



Ban This Booklist

50 Books That'll Boost Your Civil Liberties Savvy

- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings**
Maya Angelou
Poignant memoir of girlhood in rural America during the 1930s.
Topic: Racial Justice
Format: fiction | Pages: 300
- The Handmaid's Tale : A Novel**
Margaret Atwood
Prophetic tale of a future where women lack fundamental civil and human rights.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: fiction | Pages: 320
- Fahrenheit 451**
Ray Bradbury
Novel about censorship and a future where books are illegal, but no one seems to care.
Topic: Free Speech
Format: fiction | Pages: 200
- Invisible Man**
Ralph Ellison
Chronicles the travels of a young, nameless black man, as he encounters racial discrimination.
Topic: Racial Justice
Format: fiction | Pages: 600
- The Moon is a Harsh Mistress**
Robert A. Heinlein
Novel about the revolt of Loonies against the Earth authorities.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: fiction | Pages: 380
- Catch 22**
Joseph Heller
Comentary on the dangers of unquestioning obedience to authority. A literary testament to the importance of civil liberties.
Topic: Free Speech
Format: fiction | Pages: 460

7. **If He Hollers Let Him Go**
Chester Himes
Chronicles four days in the life of fictional character, Bob Jones, a black man who lives life in constant fear and is plagued by the effects of a racist society.
Topic: Racial Justice
Format: fiction | Pages: 220
8. **Brave New World**
Aldous Huxley
Tale of a futuristic world where the trends of contemporary culture are taken to alarming extremes.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: fiction | Pages: 300
9. **The Cider House Rules**
John Irving
Orphan Homer Wells becomes the protege of Dr. Wilbur Larch, the orphanage's physician and director. Trained by Dr. Larch in medicine, Wells assists him in his work, but draws the line at performing abortions.
Topic: Reproductive Freedom
Format: fiction | Pages: 600
10. **To Kill a Mockingbird**
Harper Lee
Classic American tale of race, justice and growing up poor as told through the eyes of a young girl.
Topic: Racial Justice
Format: fiction | Pages: 280
11. **Zami: A New Spelling of My Name**
Audre Lorde
Chronicles the life of an African-American lesbian in mid-20th century Harlem.
Topic: LGBTQ Rights
Format: fiction | Pages: 250
12. **1984**
George Orwell
Classic novel that tells the tale of an all-encompassing government that enforces perfect conformity among every citizen.
Topic: Free Speech; Surveillance
Format: fiction | Pages: 350
13. **Uncle Tom's Cabin**
Harriet Beecher Stowe
Classic novel depicting the cruelty of slavery.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: fiction | Pages: 500

14. **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**
Mark Twain
Tale of two runaways—a white boy and a black man—and their journey down the Mississippi River.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: fiction | Pages: 300
15. **The Color Purple**
Alice Walker
Feminist novel about an abused black woman's struggle for empowerment.
Topic: Women's Rights; Racial Justice
Format: fiction | Pages: 300
16. **Orlando**
Virginia Woolf
Tells the comic story of Orlando who enters the book as an Elizabethan nobleman and exits three centuries later as a liberated woman of the 1920s.
Topic: LGBTQ Rights
Format: fiction | Pages: 330
17. **Black Boy**
Richard Wright
Vivid description of black boyhood in the rural South.
Topic: Racial Justice
Format: fiction | Pages: 450
18. **Sticks and Stones**
Peter Kuper
Alegorical graphic novel about the vanities of imperialism.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: graphic novel | Pages: NA
19. **Get Your War On**
David Rees
Graphic novel with absurd and hilarious commentary on what the author considers a profound waste of time, money and human energy. Critiques the government's "War on Terrorism."
Topic: Free Speech
Format: graphic novel | Pages: 100
20. **Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood**
Marjane Satrapi
Graphic novel that tells the story of a young girl's life during the Islamic Revolution.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: graphic novel | Pages: 200

21. **9-11: Artists Respond Volume 1 and 9-11: September 11, 2001 (Stories to Remember, Volume 2)**
Various Artists
Responses of various graphic illustrators and artists to 9/11; volumes 1 and 2
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: graphic novel | Pages: 200
22. **Live from Death Row**
Mumia Abu-Jamal
Collection of death-row inmate Abu-Jamal's writings, which document the atrocities of prison life.
Topic: Death Penalty
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 220
23. **In Our Defense: The Bill of Rights in Action**
Ellen Alderman and Caroline Kennedy
Nineteen fascinating accounts of real-life controversies that emphasize the human side of the Bill of Rights.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 440
24. **Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High**
Melba Beals
First-hand account of desegregation following the landmark Brown v. Board of Education verdict.
Topic: Racial Justice
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 340
25. **Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us**
Kate Bornstein
A sincere and often comic look at transgender life, gender identity and sexual desire.
Topic: LGBTQ Rights
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 270
26. **Why the Religious Right is Wrong about Separation of Church and State**
Rob Boston
Chronicle of the development of the church-state relations from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Shows how separating church and state actually protects religion.
Topic: Religious Liberty
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 280

