

One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish

Dr. Seuss

When I was old enough to ask, my parents told me that this was the first book I read on my own. I am nearly positive this isn't true, as the book is far too long and advanced to have been anyone's first read, but I proudly claimed it as my own as a child. In fact, I was so proud that I regularly wore a t-shirt with an image of the book's cover on it when I went out. This is the first book that I ever remember thinking of as mine.

Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging

Louise Rennison

Throughout middle school, Louise Rennison's *Confessions of Georgia Nicholson* series was a staple on my bookshelf. I read the first book in the seventh grade when a friend lent it to me, and quickly devoured any others available in the school library. In high school, I would still go and buy the new ones when they were released even though I had really grown too old to fit into the target audience of the books. To this day, I don't think I've ever laughed so hard out loud reading a book. When Louise Rennison passed away in 2016, I felt like a member of my family had died. She was such a big part of making me laugh in an otherwise awkward, uncomfortable stage of my life, and I will be forever grateful for that.

The Perks of being a Wallflower

Stephen Chbosky

I read *The Perks of being a Wallflower* in the ninth grade, and I was sure that I would never read anything so beautiful again in my life (thankfully, I was wrong). I was struck by the protagonist Charlie and his special relationship with music and books, and Chbosky's frank, sad exploration of the teenage experience moved me and made me look at the world in which I lived differently. Throughout my life, I have purchased something like ten copies of this book, but I only have one on my shelf. I keep giving them away as gifts for lending them to friends and never receiving them back. I don't mind, though. I think Charlie would like it that way.

The Great Gatsby

F. Scott Fitzgerald

I did not read this great American classic until I was a senior in college, and I found it to be thoroughly enjoyable. The weight of this book really comes from my student teaching year when I had the chance to teach it to a group of high school juniors. I remember reading chapter seven out loud with them and watching their expressions as we reacted together and felt the oppressive New York heat that seemed to radiate from the pages. That year awakened a love for teaching in me, and I will always feel indebted to F. Scott Fitzgerald for crafting a novel that my students and I could fall in love with together.

To Kill a Mockingbird

Harper Lee

This book has followed me throughout my life. I first read it in middle school as part of the school curriculum, and when I switched districts for the ninth grade, I read it again. The story of

a miscarriage of justice through the eyes of a little girl continues to haunt me to this day, and I read this book every year whether I get to teach it or not. I consider it to be a privilege to teach this book to my students, and I don't think I'll ever grow tired of discussing it with my them.

Go Set a Watchman

Harper Lee

Although controversial, this book made my dreams come true with its release in 2015. It presented me with the rare opportunity to answer the questions I've been asking myself for years: How did Scout grow up? What is she like as an adult? Would I still relate to her? I was twenty-four when Harper Lee reintroduced me to a twenty-six year old Scout, and reading this book is like catching up with an old friend after years of wondering how she was getting along. The fresh conflict introduced in this text leaves a lot of readers frustrated, but I feel it perfectly encompasses the agony and heartbreak of growing up and looking at one's heroes through a critical lens.

A Clockwork Orange

Anthony Burgess

I'm not typically drawn to books of this genre, but this one stopped me dead in my tracks. Anthony Burgess's linguistic background allows him to create one of the most interesting texts I've ever read. He seamlessly weaves a whole new language into an intricate, dark plot. It left me wondering how an author could so effortlessly teach readers this new vocabulary without ever pausing to explicitly translate any of it. I was truly struck by how Burgess took one of the darkest stories I've ever read and made it fun to read. This kind of playful use of language exemplifies what it looks like when an author is a master of his domain, and I am inspired by it.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

Jonathan Safran Foer

Jonathan Safran Foer's story of a young boy who loses his father in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 first came into my life when Michigan State University participated in an event called One Book, One Community. I read it my sophomore year of college, and I loved it so much I found it difficult to read other fiction novels for a long time after. I revisited this text when I taught at Clawson High School and took on a course called Contemporary Literature. I was so excited to share my love for this novel with my students, and we immersed ourselves in New York culture as we worked through the text together.

Lean In

Sheryl Sandberg

Sheryl Sandberg's illuminating work on women in the workplace struck me in unexpected ways considering that the content is hardly applicable to the education sector. I felt compelled to look at my own professional habits through a critical lens thanks to this text, and I truly believe that the professional success that I have found should be at least partially credited to this book. I recommend it to every college graduate--man or woman--and continue to use it as a professional guidebook.

Bossypants

Tina Fey

If *Lean In* is my professional guidebook, *Bossypants* is my personal manifesto. As an avid and devoted fan of nearly every piece of work that Tina Fey has produced in her career, I was eager to devour her memoir when she released it in 2011. There was no disappointment, and I continue to revisit this text and find new ways to apply Fey's advice to my life. Once after class, I was flattered when a student asked me where I got my confidence. In response, I told her to go read this book! I can't think of a better introduction to the chaotic, frustrating, ever-changing world of womanhood, and I am so grateful to have Tina Fey along with me for the ride.