THE NEW ESSENTIAL FEMINIST READING GUIDE
We're calling this guide the NEW essential feminist reading guide. While my own gender studies education wouldn’t have been complete without theorists like Judith Butler, Simone deBeauvoir, and Betty Freidan, this reading guide is focused on more contemporary works that illustrate feminism as we’ve come to understand it now. All of these recommendations are indebted to the work of early feminist writers but stand alone on the shoulders of the writers and thinkers before them.

For a fairly comprehensive collection of historical feminist texts, consider The Essential Feminist Reader edited by Estelle B. Freedman. If you’d like an overview of the academic discipline of feminist theories, Feminist Thought by Rosemarie Tong and Tina Fernandes Botts is an excellent reference.

This is admittedly an incomplete list, not only because we’ve missed many excellent and necessary titles, but also because we are in a golden age of brilliant feminist writing and new books are being published every day. If you’re looking for an easy way to continue to build your social justice bookshelf, Feminist Book Club is your one-stop resource for recommendations, reviews, and conversations about feminist literature and media through an intersectional lens.

We hope you find immense value in this guide and, if you're looking for ways to stay connected with other feminists, we'd love to have you join us!

In solidarity,
Renee Powers, founder & Team FBC
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

However you want! Skip to your favorite genre or start with the first page. You’ll see insets and descriptions of some of our favorite books or titles we think might be most helpful to you. In some cases we’ve paired books that we suggest you read back-to-back to get a more nuanced perspective.

In addition to our top recommendations, we’ve also included extra titles that we love (Further Reading). Every book cover and title are clickable links to our Bookshop.org store. We do receive a small portion of any sale made, as do other independent bookstores, and deeply appreciate your support!

KEY

💋 lips denote a book that we’ve highlighted as a Book of the Month

⭐️ click the blue star to read a blog post featuring this title or author

⭐️ click the yellow star to listen to a podcast episode featuring this title or author

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New to feminism? This is where to start. You'll get a feel for the feminist movement as it is right now, the issues at the heart of it all, and you don't have to have a degree in feminist theory to understand.

Modern feminism is deeply rooted in our relationship to our bodies. These books take those relationships to the next level and encourage readers to ask deep questions.

**FURTHER READING**

- **Wordslut: A Feminist Guide to Taking Back the English Language** by Amanda Montell
- **Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle** by Amelia Nagoski and Emily Nagoski
- **She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement** by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey
FEMINISM LEVEL UP
Do you read feminist theory for fun? Are you looking for some more advanced reading? Here are a few suggests to add to your syllabus!

FURTHER READING

The Purpose of Power by Alicia Garza
Men Explain Things to Me by Rebecca Solnit
Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools by Monique W. Morris
No Visible Bruises by Rachel Louise Snyder
The Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls by Mona Eltahawy
Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements by Charlene Carruthers

A manifesto from one of America's most influential activists which disrupts political, economic, and social norms. Drawing on Black intellectual and grassroots organizing traditions, including the Haitian Revolution, the US civil rights movement, and LGBTQ rights and feminist movements, Unapologetic challenges all of us engaged in the social justice struggle to make the movement for Black liberation more radical, more queer, and more feminist.

Unapologetic

White Feminism by Koa Beck

Addressing today's conversation about race, empowerment, and inclusion in America. An examination of the history of feminism, from the true mission of the suffragists to the rise of corporate feminism. A good read for fans of Hood Feminism.

Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Maree Brown

Inspired by Octavia Butler's explorations of our human relationship to change, Emergent Strategy is radical self-help, society-help, and planet-help designed to shape the futures we want to live. Change is constant. The world is in a continual state of flux. This is a resolutely materialist "spirituality" based equally on science and science fiction, a visionary incantation to transform that which ultimately transforms us.

Emergent Strategy

Mediocre by Ijeoma Oluo

From the author of So You Want to Talk About Race, Ijeoma Olou exposes the devastating consequences of white male supremacy on woman, people of color, and white men themselves. Mediocre investigates the real costs of this phenomenon in order to imagine a new white male identity, one free from racism and sexism.

Mediocre
Memoir centers women's stories, making it the perfect feminist genre

A memoir is a record of events that happened to the author and have lived through the experience. Memoirs explore the personal lives and thoughts of the storyteller and can be used to identify themes in life and make sense of their own lived experience. By sharing their experience, readers gain a better understanding of a life they have never lived.

