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*The*  
GREAT  
AMERICAN  
NOVELS

MARCH 14, 2024

SHARE 

SAVE 

In 1868, a little-known writer by the name of John William DeForest proposed a new type of literature, a collective artistic project for a nation just emerging from an existential conflict: a work of fiction that accomplished “the task of painting the American soul.” It would be called the Great American Novel, and no one had written it yet, DeForest admitted. Maybe soon.

A century and a half later, the idea has endured, even as it has become more complicated. In 2024, our definition of literary greatness is wider, deeper, and weirder than DeForest likely could have imagined. At the same time, the novel is also

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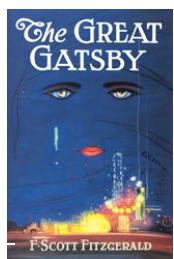
THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVELS

JUMP TO DECADE

## *The Great Gatsby*

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

1925



## *An American Tragedy*

THEODORE DREISER

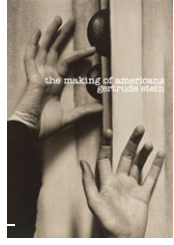
1925



# *The Making of Americans*

GERTRUDE STEIN

1925



# *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

WILLA CATHER

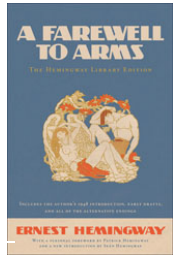
1927



# *A Farewell to Arms*

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

1929



# *Passing*

NELLA LARSEN

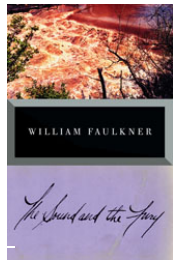
1929



# *The Sound and the Fury*

WILLIAM FAULKNER

1929



# *Absalom, Absalom!*

WILLIAM FAULKNER

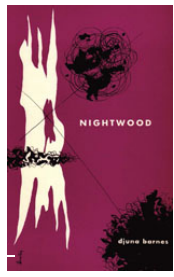
1936



# *Nightwood*

DJUNA BARNES

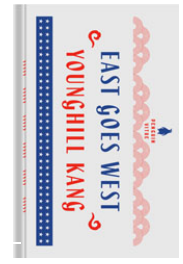
1936



# *East Goes West*

YOUNGHILL KANG

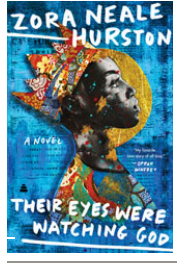
1937



*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

ZORA NEALE HURSTON

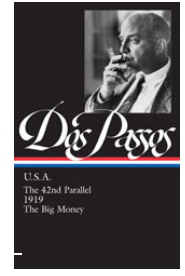
1937



*U.S.A.*

JOHN DOS PASSOS

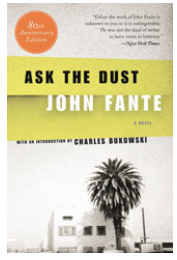
1937



*Ask the Dust*

JOHN FANTE

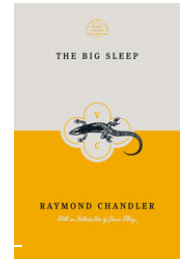
1939



*The Big Sleep*

RAYMOND CHANDLER

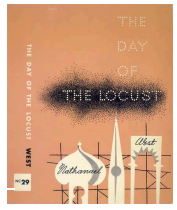
1939



*The Day of the Locust*

NATHANAEL WEST

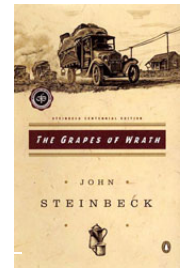
1939



*The Grapes of Wrath*

JOHN STEINBECK

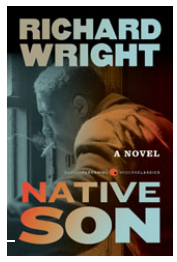
1939



*Native Son*

RICHARD WRIGHT

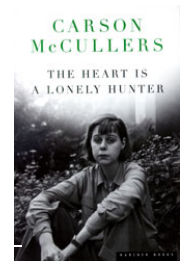
1940



*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*

CARSON MCCULLERS

1940



*A Time to Be Born*

DAWN POWELL

1942

*All the King's Men*

ROBERT PENN

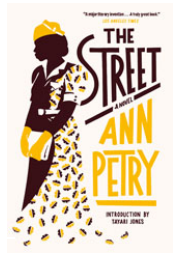
WARREN

1946

*The Street*

ANN PETRY

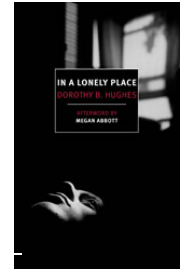
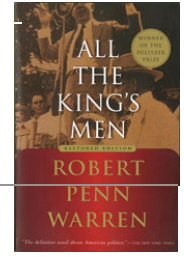
1946



