

DEMOCRACY & CITIZENSHIP SECONDARY FICTION READING LIST



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Anderson, Charles D. (2006). *All around the mulberry bush*. Toronto, ON: Borealis Press.

ISBN: 0888873069

ISBN: 9780888873064

“In the political backwater of East River, New Brunswick, news that Jerome Ryerson has called an election to secure his second mandate comes as a shock. Ryerson assumed the leadership of the Liberal Party, and became Prime Minister, following the assassination of Pierre Trudeau. The Tory incumbent, Bob Bastian, a painful burr in the Liberal saddle, is expected to run and win again, and the local Liberal riding association is having trouble finding anyone to run against him. Barry MacCrae, an ex-radio announcer with the endorsement of his mentor, the Minister of Public Works, and tenuous ties to the area, is presented as the Liberal saviour. He easily wins the nomination, and with the support of a disparate collection of volunteers victory appears to be in sight. As the campaign unfolds, the Liberals who have been thrown together in the crucible of an emotionally charged election campaign discover what’s important to each of them, and to others, and to their community.” (From the publisher)

Antonaya, Marisa (Ed.). (2004). *Living Rights: Articles 1-10 v. 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Stories and Poems*. Flame Books.

ISBN-13: 978-0954594534

“This anthology, as the title says, puts together a collection of fiction from around the world on the broad theme of human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of 10 December 1948. In what is presumably the first volume of a trilogy--Living Rights deals with the first 10 of the Declaration’s 30 articles--a dozen authors respond creatively to the questions of equality and freedom. Of course, the world being as it is, the focus in these pieces is often on repression and the denial of rights. As Marisa Antonaya says in her thoughtful introduction: We state that the pen is mightier than the sword, and then notice the blade pressed against the writer’s neck. Operating as shouts of outrage are such pieces as Dream Robbers --Freda Churches poem about compulsory medication--and Nathan Witcher’s excellent Break Away Country dealing with Australia’s inhuman treatment of asylum seekers. But there is celebration as well as anger and several writers, far from being weighed down by their philosophical brief, have adroitly melded the intimate moment with the global development. Outstanding is Helen Moore’s The Story-Makers which tackles, with the lightest of touches, the weighty issue of the economic and cultural legacy of colonialism. Each story and poem is, in its own way, a testament to our capacity to endure, to bear witness and to prevail. Living Rights is a lively contribution to the ongoing struggle to transform human rights from words on a page to the flesh and blood of everyday life.” (New Internationalist, September, 2004).

Doe, Jean. (1997). *Party favours: a novel*. Toronto, ON: Harper Collins.
ISBN: 0002245620

“A new liberal government under the leadership of Bobby Laurier has just been elected, signaling the end of a decade of Tory rule, and an ambitious but naïve young journalist is about to receive a political education.” (From the publisher) (Contains mature subject matter, teacher/reader discretion is advised.)

Duncan, Sara Jeannette. (1904, 2008). *The Imperialist*. Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart
ISBN: 978-077-109629-7

“Sara Jeannette Duncan's classic portrait of a turn-of-the-century Ontario town, *The Imperialist* captures the spirit of an emergent nation through the example of two young dreamers. Impassioned by "the Imperialist idea," Lorne Murchison rests his bid for office on his vision of a rejuvenated British Empire. His sister Advena betrays a kindred attraction to the high-flown ideals in her love for an unworldly, and unavailable, young minister. Nimbly alternating between politics and romance, Duncan constructs a superbly ironic object-lesson in the Canadian virtue of compromise. Sympathetic, humorous, and wonderfully detailed, *The Imperialist* is an astute analysis of the paradoxes of Canadian nationhood, as relevant today as when the novel was first published in 1904.” (From the publisher)

Durkin, Douglas. (1923, 1974). *The magpie*. Toronto, ON: Hodder and Stoughton, University of Toronto Press; Reprint Library.

“Provides discourse on political and economic conditions and explores the implications of opposed social philosophies around the time of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919” (John Moss, *A reader's guide to the Canadian novel*, 1987).

