Must Read: Rediscovering American Bestsellers: From Charlotte Temple to The Da Vinci Code

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What is it about certain books that makes them bestsellers? Why do some of these books remain popular for centuries, and others fade gently into obscurity? And why is it that when scholars do turn their attention to bestsellers, they seem only to be interested in the same handful of blockbusters, when so many books that were once immensely popular remain under-examined? Addressing those and other equally pressing questions about popular literature, *Must Read* is the first scholarly collection to offer both a survey of the evolution of American bestsellers as well as critical readings of some of the key texts that have shaped the American imagination since the nation's founding.Focusing on a mix of enduring and forgotten bestsellers, the essays in this collection consider 18th and 19th century works, like *Charlotte Temple* or *Ben-Hur*, that were once considered epochal but are now virtually ignored; 20th century favorites such as *The Sheik* and *Peyton Place*; and 21st century blockbusters including the novels of *Nicholas Sparks, The Kite Runner*, and *The Da Vinci Code*.

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