

Do You Think There's a Truth Here?

Using Great Literature to Explore Your World

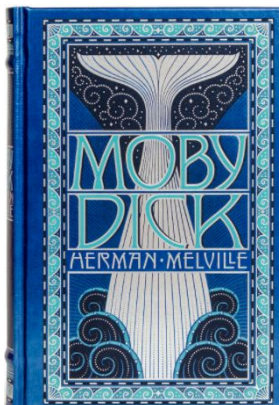
(An exercise to be done weekly as a thinking starter)

PASSAGE #1

There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own. However, nothing dispirits, and nothing seems worth while disputing. He bolts down all events, all creeds, and beliefs, and persuasions, all hard things visible and invisible, never mind how knobby; as an ostrich of potent digestion gobbles down bullets and gun flints. And as for small difficulties and worryings, prospects of sudden disaster, peril of life and limb; all these, and death itself, seem to him only sly, good-natured hits, and jolly punches in the side bestowed by the unseen and unaccountable old joker. That odd sort of wayward mood I am speaking of, comes over a man only in some time of extreme tribulation; it comes in the very midst of his earnestness, so that what just before might have seemed to him a thing most momentous, now seems but a part of the general joke.

-- Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, Opening to Ch. 49)

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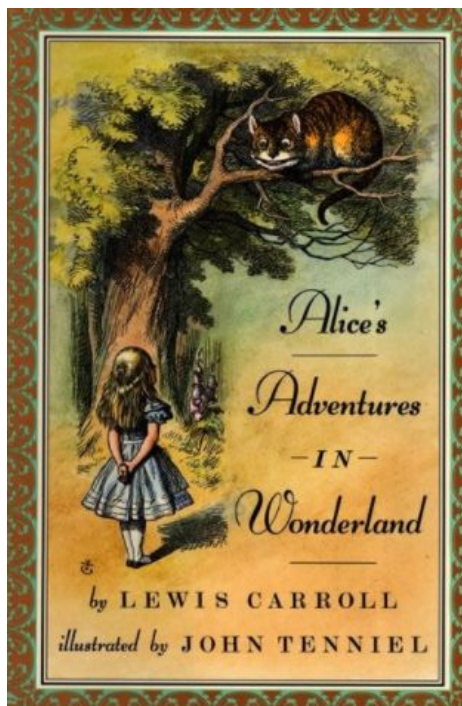
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PASSAGE #2

“Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

--Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

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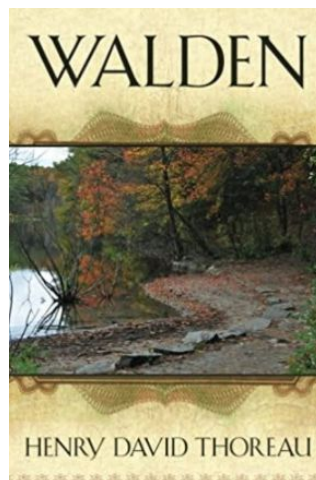
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Passage #3

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.

--Henry David Thoreau, Walden

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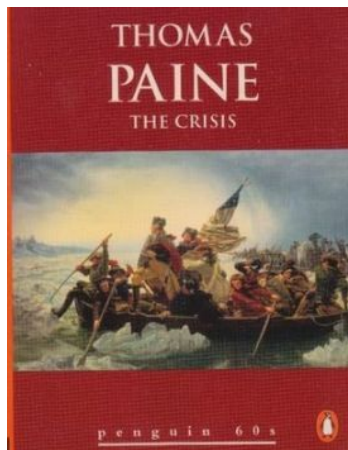
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PASSAGE #4

THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value.

--Thomas Paine, *The Crises*

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PASSAGE #5

"I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in a circus sideshow, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me."

-- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

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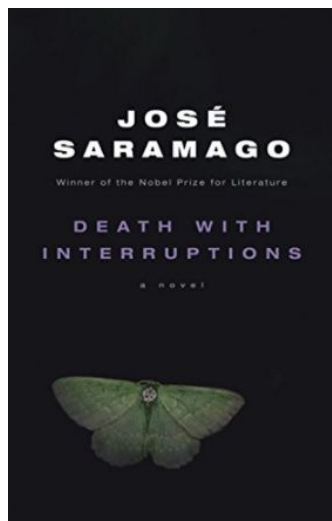
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PASSAGE #6

“That's how life is, what it gives with one hand one day, it takes away with the other.”

-- Jose Saramago, *Death with Interruptions*

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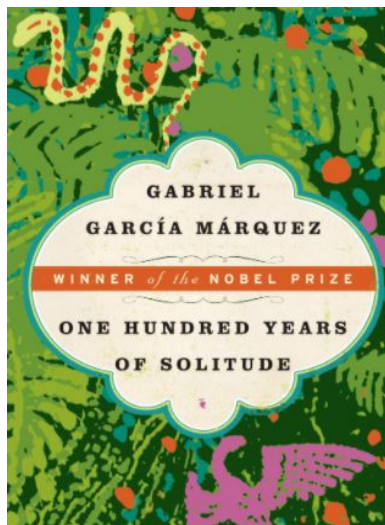
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PASSAGE #7

"In all the houses keys to memorizing objects and feelings had been written. But the system demanded so much vigilance and moral strength that many succumbed to the spell of an imaginary reality, one invented by themselves, which was less practical for them but more comforting."

--Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

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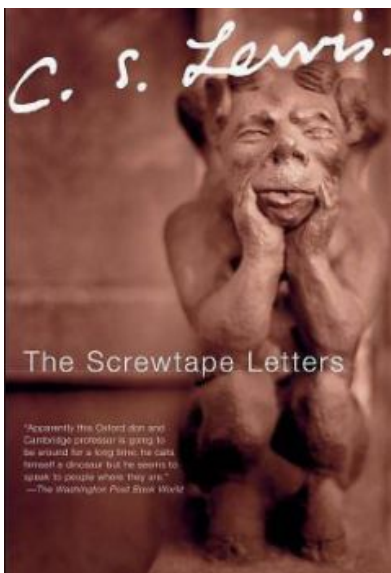
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PASSAGE #8

"The future is something which everyone reaches at the rate of sixty minutes an hour, whatever he does, whoever he is."

--C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

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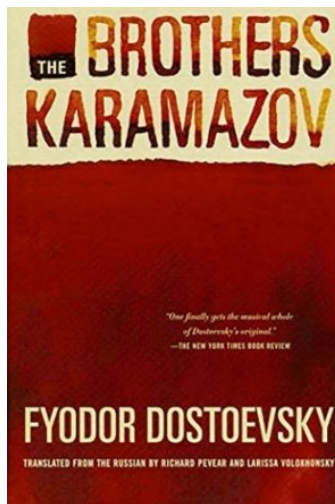
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PASSAGE #9

“Above all, don't lie to yourself. The man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point that he cannot distinguish the truth within him, or around him, and so loses all respect for himself and for others. And having no respect he ceases to love.”

--Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

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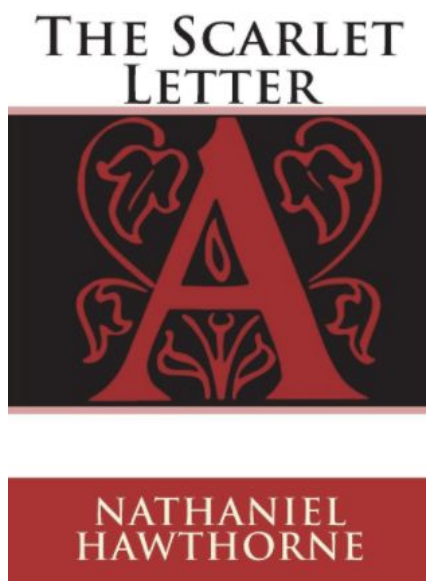
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PASSAGE #10

"No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true."

--Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

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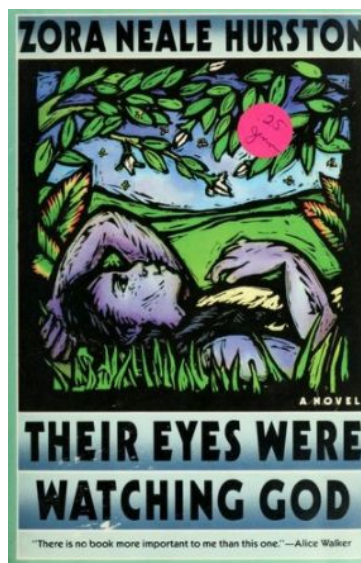
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PASSAGE #11

“In the cool afternoon the fiend from hell specifically sent to lovers arrived at Janie’s ear. Doubt.”

--Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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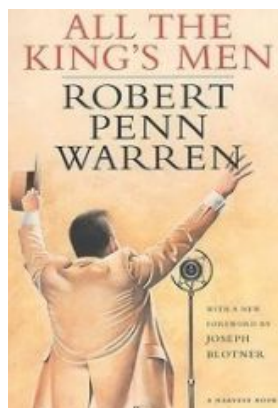
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PASSAGE #12

“There is nothing more alone than being in a car at night in the rain. I was in the car. And I was glad of it. Between one point on the map and another point on the map, there was the being alone in the car in the rain. They say you are not you except in terms of relation to other people. If there weren't any other people there wouldn't be any you because what you do which is what you are, only has meaning in relation to other people. That is a very comforting thought when you are in the car in the rain at night alone, for then you aren't you, and not being you or anything, you can really lie back and get some rest.

**--Robert Penn Warren,
*All the King's Men***

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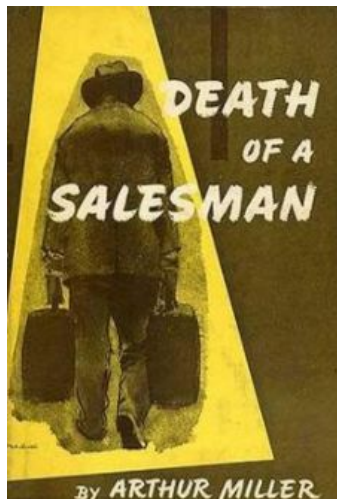
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PASSAGE #13

"It's a measly manner of existence. To get on that subway on the hot mornings in summer. To devote your whole life to keeping stock, or making phone calls, or selling or buying. To suffer fifty weeks of the year for a two week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors, with your shirt off. And still-that's how you build a future."

**--Arthur Miller,
*Death of a Salesman***

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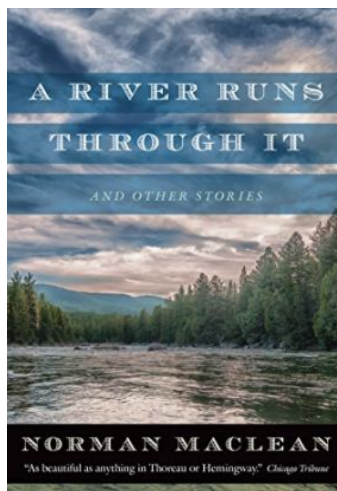
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PASSAGE #14

“My father was very sure about certain matters pertaining to the universe. To him, all good things—trout as well as eternal salvation—come by grace and grace comes by art and art does not come easy.”

**-- Norman Maclean,
*A River Runs Through It***

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PASSAGE #15

"All children have to be deceived if they are to grow up without trauma."

***-- Kazuo Ishiguro,
Never Let Me Go***

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