Fradkin, Barbara. (2006). *Honour Among Men*. Toronto, ON: Napoleon.
ISBN: 18949117367
ISBN: 978189491360

“The fifth book in the Inspector Green series finds Green eager to get back into the day-to-day fray of policing after doing administrative work in the office. He gets his chance when an unidentified woman is drowned in the Ottawa River. The investigation leads to Nova Scotia, where he learns the woman was witness to her fiancé's killing in a bar 10 years earlier. As Green and his team dig deeper into the military past, one of his female detectives is brutally beaten and may die. Green finds himself sucked not only into the murky past of a peacekeeping unit, but into the high-stakes present of a federal election race.” (From the publisher) Contains mature subject matter, teacher/reader discretion is advised.

Fallis, Terry. (2007). *The best laid plans: A novel*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.
ISBN: 9780595428724
ISBN: 9780595685356
ISBN: 9780595872114

“A burnt-out political aide quits just before an election but is forced to run a hopeless campaign on the way out. He makes a deal with an engineering professor to let his name stand in the election. No need to campaign, certain to lose, and so on. Then a great scandal blows away his opponent, and to their horror, the professor is elected. He decides to see what good an honest M.P. who doesn’t care about being re-elected can do in Parliament. The results are humorous.”
(From the publisher)

Gardiner, Scott. (2007). *King John of Canada*. Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart.
ISBN: 9780771033094
ISBN: 0771035756
ISBN: 9780771035753

“This is a funny, biting political satire set in the not-too-distant future. A series of minority governments, and endless Quebec referendums have left Canada almost ungovernable. When the Governor General resigns in disgrace and the House of Windsor implodes in London, a media baron launches the idea of a Canadian king or queen elected by lottery. It starts as a joke – except the lucky winner, King John, a bright charismatic guy from Toronto, knows exactly what people want. His popularity soars and Canadian morale soars with it. Soon the rest of the world is taking noticed of this model leader. In the United States, the blue states look enviously northward. Then Canada’s king, ignoring assassination threats, goes on a formal visit to Washington...” (From the publisher)

Heide, Lee. (1998). *The Avro Arrow affair*. Toronto, ON: Lugas.
ISBN: 1896266886

“The story is set against the tense background of the Cold War that demarked the Soviet Bloc countries from the USA and its Allies. It makes vividly real the effects of the cancellation of the multi-million dollar project by the then Prime Minister John Diefenbaker Government.” (From the publisher)

Johnston, Wayne. (1998). *The colony of unrequited dreams*. Toronto, ON: Knopf Canada.
ISBN: 0676971822
ISBN: 9780676971828

“Wayne Johnston combines brilliant storytelling with unforgettable description, and gives us two of the most memorable characters in Canadian fiction: Joe Smallwood, who claws his way from obscurity to become Newfoundland’s first premier; and Sheilagh Fielding, a popular newspaper columnist and gifted satirist who casts a haunting shadow over Smallwood’s life and career. A

mystery and a love story spanning five decades.” (From the publisher). Winner of the 1999 Canadian Authors Award for Fiction; Shortlisted for the 1998 Giller Prize, the Governor General’s Award for Fiction, and Rogers Communication Writers Trust Prize; One of the Globe and Mail’s top 100 notable books of 1998; and Critics Pick one of the year’s top ten books; A Maclean’s Choice for the Best Fiction from Fall, 1998.

Kroetsch, Robert (2000). *The words of my roaring*. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press.
ISBN: 0770100309
ISBN: 9780770100308

“I was electioneering. By God, people were listening. People were looking my way. And some joker with his arse beginning to ache from sitting too long on a nail had to clear his throat and chip, “Backstrom, what have you got to offer?” I looked at the speaker and saw he was a farmer and said, “Mister, how would you like some rain?” (From the publisher.)

LaMarsh, Judy. (1979). *A very political lady: a novel*. Toronto, ON: McClelland.

“A novel about politicians, their wives, husbands, and lovers. A sex scandal shocks the nation’s capital...Cabinet conflict erupts in two hasty dismissals...The Prime Minister comes under fire within his own party. A three way race for power is under say.” (From the publisher.) “The public settings in this novel are real, and actual procedures of the Canadian parliamentary system have been followed. The characters are not real.” (From the preface.)

