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I'll share Stan's message as an example: Beloved loved his answer last week to the question about Project Gutenberg's books! I've always wondered how to do that! I followed your instructions and downloaded Pride and Prejudice in seconds and started reading it in the Kindle app! Do you have any recommendations from Project Gutenberg? Give me a great list of things to read from there! Sure! Here are 50 great books you can download from Project Gutenberg right now for free and immediately start reading! Each is linked to your book page along with a convenient mobile link if you are looking for this on a tablet or smartphone. These are all the books I love that come recommended by me personally. Fiction Wuthering Heights (mobile) by Emily Brontë is the prototypical Gothic novel, centered on the lives of two young lovers, Heathcliff and Catherine. When Catherine decides to marry another, Heathcliff plots and avenges Catherine's family and her husband's family. Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice (mobile) focuses on Elizabeth Bennet, the eldest daughter of a 19th century English family who is facing considerable family pressure to get married. The book focuses on her growth as a person as she is courted by Mr Darcy, a rather distant fellow she initially dislikes. Jane Eyre (mobile) of Charlotte Brontë focuses on the titular orphan girl, who struggles to get an education on her own on a stern boarding and eventually ends up as a housekeeper in a family with some secrets. Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility (mobile) tells the story of the Dashwood sisters living in a small house in the land of a wealthy relative due to some misfortune of life. Most of the novel focuses on the growth of their characters, particularly the youngest, and how they discover love and their place in the world. The growth of Marianne Dashwood's character is beautifully told, both in terms of the pleasure of the book and in terms of giving the reader something to think about. Charles Dickens' Great Expectations (mobile) is a novel about Pip, an orphan who opens the novel as a young man but grows into adulthood throughout history. This one has all the great things about Dickens' novels – memorable characters from all walks of life that grow and change throughout the novel, a great sense of humor, and some great food for about divisions in society entered there with action and history. Bram Stoker's Dracula (mobile) is perhaps the greatest gothic horror novel, telling the classic story of Count Dracula, a vampire who moved to Transylvania in order to spread his undead curse, and the group of villagers fighting him, most notably Professor Abraham van Helsing. Almost everything you could expect to find in a great horror novel is right here. Les Misérables (mobile) by Victor Hugo is a powerful novel describing a long game of cat and mouse between the alleged criminal Jean Valjean and Javert, the inspector who pursues him, with many side adventures and tales of people from all levels of society. The opposite characters of Valjean and Javert, particularly Valjean's growth throughout the book, made this a timeless tale enjoyed by millions of readers. Jane Austen's (mobile) persuasion tells the story of a family renting their home to a couple, only to discover that the daughter of the family used to be engaged to the brother of the wife who is renting that house. Austen practically defines romantic comedy, and this is right in line with her other works, with this standing out because of the protagonist's relative maturity, which is in line with Austen's own relative maturity when she wrote the book. Anna Karenina (mobile) by Leo Tolstoy focuses on a case between the titular Anna Karenina and the wealthy count Vronsky. The book spins and turns as it describes the pros and cons of their relationship and how Russian social standards and the Orthodox Church and societies in other parts of Europe (especially Italy) have reacted to his case. The growth and change in characters make this a great read, especially with the way the author handles the title character as her life is in flux. Herman Dickens' David Copperfield (mobile) covers the life of the title character from childhood to maturity through all sorts of ups and downs, and like any good Dickens novel, the story is loaded with interesting and memorable characters such as morally dishonest financial secretary Uriah Heep and comically eccentric aunt Betsey Trotwood. Dickens' magic is in his characters, and this is on full display here. Wilkie Collins' Woman in White (mobile) is a really entertaining crime/mystery novel with a really imaginative blow at the center of it, one that I don't want to spoil for anyone who can read it. Suffice it to say that if you like mystery/crime novels with unexpected twists and some memorable characters, you'll find plenty to like with this one. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Brothers Karamazov (mobile) led me to think more deeply about faith, judgment and human reasoning more than any novel I've ever read. The novel focuses on the tense relationship between a family patriarch and the interconnected life of his four children and the moral and social paths that their lives each takes. Dostoyevsky is brilliant at in outside the moral ambiguity in people's characters, where they have huge blind spots about their own flaws as people, and this novel is full of it. The characters end up being incredibly rich because of this and you'll be thinking about it for the rest of your life. H.G. Wells' (mobile) Time Machine is a great science fiction novel about a man who travels 800,000 years into the future to discover that the upper class and working class of mankind have become two distinct species, with completely different attributes and societies. Wells keeps the story moving rather than staying too long in the implications of societies, giving just a great story and leaving you thinking and wanting more when you close the book. Charles Dickens' Bleak House (mobile) is about an ongoing legal case about conflicting wills with different beneficiaries and the petty fights and completely comical and ineffective and corrupt legal system in which the case is being tried. As always with a Dickens novel, the story runs and is filled with comic characters and people from all levels of society and character. