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HowStuffWorks looks at the history and culture of places from around the world. What books have had the greatest impact on human history will always be a hotly contested question. The New York Public Library has compiled a list of 25 books that its librarians claim have had the biggest impact on the course of history. From imagination and history to science and religion, the following works have left their mark on the world and stood the test of time. These books are often being checked out by patrons of the New York Public Library, the second-largest library system in America behind the Library of Congress, showing that they still resonate with readers despite being published decades or centuries ago. The books on this list are widely accepted by historians as works that help shape society, change social practices and capture or explain pivotal moments in human history. 1. 1984 by George Orwell by George Orwell | 1984 Larry Ellis/Hulton Archive/Getty Images George Orwell's classic work Dystopia launched dystopia subgenre, in which writers envision a not-so-distant future as a terrible place controlled by the government, usually with massive censorship and no freedom. Books like Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451. Anthony Burgess's Clockwork Orange, and Aldous Huxley's Brave New World won't exist without Orwell written before 1984, and 1984 is actually still blowing all those books out of the water. We're lucky the real world in the year 1984 won't turn out to be how Orwell predicted it when he wrote the book, which was published in 1949, but the impact of the book is gone and yet there was speculation about the year to continue to last. The plot follows a man living in a society controlled by like a divine leader called Big Brother who rules using surveillance, fear, force, and a broad cult of personality even though it's uncertain whether he actually exists. Words from a book like Big Brother, DoubleThink, Thought Crime and 2+2=5 are still commonly used today. The book will always be an important reminder that freedom of expression and thought is worth any price in society. 2. Esop's fables by the fables of Esop | Hulton Archive/Getty Images Aesop Fables are a collection of fables and stories credited to a slave in B.C. Greece who have either written them or collected them sometime during their lives between 620 and 560 BC. The fact that these stories written in ancient Greece by a slave is still well known to this day is astonishing. Fables like tortoise and rabbit and ant and locust are still taught to young children around the world and reinterpreted in various forms. Stories use animal characters in strange and often spectacular situations to describe simple life lessons such as slow and steady Race and work today is to eat tomorrow. Fables will probably continue to be used to teach simple moral lessons for a long time to come. 3. Confucius Analyzists of Confucius by Chinese philosopher Confucius| Hulton Archive/Getty Images Analects is a collection of things and ideas from the Chinese philosopher believed to have been written down by his followers and considered the most important book in Confucianism. Confucius may be portrayed as being an obscure and impenetrable Eastern philosopher in pop culture, but in fact many of his teachings included similar moral lessons we learn as children, including an early version of the Golden Rule. He also firmly believed in the worship of the ancestor, family loyalty and the honour of one's elders. Analects is one of the most widely read and studied books in China and has been for the past 2,0 years. It is also considered one of the most influential works on Chinese and general East Asian philosophy, values, and thinking in all history with the impact of remaining in its influence today. 4. Art of war by Sun Tzu's portrayal of Chinese military training | The Three Lions/Hulton Archive/Getty Images This Chinese military treatise has been adopted by businessmen as a book of advice on how to negotiate the cutthroat world of capitalism. Each of the book's 13 chapters addresses a different aspect of the war. Sun Tzu is an ancient Chinese military general and highly respected strategist who believed that war should have been avoided as much as possible, and accomplished quickly and efficiently when necessary. His teachings in the book have been embraced by the world of business and law to learn how to gain the upper hand in logic and negotiation. He unexpectedly stressed the importance of front preparation and flexibility. 5. King James Bible King James Bible | Hulton Archive/Getty Images Although it was not the first English translation of the Christian Bible, it is the most famous version, the most widely read, and the most printed book in history. The work was considered a stunning achievement in literature in terms of its beauty and scholarly effort that it was put into the making, as the translation was compiled from various books in different languages to create the best English Bible possible under the command of King James I. The translation was carried out by 47 different scholars, all of them members of the Church of England. The project was started in 1604 and the King James Bible was first published in 1611. The Bible is the founding text of Christianity and is based on the very book of morality and thought of Western society. 