MacSkimming, Roy. (2007). *MacDonald: A novel*. Toronto, ON: Thomas Allen Publishers.
ISBN: 9780887623059

“In the grand literary tradition of Gore Vidal’s novels about American political history, Roy MacSkimming has conjured an extraordinary novelistic recreation of the last days of Canada’s indomitable first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Narrated by his private secretary, Joseph Pope, Macdonald opens with stirring scenes of Sir John fighting his last great election battle on issues that uncannily echo our national concerns today. Convincingly grounded in the political and personal passions of the day.” (From the publisher)

Matas, Carol. (1991). *The race*. Toronto, ON: Harper Collins
ISBN: 0002237431

“Set at a Liberal leadership convention. *The Race* is an engaging young adult narrative that artfully combines the stories of a questioning adolescent and the elaborate political process of a leadership race...*The Race* offers short descriptive passages explaining the whole process of the leadership struggle. The opposition party’s role, for example is to “criticize the government, point out their mistakes and suggest a better way of doing things.” Even such issues as image creation, dirty play, media coverage and bias, and the importance of “winning Quebec” are discussed. Definitely recommended. (Reviewed by Gordon Heasley, *CM: Canadian Review of Materials*, May, 1992, Volume 20, No. 3).

McClung, Nellie L. (1921, 1992). *Purple springs*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
ISBN: 0802059244 (cloth)
ISBN: 0802068642 (paper)

“Purple Springs fictionally extends many of the arguments made by McClung in *In Times Like These* regarding ‘male statecraft,’ graphically illustrating the consequences through her characters. McClung weaves together these social critiques in a tale of love, vocation, and coming-of-age, which sees Pearl, as a prototypical McClung, take on the corrupt Conservative government of Manitoba – and win. Purple Springs explores an important piece of Canadian social history. It invites its readers to enter imaginatively an earlier age when women were second-class citizens in law as well as custom, and gives at least one woman’s view of what needed to be done to right that injustice.” (From the publisher)

McFarlane, Leslie (aka Franklin W. Dixon). (1965, 1974). *The last of the great picnics*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.

“McFarlane describes life on a family farm in the Ottawa Valley and relates events of one particular day, July first, 1887. At the Dominion Day celebrations in Perth the characters encounter the venerable Sir John A. MacDonald who recalls the great picnics of the past, which he credits with restoring him to office in 1876.” (John Moss, *A reader’s guide to the Canadian novel*, 1987.)

McIntyre, Sandra (Ed.), *Everything is so political: A collection of short fiction by Canadian writers*. (2013). Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishers.

“The stories within *Everything Is So Political* explore the intersection between politics and the contemporary short story. From the overt to the subtle, this collection tackles a broad range of topics and themes, from women’s rights and Aboriginal culture to environmentalism, terrorism and totalitarianism. This is one of the few Canadian anthologies that focuses on political fiction, and it does so in a very powerful and artful way, flying in the face of readers, writers and critics alike who claim that writing with a political agenda occurs at the expense of literary quality. Consisting of twenty short stories, this collection is proof that it is increasingly difficult, even impossible, for fiction not to be political. But make no mistake, the stories in this anthology are stories first: stories that are meant to be read, shared and enjoyed, but stories that will make you see things differently and question the world around you.” (From the publisher)

Everything Is So Political is a mixed bag of short stories, some marvelous, some forgettable. Reading it is like walking the halls in that first week of university, when you’re bombarded with appeals, from the embarrassingly earnest to the slyly humorous to the downright clever, to join this club or that society. The collection asserts that the political is unavoidable, and its editor, Sandra McIntyre, acknowledges that the title is both a statement of the obvious and a complaint. “Why is everything so political?” Blame George Orwell. Say “political literature” and you immediately invoke his name, for better or worse. While his literary talent was never doubted, he often suffered criticism because his work was seen as just too “political.” It must have bewildered him that *Animal Farm*, perhaps the most savage piece of satire in English since

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, had been initially rejected by publishers for being too critical of Stalin. Even T. S. Eliot, as far from a Bolshie as you could get, felt the novel was just too negative for a world recovering from the Second World War. It is part of Orwell's genius that *Animal Farm* and *1984* have managed to prick at the political conscience of generations of readers while still being successful "literary" novels. Political fiction is notoriously difficult to write: too often the literary shoe is too small for the ideological foot.

