

# Pulitzer Prize Winners for Fiction 2000 to 2019

All titles are available as e-books or e-audiobooks from the West Haven Library.

Descriptions adapted from publishers.

**2019: *The Overstory* by Richard Powers**

A sweeping, impassioned work of activism and resistance that is also a stunning evocation of—and paean to—the natural world. From the roots to the crown and back to the seeds, Richard Powers's twelfth novel unfolds in concentric rings of interlocking fables that range from antebellum New York to the late twentieth-century Timber Wars of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. There is a world alongside ours—vast, slow, interconnected, resourceful, magnificently inventive, and almost invisible to us. This is the story of a handful of people who learn how to see that world and who are drawn up into its unfolding catastrophe.

**2018: *Less* by Andrew Sean Greer**

Receiving an invitation to his ex-boyfriend's wedding, Arthur, a failed novelist on the eve of his fiftieth birthday, embarks on an international journey that finds him falling in love, risking his life, reinventing himself, and making connections with the past.

**2017: *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead**

A magnificent tour de force chronicling a young slave's adventures as she makes a desperate bid for freedom in the antebellum South. Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. Life is hell for all the slaves, but especially bad for Cora; an outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is coming into womanhood—where even greater pain awaits. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape.

**2016: *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen**

A sweeping epic of love and betrayal. The narrator, a communist double agent, is a “man of two minds,” a half-French, half-Vietnamese army captain who arranges to come to America after the Fall of Saigon, and while building a new life with other Vietnamese refugees in Los Angeles is secretly reporting back to his communist superiors in Vietnam.

**2015: *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr**

A beautiful, stunningly ambitious novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II. The stories of Marie-Laure and Werner illuminate the ways, against all odds, people try to be good to one another.

**2014: *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt**

Theo Decker, a 13-year-old New Yorker, miraculously survives an accident that kills his mother. Abandoned by his father, Theo is taken in by the family of a wealthy friend. Bewildered by his strange new home on Park Avenue, disturbed by schoolmates who don't know how to talk to him, and tormented above all by his longing for his mother, he clings to the one thing that reminds him of her: a small, mysteriously captivating painting that ultimately draws Theo into the underworld of art.

**2013: *The Orphan Master's Son* by Adam Johnson**

Pak Jun Do is the haunted son of a lost mother—a singer "stolen" to Pyongyang—and an influential father who runs a work camp for orphans. Superiors in the North Korean state soon recognize the boy's loyalty and keen instincts. Considering himself "a humble citizen of the greatest nation in the world," Jun Do rises in the ranks. He becomes a professional kidnapper who must navigate the shifting rules, arbitrary violence, and baffling demands of his overlords in order to stay alive. Driven to the absolute limit of what any human being could endure, he boldly takes on the treacherous role of rival to Kim Jong Il in an attempt to save the woman he loves.

**2012: No award given**

**2011: *A Visit from the Goon Squad* by Jennifer Egan**

Bennie Salazar, an aging former punk rocker and record executive, and Sasha, the passionate, troubled young woman he employs confront their pasts in this powerful story about how rebellion ages, influence corrupts, habits turn to addictions, lifelong friendships fluctuate and turn, and how art and music have the power to redeem.

**2010: *Tinkers* by Paul Harding**

An old man lies dying. Confined to bed in his living room, he sees the walls around him begin to collapse. He is hallucinating, in death throes from cancer and kidney failure. A methodical repairer of clocks, he is now finally released from the usual constraints of time and memory to rejoin his father, an epileptic, itinerant peddler, whom he had lost seven decades before. In his return to the wonder and pain of his impoverished childhood in the backwoods of Maine, he recovers a natural world that is at once indifferent to man and inseparable from him, menacing and awe inspiring. *Tinkers* is about the legacy of consciousness and the porousness of identity from one generation to the next.

**2009: *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout**

Olive Kitteridge, a retired schoolteacher, deplores the changes in her little town of Crosby, Maine, and in the world at large, but she doesn't always recognize the changes in those around her: a lounge musician haunted by a past romance; a former student who has lost the will to live; Olive's own adult child, who feels tyrannized by her irrational sensitivities; and her husband, Henry, who finds his loyalty to his marriage both a blessing and a curse. As the townspeople grapple with their problems, mild and dire, Olive is brought to a deeper understanding of herself and her life—sometimes painfully, but always with ruthless honesty.