*In a Lonely Place*

DOROTHY B. HUGHES

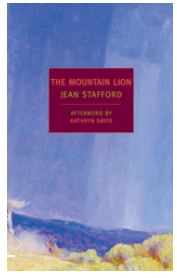
1947



*The Mountain Lion*

JEAN STAFFORD

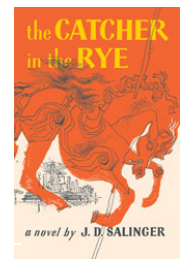
1947



*The Catcher in the Rye*

J. D. SALINGER

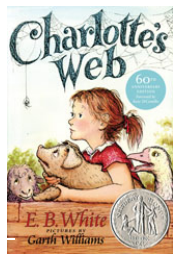
1951



*Charlotte's Web*

E. B. WHITE

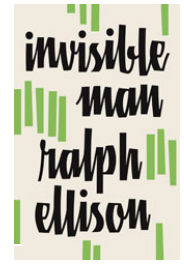
1952



*Invisible Man*

RALPH ELLISON

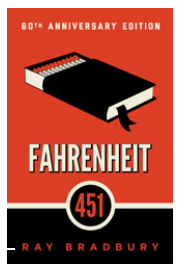
1952



*Fahrenheit 451*

RAY BRADBURY

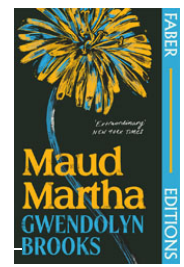
1953



*Maud Martha*

GWENDOLYN BROOKS

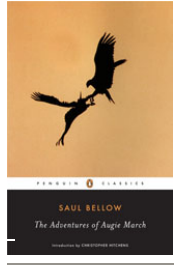
1953



# *The Adventures of Augie March*

SAUL BELLOW

1953



# *Lolita*

VLADIMIR NABOKOV

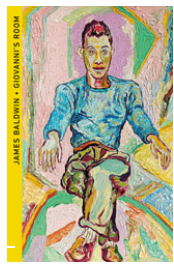
1955



# *Giovanni's Room*

JAMES BALDWIN

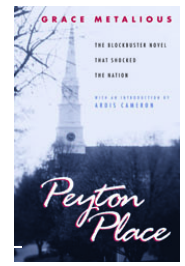
1956



# *Peyton Place*

GRACE METALIOUS

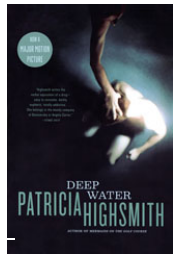
1956



# *Deep Water*

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

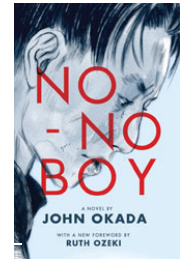
1957



# *No-No Boy*

JOHN OKADA

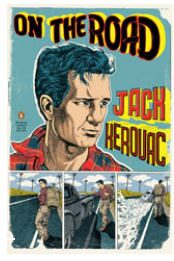
1957



# *On the Road*

JACK KEROUAC

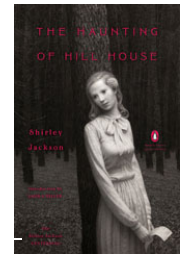
1957



# *The Haunting of Hill House*

SHIRLEY JACKSON

1959

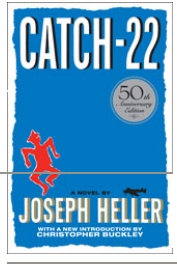


# *Catch-22*

JOSEPH HELLER

# *A Wrinkle in Time*

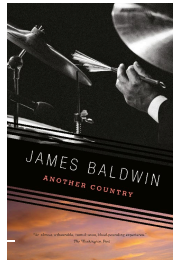
1961



*Another Country*

JAMES BALDWIN

1962



MADELEINE L'ENGLE

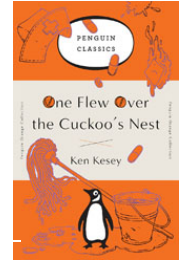
1962



*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

KEN KESEY

1962



*Pale Fire*

VLADIMIR NABOKOV

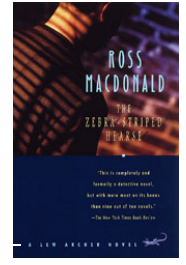
1962



*The Zebra-Striped Hearse*

ROSS MACDONALD

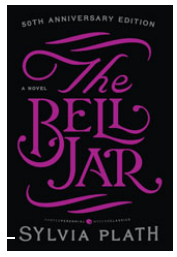
1962



*The Bell Jar*

SYLVIA PLATH

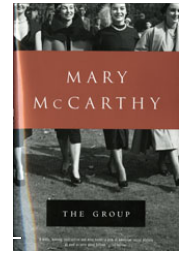
1963



*The Group*

MARY MCCARTHY

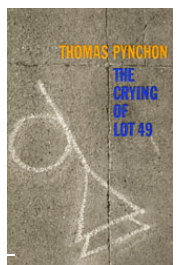
1963



*The Crying of Lot 49*

THOMAS PYNCHON

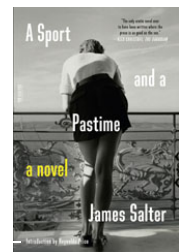
1966



*A Sport and a Pastime*

JAMES SALTER

