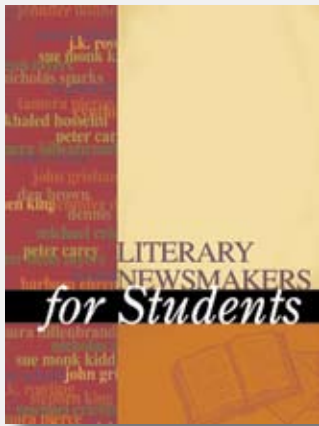




Literary Newsmakers for Students



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NEW TITLE  From John Grisham to J. K. Rowling, *Literary Newsmakers for Students* delves into the authors and books that have people talking today. This series is an engaging, reliable resource that uses the tools of the scholar – theme, characterization, historical context and more – to illuminate popular, recent titles.

BUZZ-WORTHY TITLES FROM BOOK CLUBS TO CLASSROOMS

The books included in *Literary Newsmakers for Students* are widely reviewed, discussed and added to reading lists.

- Blockbusters like “The Da Vinci Code” and “The Nanny Diaries”
- Book-club staples like “The Kite Runner” and “The Time Traveler’s Wife”
- Headline-grabbers like “Freakonomics” and “A Million Little Pieces”
- Young-adult favorites like “Eragon” and three Harry Potter titles

- Books-to-movies like “Seabiscuit” and “No Country for Old Men”

In all, the first three volumes of the series examines more than 50 works of fiction, nonfiction and poetry from U.S. and international authors.

A HOMEWORK-READY RESOURCE

Produced with input from educators, *Literary Newsmakers for Students* is aligned with national curriculum standards. Use it to help students complete assignments and to encourage further study of the books, authors and subjects that interest them most.

REACH RELUCTANT READERS WITH TITLES THEY RECOGNIZE

When research is centered on titles like “Hoot” and “The Secret Life of Bees,” the result can be a new way to foster critical-thinking skills and gain a deeper understanding of the role of literature in readers’ lives.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (2007) is J. K. Rowling’s highly anticipated seventh and final novel in her internationally popular series chronicling the adventures of a young wizard named Harry Potter. Since publishing the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (published as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* in the United States) in 1997, Rowling has become one of the most successful writers of her time. Amassing a fortune from book sales, film rights, and merchandise distribution, Rowling’s influence in early twenty-first-century culture cannot be underestimated. While waiting for the seventh novel to be published, fans all over the world speculated as to the final episode’s contents. Is Severus Snape, killer of beloved Hogwarts’s headmaster Albus Dumbledore, good or evil? Will Harry Potter survive until adulthood or die in a final battle with the evil wizard Voldemort? Such questions clogged media outlets and internet blogs for months preceding the series conclusion, even spawning a few legally punished leaks. When the book finally arrived at stores all over the world, sales skyrocketed to over 11 million in the first twenty-four hours. Readers eagerly consumed the over seven hundred pages detailing Harry Potter’s quest to destroy Lord Voldemort once and for all. At the time of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*’s publication, five films had been released; the seventh is slated to open in 2010.

J. K. ROWLING
2007



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The Da Vinci Code

The Da Vinci Code became one of the first notable international literary events of the twenty-first century as soon as it was published in early 2003. It is a fast-paced thriller involving Harvard professor of religious symbology Robert Langdon, who must solve a murder mystery before he is arrested for the murder himself. While the plot moves along rapidly, the narrative and dialogue slow down briefly at times to explore weighty issues and consider controversial questions. Was Jesus married to Mary Magdalene? Did early Christian leaders attempt to suppress her significance? Did Constantine the Great and the Council of Nicaea establish the divinity of Jesus Christ in 325 A.D.? Was Leonardo da Vinci one of the “keepers of the secret of the Holy Grail,” as Leigh Teabing, the historian scholar, declares? Did he encode his art with symbols that suggested a Christian history far different from the one with which we are familiar? Though fictional characters raise these questions, Brown, in interviews about his novel, generated much debate by defending the possibility that Christian history has been carefully and artificially constructed. When asked in an interview what he would change if he were writing the book as nonfiction rather than fiction, for example, Brown replied he would change nothing.

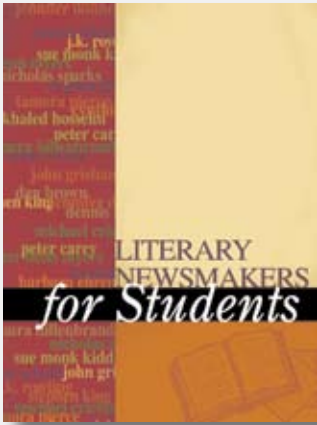
Religious leaders, Christian scholars, historians, and media figures reacted strongly to Brown’s novel. In 2004, it was banned from

DAN BROWN
2003




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In-depth analyses of popular, recent books help readers gain a foundation in literary scholarship.



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A LOOK INSIDE FAVORITE BOOKS

Each entry in *Literary Newsmakers for Students* runs approximately 20 pages and offers accessible essays in easy-to-follow categories, including:

Introduction

Greenblatt proposes to answer the question of how a man with only a secondary school education, the son of a small-town glove maker, became the most renowned playwright of all time. (from entry, "Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare")

Author biography

In his Author's Note, Martel describes it this way: "Books lined the shelves of bookstores like kids standing in a row to play baseball or soccer, and mine was the gangly, unathletic kid that no one wanted on their team." (from entry, "Life of Pi")

Plot summary

She does not merely pose as a minimum-wage worker; for a period of time, she is, in fact, a minimum-wage worker. The nature of every job she takes, each of which involves some form of physical labor, means that doing the job is never pretend. (from entry, "Nickel and Dime: On [Not] Getting by in America")

Characters

Ella Bouchard is a younger classmate of Vernon who has a crush on him. According to Vernon, "Ella's just skinny, with some freckles, and this big ole head of tangly blond hair that's always blown to hell, like a Barbie doll your dog's been chewing on for a month." (from entry, "Vernon God Little")

Themes

Hoot, like many works of juvenile fiction, emphasizes the theme of adolescent empowerment. In the book, the task of saving the burrowing owls is essentially left to three young people: Roy, Beatrice, and Mullet Fingers. (from entry, "Hoot")

Style

Through use of flashback and foreshadowing, Sebald veers away from a strictly chronological unfolding of events. (from entry, "The Lovely Bones")

Historical context

Although many changes took place after Karzai was installed as interim leader – women were once again allowed to show their faces in public [and] public executions and punishments came to a stop – the future of the country remains uncertain. (from entry, "A Thousand Splendid Suns")

Critical overview

The only substantial point of controversy among critics concerned the poem's role as a memorial. ... Kirkus Reviews wrote, "Only Marilyn Nelson can take one of the most hideous events of the twentieth century and make of it something glorious." (from entry, "A Wreath for Emmett Till")

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