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment (mobile) is the story of a poor former student who plans to assassinate a despicable pawnshop and steal his money. The student dreams of the good things he could do with this money rather than the slimy things he perceives the pawnman as doing, but eventually his own consciousness and the events of chance interfere with the planned crime. As with dostoyevsky's other works, this thrives on morally ambiguous characters and situations that leave you thinking long after the cover is closed. The Importance of Being Serious (mobile) by Oscar Wilde is a comedy centered around a group of people who use pseudonyms and fake identities to dodge their social obligations. As you can imagine, it's thick with unexpected meetings and interactions and all sorts of embarrassment, wrapped in a hilarious package. Dorian Gray's (mobile) image of Oscar Wilde has a very different tone from Earnest; here, a rather unpleasant individual named Dorian Gray manages to seemingly never grow old and maintains his youthful appearance, but this is due to the granting of a desire: his true appearance is kept locked in a painting, which ages horribly over time. Herman Melville's Moby-Dick (mobile) is one of those books that everyone should read simply because of the frequency with which it appears in popular culture in many ways. The heart of the story – Pequot captain Ahab, is obsessed with a large white whale that bit part of his leg on a pre-whaling trip – is well known, but the details draw him into a dark tale of obsession. Jules Verne's 20,000 Subooh Leagues (mobile) is a prime example of how the wonderful prototypic science fiction of the late maturity that is in the hands of someone who can write well with great imagination. Here, Verne imagines a rather advanced submarine, captained by his egomaniac companion called Nemo who sails the seas for his own unclear reasons. Nemo's mix of the puzzle with the wonderful descriptions of the submarine and its capabilities make it incredibly fun to read. Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness tells the story of a man traveling down the Congo River to visit an enigmatic ivory merchant who has apparently built a rather dark cult of personality around him. This is a dark book, but that, if you pay attention, will make you think a lot about the world around you. The Awakening (mobile), by Kate Chopin, tells the story of Edna, a woman in Louisiana at the turn of the 20th century who is struggling to balance society's view of women and their roles with the reality she is experiencing and observing in everyday life for her and the women around her. Edna's story is harrowing and moving, as she is constantly torn between what is expected of her and what she feels is the right thing to do. H.G. Wells' War of the Worlds (mobile) is a brilliant tale of an invasion of outer space by seemingly almighty aliens. This story is the baseline from which virtually all stories of hostile alien invasion are adred; it's a great work of imagination with Wells' great descriptive talent at work. Nathaniel Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter (mobile) tells the story of a forbidden romance between a woman and a pastor in an American colonial community, where the woman is shunned for her choices for the values of that community. The basic outline of the story is well known, but it is in the details and characters of Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne that this really clicks. Robert W. Chambers' King in Yellow (mobile) is a truly classic collection of interrelated horror stories that all address a play called The King in Yellow and some of the supernatural elements surrounding the play's performance. This novel often links to the work of H.P. Lovecraft, but I think Chambers' writing exceeds That of Lovecraft. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sign of the Four (mobile) is one of sherlock holmes' truly great stories, along with the following. As in most mysteries, it's not really much fun to spoil the story or the result. Just say, you will be glad that you read it if you like mysteries. A study in Scarlet (mobile) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is probably my favourite of all Sherlock Holmes tales, as this is based on the characters of Watson and Holmes so well within the narrative of a well-crafted detective story. Again, I don't want to spoil a good mystery! Silas Marner (mobile) by George Eliot is one of my favorite novels ever written, but it's surprisingly underrated today. The novel revolves around a very low-lynn weaver with the sort that seems to be the of a series of very unfortunate events. I once tried to write a modernization of this, but found it beyond my writing skills (although I still have my notes somewhere), place, about the experiences of the title character really talks to me. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's (mobile) focuses on the titular character, who is such a serious and good man in a society full of... questionable people that much of society interprets him as being unintelligent. Is it right to interpret seriousness and kindness as a failure? I don't think so, but it's a question that goes through this book. As always with Dostoyevsky, you keep thinking about the rights and mistakes of human society. A Tale of Two Cities (mobile) by Charles Dickens is probably his greatest novel. It tells the interconnected story of several families and individuals between the cities of London and France during the years leading up to the French Revolution and how their lives were thrown into turmoil by these events. The characters are rich, as Dickens is expected, but the backdrop of two societies going in slightly different directions and how it affected the lives of ordinary people makes this exceptional. George Eliot's Middlemarch (mobile) tells the story of the interconnected life of a number of people living in the fictional English city of Middlemarch in the mid-19th century. Philosophy The (mobile) Republic of Plato is a discussion about the meaning of justice and how one could project a city or a state centered entirely around the concept of justice. What would that look like? Would it be a place worth living in? Meditations (mobile) of Marcus Aurelius is a series of notebooks/diaries of the Roman emperor in which he reflects on how he mentally prepares to do the best job he can as emperor, which was very good – Marcus Aurelius is widely considered one of the great