6. Bury my heart on injured knee: D. Alexander Brown | an Indian history of the American West by the old image of Native Americans Hulton Collection/Getty Images This was history about the Old West and Native Americans In 1970 the U.S. was waging an unpopular war in Vietnam as that was also resulting in mass casualties of non-white civilians. The parallel wasn't lost on readers when the book came out and it contributed to its longevity as a pivotal work in American history, depicting the concept that history tends to repeat itself. Historian D. Brown sees various terrible injustices faced by Native Americans at the hands of the U.S. government during the late nineteenth century, including forced relocations, mass killings and attempts to destroy Native American culture. The book was written during a time of the growing American Indian movement seeking civil rights and equality for Native Americans and was an important document that reflected the atrocities they suffered in American history and colonization. The book is credited with ending colonial mythology surrounding the settlers of the American West. 7. Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Portrait of Karl Marx | Henry Gutman/Hulton Archive/Getty Images Before you let your feelings about communism or knowledge about how the political structure has played out in history through various communist dictatorships you think Marx was a bad man, it's worth giving the Communist manifesto a chance. The short political manifesto was published in 1848 and sparked a revolution before being misinterpreted by many people seeking to make their ideals in the real world. The book is one of the most influential works in political theory ever written and is also a lesson in how some good or at least well-intentioned ideas can actually get twisted by the bad guys. Many argue that this book is symbolizing good in theory, but not in practice, while some still think it's possible for people to create a society like a marx to describe work for the benefit of mankind. 8. Anne Frank: Diary of a young girl by Anne Frank statue of Anne Frank near Westerkerk in Amsterdam | Henry Craiger/Hulton Archive/Getty Images This book is perhaps the most widely read and important work to come out of the Holocaust. Anne Frank kept an elaborate diary while she was in hiding with her family for two years during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. She was a young teenager during this time, receiving diaries for her thirteenth birthday. He died at a concentration camp in 1944 at the age of 15. The only surviving member of the family was given a diary to her father and published. It earned international critical and popular acclaim when it was translated into English in 1947. Work has a look at how a young girl tries to maintain some normalcy while the world around her has descended into one of the darkest times in modern history. Teen perspective means that the book readers of any age can be understood, and use its common use in middle learning And the Holocaust has contributed to high school-age children about how ubiquitous the book is. It can certainly still be appreciated by adults, as young voices describing one of the worst atrocities in history can become more heart-wrenching with age. 9. Image of Samuel Johnson A Dictionary of the English Language by Samuel Johnson | The Hulton Archive/Getty Images Published in 1755, Samuel Johnson's dictionary is considered to be the most influential dictionary of the English language and the Oxford English Dictionary was the most important English dictionary until it was published 173 years later. While it's disputed by some, it's commonly believed that Johnson accomplished huge amounts over a period of nine years alone, making the feat that much more impressive. Johnson's dictionary is filled with witty definitions and he's quoted as the man that spoke dictionaries. There was nothing just to see the words in his dictionary, it was something to read in and of himself. 10. Daughter Frieden's Daughter Frieden Fot by Feminine Mystique | Peter Kramer/Getty Images Betty Frieden's 1963 classic is credited with sparking the second wave feminist movement. While the first wave of feminism focused on issues such as women's suffrage and property rights, the second wave raised questions about sexuality, family, workplace and reproductive rights. Frieden was inspired to write the book when he was asked to do a survey of his former classmates at Smith College on their fifteenth reunion and found that most of them were very unhappy in their roles as housewives and mothers. The book involved delving into research psychology and media as well as conducting interviews with suburban housewives to try and figure out why they were incomplete. The New York Times said the book in Frieden's obituary permanently changed the social fabric of the United States. 11. Hiroshima | by John Hersi Aerial View of Hiroshima Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images John Hersi's slim but powerful Hiroshima was first published in The New Yorker in August of 1946, which runs in its entirety rather than published in order because there will be the longest pieces. The interest in the piece was astonishing, with copies of the magazine selling out everywhere. Hersi's account took the lives of six survivors of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and used its stories to humanize the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan. By the time Hersey's account was published, Americans only understood the bombing through articles announcing to newspapers that a hundred thousand people died in a split second. Seeing what happened with a pastor, a pastor, two doctors, a mother, and an office clerk who miraculously survived, Hersey helped people understand the horror of the decision to drop those bombs. 