**2008: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz**

Oscar is a sweet but disastrously overweight, lovesick Dominican ghetto nerd. From his home in New Jersey, where he lives with his old-world mother and rebellious sister, Oscar dreams of becoming the Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien and, most of all, of finding love. But he may never get what he wants, thanks to the Fukú—the curse that has haunted Oscar's family for generations, dooming them to prison, torture, tragic accidents, and, above all, ill-starred love. Oscar, still waiting for his first kiss, is just its most recent victim.

**2007: *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy**

A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other.

**2006: *March* by Geraldine Brooks (not available as an e-book or e-audiobook)**

From Louisa May Alcott's beloved classic *Little Women*, Brooks has animated the character of the absent father, March. Brooks follows March as he leaves behind his family to aid the Union cause in the Civil War. His experiences will utterly change his marriage and challenge his most ardently held beliefs.

**2005: *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson**

An intimate tale of three generations, from the Civil War to the 20th century: a story about fathers and sons and the spiritual battles that still rage at America's heart.

**2004: *The Known World* by Edward P. Jones**

The story of Henry Townsend, a black farmer and former slave who falls under the tutelage of William Robbins, the most powerful man in Manchester County, Virginia. Making certain he never circumvents the law, Townsend runs his affairs with unusual discipline. But when death takes him unexpectedly, his widow, Caldonia, can't uphold the estate's order and chaos ensues.

**2003: *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides**

"I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day of January 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974.... My birth certificate lists my name as Calliope Helen Stephanides. My most recent driver's license...records my first name simply as Cal." So begins the breathtaking story of Calliope Stephanides and three generations of the Greek-American Stephanides family who travel from a tiny village overlooking Mount Olympus in Asia Minor to Prohibition-era Detroit to the tree-lined streets of suburban Michigan. To understand why Calliope is not like other girls, she has to uncover a guilty family secret and the astonishing genetic history that turns Callie into Cal.

**2002: *Empire Falls* by Richard Russo**

Miles Roby has been slinging burgers at the Empire Grill for 20 years, a job that cost him his college education and much of his self-respect. What keeps him there? It could be his bright, sensitive daughter Tick, who needs all his help surviving the local high school. Or maybe it's Janine, Miles' soon-to-be ex-wife, who's taken up with a noxiously vain health-club proprietor. Or perhaps it's the imperious Francine Whiting, who owns everything in town-and seems to believe that "everything" includes Miles himself. In *Empire Falls* Richard Russo delves deep into the blue-collar heart of America in a work that overflows with hilarity, heartache, and grace.

**2001: *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* by Michael Chabon**

In New York City in 1939, a young escape artist and budding magician named Joe Kavalier arrives on the doorstep of his cousin, Sammy Clay. While the long shadow of Hitler falls across Europe, America is happily in thrall to the Golden Age of comic books, and in a distant corner of Brooklyn, Sammy is looking for a way to cash in on the craze. He finds the ideal partner in the aloof, artistically gifted Joe, and together they embark on an adventure that takes them deep into the heart of Manhattan, and the heart of old-fashioned American ambition. From the shared fears, dreams, and desires of two teenage boys, they spin comic book tales of the heroic, fascist-fighting Escapist and the beautiful, mysterious Luna Moth, otherworldly mistress of the night. Climbing from the streets of Brooklyn to the top of the Empire State Building, Joe and Sammy carve out lives, and careers, as vivid as cyan and magenta ink.

**2000: *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri**

Navigating between the Indian traditions they've inherited and the baffling new world, the characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's elegant, touching stories seek love beyond the barriers of cultures and generations. In "A Temporary Matter," published in the *New Yorker*, a young Indian-American couple faces the heartbreak of a stillborn birth, while their Boston neighborhood copes with a nightly blackout. In the title story, an interpreter guides an American family through the India of their ancestors and hears an astonishing confession.