



# You Can't Read This: Forbidden Books, Lost Writing, Mistranslations, and Codes

*Val Ross*

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## **You Can't Read This: Forbidden Books, Lost Writing, Mistranslations, and Codes** Val Ross

Wherever people can read, there are stories about the magic, mystery, and power of what they read. Val Ross presents a history of reading that is, in fact, the story of the monumental, on-going struggle to read. From Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon the Great, the world's oldest signed author to Empress Shotoku of Japan who in 764 ordered the printing of one million Buddhist prayers; from the story of Hulagu, Ghengis Khan's nasty brother who destroyed the library of Baghdad to Bowdler and the censorship of Shakespeare, there have been barriers to reading ranging from the physical to the economical, social, and political.

Written for children ages ten and up, *You Can't Read This* explores the development of alphabets, the decoding of ancient languages, and censorship in Ancient Rome and modern America. It's about secret writing, trashed libraries, writers on the run, writers in hiding, books that are thought to have magical powers and mistranslations that started wars. It's about people: from the American slave Frederick Douglass to girls in Afghanistan in the year 2001 who defied laws that prevented them from learning to read.

What do all these stories have in common?

They're all about how texts contain power – and how people everywhere throughout history have devoted their wills and their brains to reading and unleashing the power of the word.

With lavish illustrations and an index, this is history at its finest.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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