12. How Other half-life: Study between New York's Tenents by Jacob Riis's Image of Jacob Riis| The Hulton Archive/Getty Images How second-half lives are one of the earliest examples of photojournalism and muckraking journalism. Published in 1890, the book is a collection of photographs documenting life in the slums of New York City that were like there for the upper classes, who may not know that a large group of people were living in such squalid conditions. Riis's decision to use photographs instead of using words to raise awareness of an issue was unprecedented, and the photos are still heartbreaking, beautiful, and disturbing to this day. The Library of Congress included the book in its list of books that shaped The U.S. and said it was after public outcry over conditions between immigrants living in its publication and Tenants on the Lower East Side that he photographed, drain, plumbing, and garbage collection were instated in neighborhoods. 13. I Ching: The Book of Changes I Ching: The Book of | Horace Bristol/Hulton Archive/Getty Images I Ching, known as the Book of Change of Change in English, is thought to be one of the first attempts to keep the human mind in terms of the universe. It has been an influence on Chinese thought for 3,0 years, especially in the places of Confucianism and Taoism, and has been gaining influence in the West in the last century. The book has inspired the world of business, art, religion and psychology through its teachings. 14. Harriet A. Jacob | events in the life of a slave girl by the example of slaves working in a field Hulton Archive/Getty Images This book is often considered a kind of companion to the legend of Frederick Douglass, which we will receive later. Written by Harriet Jacobs through fictional storyteller Linda Brent, Jacob tells of the sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of her slave boss, one who culminated in her hiding in her grandmother's attic for seven years to avoid the repeated rape of her boss. It is considered the first and most comprehensive first-hand account of an enslaved woman's life experience. Jacob's use of similar language for Victorian romance novels could be stopped considering the topic, but his story was an important one and the courage it would have taken for him to write it down is astonishing. 15. The Jungle by Upton Sinclair's image of Upton Sinclair writing | Hulton Archive/Getty Images Upton Sinclair was one of the great American muckraking journalists who sought to expose corruption in government and business. Jungle is one of the most famous books that simply, how to take advantage of rich, corrupt businessmen and rob poor laborers, especially immigrants, in urban areas. The book shows how members The class lacks the social support they also need to meet their basic human rights and suffer from a lack of social mobility as well as despair caused by depression from their rigorous working and living conditions. The book is also very famous for exposing the hideous aspects of the meatpacking industry from companies not following basic health guidelines and hygiene as they were supposed to. According to an article from Slate, Sinclair was disappointed that the public at the time became more fixated on the book's description of what was going on with their dinner meat than with the worker's plight. He famously complained that, I aimed the public's heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach. Nevertheless, the book is considered one of the most influential works of literary social criticism. 16. The Legend of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass life by Frederick Douglass| Hulton Archive/Getty Images Frederick Douglass is perhaps the most famous abolitionist of all time. The former slave is a truly extraordinary figure in American history. He educated himself, escaped slavery, and spoke with Abraham Lincoln on the sensitive and deceptive subject of slavery. Douglas became known far and wide for his ability as a powerful speaker. When some people began to suspect that he had ever been enslaved because of his own and educated manner, he decided to write his story. It became one of the best-selling slave narratives of the period and probably released into the most widely read first-hand account of slavery than a figure that played a big hand in helping to eradicate it. Douglas will go on to publish two subsequent biographies to continue his life story. 17. At Liberty: Bold-faced views on free speech, and john stuart mill | the importance of personality by portrait of John Stuart Mill Hulton Archive/Getty Images In this work nineteenth-century British philosopher John Stuart Mill is credited with giving one of the first and most passionate defenses of free speech, a value that much of modern Western society now holds as one of its principle premises. Mill has spoken about powerful arguments that any theory should be allowed to be published and no matter how immoral or terrible it might look for the majority. He argues that it is essential for the good of society in terms of its overall rhetoric and dignity. Obviously the constitution maker agreed with him. 18. On the origin of the species: by Charles Darwin's portrait of Charles Darwin, through the natural selection of conservation of the favorite race in the struggle for life| General Photographic Agency/Hulton Archive/Getty Images Evolution is still one of the most controversial topics in American society. It was just last year that scientist Bill Nye argued in a widely watched debate with creationist Ken Ham Whether or not people choose to believe in science, it all started with the unprecedented discovery of inherited traits and natural selection that Charles Darwin documented in his book on the origin of the species. Through observing generations of different plants and animals, Darwin wondered how organisms evolved and adapted to the natural environment in a process that resulted in the survival of the fittest, but also beautifully poetic. Published in 1859, this is the book on which life sciences are based. 