Memoirs continue to be a Feminist Book Club favorite book genre because change cannot happen without listening and understanding others' experiences. These stories touch our hearts, light a fire, and shift perspective. These titles are just a few of our team’s most recommended memoirs.

**FURTHER READING**

- *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman* by Lindy West
- *Redefining Realness* by Janet Mock
- *Dear Girls* by Ali Wong
- *Things We Didn't Talk About When I Was a Girl* by Jeannie Vanasco
MEMOIR

In the words of our members

Sarah McBride's memoir is perhaps one of my favorite books I read in 2021! Sarah gives such vulnerable insight into her life and the need for trans rights and non-discrimination protections. As a transgender woman, Sarah reminds us that transgender rights are feminist and that feminism is nothing without intersectionality and the work of our transgender peers.

CLAUDIA, MINNESOTA

This memoir by a Native American author with bipolar disorder helped me to see my lived experience through the lens of intersection. I read this when I was having a lot of issues with my own mental health and it felt like being understood.

JOAN, PORTLAND

They say that if you aren’t angry, you’re not paying attention. Once you’re angry, what do you do with that? Brittney Cooper turns that rage into prose you can’t put down.

PATRICK, MINNESOTA

FURTHER READING

I'm Still Here by Austin Channing Brown

This Will Be My Undoing by Morgan Jerkins

My Life on the Road by Gloria Steinem

The Ugly Cry by Danielle Henderson

Haben by Haben Girma

The Girl Who Smiled Beads by Clemantine Wamariya
**SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS**

- **Sabrina & Corina** by Kali Fajardo-Anstine
  Winner of the American Book Award, finalist for the story prize, and a finalist for the Pen/Robert W. Bingham prize for debut short story collection. Kali Fajardo-Anstine's story collection breathes life into her Latina characters of indigenous ancestry and the land they inhabit in the American West. With the backdrop of Denver, Colorado these women navigate the land the way they navigate their lives: with caution, grace, and quiet force. A moving narrative of unrelenting feminine power and an exploration of the universal experiences of abandonment, heritage, and an eternal sense of home.

- **The Office of Historical Corrections: A Novella and Stories** by Danielle Evans
  Winner of the 2021 Joyce Carol Oates prize and named Best Book of 2020 by O Magazine, The New Yorker, and more. Evans zooms in on particular moments and relationships in her characters' lives in a way that allows them to speak to larger issues of race, culture, and history. She introduces us to Black and multiracial characters who are experiencing the universal confusions of lust and love, and getting walloped by grief--all while exploring how history haunts us, personally and collectively.

**FURTHER READING**

- **Difficult Women** by Roxane Gay
- **Everything Inside** by Edwidge Danticat
- **Austenistan** edited by Laaleen Sukhera
- **Love War Stories** by Ivelisse Rodriguez

**POETRY COLLECTIONS**

- **Fierce Fairytales: Poems and Stories to Stir Your Soul** by Nikita Gill
  A much needed modern makeover to fairy tale classics and spellbinding original tales. Reimagining, "Once upon a time", Nikita Gill dismantles the old fashioned tropes that have been ingrained in our minds. In this book, gone are the docile women and male saviors. Instead, lines blur between heroes and villains. You will meet fearless princesses, a new kind of wolf lurking in the concrete jungle, and an independent Gretel who can bring down monsters on her own. Complete with beautifully hand-drawn illustrations by Gill herself.

- **Black Girl, Call Home** by Jasmine Mans
  Named "A Most Anticipated Book of 2021" by Oprah Magazine, Vogue, Vulture, and more. An unforgettable poetry collection about race, feminism, and queer identity. With echoes of Gwendolyn Brooks and Sonia Sanchez, Mans writes to call herself home. Each poem explores what it means to be a daughter of Newark, and America--and the painful, joyous path to adulthood as a young, queer Black woman. A love letter to the wandering Black girl and a vital companion in a journey to find truth, belonging, and healing.

**FURTHER READING**

- **Home Is Not a Country** by Safia Elhillo
- **The Poet X** by Elizabeth Acevedo
- **Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth** by Warsan Shire
SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY
Launch yourself out of this timezone, country, planet... dimension?

AFROFUTURISM
A New York Times Best Seller
Afrofuturism is all about evaluating the past, present and future and imagining a world that encourages better conditions for Black people through literature, music, technology, and arts. In these stories you'll find themes of reclamation and black liberation.

