



2001-2010

2001

1Religion Explained –Pascal Boyer

2The Closing of the Western Mind –Charles Freeman

3Nickel & Dimed –Barbara Ehrenreich

4The Metaphysical Club –Louis Menand

5The Trial of Henry Kissinger –Christopher Hitchens

6Fast Food Nation – Eric Schlosser

7 My Day –Eleanor Roosevelt

8Writings On An Ethical Life –Peter Singer

9Theodore Rex –Edmund Morris

10Justice As Fairness: A Restatement –John Rawls

Honorable Mentions:

The Tragedy of Great Power Politics – John Mearsheimer

Humanity: A Moral History of the 20th Century –Jonathan Glover

What Went Wrong? –Bernard Lewis

John Adams –David McCullough

A Universe of Consciousness –Edelman / Tononi

Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee –Dee Brown

Constantine's Sword –James Carroll

Arguing Comparative Politics –Alfred Stepan

On Nature & Language –Noam Chomsky



Radical Enlightenment –Jonathan Israel

The Future of Ideas –Lawrence Lessig

The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism & The Death of Democracy

–Noreena Hertz

The Future of Success –Robert Reich

Capitalism & Its Economics: A Critical History –Douglas Dowd (pub. 2000)

2002

1War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning –Chris Hedges

2Understanding Power –Noam Chomsky

3Wealth & Democracy –Kevin Phillips

4The Blank Slate – Steven Pinker

5 In Gods We Trust –Scott Atran

6 Israel / Palestine –Tanya Reinhart

7Synaptic Self –Joseph LeDoux

8Perpetual War For Perpetual Peace –Gore Vidal

9The Mind & The Market – Jerry Z. Muller

10Marx's Revenge –Meghnad Desai

Honorable Mentions:

The Golden Ratio –Mario Livio

A New Kind of Science –Stephen Wolfram

Abraham –Bruce Feiler

Unequal Protection –Thom Hartmann (note: 2nd ed., 2010)

Globalization & Its Discontents –Joseph Stiglitz



LBJ: Master of the Senate –Robert A. Caro

The Problem of the Soul –Owen Flanagan

On Democracy & Education –Noam Chomsky

Darwin's Cathedral –David Sloan Wilson

One World: The Ethics of Globalization –Peter Singer

The Tangled Wing –Melvin Konner

Secrets –Daniel Ellsberg

Understanding Capitalism –Douglas Dowd

A Problem From Hell –Samantha Power

2003

1Lost Christianities – Bart Ehrman

2Hegemony or Survival –Noam Chomsky

3Killing Hope: 2003 edition –William Blum

4The New Imperialism –David Harvey

5Isaac Newton –James Gleick

6Beyond Belief –Elain Pagels

7The Soul of Capitalism –William Greider

8The Future of Freedom – Fareed Zakaria

9Sync –Steven Strogatz

10Middle East Illusions –Noam Chomsky

Honorable Mentions:

A Devil's Chaplain –Richard Dawkins

Under the Banner of Heaven –Jon Krakauer



Looking For Spinoza –Antonio DaMasio

The Crisis of Islam –Bernard Lewis

Nature Via Nurture –Matt Ridley

Objectivity & Liberal Scholarship –Noam Chomsky

Benjamin Franklin –Walter Isaacson

The Great Unraveling –Paul Krugman

The Peloponnesian War –Donald Kagan

All The Shah's Men –Stephen Kinzer

Freedom Evolves –Daniel Dennett

Perfectly Legal –David Cay Johnston

In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror –Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski

Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power & the Disabling of Democracy –Ted Nace

2004

1Freethinkers –Susan Jacoby

2The Sorrows of Empire –Chalmers Johnson

3The End of Faith –Sam Harris

4What's the Matter With Kansas? –Thomas Frank

5The Science of Good & Evil –Michael Shermer

6Fascists –Michael Mann

7The Truth About The Drug Companies –Angell Marcia

8Ghost Wars –Steve Coll

9 The Dark Side Of Democracy –Michael Mann

10 America Beyond Capitalism –Gar Alperovitz



Honorable Mentions:

The Wisdom of Crowds –James Surowiecki

Will In The World –Stephen Greenblatt

The Great Influenza –John M. Barry

The Fabric of the Cosmos –Brian Greene

The Ancestor's Tail –Richard Dawkins

Free Culture –Lawrence Lessig

Alexander Hamilton –Ron Chernow

Saying What The Law Is –Charles Fried

His Excellency: George Washington –Joseph Ellis

Cataclysm: The First World War As Political Tragedy –David Stevenson

Reason & Value: Themes From the Moral Philosophy of Joseph Raz

The Problem Of The Media –Robert McChesney

American Empire –Andrew Bacevich (updated from the '02 version)

American Dynasty —Kevin Phillips

The Corporation –Joel Bakan

The Limits To Growth –Donella H. Meadows

2005

1A Brief History of Neoliberalism –David Harvey

2Beyond Chutzpah –Norman Finkelstein (revised / expanded in 2008)

3Generation Rx –Greg Crister

4 The Ethics of Identity –Anthony Appiah

5The Rise of American Democracy –Sean Wilentz



6The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth –Benjamin Friedman

7Misquoting Jesus –Bart Ehrman

8Active Liberty –Stephen Breyer

9Restless Giant: The U.S. from Watergate To Bush v. Gore –James T. Paterson

10 Postwar –Tony Judt

Honorable Mentions:

The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789 –Robert Middlekauff

Team of Rivals –Doris Kearns Goodwin

A Man Without A Country –Kurt Vonnegut

The Impact of Inequality –Richard Wilkinson

Inequality & Prosperity –Jonas Pontusson

The Assassins' Gate –George Packer

Universal Human Rights: In Theory & Practice –Jack Donnelly

The New American Militarism –Andrew Bacevich

The End of Poverty –Jeffrey Sachs

John Kenneth Galbraith –Richard Parker

The Ethical Brain –Michael Gazzaniga

The Great War For Civilization –Robert Fisk

Thomas Paine & The Promise of America –Harvey J Kaye

Strategies of Containment (2005 ed.) –John Lewis Gaddis

2006

1House of War –James Carroll

2Breaking The Spell –Daniel Dennett



3 The Israel Lobby –Mearsheimer / Walt

4Thomas Paine –Craig Nelson

5The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine –Ilan Pappé

6Fiasco –Thomas E. Ricks

7Failed States –Noam Chomsky

8Moral Minds –Marc Hauser

9The Looming Tower –Lawrence Right

10The God Delusion –Richard Dawkins

Honorable Mentions:

American Fascists –Chris Hedges

Conversations On Consciousness –Susan Blackmore

Enlightenment Contested –Jonathan Israel

Cosmopolitanism –Anthony Appiah

Is Democracy Possible Here? –Ronald Dworkin

A World Undone –G.J. Meyer

Imperial Life In The Emerald City –Rajiv Changrasekaran

The Varieties of Scientific Experience –Carl Sagan

The One Percent Doctrine –Ron Suskind

War In Human Civilization –Azar Gat

The Evolution of Morality –Richard Joyce

Primates & Philosophers –Frans de Waal

Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid –Jimmy Carter

An Inconvenient Truth –Al Gore



2007

1The Shock Doctrine –Naomi Klein

2The World Without Us –Alan Weisman

3Legacy of Ashes –Tim Weiner

4The Impartial Spectator: Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy –D.D. Raphael

5The Black Swan –Nassem Taleb

6Blackwater –Jeremy Scahill

7God Is Not Great –Christopher Hitchens

8Supercapitalism –Robert Reich

9What Hath God Wrought: The Trans. of America, 1815-1845 –Daniel Walker Howe

10Eisenhower: Soldier & President –Stephen E. Ambrose

Honorable Mentions:

I Am A Strange Loop –Douglas Hofstadter

The Stuff of Thought –Steven Pinker

Free Lunch –David Cay Johnston

Einstein –Walter Isaacson

The Chomsky Effect –Robert Barsky

Nemesis –Chalmers Johnson

Infidel –Ayaan Hirsi Ali

God: The Failed Hypothesis –Victor Stenger

The Conscience of a Liberal –Paul Krugman

The History of the Ancient World –Susan Wise Bauer



Conflict After The Cold War: 3rd Edition –Richard Betts

American Creation –Joseph Ellis

Modern Liberty –Charles Fried

Bad Samaritans –Ha-Joon Chang

Republic.com 2.0 –Cass Sunstein

The \$3 Trillion War –Joseph Stiglitz

2008

1The Age of Reagan –Sean Wilentz

2Democracy Incorporated –Sheldon S. Wolin

3The Limits of Power –Andrew Bacevich

4The Way of the World –Ron Suskind

5The Forever War –Dexter Filkins

6The Invisible Constitution –Laurence Tribe

7Thinking In Systems –Donella H. Meadows

8Godless –Dan Barker

9Bad Money –Kevin Phillips

10 Nixonland –Rick Perlstein

Honorable Mentions:

Palestine Inside Out –Saree Makdisi

How Judges Think –Richard Posner

Common Wealth –Jeffrey Sachs

The Post-American World –Fareed Zakaria

Unjust Deserts –Gar Alperovitz / Lew Daly



From Colony To Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776 –George C. Herring

Experiments in Ethics –Anthony Appiah

American Lion –Jon Meacham

The Age of American Unreason –Susan Jacoby

The Dark Side –Jane Mayer

Here Comes Everybody –Clay Shirky

International Human Rights –Michael Haas

Superclass –David Rothkopf

Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten 20th Century –Tony Judt

2009

1. **The Lords of Finance** –Liaquat Ahamed
2. **Come Home, America** –William Greider
3. **The Spirit Level** –Wilkinson / Pickett
4. **The Greatest Show On Earth** –Richard Dawkins
5. **The Invention of the Jewish People** –Shlomo Sand
6. **The Idea of Justice** –Amartya Sen
7. **The Great Cold War: A Journey Through the Hall of Mirrors** –Gordon Barass
8. **The Myth of the Rational Market** –Justin Fox
9. **The Empathic Civilization** –Jeremy Rifkin
10. **The Healing of America** –T.R. Reid

Honorable Mentions:

How Rome Fell –Adrian Keith Goldsworthy

Lost To The West –Lars Brownworth

A Revolution of the Mind –Jonathan Israel

America's Cold War –Campbell Craig



Keynes: Return of the Master –Robert Skidelsky

The Forty Years War: The Rise & Fall of the Neocons –Colodny / Shachtman

Zombie Capitalism –Chris Harman

Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815 –Gordon Wood

On Rumors –Cass Sunstein

How Markets Fail –John Cassidy

The Great Financial Crisis –John Bellamy Foster

Shadow Elite –Jenine R. Wedel

The Dark Side of Zionism –Baylis Thomas

The Dead Hand –David. E. Hoffman

Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet –Tim Jackson

Authoritarianism & Polarization in American Politics –Hetherington, Weiler

FDR: Traitor To His Class –H.W. Brands

2010

1Freefall –Joseph Stiglitz

2Ill Fares The Land –Tony Judt

3Unequal Protection (Revised & Expanded edition) –Thom Hartmann

4Winner-Take-All Politics –Paul Pierson / Hacker

5Mis-measuring Our Lives –Joseph Stiglitz, et. al.