Roman emperors. This is considered one of the outstanding works of the philosophy of stoicism. Thomas More's Utopia (mobile) describes an island society that has adopted a simple orderly life that seems to be very pleasant to be a part of but would function as a place to live? Is it really a utopia? That's really a question for the reader to decide. Tao te Ching (mobile) of Lao-Tzu is a work I wasn't sure whether I should categorize as religious or philosophical as it actually crosses the fence between the two (as well as some items from the religious group, below). The book focuses on the idea of virtue and how to practice it in life in a very lyrical way that presents ideas, apparently contradicts them, and then reconciles contradictions. On the Principles of Political Economy, and Taxation (mobile) by David Ricardo is an economics book that dives into the reasons behind a lot of simple economics that we take for granted, such as why rent rises in highly populated areas and how machine and automation benefit everyone except for the people at the bottom of the (a little). Ricardo's writing is very easy to translate directly into modern situations such as expensive rent in New York and San Francisco. Immanuel Kant's critique of Pure Reason essentially argues that reason, logic, and data are insufficient to gain a complete understanding of the world. It's a very heavy philosophical job, but if you go through this patiently, it will leave you thinking a lot about how people make decisions and some of society's broader trends. On The Liberty (mobile) of John Stuart Mill argues that the only way to balance authority and freedom is to seek solutions that have maximum utility; in other words, neither strict authority nor complete freedom is the best solution in all situations, but that individual situations may tend more in one direction or another. In addition to Good and Evil (mobile), by Friedrich Nietzsche, it focuses on the idea that a good person is not necessarily the complete opposite of an evil person and that he often operates with the same basic impulses, with kindness representing a refinement of these impulses. For example, a person who acts selflessly and a person who acts cruelly may be seeking the same benefit, but only has different approaches to acquiring that benefit. Leaves of Grass Poetry (mobile) by Walt Whitman is perhaps my favorite work of poetry ever written. I often quote Whitman in my inspirational columns, and many of his best works come from this book – and it's free. Emily Dickinson's (mobile) poems, on the other hand, is a largely complete collection of her works. I only think of Whitman as a poet about the outside – the world at large – while Dickinson often strikes a chord with the interior – the inner world. It's not a strict line, of course, but it's a description of how each makes me feel. Essays / General Nonfiction Walden (mobile) by Henry David Thoreau tells the story of a two-year period in Thoreau's life in which he lived largely in solitude in the woods near Walden Pond in a house he built himself. The book is highly introspective, as one might expect; Thoreau takes the opportunity to reflect within himself and his character, as well as out of society as a whole. Ralph Waldo Emerson's (mobile) essays is a great pile of wonderful essays from one of my favorite writers of all time. I covered one of his essays, Self-Reliance, in an in-depth series three years ago, but this essay just scratches the surface of the great things one can find in this volume. As always with a book of essays, it can be easily read into small pieces, broken at your convenience. Henry Adams' Education (mobile) by Henry Adams is a wonderful book about the power of self-directed learning and education through a mix of books and experiences. Adams looks at himself under a microscope to find out that he did to acquire knowledge and come to his current understanding of the world, and in doing so conveys very strong on self-education and opportunity. Religion The King James Bible (mobile) may not be the best translation of the Holy Bible into English, but there are parts of it that are almost impressive in the beauty of the language. It is the most cited translation in literature and popular culture and for good reason. It is worth reading for cultural understanding and for pure literary appreciation, regardless of your beliefs. The Quran (mobile) is in the same boat as the Bible – regardless of your particular religious beliefs, it is worth reading as a cultural document and as a tool for a better understanding of a religion followed by billions. Just like in the Bible, there are incredibly beautiful and lyrical sections that will touch your heart and spirit. The Bhagavad Gita (mobile) is a Hindu scripture that takes the form of a dialogue between a prince and his carriage as they discuss the fight in an upcoming battle. Is it more important to be chivalrous or fight to win if you believe your cause is right? The whole work is beautiful and lyrical and focuses on a powerful issue. Analects (mobile) of Confucius is one of the central works of Confucianism and consists of a series of sayings and ideas attributed to him. This work really seems a general orientation on how to live a reflective and patient and morally cultivated life, which is necessary to be part of a good society. Rāmāyaṇa de Vālmīki (mobile) is an epic poem that is a fundamental work in various religions (Hinduism, Jain and Sikh) and various cultures in South Asia. The poem focuses on how to be an ideal person, no matter your role in life – the ideal servant, the ideal wife, the ideal brother, the ideal father and the ideal king, among others, and how they relate to each other. Alexis de Tocqueville's History Democracy in America (mobile) is a powerful interconnected series of essays about America and how it governs itself. The book is positive but realistic and insightful, and provides an incredibly valuable read to anyone bothered by the current American political state and wanting to get in touch with the great American political experience. The (mobile) Histories of Herodotus is an ancient work describing the clashes between the various societies of North Africa and Greece during the 5th century BC. It describes the rise of the Persian empire and many small wars, and curiously intersperses Greek mythology with the conflicts of humans. Ufa! If you can't find something to read there, you're not trying! Continue reading