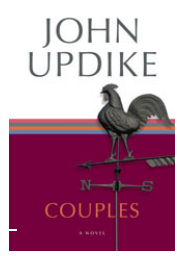
1967



### *Couples*

JOHN UPDIKE

1968



### *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

PHILIP K. DICK

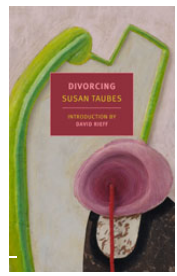
1968



### *Divorcing*

SUSAN TAUBES

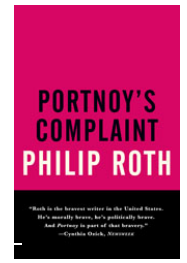
1969



### *Portnoy's Complaint*

PHILIP ROTH

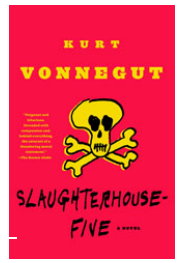
1969



### *Slaughterhouse-Five*

KURT VONNEGUT

1969



### *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*

JUDY BLUME

1970



### *Desperate Characters*

PAULA FOX

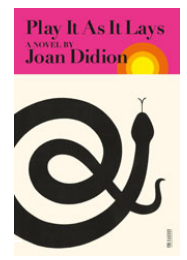
1970



### *Play It as It Lays*

JOAN DIDION

1970





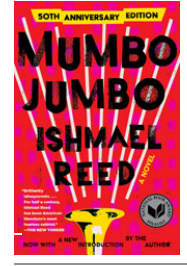
*Log of the S.S. The Mrs Unguentine*

STANLEY CRAWFORD  
1972



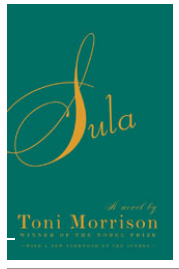
*Mumbo Jumbo*

ISHMAEL REED  
1972



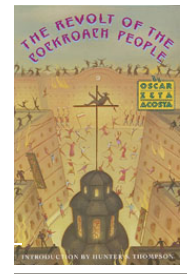
*Sula*

TONI MORRISON  
1973



*The Revolt of the Cockroach People*

OSCAR ZETA ACOSTA  
1973



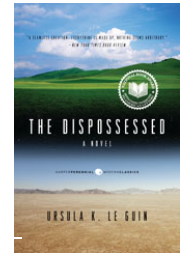
*Oreo*

FRAN ROSS  
1974



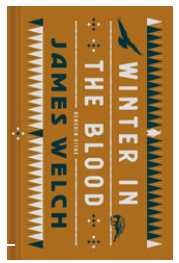
*The Dispossessed*

URSULA K. LE GUIN  
1974



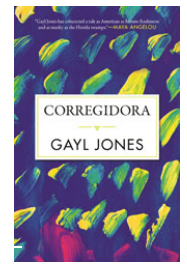
*Winter in the Blood*

JAMES WELCH  
1974



*Corregidora*

GAYL JONES  
1975



# Speedboat

RENATA ADLER

1976



# Ceremony

LESLIE MARMON SILKO

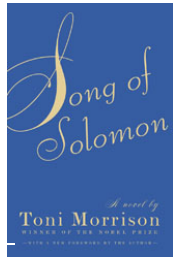
1977



# Song of Solomon

TONI MORRISON

1977



# A Contract With God

WILL EISNER

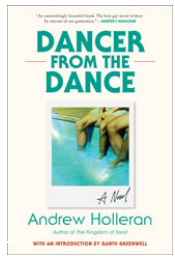
1978



# Dancer From the Dance

ANDREW HOLLERAN

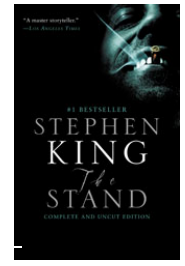
1978



# The Stand

STEPHEN KING

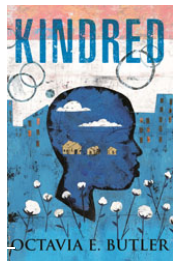
1978



# Kindred

OCTAVIA E. BUTLER

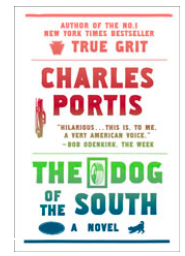
1979



# The Dog of the South

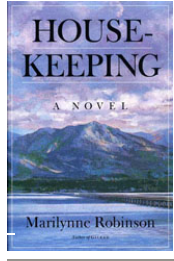
CHARLES PORTIS

1979



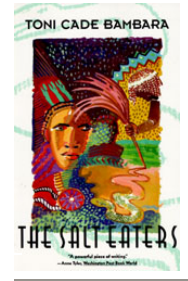
*Housekeeping*

MARILYNNE ROBINSON  
1980



*The Salt Eaters*

TONI CADE BAMBARA  
1980



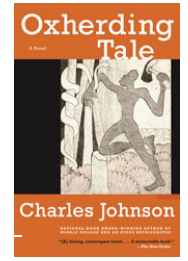
*Little, Big: Or, the Fairies' Parliament*

