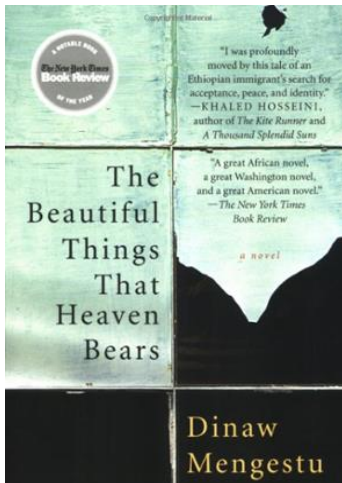


# LIT PICKS

## A curated selection of the Web's literary tidbits

"Lit Picks" is our DC Public Library insider's guide to the literary pieces we're reading, liking and sharing. We hope you enjoy our look at some of the best and most interesting items the Web has to offer on books, reading and life.

### Washington, D.C.: More Than a Scandal

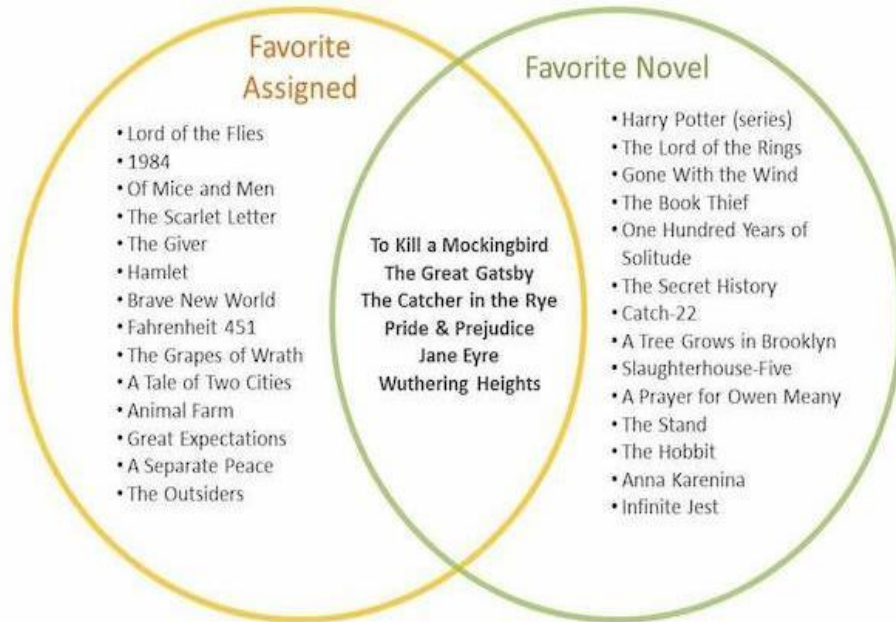


We love Washington, D.C. for many reasons, not least for the number of significant events that have occurred here, from the controversial (Watergate, or any -gate, for that matter) to the celebrated, such as the March on Washington. Our nation's capital is seldom short on excitement, which makes it the perfect setting for fictional tales.

Along with NYC, Boston and Chicago, D.C. is featured in the *Guardian's* [Reading American Cities](#). In this write-up, readers have selected their favorite books set in Washington, D.C. - and not surprisingly, at least to us, the first book on the list is by DCPL Foundation Board member, George Pelecanos. [The Night Gardener](#) is infused with vice, intensity, and excellent dialogue, as a detective and two ex-cops investigate the potential return of a serial killer. Pelecanos, a D.C. native, includes detailed descriptions of gritty neighborhoods in his work, making the novel very specific to the District.

Another novel featured in this list is Dinaw Mengestu's [The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears](#), which focuses on an Ethiopian immigrant's experience in D.C., more specifically, Logan Circle. The book was recently selected through a public voting process for [DC Reads](#), a DC Public Library program that encourages the whole city to read the same book. The Library will host a variety of *DC Reads* programs from October 15 - November 15, including an opening night reception with the author at MLK Library on Oct. 15.

## No Sparknotes Necessary: Favorite Assigned Reading



What do you think of when you recall High School? Awkward encounters, questionable fashion choices, classroom crushes, mandatory gym class, homework! The teen years were all about accepting the good with the bad: case in point - assigned reading. Despite the looming analytical essay waiting for you at the completion of the book, the classic novels prescribed to us in High School often left lasting impressions and helped shape our formative years.

The latest poll from *Book Riot* reveals readers' top 25 favorite assigned reading titles. [To Kill a Mockingbird](#) tops the list, with its timeless teachings about the complexities of race, morality and the justice system. See the full list [here](#), and check out some of the other favorites from the list at the DC Public Library, including [The Great Gatsby](#), [Of Mice and Men](#), [Catcher in the Rye](#), [The Scarlet Letter](#) and [Brave New World](#). Shakespeare also appears three times with [Hamlet](#), [Romeo and Juliet](#) and [Macbeth](#).

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## Can You Judge a Book by its Cover?

