

From the Stacks
By Julie Orf
Dunklin County Library

Happy Public Domain Day! Well, actually, now a few days late, but with January 1, 2026, a new crop of creative works from 1930 (along with sound recordings from 1925) will enter the public domain in the United States—ready to be remixed, recycled, or repurposed into screenplays, musicals, short stories, novels, and so much more. From *Nancy Drew* to *Animal Crackers* to *The Maltese Falcon*, movies may be restored or digitized and novels may be printed at a more reasonable price for readers.

An impressive roster of literary giants standout for public domain day 2026. Highlighting the year are William Faulkner's masterpiece *As I Lay Dying*, Dashiell Hammett's gritty noir *The Maltese Falcon*, and Evelyn Waugh's sharp satire *Vile Bodies*. Younger readers can also celebrate the arrival of the beloved classics Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*, the triumphant spirit of Watty Piper's *The Little Engine That Could*, and the Newbery-winning *The Cat Who Went to Heaven* by Elizabeth Coatsworth. This day also welcomed two of mystery's most iconic leading ladies. This includes the debut of the plucky teen sleuth in the original *Nancy Drew* mysteries, alongside Miss Marple's first appearance in Agatha Christie's *The Murder at the Vicarage*. *Fun with Dick and Jane* is a book series created by Zerna Sharp and written by William S. Gray to teach children to read have no copyright restrictions now, and these books are considered collector's items today.

The 2026 public domain expansion brings a wealth of musical heritage into the fold. Compositions from 1930, such as the Ira and George Gershwin brothers' "I Got Rhythm" and *Embraceable You* and Hoagy Carmichael's "Georgia on My Mind," are now available for public use. On the recording side, hits like "Yes Sir, That's My Baby" and "I'll See You in My Dreams," as well as influential blues recordings by Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong are free of copyright. *Sweet Georgia Brown* by Ben Bernie and His Hotel Roosevelt Orchestra that spent five weeks at #1 and later became the Harlem Globetrotters' anthem may be used without restrictions.

The movie selection spans war stories, musicals, thrillers, Westerns, comedies and more, coming from directors including Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hughes and Salvador Dalí. The 2026 list also shines a spotlight on the humble beginnings of Hollywood royalty. Fans can revisit Bing Crosby's big-screen debut in *King of Jazz*, Greta Garbo's pivotal transition to sound in her first "talkie," *Anna Christie*, and the birth of a Western icon in *The Big Trail*, John Wayne's very first leading role. *Ladies of Leisure*, a film directed by Frank Capra and starring Barbara Stanwyck, and *Another Fine Mess*, directed by James Parrott, starring Laurel and Hardy are two personal favorites.

If you like memoirs, *My Early Life*, Winston Churchill, and *Growing Up in New Guinea*, Margaret Mead are without copyright. These nonfiction pieces may appear online with no fees attached for reading. Several poems have reached their public domain date. "Ash Wednesday", T.S. Eliot, and "The Bridge", Hart Crane, may pop up in magazine or newspaper or a line may be used as well. *The Collected Poems* by Robert Frost, first published in 1930, contain the poem, "The Death of the Hired Man". Another personal favorite poem contains the themes of hard work, forgiveness, and loyalty. "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in" is spoken by the wife, Mary, in this poem to her husband about the farmhand. Home is a place of necessity and unconditional acceptance, a fundamental human need, not something earned or deserved and given through love.