6Washington Rules –Andrew Bacevich

7The Enigma of Capital –David Harvey

8Dismantling the Empire –Chalmers Johnson

9Why The West Rules—For Now –Ian Morris



10 The Shallows –Nicholas Carr

Honorable Mentions:

Cultures of War –John Dower

Deadly Spin –Wendell Potter

Making Our Democracy Work –Stephen Breyer

The Betrayal of American Prosperity –Clyde Prestowitz

American Colossus –H.W. Brands

The Moral Landscape –Sam Harris

The Icarus Syndrome –Peter Beinart

The Living Constitution –David Strauss

The Emperor of All Maladies –Siddhartha Mukherjee

The Empire Has New Clothes –Paul Street

Cognitive Surplus –Clay Shirky

Economic Sentiments –Emma Rothschild

Griftopia –Matt Taibbi

Justice –Michael Sandel

Meanwhile...

The History of the Medieval World –Susan Wise Bauer

The Age Of Empathy –Frans de Waal

The Science of Liberty –Timothy Ferris

Eyes In Gaza –Mads Gilbert, Erik Fosse

The New Jim Crow –Michelle Alexander

This Time We Went Too Far –Norman Finkelstein



After-Shock –Robert Reich

All the Devils Are Here –McLean / Nocera

The Great American Stickup –Robert Scheer

Crisis Economics–Nouriel Roubini

Fault Lines –Raghuram Rajan

Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life –Nicholas Phillipson

Ratification –Pauline Maier

Bloodlands –Timothy Snyder

The World According To Monsanto –Marie-Monique Robin

Hopes & Prospects –Noam Chomsky

The Last Utopia: Human Rights In History –Samuel Moyn

What Technology Wants –Kevin Kelly

Death of the Liberal Class –Chris Hedges

War –Sebastian Junger

Quantum –Manjit Kumar

The Grand Design –Stephen Hawking, Leonard Mlodinow

The Warmth of Other Suns –Isabel Wilkerson

The Balfour Declaration –Jonathan Schneer

Where Good Ideas Come From –StevenJohnson

Magic & Mayhem–Derek Leebaert

The Irony of Manifest Destiny –William Pfaff

The American Way of War –Tom Engelhardt

A Companion To Marx’s Capital –David Harvey



The Long Divergence –Timur Kuran

The Death & Life of American Journalism –McChesney / Nichols

Science Is Culture –ed. Adam Bly

The Master Switch–Tim Wu

Manipulating Democracy: Democratic Theory, Poli Psych & Mass Media

Zombie Politics & Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism –Henry Giroux

The End of the Free Market –Ian Bremmer

From Eternity To Here –Sean Carroll

Eaarth –Bill Mckibben

Zombie Economics –John Quiggin

Washington: A Life –Ron Chernow

The Fiery Trial –Eric Foner

Colonel Roosevelt –Edmund Morris

Revolutionaries –Jack Rakove

Self Comes To Mind –Antonio Damasio

How To Live: Or A Life of Montaigne –Sarah Bakewell

The Marketplace of Ideas –Louis Menand

Toward A Truly Free Market –John C. Medaille

You Are Not A Gadget –Jaron Lanier

Every Man In This Village Is A Liar –Megan K. Stack

Galileo –John Heilbron

Prophets Of War –William D. Hartung

Irrational Security –Daniel Wirls



...are other notable books from 2010. The Big Short by Michael Lewis, Cleopatra by Stacy Schiff, Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand, and The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot were interesting books that ended up being gigantic mega-sellers.

Having listed 72 noteworthy books from 2010 alone, it becomes apparent that—each year—there are many good books from which to choose. Tragically, most Americans choose either not to read good books, or—when they do choose to read something—end up picking pulp trash (“enticing reads” that are amusing or provocative, yet ultimately un-edifying). Such publications sometimes do more harm than good.

Note that, for 2010, only the last four books mentioned here were blockbusters; none of the 72 listed ended up being huge sellers. Meanwhile, the vast majority of 2010’s best sellers were—it is no exaggeration to say—pulp trash. What does this tell us about American reading habits?

