All reading lists marked with an asterisk* are suitable for readers of various levels and people with significant time constraints.

**Maine at 200: How should life be?**

We view our state’s bicentennial year, 2020, as an invitation to take stock, to look back with new eyes at what’s already happened, to look around with renewed care at what’s happening now, and to grapple with big questions, like who are we? where are we? how did we get here? and where might we be going? And the most important place to talk about big questions like these is wherever we live and work and engage with the opportunities and challenges of life in Maine.

There are so many ways of approaching this big question! We have put together four different reading lists for you to choose from. All of them are intended to provide opportunities for people to engage with any or all of our four bicentennial themes: Many Maines, Migration & Borders, Race & Ethnicity, Wabanaki Voices.

*Poetry*

*3 Nations Anthology: Native, Canadian, & New England Writers*, edited by Valerie Lawson
Additional poems by Maine authors will be provided via PDF and/or in a printed packet.

*A New Land*

*A New Land: A Collection of Youth Poetry*, from the Telling Room
*Thanks to the Animals*, by Allen Sockabasin, Passamaquoddy Storyteller. Illustrated by Rebekah Raye.
Additional short readings will be provided via PDF and/or in a printed packet.
Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, is one of our featured books this year. It’s a powerful, accessible novel that explores family, society, and the destructive clash of cultures in the moment of colonization in Nigeria.

“*Things Fall Apart* may well be Africa’s best-loved novel ... For so many readers around the world, it is Chinua Achebe who opened up the magic casements of African fiction.”

— Kwame Anthony Appiah

“The power and majesty of Chinua Achebe’s work has, literally, opened the world to generations of readers. He is an ambassador of art, and a profound recorder of the human condition.”

— Michael Dorris

“[Achebe is] a powerful voice for cultural decolonization.”

— The Village Voice

The book can stand alone as the text for a series of discussions, or as part of 5 different lists that explore some of Achebe’s key themes in two or more texts.

*Two worlds at once*

*Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe

*The New Kid*, by Jerry Craft

*Family* 

*Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe

*The Round House*, by Louise Erdrich

*Community* 

*Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe

*Year of Wonders*, by Geraldine Brooks

*Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing*, edited by Bell Gale Chevigny
Cultures Interacting
Things Fall Apart, by Chinua Achebe
No No Boy, by John Okada
There There, by Tommy Orange

Justice
Things Fall Apart, by Chinua Achebe
Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption, by Bryan Stevenson
The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks about Race, edited by Jesmyn Ward
Homegoing, by Yaa Gyasi

One Book is Enough

While we often include several texts in the reading list for a discussion series, one book is enough. For the Fall Discussion Project, there are two books on offer as stand-alone texts.

Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism, and You, by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
Through a gripping, fast-paced, and energizing narrative written by beloved award-winner Jason Reynolds, this book shines a light on the many insidious forms of racist ideas—and on ways readers can identify and stamp out racist thoughts in their daily lives.

Things Fall Apart, by Chinua Achebe
Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, is one of our featured books this year. It’s a powerful, accessible novel that explores family, society, and the destructive clash of cultures in the moment of colonization in Nigeria.

Choose your own texts

If you want to use texts that you and your group choose for your Discussion Project – great!

Texts for discussion are often pieces of writing – stories, novels, essays, poems – but texts can be surprisingly varied. The pictures in illustrated stories, images with no text at all, audio recordings, video recordings ... all sorts of things can be excellent grounding for rich, meaningful discussion among participants in a group.

As you think about texts to use, remember that fostering a discussion is easiest when the text the group reads allows openings for interpretation. In our experience, stories (long or short, with or without illustrations) and poems often allow such openings, and invite people to think and feel in new ways, and to explore people and situations different from their own. We have found that texts explaining an issue or providing information often feel more accessible when a poem or story is included alongside them – the evidence they provide can be put to use as people work to understand and find words for their understanding of the story or poem.

Please be in touch with us if you have any questions!
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