Peter Mendelsund thinks so. As the associate art director of Alfred A. Knopf Books, he's designed covers for everything from [The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo](#) to classics by Dostoevsky, Nabokov, Joyce, and De Beauvoir. In September, he published two books about the art of the cover: [What We See When We Read](#), about the experience of reading, and [Cover](#), which showcases his best work, along with his thoughts on designing and several short essays from authors.

In this [brief interview from The Awl](#), Peter shares some of his philosophy of cover design. There's the good, which "require[s] a double take, and should unfold slowly;" and there's the bad: "There's a particular sort of cover that I really don't like, a sort of punning cover, which is where the cover does the opposite of what the title says... Like if the book is called *Thin* the type is fat, which is just meaningless and horrible design."

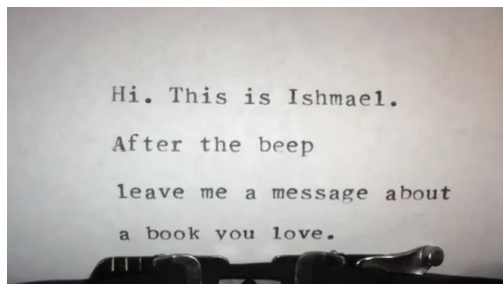


And, his final words about what a book cover should accomplish: "The book cover really should unfold over time with the reading experience. If you finish the book, and maybe even if you didn't love the book, the cover should still make you want to keep the book, keep it around as part of your life. And more importantly, if you did love the book, then the cover should be something you don't feel weird about, or something that inhibits the joy of keeping the book around. If it achieves those objectives, then the job is done."

If you'd like to experiment with choosing your next read based on the cover, browse the [What's Hot](#) section on the homepage of the newly redesigned [dclibrary.org](#) for some ideas.

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## Voicemail for Ishmael



We've all read books that have shaped the way we accept (or reject) societal values, relate to those around us, and understand the world we inhabit. In a brilliant blog, [Call Me Ishmael](#), everyday readers call in and leave messages for Ishmael about a book they love. The calls are transcribed and the text is paired with the audio message. Each story demonstrates the powerful impact that books

have on our decisions, lives and our wealth of knowledge. The anonymity of each call also encourages deeply personal candor.

[One caller](#) reveals how Dr. Seuss' [Sneetches](#) taught him to question racial segregation while growing up in the south. [A woman](#) experiencing loss and depression found the courage to seek mental help after visiting her local library to read Sylvia Plath's [The Bell Jar](#). [Another caller](#) explains how Abraham Verghese's [Cutting for Stone](#) triggered a

poignant moment between her and a complete stranger on an airplane.

Books empower us, making us stronger and wiser. This potent blog is bound to feature at least one book that resonates with each of us, with voicemail messages inspired by a range of reads from [The Diary of a Young Girl](#) by Anne Frank to [Hunter S. Thompson's Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas](#).

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## Quick Picks

- Fashion aficionado and DCPL Library Associate, My Nguyen, [interviews fashionable library goers](#) about their style and current reads.
  - An award-winning Oscar-nominated film team is coming together to create a documentary titled [Free for all: Inside the Public Library](#) to raise awareness of public libraries and promote a national dialogue about their essential role in upholding a democratic society.
  - See the plots and/or titles of some of your favorite literary classics conveyed in four emojis or less. [Can you guess the novel?](#)
  - Although Banned Books Week is over, the new edition of Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* is now available, featuring a series of [new illustrations](#) by British designer, Ben Jones.
  - Once you finish our *DC Reads* book, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, check out [this list](#) of must-reads for October 2014.
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## Upcoming Library Events

Please join us at the DC Public Library for any of these wonderful upcoming events, and check out the [calendar](#) for even more fantastic programming at your local library:

- **Opening *DC Reads* Reception** - Join us for an opening night celebration to launch *DC Reads* 2014 with author Dinaw Mengestu.
  - [MLK Library, Wednesday, 10/15, 6:30 PM](#)
- **Meet the Makers: Makerplaces in Libraries, Schools and Beyond** - Join us for a conversation with leading tech industry panelists about the maker movement and the role of libraries in this movement.
  - [MLK Library, Monday, 10/20, 7 PM](#)
- **District of Change: LGBTQ Life in D.C. Then & Now** - Join us for a conversation with Mark Joseph Stern, Andrew Sullivan, Philip Pannell, and Loraine Hutchins on the vibrant past, present and future of the LGBTQ community in the District.
  - [MLK Library, Wednesday, 10/22, 7 PM](#)

- **Punk Rock Swap Meet** - Swing by the Passenger/Warehouse Theater to mingle with DC punk lovers and contribute to the DC Public Library Punk Archive. Receive free drinks in exchange for punk memorabilia.
  - [Tuesday, 10/28, 9 PM](#)

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The DC Public Library Foundation thanks you for your support! Now is a very exciting time to invest in the future of the DC Public Library. If you haven't already, please give this year! Visit [dclibrary.org/giving](http://dclibrary.org/giving) to learn more about the Literati and the Ex Libris Society giving memberships, and donate today!