Hugo & Nebula Award Winner

Werewolves, Magicians, Mermaids, Alternate Dimensions. In these books, you'll discover stories and characters to challenge how you view your present world, all while allowing you to escape to different worlds created by diverse authors and inspired by their cultural heritage.

FURTHER READING
The Year of the Witching by Alexis Henderson
Raybearer by Jordan Ifueko
Elatsoe by Darcie Little Badger
The Broken Earth Trilogy by N. K. Jemisin
The Power by Naomi Alderman
**ROMANCE**

In the words of our friends on the Boobies & Noobies podcast, romance features a main character getting exactly what she wants - what could be more feminist than that?

What's NOT to love about a bisexual sex worker-turned-educator partnering with a cinnamon roll rabbi to deliver lessons on 'modern intimacy'? Answer: Nothing. This steamy romance novel delivers healthy discussions about sex, faith, trauma, and love, all through a feminist perspective. Readers will come for Ethan and Naomi's love story, but stay for Naomi's journey of self-discovery.

For the first time ever, I saw myself as a main character in a love story. Chloe Brown is a fat woman of color who lives with chronic illness and severe anxiety. Reading about her navigate finding love as she is (and getting some lovin') made this one of the best reading experiences for me this year.

**FURTHER READING**

- The Worst Best Man by Mia Sosa
- One Last Stop by Casey McQuiston
- Seven Days in June by Tia Williams
- The Lady's Guide to Celestial Mechanics by Olivia Waite
- Happy Endings by Thien-Kim Lam
- So We Meet Again by Suzanne Park
- You Had Me at Hola by Alexis Daria
- The Roommate by Rosie Danon
- While We Were Dating by Jasmine Guillory
- The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo by Taylor Jenkins Reid
- How to Catch a Queen by Alyssa Cole

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LIZ, ILLINOIS

Such a sweet and empowering romance featuring a neurodiverse heroine written from an own voice perspective and great representation of women in STEM.

KELLY, PORTLAND

CAROLE, CHICAGO
There is no limit to the lengths women will go for the ones they love. Both of these books are heartbreaking in their own ways. From Jamaica to Palestine, womanhood is often a struggle.

Girlhood is fraught across all cultures. In these two books, we read beautifully rendered depictions of tenacious girls determined to claim their lives as their own, one in Nigeria and the other in Tokyo.

Imperfect marriages make for beautiful stories. Whether the character is separated from their partner emotionally or due to incarceration, these books illuminate how our partners shape us in unlikely ways.

These two books are fantastic examples of how feminism can stretch to encompass certain basic dignities--like Kim Jiyoung in South Korea--to explorations of gender and family, as in Detransition, Baby.

**FURTHER READING**

- Juliet Takes a Breath by Gabby Rivera & Celia Moscote
- Swing Time by Zadie Smith
- The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett
- Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid
- Salvage the Bones by Jessmyn Ward
- Red at the Bone by Jacqueline Woodson
- Infinite Country by Patricia Engel
- Dial A for Aunties by Jesse Q. Sutanto
- The Other Black Girl by Zakiya Dalila Harris
HISTORICAL FICTION
Transport yourself into a different time & place with stories that revisit history.

How Much of These Hills is Gold
by C. Pam Zhang
C. Pam Zhang's debut novel is set during the American gold rush, where two siblings are on the run in an unforgiving landscape, trying not just to survive but to find a home. Both epic and intimate, blending Chinese symbolism and reimagined history with original language and storytelling, it explores race in an expanding country and the question of where immigrants are allowed to belong. But page by page, it's about the memories that bind and divide families, and the yearning for home.

Homegoing
by Yaa Gyasi
One of Oprah's Best Books of the Year and a PEN/Hemingway award winner, Homegoing follows the parallel paths of two sisters and their descendants through eight generations.

The Stationery Shop
by Marjan Kamali
Follow Roya, a idealistic teen living amid the political upheaval of 1953 Tehran, finds a literary oasis in Mr. Fakhri's neighborhood stationery shop. Then Mr. Fakhri, with a keen instinct for budding romance, introduces Roya to his other favorite customer. A powerful, heartbreaking story that explores loss, reconciliation, and the quirks of fate.

Circe
by Madeline Miller
In the house of Helios, god of the sun and mightiest of the titans, a daughter is born. A bold and subversive retelling of the goddess's story, this #1 New York Times bestseller is both epic and intimate in its scope, recasting most infamous female figure from the Odyssey as a hero in her own right.