It is the irony of our age, when everything was predicted to be post-ideological, an age that was supposed to be about the Global Village getting even smaller, an age when everything is uploaded and shared and instantly commented on, so that people are no longer passive consumers but "citizen journalists," that there is little in the cultural landscape that can be termed apolitical. When your choice of breakfast cereal, or what car you drive, or which television shows you watch (if you are such a dinosaur that you still have a tv) is a comment on your politics, how can anyone ever hope, as Somerset Maugham did, to simply write "a well-made story"? The good news is that *Everything Is So Political* contains several well-made stories. Some are subtly political, others wear their ideology on their sleeves, and practically every form of politics is explored, in various settings and genres. In J. Paul Cooper's "The King's Nephew," a couple of war widows get medieval on a nobleman. Orwell makes an appearance, by way of time-travel, in Jack Godwin's "Gotcha!," a sci-fi satire on corporate power and political correctness; Michelle Butler Hallett imagines an alternate, non-Canadian Newfoundland in "Lost Wax Casting." R. Jonathan Chapman's "The Extremists" is a miniature play—just one scene, really—examining a peculiar case of political-party strategy. One of the outstanding stories in the collection, "Elephant Air," by Fran Kimmel, examines the topic of animal cruelty in a tender tale of love and loss between father and daughter. The equally powerful "A Year of Coming Home" by A. S. Penne proves what we all know: that the personal is the political.

If everything is political, even when it doesn't want to be, thankfully there are some writers at work here ready to tackle that challenge." (*The Malahat Review*, 184 Autumn 2013.)

Merkley, Ken. (2007). *The raid: A novel*. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing.
ISBN: 1412093090

"Startling evidence is uncovered indicating that a major political party may have used the proceeds from drug sales to pay the membership fees for thousands of new party recruits. Over time, other criminal activities are unearthed, including money laundering, influence-peddling, election rigging and finally, murder." (From the publisher)

Robertson, Heather, (1983). *Willie: a romance: Volume 1 of the King years*. Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Company.
ISBN: 08888626711
ISBN: 9780888626714

"Heather Robinson has made Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's bizarre and paradoxical psyche the mainspring of a historical novel of consummate invention, audacity and

wit. Set against the turbulent background of World War I and Canada's struggle to achieve political maturity, *Willie: A Romance* hurls Mackenzie King into not only a love affair but a love triangle. A unique and absorbing panorama of wartime Canada and wartime Ottawa, official and unofficial, the novel is richly peopled with historical characters: King, Talbot Papineau, Sir Wilfred and Lady Laurier, Lord Beaverbrook, John D. Rockefeller, among other." (From the publisher) *Willie* won the Chapters/Books in Canada Award, and the Canadian Authors Association Award.

Robertson, Heather, (1986). *Lily: a rhapsody in red: Volume 2 of the King years*. James Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Company.

ISBN: 08888629540

ISBN: 9780888629548

"*Lily: A Rhapsody in Red*, second book in the King Years trilogy, is a dazzling comic epic of politics, sex and scandal during the 1920's and '30's. Our guide on the journey is the indomitable Lily Coolican, the former secret bride of Mackenzie King who follows her ne'er-do-well twin brother Jack to the raw mining country of northern Ontario. Jack gets rich; Lily gets Communism. In Ottawa Lily's mum finds her true calling as the psychic architect of Mackenzie King's political triumphs. (From the publisher)

Rohmer, Richard. (1995). *Death by deficit: A 2001 novel*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing. Co. ISBN: 077372902X

"It's late January, 2001, and Canadians have just elected a new government. When the Prime Minister is briefed on the true depth of the country's money problems, he listens in horror as Canada's top civil servant, the Clerk of the Privy Council, describes a financial crises of almost unbelievable proportions." (From the publisher)

"Death by Deficit uncannily captures the atmosphere which dominates the House, the caucus, and the Cabinet when there is a crises." -James Gillies, professor emeritus of policy, York University." (From the book jacket)

Rohmer, Richard. (2003). *A Richard Rohmer omnibus: Ultimatum, Exoneration, Periscope Red*. Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press.

