



The Worst Books Ever

No, I'm talking here about some really dreadful books. The ones that helped produce the world's most ruthless dictators, slaughtered millions of innocent civilians, and created the most misery.

A couple of years ago, *Human Events* (one of my favorite conservative publications) asked a group of scholars and public-policy leaders to compile a list of the 10 Most Harmful Books of the 19th and 20th centuries. Each panelist nominated a number of titles. They then voted on all books nominated, with the worst (No. 1) getting 10 points, the next getting nine points and so on down the list.



A whole bunch of terrible titles got an Honorable Mention. (Or maybe that should be a Dishonorable Mention.) But here are the Top 10 — the books the scholars credited with causing more harm to mankind than anything else written in the past 250 years.

1. *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

□ There was near-unanimity on the book that deserved the No. 1 slot. *The Communist Manifesto* received almost twice as many points as the title that captured second place. And is it any wonder? The “dictatorship of the proletariat,” as implemented by Vladimir Lenin and Mao Zedong, led to the wholesale extermination of more than 200 million people.

I'm not talking about the victims of war here, but the systematic slaughter of entire populations as a means of consolidating and preserving state power. Of course the “withering away of the state,” as promised in the *Manifesto*, has never occurred anywhere communism has been tried. That was nothing more than boob-bait, as H.L. Mencken rightly observed, designed to seduce credulous idealists and immature college students.

2. *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler

□ *Mein Kampf* (“My Struggle”) was originally published in two parts in 1925 and 1926, after Hitler was imprisoned for leading the Nazi Brown Shirts in the so-called “Beer Hall Putsch” that tried to overthrow the Bavarian government. In it, Hitler explained exactly what he planned to do once he seized power — murder the Jews, wage war against France and then Russia, and establish a thousand-year reign (his “Third Reich”) for the Aryan race.

What a pity that authorities dismissed him as an insignificant annoyance, instead of the evil genius whose efforts would lead directly to World War II, and the deaths of millions of soldiers and civilians, including the slaughter of millions of Jews. They released him from prison instead of saving all of us from a lot of suffering.

3. *Quotations from Chairman Mao* by Mao Zedong

This tract, also known as “The Little Red Book,” was ostensibly written by the Chinese Communist



Written by [Wallis W. Wood](#) on December 19, 2010

dictator in 1966, 17 years after he seized power in China and founded the “People’s Republic.” More than a billion copies were distributed in China as part of Mao’s “cultural revolution.”

But believe it or not, Mao’s “Little Red Book” found its greatest popularity among Marxist college professors in the West, who couldn’t get enough of such anti-American pap as this from Chairman Mao: “It is the task of the people of the whole world to put an end to the aggression and oppression perpetrated by imperialism, and chiefly by U.S. imperialism.”

4. *The Kinsey Report* by Alfred Kinsey

Kinsey and his staff conducted extensive surveys of American sexual habits, including incredibly explicit one-on-one interviews, in the 1940s. The results appeared in two books — *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, published in 1948, and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, published in 1953. Together, the two became known as *The Kinsey Report*.

Kinsey, a zoologist at Indiana University, acknowledged that part of his purpose was to give a scientific gloss to the normalization of promiscuity and deviancy. One reviewer later noted that Kinsey’s first report “stunned the nation by saying that American men were so sexually wild that 95 percent of them could be accused of some kind of sexual offense under 1940s laws.”

His second report went even further, describing “sexual activity involving girls younger than age 4 and suggest[ing] that sex between adults and children could be beneficial.”

5. *Democracy and Education* by John Dewey

Here’s a name that isn’t mentioned much anymore, but Dewey’s influence in the first half of the 20th century was enormous. In this 1916 work, Dewey (the “father of progressive education”) denounced education that focused on traditional character development and the accumulation of “hard” knowledge (i.e., facts).

Instead, the secular humanist advocated teaching “thinking skills,” with little concern about what is “right” or “wrong.” We are still paying the price for such idiocy today, nearly 100 years later.

6. *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx

When he died in 1867, Marx had completed just the first volume of a planned three-volume study. His benefactor Friedrich Engels finished the other two volumes from notes Marx left. In his *magnum opus*, Marx portrayed capitalism as merely an ugly phase in human development, in which capitalists exploit labor by paying the cheapest wages possible to amass as much wealth as possible. (Sounds like a Barack Obama speech today, doesn’t it?) Such injustice would end, Marx said, in a worldwide proletarian revolution.

7. *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan

□ In this 1963 bestseller, Betty Friedan, the first of the angry feminists, disparaged stay-at-home motherhood as “a comfortable concentration camp.” Friedan later founded and was for many years the president of the National Organization for Women. □

Friedan was no mere liberal activist, however. As David Horowitz notes, “from her college days and until her mid-30s, she was a Stalinist Marxist, the political intimate of the leaders of America’s Cold War fifth column, and for a time even the lover of a young communist.”

Friedan’s unattractiveness was much more than skin deep; her ugliness went all the way to the bone.



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8. *Course of Positive Philosophy* by Auguste Comte

□I'm not sure how this one made it to Top 10. Like you, I can think of lots of books that have done more damage — starting with Dr. Spock's baby book, which told generations of parents not to spank their children. Still, this six-volume study, published between 1830 and 1842, is generally credited with creating the field of social studies, or "sociology" (a word Comte coined).□

The son of a royalist Catholic family that survived the French revolution, Comte turned his back on theology, bragging that, "I have naturally ceased to believe in God." Comte taught that man alone, through scientific observation, could determine the way things ought to be, without any reliance on a Higher Power.

9. *Beyond Good and Evil* by Friedrich Nietzsche

An oft-scribbled bit of college-campus graffiti goes, "God is dead — Nietzsche," followed by "Nietzsche is dead — God." Nietzsche's contention that "God is dead" first appeared in his 1882 book, *The Gay Science*, but was expanded and popularized in *Beyond Good and Evil*, which appeared four years later.□

In it, the German philosopher argued that all men are driven by an amoral "Will to Power," and that superior men will sweep aside all obstacles to their ambition, including religiously-inspired moral rules. Not surprisingly, the Nazis loved Nietzsche.

10. *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* by John Maynard Keynes

□Lord Keynes was an interesting contradiction. A member of the British elite (he was educated at Eton and Cambridge), he did more to popularize ever-expanding government than any other economist of his era.

Keynes became immensely wealthy through his investments, yet argued in favor of deficit spending and government borrowing. Long before Richard Nixon famously said, "We are all Keynesians now," Franklin Roosevelt used Keynes' arguments to justify the massive growth of government. As a result, today we have a \$3.5 trillion Federal budget and a \$13.8 trillion national debt. Thanks, Lord Keynes.

Dishonorable Mentions□

Want some more really bad books? There are 10 additional titles that also garnered a substantial number of votes, but fell short of the top 10. In order they are: *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich, *What Is To Be Done* by V.I. Lenin, *Authoritarian Personality* by Theodor Adorno, *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill (I don't know why this got included), *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* by B.F. Skinner, *Reflections on Violence* by Georges Sorel, *The Promise of American Life* by Herbert Croly, *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, *Madness and Civilization* by Michel Foucault, and *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization* by Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

So there you have it — 20 books that have, by and large, caused unimaginable suffering, horror, and devastation in the world. While some of them have (deservedly) disappeared into the trash cans of history, you will still find most of them praised and promoted on our college campuses today.

And allow me to add one more: *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Inheritance*, by Barack Obama. This book is credited with helping to launch Obama's presidential campaign. You can see where that has gotten us.

Until next time, keep some powder dry.

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