JOHN CROWLEY  
1981



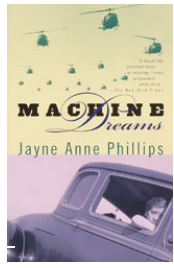
*Oxherding Tale*

CHARLES JOHNSON  
1982



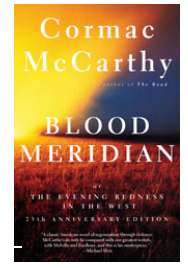
*Machine Dreams*

JAYNE ANNE PHILLIPS  
1984



*Blood Meridian*

CORMAC MCCARTHY  
1985



*A Summons to Memphis*

PETER TAYLOR  
1986



*Watchmen*

ALAN MOORE AND  
DAVE GIBBONS  
1986



*Beloved*

TONI MORRISON  
1987

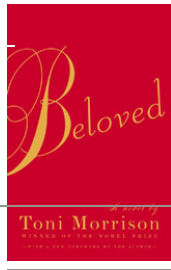
*Dawn*

OCTAVIA E. BUTLER  
1987

*Geek Love*

KATHERINE DUNN

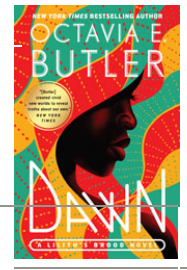
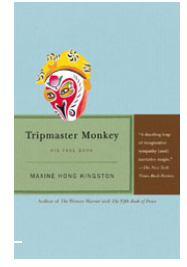
1989