27. **Stand and Deliver: Political Activism, Leadership and Hip-Hop Culture**
Yvonne Bynoe
Argues that the tradition of effective activism of the civil rights era might be revived by tapping into the enormous energies of the hip hop explosion.
Topic: Racial Justice, Political Activism
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 200
28. **Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement**
Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall
Examines the FBI's harassment, surveillance, and disruption of black and Native American groups in the 1960s and 1970s.
Topic: Racial Justice; Privacy
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 500
29. **The Trials of Lenny Bruce: The Fall and Rise of an American Icon**
Ronald Collins and David Skover
Chronicles the obscenity cases that comedian and cultural maverick Lenny Bruce had leveled against him.
Topic: Free Speech
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 550
30. **Terrorism & The Constitution: Sacrificing Civil Liberties in the Name of National Security**
James Dempsey and David Cole
Argues that the Anti-Terrorism Act and the USA Patriot Act are ineffective and undermine civil rights. Concludes that there can be no trade-off between national security and civil liberties.
Topic: Patriot Act
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 240
31. **Stonewall**
Martin Duberman
Chronicles the Stonewall riots, a watershed event in gay and lesbian rights that occurred during the summer of 1969.
Topic: LGBTQ Rights
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 350
32. **Defending Everybody: A History of the ACLU**
Diane Garey
The story of the ACLU from its earliest battles through its landmark cases.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 300

33. **Six Days or Forever? Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes**
Ray Ginger
An in-depth account of the famous "Scopes Monkey Trial" of 1925, which struck down a law forbidding the teaching of evolution in state-funded schools.
Topic: Religious Liberty
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 250
34. **Not in Front of the Children: "Indecency," Censorship and the Innocence of Youth**
Marjorie Heins
Argues that the age-old idea of protecting children from corrupting influences has reached dangerous proportions in the United States.
Topic: Censorship; Youth Rights
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 400
35. **The War on the Bill of Rights and the Gathering Resistance**
Nat Hentoff
Argues that the federal government has used the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 as a pretext for curtailing civil liberties.
Topic: Patriot Act
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 200
36. **The Courage of Their Convictions: Sixteen Americans Who Fought Their Way to the Supreme Court**
Peter Irons
The story of 16 individuals who took their battles for civil liberties to the Supreme Court.
Topic: Supreme Court
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 450
37. **I'd Hate Myself in the Morning: A Memoir**
Ring Lardner
Memoir that chronicles life on the House Un-American Activities Committee's Hollywood blacklist.
Topic: Privacy; Free Speech
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 220
38. **The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship and the Production Code**
Leonard Leff and Jerold Simmons
Engaging look at the "Production Code," which was adopted in 1934 by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association that dictated what was morally acceptable in American movies.
Topic: Censorship
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 380

39. **Driving While Black: What To Do If You Are a Victim of Racial Profiling**
Kenneth Meeks
Well-researched and disturbing book about racial profiling that details origins and consequences of this problem and suggests some solutions.
Topic: Racial Justice
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 280
40. **Defending My Enemy: American Nazis, the Skokie Case, and the Risks of Freedom**
Aryeh Neier
Former ACLU executive director's autobiographical account of the famous Skokie Case.
Topic: Free Speech
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 200
41. **The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America from Slave Passes to the War on Terror**
Christian Parenti
Explores the historical and sociological roots of government surveillance -- from slave owners' attempts to control slaves to modern police efforts to stop crime.
Topic: Privacy
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 275
42. **The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School**
Neil Postman
Claims that our current educational system teaches students to worship consumerism. Argues for more humanistic education in schools.
Topic: Youth/Student Rights
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 220
43. **The Death of the Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions**
Hellen Prejean
Passionate indictment of the American criminal justice system.
Topic: Death Penalty
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 330
44. **Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member**
Sanyika Shakur
Autobiography describing Shakur's experiences of gang-life, racial profiling and police brutality. Indictment of the American criminal justice system.
Topic: Criminal Justice; Racial Justice
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 300

45. **And the Band Played On: Politics, People and the AIDS Epidemic**
Randy Shilts
Exhaustive account of the early years of the AIDS crisis that outlines the medical, social and political forces behind the epidemic's origins and spread.
Topic: LGBTQ Rights; Disability Rights
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 650
46. **In Defense of American Liberties: A History of the ACLU**
Samuel Walker
Comprehensive history of the ACLU by an active member who had complete access to ACLU's archives.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 500
47. **No More Prisons**
William Upski Wimsatt
Self-proclaimed "cool rich kid" William Upski Wimsatt takes on the American penal system and its emphasis on punishment at the expense of hope and rehabilitation.
Topic: Criminal Justice
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 165
48. **Prison Nation: The Warehousing of America's Poor**
Paul Wright and Tara Herivel (Eds)
Prisoners, social critics and investigative journalists document the current state of American prisoners' living conditions.
Topic: Criminal Justice
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 330
49. **People's History of the United States: 1492-Present**
Howard Zinn
American history as told from the point of view of women, factory workers, African Americans, American Indians and immigrant laborers.
Topic: Civil Liberties
Format: nonfiction | Pages: 750
50. **Howl and Other Poems**
Ginsberg, Alan
Classic poem of the Beat Generation that overcame multiple censorship trails to become one of the most widely read political poems in American history.
Topic: Free Speech
Format: poetry | Pages: 50