

History and Cultures

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Ahmad, Dohra, ed. *Rotten English: A Literary Anthology*. 2007. W.W. Norton.

Language is power and for the dizzying array of writers collected here, displaying an authentic voice is a means to reclaim what has been stolen, oppressed, or colonized. *Rotten English* collects the poetry, essays, short stories, and novels of the best in global vernacular writing from Mark Twain to Junot Diaz.

Alexie , Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. 2007. Little, Brown.

Arnold Spirit, aka Junior, was born an outsider with water on his brain, lopsided eyes, and an IQ oppressed by extreme poverty and a mediocre reservation education. After switching to an all-white high school he realizes that though he'll never easily fit in, self-determination and a solid personal identity will give him the chance to both succeed and transcend.

Bagdasarian , Adam. *Forgotten Fire: A Novel*. 2002. Random House/Laurel Leaf.

"Who will remember the Armenians?" Hitler asked, referencing the Armenian genocide as his inspiration for the final solution. This brutal hidden chapter of history is seen through the eyes of 12-year-old survivor Vahan Kendarian, whose world was shattered within a matter of days.

Chandrasekaran , Rajiv. *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*. 2007. Knopf/Vintage.

A journalist explores the pristine "Emerald City," the American government's enclave in the middle of war-torn Baghdad.

Chang, Iris. *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*. 1998. Penguin.

Barely a postscript in official Japanese history, the horrific torture and murder of hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens took place over the course of just seven weeks.

Chotjewitz , David. Doris Orgel (Translator). *Daniel Half-Human: And the Good Nazi*. 2004. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum.

From Hitler Youth to hunted "mischling," Daniel's world unravels when he discovers his mother's hidden history "taints" him with Jewish blood and marks him for extermination.

Delisle , Guy. *Pyongyang : A Journey in North Korea*. 2007. Drawn and Quarterly.

The secretive world of Communist North Korea remains a mystery to French-Canadian cartoonist Delisle, even after spending two months inside its borders.

Diamond, Jared. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. 2005. Penguin.

What do the lack of Icelandic fisherman, the 2008 Chinese Olympics, and Easter Island tree cutters all have in common? Much more than you might think. *Collapse* explores the political, technological, and ecological decisions which merge in order to sustain or destroy societies.

Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. 2007. Penguin/Riverhead.

"Ghetto nerd," outcast, and anime-loving Oscar Wao is the latest in a long line of doomed generations to suffer the dreaded fuku curse of his native Dominican Republic. With humor and talent as his weapons, he perseveres, knowing "you can never run away. Not ever. The only way out is in."

Egan, Timothy. *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*. 2005. Houghton Mifflin.

Award winning *New York Times* reporter Egan tackles the great dust bowl phenomenon of the 1930's and 40's in this multi-tiered account. He shares incredible eye-witness accounts as well as the overwhelming convergences of failed agricultural practices, ill-fated government policies, and the costs of "get rich quick" schemes.

Eggers, Dave. *What is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng: A Novel*. 2007.

Knopf/Vintage.

As a young boy Valentino witnessed Arab militia men destroy his village, hid from hungry lions, wandered through wasted, desert landscapes, and narrowly escaped fatal disease, capture, starvation, and enlistment. The will to survive displayed here is almost as miraculous as this Sudanese "Lost Boy's" ability to recount the harrowing genocide of home and people with such thoughtfulness and grace.

Fadiman, Anne. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. 1998. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

A Hmong refugee family in California clashes with the American medical system when they attribute their daughter's grand mal seizures to a spiritual rather than physical problem.

Fleming, Anne Marie. *The Magical Life of Long Tack Sam*. 2007. Penguin/Riverhead.

In his day, Long Tack Sam was an acrobat, a magician, an entrepreneur, a world traveler, a celebrity, a father, a ladies man, and a husband. This graphic collage biography pairs narrative writing, handbills, photographs, and news clippings along with interviews, comics, and commentary to convey the inevitable effects of cultural shifts and global politics on individual lives.

Jones, Edward P. *The Known World*. 2003. HarperCollins/Amistad.

In this Pulitzer Prize winning novel Jones approaches a little explored chapter in antebellum history, that of African American slave owners. Set several decades before the beginning of the Civil War, this title skillfully weaves plot, time, and perspective amongst a diverse and powerful cast of characters in order to explore the moral complexities inherent to human freedom (or the lack thereof).

Horwitz, Tony. *A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World*. 2008. Henry Holt.

Pulitzer prizing winning journalist Horwitz uses humor and candor to literally follow in the footsteps of the first American explorers—from the Vikings and French utopians to America's first African-American trailblazer—whose discoveries took place hundreds of years *before* the mythical landing on Plymouth Rock.

Larson, Erik. *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*. 2004. Knopf/Vintage.

The 1893 Chicago World's Fair captured the imagination of the whole world, and also provided a playground for a cunning serial killer.

Maltman, Thomas. *The Night Birds: A Novel*. 2008. Soho Press.

Three generations of settlers and native Dakota weave a dark tale of family secrets and brutal injustice in Civil War era America.

Roberts, Gene and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation.* 2007. Knopf/Vintage.

When Harry Reasoner thrust a microphone at an angry mob, and yelled "I don't care what you're going to do to me, but the whole world is going to know it!" he spoke for all the reporters and photographers, black and white, north and south, who played a critical role in bringing the reality of the Civil Rights movement into the living rooms and consciousness of the American public.

Saenz, Benjamin Alire. *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood.* 2004. Cinco Puntos Press.

This Hollywood is a barrio in 1968 New Mexico, where the students at Las Cruces High School struggle through heartbreak, loss, and an entrenched racial divide to find their place in the world.

Satrapı , Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis.* 2007. Knopf/Pantheon.

Marjane Satrapı's memoir of her childhood in Iran during the Islamic Revolution is beautifully rendered in this graphic novel series.

Spiegelman , Art. *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale.* 1996. Knopf/Pantheon.

A man struggles to come to terms with his parents' brutal past at Auschwitz in this seminal graphic novel.

Ung , Loung . *First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers.* 2006. HarperCollins.

The perils of life under the brutal Pol Pot regime change a young woman's life forever, as she and her family find themselves fugitives of war, without even their names to remind them of what they lost.

Weiner, Tim. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA.* 2008. Knopf/Anchor.

With considerable research and extensive interviews, Tim Weinershowsthe grave miscalculations that have plagued the Central Intelligence Agency since its inception.

Williams, David. *Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War.* 2008. The New Press.

The Civil War was lost long before the first shot was ever fired, thanks to deep and violent divisions of class and political allegiance that resulted in "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight."

Wolf, Allan. *New Found Land: Lewis and Clark's Voyage of Discovery.* 2007. Candlewick.

The epic journey of Lewis and Clark comes alive as each member of the expedition tells an intimately personal story of struggle and discovery in this sweeping poetic rendition.