*Tripmaster Monkey*

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON

1989



*Dogeaters*

JESSICA HAGEDORN

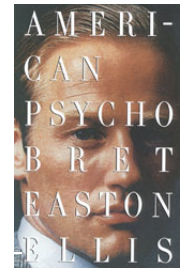
1990



*American Psycho*

BRET EASTON ELLIS

1991



*How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*

JULIA ALVAREZ

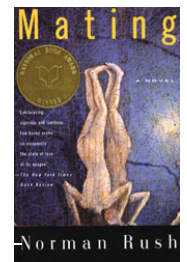
1991



*Mating*

NORMAN RUSH

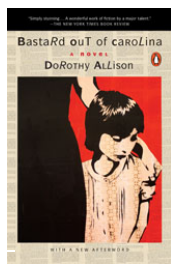
1991



*Bastard Out of Carolina*

DOROTHY ALLISON

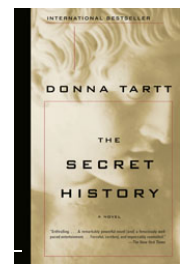
1992



*The Secret History*

DONNA TARTT

1992



# So Far From God

ANA CASTILLO

1993



# Stone Butch Blues

LESLIE FEINBERG

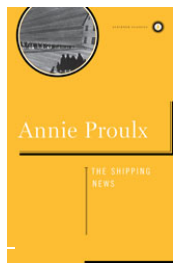
1993



# The Shipping News

ANNIE PROULX

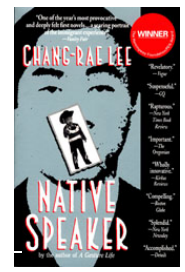
1993



# Native Speaker

CHANG-RAE LEE

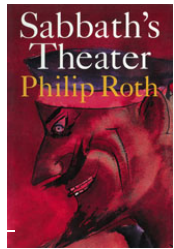
1995



# Sabbath's Theater

PHILIP ROTH

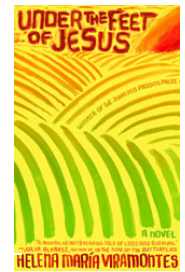
1995



# Under the Feet of Jesus

HELENA MARÍA VIRAMONTES

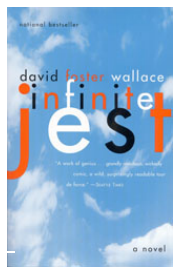
1995



# Infinite Jest

DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

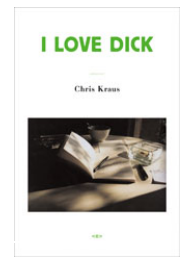
1996



# I Love Dick

CHRIS KRAUS

1997



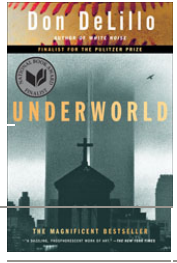
# Underworld

DON DELILLO

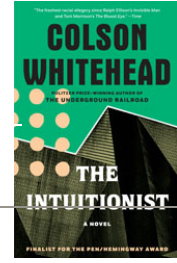
# The Intuitionist

COLSON WHITEHEAD

1997



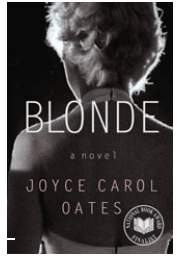
1999



*Blonde*

JOYCE CAROL OATES

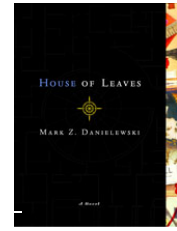
2000



*House of Leaves*

MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI

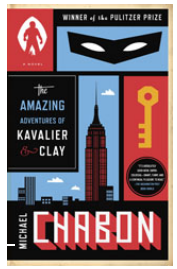
2000



*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*

MICHAEL CHABON

2000



*The Last Samurai*

HELEN DEWITT

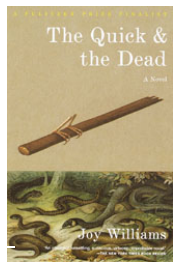
2000



*The Quick and the Dead*

JOY WILLIAMS

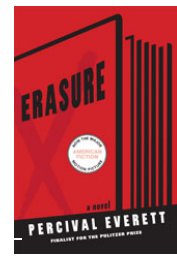
2000



*Erasure*

PERCIVAL EVERETT

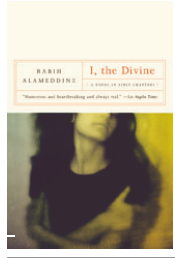
2001



# *I, the Divine*

RABIH ALAMEDDINE

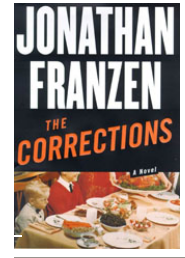
2001



# *The Corrections*

JONATHAN FRANZEN

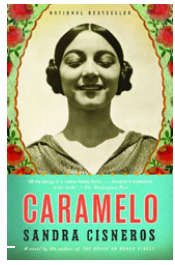
2001



# *Caramelo*

SANDRA CISNEROS

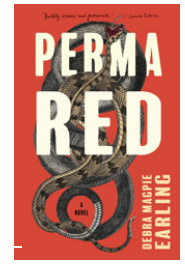
2002



# *Perma Red*

DEBRA MAGPIE EARLING

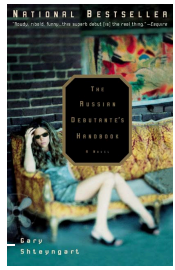
2002



# *The Russian Debutant's Handbook*

GARY SHTEYNGART

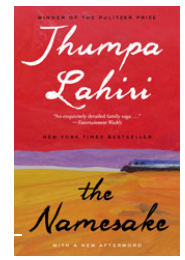
2002



# *The Namesake*

JHUMPA LAHIRI

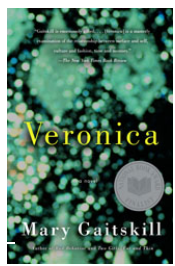
2003



# *Veronica*

MARY GAITSKILL

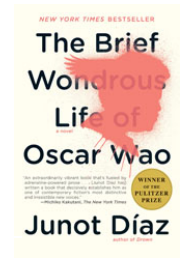
2005



# *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

JUNOT DÍAZ

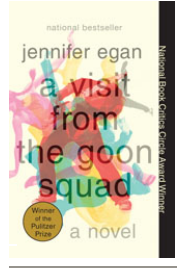
2007



# *A Visit From the Goon Squad*

JENNIFER EGAN

2010



# *I Hotel*

KAREN TEI YAMASHITA

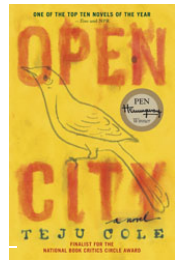
2010



# *Open City*

TEJU COLE

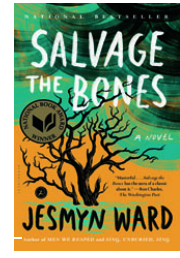
2011



# *Salvage the Bones*

JESMYN WARD

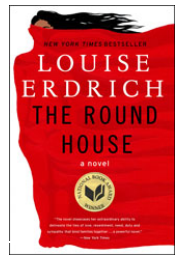
2011



# *The Round House*

LOUISE ERDRICH

2012



