



Q&A

Q: How were the top 100 books chosen?

A: PBS and the producers worked with the public opinion polling service “YouGov” to conduct a demographically and statistically representative survey asking Americans to name their most-loved novel. Approximately 7,200 people participated.

Q: How did you narrow that list to the top 100?

A: The results were tallied and organized based on our selection criteria and overseen by an advisory panel of 13 literary industry professionals. The criteria for inclusion on the top 100 list were as follows:

1. Each author was limited to one title on the list (to keep the list varied).
2. Books published in series or featuring ongoing characters counted as one eligible entry on the list (e.g. the *Harry Potter* series or *Lord of the Rings*) to increase variety.
3. Books could be from anywhere in the world as long as they were published in English.
4. Only fiction could be included in the poll.
5. Each advisory panel member was permitted to select one book for discussion and possible inclusion on the top 100 list from the longer list of survey results.

Q: What is the role of the advisory panel? How much influence do they have on the final list?

A: The advisory panel is a group of 13 book industry professionals who bring their collective experience to the project. They will also help promote THE GREAT AMERICAN READ by reaching out to their own networks within the book industry and to existing literacy and reading networks and groups. Each panel member was permitted to select one book for discussion and possible inclusion on the top 100 list from the longer list of survey results. This was done to increase the overall variety of the list and to break ties. However, panel members were not permitted to add books that were not already included on the larger list of titles; therefore, all 100 books were indeed chosen by the public.

Q: What books are included on the list?

A: The list contains a broad range of fictional titles, authors, time periods, countries, genres and subject matter. The list includes books from as far back as the 1600s and as recent as 2016. From beloved world literature to contemporary best sellers, many categories are represented: 20th century American classics, thrillers, young adult novels, sci-fi/fantasy, adventure, historical fiction, romantic stories, and books that represent the human experience told from a diverse range of perspectives.

Q: But what titles are SPECIFICALLY on the list?

A: You can see the list of 100 books [here](#).

Q: Are the books ranked by popularity?

A: The campaign aims to generate national discussion about what these books mean to the country and our collective culture, all while encouraging Americans to read the selected books

from the list throughout the summer. The books are not ranked or weighted in any way. It is up to the viewers to “rank” the titles by voting for their favorites through the series run.

Over the course of the summer and the broadcast of THE GREAT AMERICAN READ, people will be able to vote for their favorite books on the list of 100 titles, which will be available on the website. The books with the most votes will be unveiled in the finale of THE GREAT AMERICAN READ, as well as “America’s Best-Loved Novel.”

Q: Why are there only fiction books included? Why aren’t religious works included?

A: THE GREAT AMERICAN READ is searching for the country’s best-loved novel. While we recognize the broad categories of books available, we chose to narrow our focus to works of fiction because it would be impossible to cover them all over the course of an eight-part series.

Q: How does the voting work?

A: Voting will open online and on social media with the launch of the two-hour premiere episode and continue throughout the summer, leading up to the finale in October 2018. Over the summer, viewers can vote at pbs.org/greatamericanread and through hashtag voting via Facebook and Twitter. In the fall, viewers will also be able to cast their votes by using SMS and toll-free voting.

Q: Does my vote even matter? Don’t bots control the vote anyway?

A: The team behind THE GREAT AMERICAN READ has taken great care to ensure the integrity of the votes. The voting process is carefully monitored by an independent vote management company that reserves the right to remove any votes cast in violation of the voting policy. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of technical enhancements that could unfairly influence the outcome of the voting. For more information, please visit pbs.org/greatamericanread.

Q: There are many acclaimed authors and books not included in this list. Will this discourage people from discovering valuable works that are not as popular as the titles included here?

A: The list and THE GREAT AMERICAN READ are meant to open a discussion about why we love the books we do and serve as a launching pad to discover new books and re-read favorites. This is a list of America’s 100 favorite novels at the time the survey was conducted. It would be impossible for us to cover every book.

Q: Why is [Insert Controversial Book Name] on the List?

A: First, it’s important to remember that the books that appear on the top 100 list were chosen by the public through a demographically and statistically representative survey. These are the books that Americans have said that they love to read.

One reason we’re drawn to certain books is that they challenge us. Over the years a number of books that appear on PBS’ list of “100 Best-Loved Novels” have been the target of efforts to ban them from libraries or schools in various communities. While we respect that there are some who might challenge certain books on the list, the goal of THE GREAT AMERICAN READ is to explore why these books are widely loved and embraced, not why some people object to them.

PBS does not have an opinion on any titles on the top 100 list. The profiles of the books in the series are told from fans’ and authors’ perspectives, showing how people have connected with these stories in profound ways and how a book can take on new meaning, depending on where

and when it's being read. We recognize that not every book is appropriate for every taste, age group or sensitivity. But possibly disputed books wouldn't be included on the list if they weren't popular, and questioning why they're so popular, what we can learn from them and what they tell us about our collective society is the focus of THE GREAT AMERICAN READ.

If pressed about specific titles...

[Gone with the Wind]

Gone With the Wind was written in 1936 about a particular time period in our nation's history, the Civil War. In the launch episode of THE GREAT AMERICAN READ, we visit Atlanta, Georgia, where we speak with experts to learn how a reader can, on one hand, love the book, while on the other, still hold it accountable for its depiction of what has been called "America's Original Sin." At its heart, the story told in *Gone With the Wind* represents many things: love, family, the importance of perseverance and self-reliance to name a few. It provides a rich platform for discussion, which is ultimately the goal of THE GREAT AMERICAN READ.

[Fifty Shades of Grey]

Love it or hate it, when *Fifty Shades of Grey* was first published in the United States in 2012, people couldn't stop reading it or talking about it. The first novel in the *Fifty Shades* trilogy was translated into 52 languages and topped best-seller lists around the world, selling hundreds of millions of copies. So it's no surprise that it ended up on our top 100 list of "America's Best-Loved Novels."