19. Quran Quran | Paula Bronstein/Getty Images The Quran is the founding text of Islam, which Muslims believe God had exposed to Muhammad by angel Gabriel. For the similarLy Christian Bible, this ancient text is revered for its poetic beauty, storytelling, and moral lessons that are sweeping the Muslim world. Since Islam currently has 1.2 billion followers, or a quarter of the world's population, it's easy to see why this book is still so important. While there's a lot of misunderstanding and prejudice about Islam in the West, which the Pew Research Center says is so widespread it could affect the pattern of Muslim migration, Islam has a large amount in common with an Abrahamic belief that Christianity. 20. Plato | Plato Image by Republic Hulton Archive/Getty Images It is the most famous of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato's dialogues, which focuses on the regular figures of his works, Socrates. In this work, Socrates considers the question of justice and whether the person is more than just an unjust person. To support his very long argument that a just person is happy, Socrates imagines a play called Downton Kallipolis, where he and other philosophers he argues with fictional citizens and their philosophical debates set the stage with situations. During the conversation, Socrates addresses almost every imaginable aspect of society and the nature of being. 21. The Right of Man: The Right of Man to the Benefit of All Mankind by Thomas Paine: | for the Benefit of All Mankind by Thomas Paine Hulton Archive/Getty Images Thomas Paine, one of america's founders, argues in this slim political manifesto that citizens have the right to revolt against the government when the government is not serving the natural rights of its people. It sounds like a no-brainer, but in 1791 when this book was published caused a zeal, illustrated in pamphlets from the time shown above. The book was written in defense of the French Revolution, as Paine had been in the country at the time and observed the turmoil. Human rights inspired the American Revolution and are considered one of the founding texts of democracy. 22. Simone de Beauvoir's second sex by Simone de Beauvoir photo | Hulton Archive/Getty Images This staggering feminist volume from French philosopher De Beauvoir The second wave attempts to document the starting point of feminism and the systematic harassment of women throughout history. It was an enormous job that the philosopher undertook at the age of 38 and when he presented an attitude that frustrations were given words to many women, but did not express. The book explains with a vast array of examples how women have been treated as second-class citizens. The second sex was an act of Promethean audacity — the theft of Olympian fire — none of which was turning back, the New York Times wrote. 23. Silent Spring | by Rachel Carson Silent Spring hulton Archive by Rachel Carson/Getty Images Silent Spring is the book credited with the beginning of the American environmentalist movement, a reason why still deeply felt issues from the use of GMOs in food today to laying a pipeline or not. You can't go to the grocery store without seeing the impact of Carson's book on harmful chemicals used in agriculture in the 1950s and '60s. Those chemicals had badly damaging effects on the environment, especially on bird populations, hence the title of the book. Carson accused the pesticide industry of spreading misinformation and lying clearly to its customers and the public, and also accused the government of accepting that misinformation without question despite the obvious damage to the environment. The book is so influential that it is credited with spurring restrictions on the use of DDT for agricultural purposes and the cause of the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency. 24. Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu by Lao Tzu | Hulton Archive/Getty Images This ancient Chinese text is the founding text of Taoism and is estimated to be about 2,500 years old. However, its influence extends Taoism to Confucianism and Buddhism, as well as heavily influencing Chinese painting, calligraphy, poetry, horticulture and other art forms. The work is believed to have been written by someone identified as Lao Tzu about 400 BC. Tzu's identity is opposed, as his name may simply translate to the old master, indicating that the name of the philosopher who wrote these teachings was lost. Tao broadly translates the way and work outlines what one is supposed to be the best way to live a life full of simple and pleasant knowledge and integrity. Many today still see this book for advice on how to slow down, enjoy simple things, and accept what they can't control. 25. Torah: Five Books of Moses | torah Jaffar Ashtayah/AFP/Getty Images The Torah is the most important text of Judaism, including the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. The books in the Torah are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, starting with the creation of the world by God and ending with the death of Moses. This Moses is believed to have written himself after a revelation from God in Mount Sinai. These texts have found many very familiar stories, including the story of Moses' life. Although they do not have the same importance in other religions, these texts are also a part of the Christian Bible and the Quran. Check out the Entertainment Cheat Sheet on Facebook!

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