

Book Descriptions

Margaret Craven, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*

Amid the grandeur of the remote Pacific Northwest stands Kingcome, a village so ancient that, according to Kwakiutl myth, it was founded by the two brothers left on earth after the great flood. The Native Americans who still live there call it Quee, a place of such incredible natural richness that hunting and fishing remain primary food sources. But the old culture of totems and potlatch is being replaced by a new culture of prefab housing and alcoholism. Kingcome's younger generation is disenchanted and alienated from its heritage. And now, coming upriver is a young vicar, Mark Brian, who has two years to live. Sent to this Indian parish in British Columbia, Mark embarks on a journey of discovery that can teach him -- and us -- about life, death, and the transforming power of love.

Christopher Paul Curtis, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*

A wonderful novel narrated by Kenny, 9, about his middle-class black family, the Weird Watsons of Flint, Michigan. When Kenny's 13-year-old brother, Byron, gets to be too much trouble, they head South to Birmingham to visit Grandma, the one person who can shape him up. And they happen to be in Birmingham when Grandma's church is blown up.

Kate DiCamillo, *Because of Winn Dixie*

This novel tells the story of ten-year old Opal. She has just moved to Naomi, Florida with her preacher father. On an errand to the grocery store Opal finds a large, ugly, homeless dog. Opal is immediately attached to the dog whom she names Winn Dixie after the grocery store where she finds him. Together they make friends with Otis, an ex-convict who runs the local pet store; Miss Fanny, the librarian who has a desk full of "Litmus Lozenges" a type of candy which her great grandfather invented; and Gloria Dump, the lady the local children think of as a witch because of her jungle-like yard. This book will make you laugh as Opal and Winn Dixie make friends with these very likable characters in this small southern town.

Jeff Kinney, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid (Series #1)*

It's a new school year, and Greg Heffley finds himself thrust into middle school, where undersized weaklings share the hallways with kids who are taller, meaner, and already shaving. The hazards of growing up before you're ready are uniquely revealed through words and drawings as Greg records them in his diary.

In book one of this debut series, Greg is happy to have Rowley, his sidekick, along for the ride. But when Rowley's star starts to rise, Greg tries to use his best friend's newfound popularity to his own advantage, kicking off a chain of events that will test their friendship in hilarious fashion.

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

The unforgettable novel of a childhood in a sleepy Southern town and the crisis of conscience that rocked it, *To Kill A Mockingbird* became both an instant bestseller and a critical success when it was first published in 1960. It went on to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and was later made into an Academy Award-winning film, also a classic.

Compassionate, dramatic, and deeply moving, *To Kill A Mockingbird* takes readers to the roots of human behavior - to innocence and experience, kindness and cruelty, love and hatred, humor and pathos. Harper Lee always considered her book, now with over 18 million copies in

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print in forty different languages, to be a simple love story. Today it is regarded as a masterpiece of American literature.

Lois Lowry, *The Giver*

Eleven-year-old Jonas lives in a seemingly ideal world. There is no war or pain, and there are no choices. Every person is assigned a role in the community. When Jonas turns 12, he is chosen to receive special training from The Giver himself -- a man who alone holds the key to the true pain and pleasure of life: memories. Now it is time for Jonas to receive the truth. What will Jonas do once he experiences the power of deep emotions? This gripping and provocative Newbery Award-winning novel keeps readers turning the pages and exploring the special qualities that make us each human.

Wilson Rawls, *Where the Red Fern Grows*

A young boy living in the Ozarks achieves his heart's desire when he becomes the owner of two redbone hounds and teaches them to be champion hunters. Together, the three of them experience danger, adventure, love, and sorrow.

Rick Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* (Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book 1)

What if the gods of Olympus were alive in the 21st Century? What if they still fell in love with mortals and had children who might become great heroes -- like Theseus, Jason and Hercules? What if you were one of those children? Such is the discovery that launches twelve-year-old Percy Jackson on the most dangerous quest of his life. With the help of a satyr and a daughter of Athena, Percy must journey across the United States to catch a thief who has stolen the original weapon of mass destruction -- Zeus' master bolt. Along the way, he must face a host of mythological enemies determined to stop him. Most of all, he must come to terms with a father he has never known, and an Oracle that has warned him of betrayal by a friend.

Jerry Spinelli, *Maniac Magee*

When Jeffrey Lionel Magee wanders into Two Mills, Pennsylvania, a legend is in the making. Before too long, stories begin to circulate about how fast and how far he can run and about feats so incredible they earn him the nickname "Maniac."

John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*

Originally published in 1937, this is the timeless story of George Milton and Lennie Small, ranch hands who drift from job to job, always one step ahead of the law and a few dollars from the poorhouse. George is small, wiry, sharp-tongued and quick-tempered; slow witted Lennie is his opposite—an immense man, brutishly strong but naturally docile, a giant with the mind of a child. Despite their difference, George and Lennie are bound together by a shared vision: their own small farm, where they'll raise cows, pigs, chickens, and rabbits, where they'll be their own bosses and live off the fat of the land.

When they find work on a ranch in California's Salinas Valley, the dream at last seems within reach. If they can just save up a little money. . . . But their hopes, like "the best-laid schemes of mice and men," begin to go awry. The story unfolds with the power and inevitability of a Greek tragedy, as Lennie commits an accidental murder, and George, in a riveting, deeply moving finale, must do what he can to make things turn out right.