

Ten Great Books for Guys

By Larry West



Sure, hanging out with friends or watching the game on TV are great ways to spend a little downtime, but sometimes there's just nothing better than a good book.

Whether you're a guy looking for a great book to read, or someone shopping for a book to give a great guy, the following list offers a selection of titles—from current to classic—that any guy could love.

Spartina by John Casey

This classic novel of a man, a boat, and a storm is ultimately a compelling voyage of self discovery. Dick Pierce, an out-of-luck commercial fisherman, has lost nearly everything except his family. *Spartina* is the fishing boat he is trying to build in a last-ditch effort to realize his frustrated dreams of independence. As things veer from bad to worse, Dick manages to launch *Spartina* just before a hurricane hits. While riding out the storm brings Dick new clarity, the real heart of this novel is its timeless story of one man's struggle to find his true place in the world.

The Boys of Summer by Roger Kahn

Quite possibly the best book ever written about baseball, *The Boys of Summer* tells the story of the Brooklyn Dodgers and the community that loved them. Roger Kahn, a sportswriter who grew up near Ebbets Field, covered the Dodgers for the Herald Tribune in the 1950s and tells the story here in all its glory and pathos—right up to the day in 1958 when the team moved to Los Angeles and took the heart and soul of Brooklyn with them. You don't have to love baseball to love this book.

Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer

In April 1992, following several years of solo adventures and sometimes odd behavior, 24-year-old Chris McCandless burned the last cash in his wallet and walked into the Alaskan wilderness on a personal quest to find new meaning in his life. Four months later, hunters found his decomposing body in an abandoned school bus. In this book, which inspired the current movie directed by Sean Penn and scored by rocker Eddie Vedder, author Jon Krakauer tries to understand how and why McCandless died—and what he discovered on his spiritual journey.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

If you haven't read *To Kill a Mockingbird* since high school or college, it's time to take another look. Harper Lee's first and only novel, which won her a Pulitzer Prize and inspired an Oscar-winning film, offers one of the best role models for fatherhood in all of literature in the character of Atticus Finch. The novel also takes a compelling look at the cancerous effects of institutionalized racism on a small Southern town in the years before the civil rights movement.

Understanding Men's Passages by Gail Sheehy

For men, midlife is often seen as a time of crisis and confusion. But it's also a time when many men reinvent themselves and take control of their lives. Bestselling author Gail Sheehy has written what may be the ultimate relationship book for men. By sharing the stories of real men coping with the changes and challenges they encounter during their 40s, 50s, 60s, and beyond, Sheehy shows all men how to develop a truer relationship with themselves and to open their hearts more fully to the people they love.

A River Runs Through It by Norman Maclean

Made into a 1992 movie starring Brad Pitt and directed by Robert Redford, Norman Maclean's book of two brothers following different paths is a poignant and lyrical story of loss, and our all-too-frequent inability to understand and help the people we love the most. Set in 1930s Montana, with some great fly-fishing scenes, Maclean tells his moving memoir in prose as clean and clear as a trout stream.

I Killed: True Stories of the Road from America's Top Comics by Ritch Shydner and Mark Schiff

More than 200 standup comedians come clean in this hilarious and sometimes bizarre look at what goes on behind the laughter when comics are on the road. Contributors include legendary comic all-stars such as Jonathan Winters, Dennis Miller, Drew Carey, Chris Rock and Rita Rudner as well as a lineup of nearly anonymous rising stars. The stories range from Jerry Seinfeld's memory of being heckled by a Mafia hit man to Jay Leno's anecdote about accidentally leaving a groupie tied to her bed overnight. Authors Shydner and Schiff are veteran standup comics whose own recollections are included in the book.

The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century by Thomas L. Friedman

In his bestselling book, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman argues that economic, political and technological forces have led to a new stage of globalization that is creating previously unimagined opportunities and crises. Not everyone will agree with Friedman's conclusions, but there is no question that he does a masterful job of tracing many of the new trends and complex relationships that affect our lives.

Niagara Falls All Over Again by Elizabeth McCracken

This story about the 30-year friendship of two vaudeville comedians who make it big in the early days of Hollywood and television is touching, insightful, and often laugh-out-loud funny. Although as different offstage as on, straight man Mose Sharp and funny man Rocky Carter both struggle to overcome their demons and discover the essential value of male friendship.

Seabiscuit: An American Legend by Laura Hillenbrand

One of the great underdog sports stories of all time, *Seabiscuit: An American Legend* tells how a horse that nobody wanted won the heart of a nation. Misunderstood and mishandled during his early racing career, Seabiscuit looked like a loser but became a champion. Competing during the bleakest years of the Great Depression, Seabiscuit was a symbol of triumph and hope for millions of Americans.

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