

Here is a list of some of the books I have enjoyed and some that have changed the way I think about various things.

The following books are by Stephen Jay Gould. He is a wonderful writer.

The mismeasure of man.

There is no such thing as IQ and this book explains why.

Wonderful life.

About early evolution (the Cambrian explosion 500 million B.P.) and leads to a convincing argument that the usual discussions suggesting there is lots of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe are based on unwarranted assumptions.

Panda's thumb

Hen's teeth and Horse's toes

Two books that show the beauty, depth of ideas, and subtlety of evolutionary science.

Guns, germs and steel by Jarred Diamond.

A history that connects natural history to human history in a way no other book I know of does. Why did the Europe invade America and not vice-versa ?

Selfish gene

Blind watchmaker

Both by Richard Dawkins. These give some really nifty insights into evolution.

Lies my teacher told me by James W. Loewen

A book which probably has even more impact if you went to high school in the USA. For example what do YOU know about Helen Keller ?

Braided lives by Marge Piercy.

A wonderful novel and one of the few novels to change how I think about something. Everyone (especially men) should read it

Slaughter House Five by Kurt Vonngut.

Another novel, and a masterpiece. I read this when I was fifteen and it opened my eyes to what the allies did in WW II. It also expresses very nicely a view of time summarized by "all time is eternally present" that both fits with the modern physics/mathematics view of space-time as a 4-manifold and emotionally for anyone who has lost a loved one. Short , well written and to the point.

Consciousness Explained by Daniel Dennet.

This book told me something about my own mind. The book is slow but well worth the effort. The discussion about why we do not notice our own blind spot really hits home. It made me think about what goes on in my head when I look at something.

The language Instinct by Steven Pinker.

So how do children know linguistic things that they have never experienced ?

How the mind works by Steven Pinker.

Some novels that were fun at the time:

Zen and the Art of motorcycle maintenance by Robert Pirzig.

I read this book one weekend at the age of 26. I thought it must have been written for me and me alone. It talks about motorbikes (I rode one then) Poincare (a mathematician. I was writing my PhD at the time on an area of mathematics he worked on) and a lot of gibberish about *quality* and a trip through the Rocky mountains which all seemed terribly appealing at the time.

Catch 22 by Joseph Heller.

The stupidity of war.

Iain Banks has written a lot of good stuff.

The Bridge

The Wasp factory (read it if you dare, some love it, others hate it)

Use of weapons

Feersum endjin (a book that is very hard to read, in places you have to speak it aloud and listen to what you are saying)

If you want to know more about mathematics (not calculus, or the stuff you did in school)

Mathematics: A Very Short Introduction by Timothy Gowers

Flatland by Edwin A. Abbott

Flatterland: Like Flatland, Only More So by Ian Stewart

The Heart of Mathematics: An invitation to effective thinking by Edward B. Burger,
Michael Starbird