ISBN: 1550024604

"This volume combines three of Richard Rohmer's best-selling novels in one book all are fast-paced, incisive novels in which Rohmer makes fiction read like fact. They are chilling visions of a world of military conflict, legal and political entanglements, and Canada's role in domestic and international spheres. The issues inside are just as important to Canada today as they were when the books were written. In all of these works, Rohmer demonstrates his insider's knowledge of the energy industry and military, and his master storyteller's ability to bring it alive." (From the publisher)

Rohmer, Richard. (2007). *Ultimatum II*. Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press.
ISBN: 1550025848

“An action packed, fast-moving saga. The American president is fed up with the hundreds of millions of dollars given to Russia to clean up high-level nuclear waste. His solution is to give the Russians an ultimatum: do this my way, or else! It is delivered in person by the secretary of state during a secret rendezvous in Norway. A second ultimatum follows from the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom to the government of Canada, after they decide that an international disposal site should be created in Canada. The Canadian prime minister tells their emissary there’s no way Canada will become a nuclear waste dump. The Americans threaten to invade. How the matter is resolved is ingenious.” (From the publisher)

Salutin, Rick. (1995, 2000). *The age of improv*. Toronto, ON: HarperCollins.
ISBN: 0002237474
ISBN: 0006480926
ISBN: 0006480926
ISBN: 9780006480921

“It is the beginning of the 21st century and an election has been called, but the traditional political parties no longer exist. With only a video camera and his gifted ability to improvise, actor Matthew Deans begins his own campaign. What transpires makes *The Age of Improv* a provocative and fascinating novel about the relationship between politics and theatre.” (From the publisher.)

Wiebe, Armin. (1995). *The second coming of Yeeat Shpanst*. Turnstone Press.
ISBN: 0888011970

“Set in the mythical Mennonite village of Gutenthal, *The Second Coming of Yeeat Shpanst* is an operatic political cartoon novel of the struggle for Canada’s soul. When the Prime minister declares it is a dark time for Canada the citizens of Gutenthal decide it is time to save their neighbour from drowning in the waves of referendum questions and corporate troubles.” (From the publisher.)

References

The following databases were consulted to compile this list.

Library and Archives Canada – AMICUS – Canadian National Catalogue
Library of Congress Online Catalog
Academic Search Complete (EBSCO)
Arts and Humanities Citation Index (CSA)
British Humanities Index (CSA)
Canadian Literary Centre (EBSCO)
CBCA Fulltext Education (PQ)
Education: SAGE Full-Text Collection
ERIC (EBSCO)
Humanities Index (Wilson)
IBSS: International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (CSA)
JSTOR
Literature Online (LION)
Military and Government Collection (EBSCO)
MLA International Bibliography (EBSCO)
PAIS International with Archive (CSA)
Periodicals Index Online (PQ)
Philosopher’s Index (CSA)
Project Muse
Social Sciences Index (Wilson)
Teacher Reference (EBSCO)
Web of Science (ISI)
WorldCat (OCLC)
Worldwide Political Science Abstracts-WPSA (CSA)

Subject Headings that were used include:

Democracy
Political Fiction
Canada-Politics and Government
Canadian Fiction (English) Themes, motives
Canadian Fiction and Politics
British Columbia-Politics and Government
Canadian Fiction and Politics
Politics and Literature
Citizenship-Canada
Citizenship, Study and teaching
Citizenship education
Civic literacy

Civics, Canadian
Political science education
Political campaigns-Canada
Political campaigns-British Columbia
Law-Canada
Elections-Canada
Elections-British Columbia
Prime ministers
Premiers
Governors General
Lieutenant Governors
Politicians

Where appropriate the following sub-headings were attached to the subject headings listed above.

Fiction
Literature
Juvenile Fiction
Juvenile Literature
Study and teaching