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Reflections on Reading

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REFLECTIONS ON READING

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On 23 February 2021, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Michael M. Gilday, USN, released his update to the CNO Professional Reading Program (CNO-PRP). He identified fifty-three books of particular benefit to the professional development of all sailors, E-1 to O-10. The titles and authors of these books were identified in the previous issue of the *Naval War College Review* (Spring 2021).

The master chief petty officer of the Navy (MCPON) also identified a list of books he believes to be of special value to the enlisted force. However, to be clear: any sailor, of any rank, can read any book on the two lists. The differentiation is intended simply to serve as a guide if readers want to focus their limited time on the books most appropriate to their level of experience.

The twenty-one books on the MCPON's suggested reading list are listed below by title and author or editor.

<i>Blink</i>	Malcolm Gladwell
<i>Brave New World</i>	Aldous Huxley
<i>A Call to Conscience</i>	Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, eds.
<i>Cannonball!</i>	Brock Yates
<i>The Captain Class</i>	Sam Walker
<i>Class 11</i>	T. J. Waters
<i>Descent into Darkness</i>	Edward C. Raymer
<i>Duty</i>	Robert M. Gates
<i>The Good Shepherd</i>	C. S. Forester
<i>The Happiness Advantage</i>	Shawn Achor

<i>Jonathan Livingston Seagull</i>	Richard Bach
<i>The Old Man's Trail</i>	Tom Campbell
<i>The Only Woman in the Room</i>	Marie Benedict
<i>Overcome</i>	Jason Redman
<i>Perform under Pressure</i>	Ceri Evans
<i>Run Silent, Run Deep</i>	Edward L. Beach
<i>Shoot the Women First</i>	Eileen MacDonald
<i>Starship Troopers</i>	Robert A. Heinlein
<i>Team of Teams</i>	Stanley McChrystal
<i>Tragedy at Honda</i>	Charles A. Lockwood and Hans Christian Adamson
<i>We Die Alone</i>	David Howarth

All seventy-four books are highlighted and summarized on the CNO-PRP website, which can be found at navy.mil/CNO-Professional-Reading-Program/. On this site, sailors also can download the “U.S. Navy Reading Checklist,” a one-page listing of all titles arrayed in their various topical categories and according to suggested experience levels. It can serve as a motivational tool for dedicated readers to use to record their progress through the world of professional reading—you can check *out* the books, then check them *off* the list as you read them!

A few of the books featured in the recently revised CNO-PRP have been considered controversial by some critics. CNO Gilday has responded to this criticism by noting, “While I do not endorse every viewpoint of the books on this reading list, I believe exposure to varied ideas improves the critical thinking skills of our Sailors. My commitment to them is to continue to listen, make sure their voice is heard, and make the Navy a shining example of an organization centered on respect, inclusive of all.”

Author Thomas Brown addresses the value of reading opposing views when he notes that

we should be approaching new writing with the purpose of understanding not disproving. Our aim should be to learn, not to defeat. In doing this we will likely come to better engage with our own ideas as well as the ones being presented on the page in front of you.

This is important as while you may whole-heartedly disagree with what a piece of literature is saying, there is always something that can be gained from reading it. You might encounter a new perspective on a topic you have never considered; you might

learn of a new topic you never knew existed; you might entirely change your opinion on something. None of this is guaranteed, but you won't know for sure unless you read with an understanding approach.*

As the CNO and MCPON say, we should all "Read Well to Lead Well"!

JOHN E. JACKSON

* Thomas Brown, "How to Read Something You Don't Agree With and Why We Should Do It More Often," *Medium*, 1 March 2019, tbrown12321.medium.com/.