It is surprising that more time isn’t spent (by society’s most erudite) compiling lists of worthwhile publications. If they were to do so, the rest of us could become more aware—when we have some time to devote to a full book—what our “reading time” is best spent on. Such a listing would seem to be one of the most fundamental resources for which the web could be used. Beyond these 72 titles, there are undoubtedly a few more books from the past year that are worthwhile—depending on one’s personal interests. However, if one were to survey, say, the 100 best-sellers of 2010, as with most other years, one would find that the vast majority are—to be blunt—garbage. The gargantuan amount of horrible books published each year should not make us forget the few GREAT books that are published. The sparse gems stand out all the more due to the mountains of trash-pulp on offer.

Alas, bookstores are filled with pulp published for the sole purpose of making money. Most imprints’ only standard for publication is the maximization of sales, not the credence of the work. (The right-wing political pundit industry, for example, is perhaps the most lucrative segment of book publishing.) Catering to the LCD seems to be the primary factor contributing to a book’s success. This does not bode well for the edification of the general public.

SUMMING UP THE DECADE



It is interesting to note that of the 100 “Top 10” books listed above, only two made its year’s **Top 10 Bestseller** list: The God Delusion was #7 in 2006 and God Is Not Great was #10 in 2007. The End of Faith and The Black Swan eventually went on to become huge hits. Hegemony or Survival, Fast Food Nation, The Black Swan, and Nickel & Dimed were also relatively big hits as time went on. The Shock Doctrine, What’s The Matter With Kansas? The Lords of Finance, Theodore Rex, The Looming Tower, Legacy of Ashes, and The Forever War eventually became moderately popular due to critical acclaim. Two of the “Honorable Mentions” were among their years’ top sellers: John Adams in 2001 and Team of Rivals in 2005.

16 Notable Books from 2000:

Founding Brothers –Joseph Ellis

Time, Love, Memory –Jonathan Weiner

Shrub –Molly Ivans

Rogue States –Noam Chomsky

A New Generation Draws the Line –Noam Chomsky

When Genius Failed –Roger Lowenstein

Arguments & Icons –Harvey Whitehouse

Blowback –Chalmers Johnson

Sovereign Virtue –Ronald Dworkin

Taliban –Ahmed Rashid

The Elegant Universe –Brian Greene

One Market Under God –Thomas Frank

W.E.B. Du Bois –David Levering Lewis

From Dawn To Decadence –Jacques Barzun

Meritocracy & Economic Inequality –Kenneth Arrow

Bowling Alone –Robert Putnam



Following are other notable books that didn't quite make the cut during the first decade:

2001:

The Universe In A Nutshell -Stephan Hawking

Propaganda & The Public Mind -Noam Chomsky

Copyrights & Copywrongs -Siva Vaidhayanathan

The Divine Right of Capital -Marjorie Kelly

Wittgenstein's Poker -Edmonds / Eidenow

Ethics -Spinoza, The Wordsworth edition

Carry Me Home -Diane McWhorter

Resource Wars -Michael T. Klare

Republic.com -Cass Sunstein

War In A Time of Peace -David Halberstam

2002:

James Madison -Garry Wills

Why Orwell Matters -Christopher Hitchens

American Law in the 20th Century / Law In America

-Lawrence M. Friedman

Nexus -Mark Buchanan

When Smoke Ran Like Water -Devra Davis

Seeing In The Dark -Timothy Ferris

Pirates & Emperors, Old & New (02 ed.) -Noam Chomsky

Power & Terror -Noam Chomsky



The Scientists –John Gribbon

Paris 1919 –Margaret MacMillan

The Oligarchs –David E. Hoffman

The Best Democracy Money Can Buy –Greg Palast

2003:

The Future of Life –E.O. Wilson

Linked –Albert-Laszlo Barabasi

Gulag: A History –Anne Applebaum

Chomsky & His Critics

Noam Chomsky: The Generative Enterprise Revisited (03 ed.) –ed. Gruyter

The Imperial Tense –ed. Bacevich

A Brief History of Nearly Everything –Bill Bryson

Objectivity & Liberal Scholarship (03 ed.) –Noam Chomsky

Big Lies –Joe Conason

The Roaring 90's –Joseph Stiglitz

Khrushchev: The Man & His Era –William Taubman

2004:

