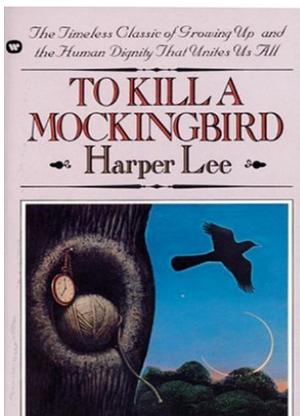


## 8 Books/Book Series that Helped Me Get Where I Am Today

While I've explored film and television, books have been an essential part of informing my outlook on characters and stories. They allow my already imaginative mind to explode with possibilities.

As a storyteller, differing writing approaches allow me to hone my craft by drawing from these influences. Being an avid reader, books have fed my appetite for words, knowledge, understanding, and the art of storytelling.

So, enjoy this trip down memory lane with me as I share the seven books that helped me get where I am today.

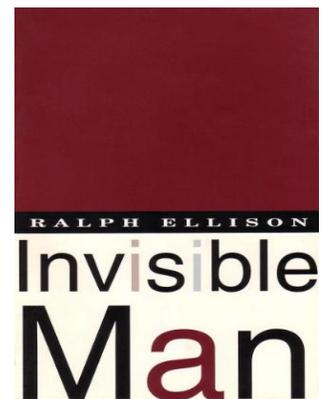


### *To Kill a Mockingbird* – Harper Lee

This classic Pulitzer Prize-winning coming-of-age novel illustrates Scout Finch coming to terms with racism in the 1930s American South as her father Atticus defends a black man Tom Robinson. Seeing the world through a six-year-old's eyes spoke to me as a teenager coming of age in the early 2000s with both a sense of warmth and uneasiness.

### *Invisible Man* – Ralph Ellison

This National Book Award-winning novel displays the trials and tribulation of the narrator as he goes from promising college student to a broken Black man in 1940s America. As I transitioned from a black boy into a man, this book prepared me for the racism and discrimination I would someday face as an adult in America.



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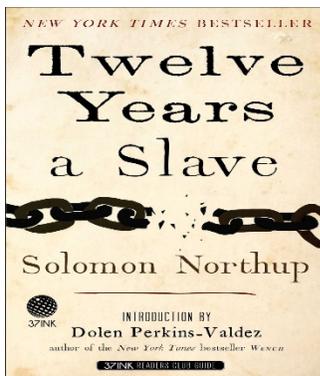
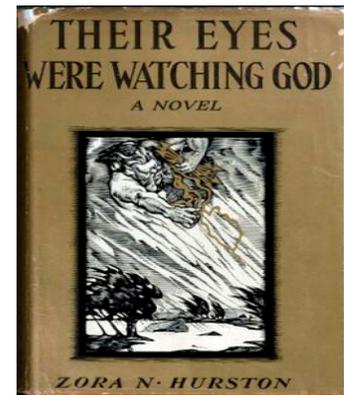


*The Boxcar Children* series – Gretchen Warner

The children's book series features the adventures of the orphaned Alden children and their grandfather as they solve mysteries over school breaks. As a young reader, the book series allowed me to explore my imagination while opening my mind to a world of words.

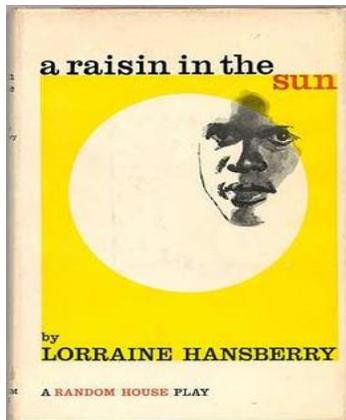
*Their Eyes Were Watching God* – Zora Neale Hurston

This classic novel born from the Harlem Renaissance showcases the liberation of Janie Crawford against the backdrop of early 20th century Florida. Reading this book was the first time I was able to read something set in the South centered around African American life.



*12 Years a Slave* – Solomon Burke

This slavery memoir tells the story of freedman Solomon Northup as he fights to regain his freedom after being sold into slavery. As a young adult, I read this book after seeing the film, which allowed me to read Northup's words with a sense of awareness and respect.

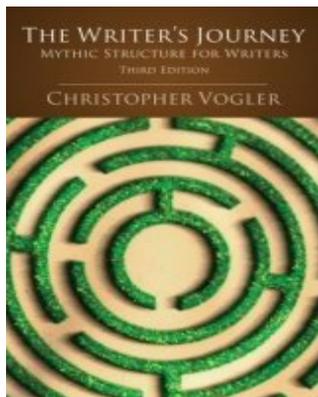
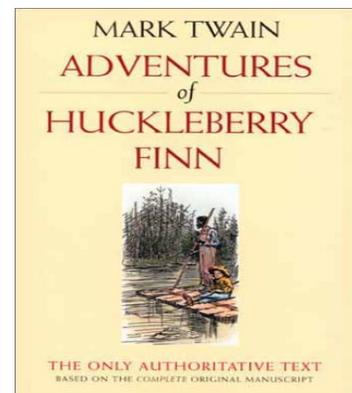


*A Raisin in the Sun* – Lorraine Hansberry

This classic Tony Award-winning play tells the story of the Younger family trying to seek financial freedom after receiving an insurance payout. Reading this play in high school illustrated how the experience of the Black American family hadn't changed much since it was written, but still gave hope for a prosperous future.

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* – Mark Twain

Twain's most celebrated and controversial work brings the adventures of Tom Sawyer's best friend Huck and Jim as they travel up the Mississippi River. As a teenager, I enjoyed the comradery with Huck and Jim and the characterizations in the book even though I found some of the portrayals and dialogue to be problematic.



*The Writer's Journey* – Christopher Vogler

This quintessential guide breaks down the art of storytelling from every angle from archetypes to major plot points to finding inspiration. Reading Vogler's words marked the first time I was able to understand all the elements that went into creating a great story that grabs people.

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The works mentioned on this list helped to shape my foundation as a writer and storyteller. With that said, I hope to one create masterpieces that the world cherishes long after I'm gone.