# *Americanah*

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

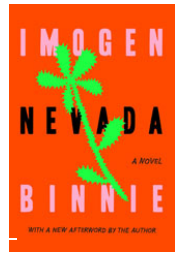
2013



# *Nevada*

IMOGEN BINNIE

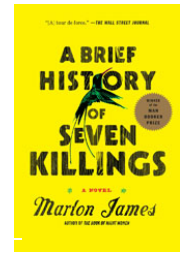
2013



# *A Brief History of Seven Killings*

MARLON JAMES

2014



# *Family Life*

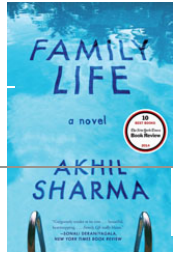
AKHIL SHARMA

# *Fates and Furies*

LAUREN GROFF



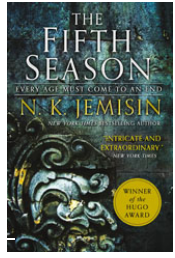
2014



*The Fifth Season*

N. K. JEMISIN

2015

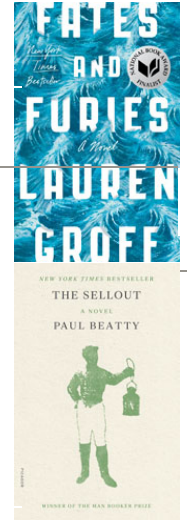


2015

*The Sellout*

PAUL BEATTY

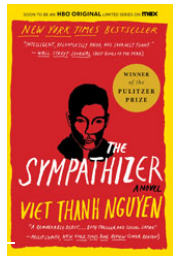
2015



*The Sympathizer*

VIET THANH NGUYEN

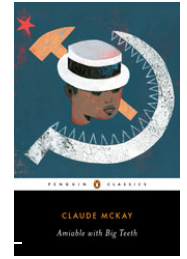
2015



*Amiable With Big Teeth*

CLAUDE MCKAY

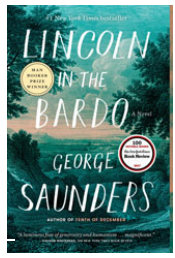
2017



*Lincoln in the Bardo*

GEORGE SAUNDERS

2017



*Sabrina*

NICK DRNASO

2018



*Severance*

LING MA

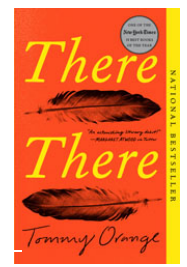
2018



*There There*

TOMMY ORANGE

2018



### *Lost Children Archive*

VALERIA LUISELLI

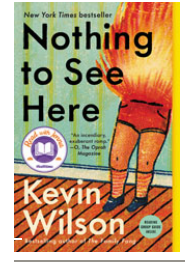
2019



### *Nothing to See Here*

KEVIN WILSON

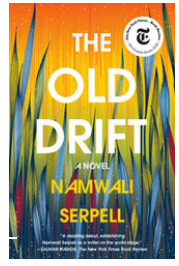
2019



### *The Old Drift*

NAMWALI SERPELL

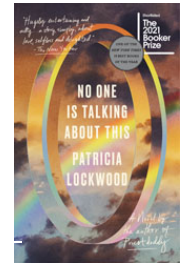
2019



### *No One Is Talking About This*

PATRICIA LOCKWOOD

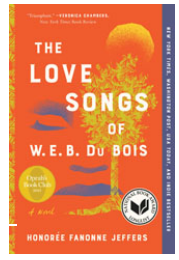
2021



### *The Love Songs of W. E. B. Du Bois*

HONORÉE FANONNE JEFFERS

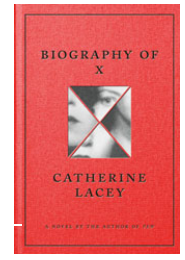
2021



### *Biography of X*

CATHERINE LACEY

2023



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