Collapse –Jared Diamond

The 9-11 Commission Report

The President of Good & Evil –Peter Singer

Rise of the Vulcans –James Mann

The Wisdom of Crowds –James Surowiecki

Confessions From An Economic Hit Man –John Perkins



A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness –V.S. Ramachandran

Parallel Worlds –Michio Kaku

Einstein's Cosmos –Michio Kaku

The Limits To Growth: A 30 Year Update –Meadows

The Politics of Truth –Joe Wilson

America Right Or Wrong –Anatol Lieven

Imperial America –Gore Vidal

A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples –Ilan Pappé

Al Qaeda –Jason Burke

Pathologies of Power –Paul Farmer

Growing Public (vol. I & II) –Peter H. Lindert

Growth Fetish –Clive Hamilton

How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the World –Francis Wheen

2005:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Restless Genius –Leo Damrosch

The World Is Flat –Thomas Friedman

1776 –David McCullough

Imperial Ambitions –Noam Chomsky

Deep Simplicity –John Gribbin

Inner Presence: Consciousness as a Bio. Phen. –Antti Revonsuo

The Modern Middle East –Ilan Pappé

Why Social Justice Matters –Brian Barry

A World Without Time –Palle Yourgrau



Taming American Power –Stephen Walt

2006:

Taking Ourselves Seriously & Getting It Right –Harry Frankfurt

American Theocracy –Kevin Phillips

Code & Other Laws of Cyberspace, Version 2.0 –Lawrence Lessig

Who Controls The Internet? –Goldsmith / Wu

Sailing From Byzantium –Colin Wells

Why Darwin Matters –Michael Shermer

Perilous Power –Noam Chomsky

The Creation –E.O. Wilson

Making Globalization Work –Joseph Stiglitz

Capitalism 3.0 –Peter Barnes

The Wealth of Networks –Yochai Benkler

The Conservative Nanny State –Dean Baker

Convergence Culture –Henry Jenkins

2007:

The New Golden Age –Ravi Batra

The Squandering Of America –Robert Kuttner

Interventions –Noam Chomsky

The Brain That Changes Itself –Norman Doidge

1967: Israel, The War, & The Year that Trans. the Middle East –Tom Segev

The Bottom Billion –Paul Collier

The Long War –Andrew Bacevich



Journals: 1952-2000 –Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Overtreated –Shannon Brownlee

The Revenge of Gaia –James Lovelock

Unruly Americans & The Origins of the Constitution –Woody Holton

The Trillion Dollar Meltdown –Charles Morris

2008:

The Future of the Internet—And How To Stop It –Jonathan Zittrain

The Great Derangement –Matt Taibbi

Angler –Barton Gellman

This Land Is Their Land –Barbara Ehrenreich

The Essential Chomsky

The Wrecking Crew –Thomas Frank

The Predator State –James Galbraith

Descent Into Chaos –Ahmed Rashid

Outliers –Malcolm Gladwell

The Holocaust Is Over; We Must Rise From Its Ashes –Avraham Burg

The Return of Depression Economics –Paul Krugman

The Search For Al Qaeda –Bruce Riedel

Human –Michael Gazzaniga

Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet –Michael T. Klare

The Symmetries of Things –Conway, Burgiel, Goodman-Strauss

A History of The Modern Middle East (4th Edition) –William Cleveland

This Republic of Suffering –Drew Gilpin Faust



Palestine Inside Out –Saree Makdisi

Capitalism Hits the Fan –Richard Wolff

The Liberal Hour –Robert Weisbrot

The Age of The Warrior –Robert Fisk

The Secular Conscience –Austin Dacey

Freedom & Resentment & Other Essays –P.F. Strawson

2009:

The Age of Wonder –Richard Holmes

Physics Of The Impossible –Michio Kaku

Power Rules –Leslie Gelb

The Arabs –Eugene Rogan

The Good Soldiers –David Finkel

The Ego Tunnel –Thomas Metzinger

Field Notes On Democracy –Arundhati Roy

Inequality & The Global Economic Crisis –Douglas Dowd

Bright-Sided –Barbara Ehrenreich

Breaking The Sound Barrier –Amy Goodman

Empire of Illusion –Chris Hedges

Republican Gomorrah –Max Blumenthal

Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do? –Michael J. Sandel

The Nature of Technology –W. Brian Arthur

Judaism Does Not Equal Israel –Marc H. Ellis

How We Decide –Jonah Lehrer



Half The Sky –Kristof / WuDunn

Woodrow Wilson: A Biography –John Milton Cooper

Keynes: The Rise, Fall, and Return of the 20th Century's Most Influential Economist
–Peter Clarke

This Time It's Different –Kenneth Rogoff

Predictably Irrational –Dan Ariely

...as well as some worthwhile books by Martha Nussbaum, Bill Bryson, various investigative journalists, and renown scholars.

NOTE: Not counted are political pundit books—if for no other reason that they're not works of scholarship so much as exercises in polemic. Polemic can be important as a didactic tool, but seems not to be appropriate for the present project. Books like *Armed Madhouse* by Greg Palast, *It Could Happen Here* by Joe Conason, and *The Mendacity of Hope* by Roger Hodge are interesting reads, but are more rants than edifying treatises. Mere polemic (e.g. political punditry from the those like Al Franken and Michael Moore) is not timeless, is not scholarly, and generally only serves as an echo chamber—preaching to the choir. Though interesting, these are not important books.

One can engage in an interesting thought experiment if one hypothesizes what our society would be like—and how vastly different our public discourse would look—if the books mentioned for each year were the best-selling books of that year. Imagine, for a moment, that THESE were the 10 books “everyone was reading” for year X.

Furthermore, we could speculate: If those listed above were the most widely-read books while people stopped reading pulp trash altogether. How drastically improved would our society be? It's safe to say that a well-informed, more discerning electorate would yield a vastly different social order than we now experience.

A participatory, deliberative democracy (i.e. a genuine, functioning democratic society) is predicated on a well-educated citizenry—something we do not currently have. Not by a long shot. (One need only survey the pulp trash that currently clogs the displays at the front of the nation's bookstores...or peek at the week's best-seller lists...to note this disconcerting fact.) Many of the important things people

could learn by reading any of the hundreds of books listed HERE are simply things most people across the country currently don't know. Our society has suffered as a consequence of this short-coming.

A well-educated citizenry is, in part, based on a culture where edification and scholarship are valued and recognized (i.e. where reading great books is a way of life). Alas, in the current pop culture, people tend not to read great books—if / when they read books at all. The publications that sell the most tend to be alluring pulp trash—fodder designed for mass-market appeal and provocation. Many of these super-sellers are based on gimmicks (notably, “self-help”, tabloid fodder, and dogma-peddling).

There seems to be a catch-22 entailed here. At the same time that if more people read the MIBY books our society would be much better educated, if our society were much better educated more people would read the MIBY books. There is, indeed, a symbiosis involved. But which comes first, the chicken or the egg?

Perhaps if more time was spent compiling lists like this, the current trends could change. After all, there seems to be no means by which the intellectually curious layman can ascertain which books are most worth his time. That's why Mason Scott offers the MIBYs.

If more people read these books (and took something important away from the experience), the world would surely be a much better place. (Meanwhile, if one has not yet read many of these great works, it is safe to say that one is courting ignorance.) For those who are more ambitious, reading at least the top five MIBYs from each year is highly recommended. Degree of erudition regarding contemporary issues is influenced—in part—by how many MIBYs one has read.

We can hope that—for the next decade—the (objectively) most important books of the year turn out to be the most-read books of each year. The better educated the general populace is, the better our society will become. Reading worthy books—while not wasting any of one's time on pulp trash—is a key part of that process.