FURTHER READING
Cantoras by Carolina De Robertis
The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah
Outlawed by Anna North
Before We Were Free by Julia Alvarez
Pachinko by Min Jin Lee
The Lions of Fifth Avenue by Fiona Davis
The Rib King by Ladee Hubbard
We Ride Upon Sticks by Quan Barry
The Lost Apothecary by Sarah Penner
Daughters of Jubilation by Kara Lee Corthron
**Hurricane Season**
by Fernanda Melchor

The Witch is dead and discovery of her corpse has the whole village investigating the murder. As the novel unfolds in a dazzling linguistic torrent, with each unreliable narrator lingering on new details, new acts of depravity or brutality, Melchor extracts some tiny shred of humanity from these characters--inners whom most people would write off as irredeemable--forming a lasting portrait of a damned Mexican village. Hurricane Season takes place in a world saturated with mythology and violence--real violence, the kind that seeps into the soil, poisoning everything around: it's a world that becomes more and more terrifying the deeper you explore it.

**Firekeeper's Daughter**
by Angeline Boulley

Eighteen-year-old Daunis Fontaine has never quite fit in, both in her hometown and on the nearby Ojibwe reservation. Daunis dreams of studying medicine, but when her family is struck by tragedy, she puts her future on hold to care for her fragile mother. The only bright spot is meeting Jamie, the charming new recruit on her brother Levi’s hockey team. Yet even as Daunis falls for Jamie, certain details don’t add up and she senses the dashing hockey star is hiding something. Everything comes to light when Daunis witnesses a shocking murder, thrusting her into the heart of a criminal investigation. Reluctantly, Daunis agrees to go undercover, but secretly pursues her own investigation, tracking down the criminals with her knowledge of chemistry and traditional medicine. But the deceptions—and deaths—keep piling up and soon the threat strikes too close to home. Now, Daunis must learn what it means to be a strong Anishinaabe kwe (Ojibwe woman) and how far she’ll go to protect her community, even if it tears apart the only world she’s ever known.

**Severance**
by Ling Ma

Candace Chen, a millennial drone self-sequestered in a Manhattan office tower, is devoted to routine. With the recent passing of her Chinese immigrant parents, she’s had her fill of uncertainty. She’s content just to carry on: She goes to work, troubleshoots the teen-targeted Gemstone Bible, watches movies in a Greenpoint basement with her boyfriend. So Candace barely notices when a plague of biblical proportions sweeps New York. Then Shen Fever spreads. Families flee. Companies cease operations. The subways screech to a halt. Her bosses enlist her as part of a dwindling skeleton crew with a big end-date payoff. Soon entirely alone, still unfevered, she photographs the eerie, abandoned city as the anonymous blogger NY Ghost. Candace won’t be able to make it on her own forever, though. Enter a group of survivors, led by the power-hungry IT tech Bob. They’re traveling to a place called the Facility, where, Bob promises, they will have everything they need to start society anew. But Candace is carrying a secret she knows Bob will exploit. Should she escape from her rescuers?

**Further Reading**

- *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia
- *Last Woman Standing* by Amy Gentry
- *The Herd* by Andrea Bartz
- *My Sister, the Serial Killer* by Oyinkan Braithwaite
- *Temper* by Layne Fargo
CLASSICS THAT STILL HOLD UP

Overwhelmed by book lists of the present? Start with classics that we still love today.
ALL OUR PREVIOUSLY FEATURED BOOKS

March 2018 to November 2021
Renee Powers started this book club in March 2018 as an online reading community discussing books with her friends and podcast listeners. As more and more people joined, she realized she was uniquely positioned to grow this into more than a book club, but a movement of readers determined to read and shop their values. So in July of 2018, she launched FeministBookClub.com and the rest is history.

Since then, Feminist Book Club members have supported dozens of woman and queer authors, hundreds of small woman- and queer-owned businesses, and donated nearly $50,000 to social justice organizations. Feminist Book Club has been recognized as a favorite subscription box of Oprah Daily, Shondaland, Marie Claire, BookRiot, Reader's Digest, and many more. Three years after launch, Feminist Book Club was recognized by Tory Burch herself as a 2021 Tory Burch Foundation Fellow.

Our mission remains the same: we deserve to see ourselves in the stories we read, which is why we're fiercely passionate about reading as intersectionally as possible. Feminist Book Club makes it easy and fun to DO intersectional feminism in our everyday lives, not just talk about it. We read socially and, through our private discussion groups, we learn from one another in surprising ways.
SPECIAL THANKS TO

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OUR TEAM

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