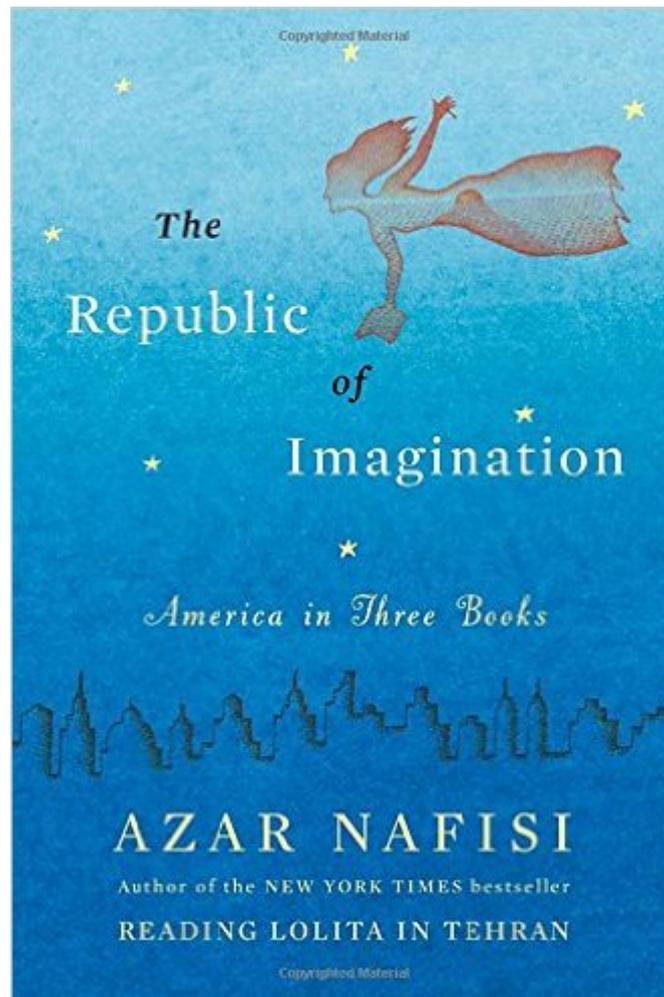


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The Republic Of Imagination: America In Three Books



Synopsis

A passionate hymn to the power of fiction to change people's lives, by the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* Ten years ago, Azar Nafisi electrified readers with her million-copy bestseller, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, which told the story of how, against the backdrop of morality squads and executions, she taught *The Great Gatsby* and other classics to her eager students in Iran. In this exhilarating followup, Nafisi has written the book her fans have been waiting for: an impassioned, beguiling, and utterly original tribute to the vital importance of fiction in a democratic society. What *Reading Lolita in Tehran* was for Iran, *The Republic of Imagination* is for America. Taking her cue from a challenge thrown to her in Seattle, where a skeptical reader told her that Americans don't care about books the way they did back in Iran, she energetically responds to those who say fiction has nothing to teach us. Blending memoir and polemic with close readings of her favorite American novels—*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Babbitt*, and *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, among others—she invites us to join her as citizens of her "Republic of Imagination," a country where the villains are conformity and orthodoxy and the only passport to entry is a free mind and a willingness to dream.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Every once in a while a book comes along that not only makes you think, but challenges you in ways you were not expecting. This would be one of those books. Azar Nafisi has the unique advantage of viewing this country and its attitude toward art and literature from the outside.

Originally from Iran, she has become an American citizen (in her words because she found herself grumbling about America so she knew she was an American). But it is her heritage that gives her a different understanding of the meaning of fiction and how this country views it. Using four writers, which she had narrowed from a list of twenty-four, Nafisi shows us how fiction is not only necessary but vital to the health of this nation. She makes the point that imagination, defined as free thinking, is nurtured by fiction and without it a society will suffer and stagnate. Beginning with Mark Twain, then Sinclair Lewis, followed by Carson McCullers, and ending with James Baldwin, Nafisi reinforces the idea that literature is as important to one's education as science and technology. Nafisi knows what it means to live in a country where imagination is stifled, books are banned, and people are imprisoned or killed for simply seeking an education. This book challenges all of us to make sure literature and art do not disappear and to actively promote both in our schools and in our communities. Her ideas can be summed into one question she asks in the book. "Why do tyrants understand the dangers of a democratic imagination more than our policy makers appreciate its necessity?" While I agree with almost all of what she says, the only negative aspect to the book is that she injects her opinions with a heavy hand.

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