Delve Deeper into The Look of Silence
A film by Joshua Oppenheimer

This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Robert Surratt of The San Diego Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary The Look of Silence.

In this Oscar®-nominated film, winner of more than 70 awards, an optometrist identifies the men who killed his brother in the horrific 1965 Indonesian genocide. He confronts them while testing their eyesight and demands they accept responsibility. Winner, Grand Jury Prize, Critics Prize and Human Rights Award, 2014 Venice Film Festival.

ADULT NONFICTION

Larasati, Rachmi Diyah. The Dance That Makes You Vanish: Cultural Reconstruction in Post-Genocide Indonesia. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2013. In The Dance That Makes You Vanish, an examination of the relationship between female dancers and the Indonesian state since 1965, Rachmi Diyah Larasati elucidates the Suharto regime’s dual-edged strategy: persecuting and killing performers perceived as communist or left leaning while simultaneously producing and deploying “replicas”—new bodies trained to standardize and unify the “unruly” movements and voices of those vanished—as idealized representatives of Indonesia’s cultural elegance and composure in bowing to autocratic rule.


Pisani, Elizabeth. Indonesia, etc.: Exploring the Improbable Nation. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014. Declaring independence in 1945, Indonesia said it would “work out the details of the transfer of power etc. as soon as possible.” With over 300 ethnic groups spread across over 13,500 islands, the world’s fourth most populous nation has been working on that “etc.” ever since. Bewitched by Indonesia for twenty-five years, Elizabeth Pisani recently traveled 26,000 miles around the archipelago in search of the links that bind this impossibly disparate nation.


Sukanta, Putu Oka and Jennifer Lindsay. Breaking the Silence: Survivors Speak About the 1965-66 Violence in Indonesia. Monash University Press, 2014. Edited by former political prisoner Putu Oka Sukanta, this is a collection of accounts from people around the archipelago who experienced the 1965 violence in Indonesia. These accounts, including one from a perpetrator who is now tormented by guilt, and survivors who still feel isolated and rejected by society, show how the violence continues to influence Indonesian society.

Vltchek, André and Rossie Indira. Exile: Conversations with Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Chicago: Haymarket
Delve Deeper into *The Look of Silence*
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**Books, 2006.** In these remarkable interviews with Indonesia’s most celebrated writer, he speaks out against tyranny and injustice and discusses personal and political topics he could never before address in public.

**ADULT FICTION**


*Kurniawan, Eka. Beauty is a Wound.* New York, NY: New Directions, 2015. The beautiful Indo prostitute Dewi Ayu and her four daughters are beset by incest, murder, bestiality, rape, insanity, monstrosity, and the often vengeful undead. Kurniawan’s gleefully grotesque hyperbole functions as a scathing critique of his young nation’s troubled past: the rapacious offhand greed of colonialism; the chaotic struggle for independence; the 1965 mass murders of perhaps a million “Communists,” followed by three decades of Suharto’s despotic rule.


**NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS**

*Heits, Rudolph T. Communism.* Broomall, PA: Mason Crest, 2013. For several decades during the 20th century, communism was one of the world’s dominant forms of government. At one time, Communist regimes held power across much of Asia and all of Eastern Europe. This book provides an introduction to communism, exploring the principles that underpin communism and examines the way Communist governments have exercised power in practice.

*Hibbs, Linda. All About Indonesia: Stories, Songs and Crafts for Kids.* North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2013. Introduces Indonesia, describing its history, geography, culture, everyday life, educational system, cuisine, language, and religion, as well as discussing traditional regional costumes, music, and dance.


*Tohari, Ahmad. The Dancer: A Trilogy of Novels.* Jakarta: Lontar Foundation, 2003. Set in the tumultuous days of the mid 1960s, *The Dancer* describes a village community struggling to adapt to a rapidly changing world. It also provides readers with a ground-level view of the political turmoil and human tragedy leading up to and following the abortive Communist coup.


**FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS**

*McCormick, Patricia. Never Fall Down: A Novel.* New York, NY: Blazer + Bray, 2012. When soldiers arrive at his hometown in Cambodia, Arn is just a kid, dancing to rock ‘n’ roll, hustling for spare change, and selling ice cream with his brother. But after the soldiers march the entire population into the countryside, his life is changed forever. Based on the true story of Cambodian advocate Arn Chorn-Pond.

*Mikaelson, Ben. Tree Girl.* New York, NY: Harper Tempest, 2004. They call Gabriela “Tree Girl” or Laj Ali Re Jayub in her native language of Quich’e. Gabi climbs trees to be among the sun rise into an empty sky. She is at home in the outstretched branches of the Guatemalan forests. Then one day from the safety of a tree, Gabi witnesses the sites and sounds of unspeakable massacre.

*Smith, Icy. Half Spoon of Rice: A Survival Story of the Cambodian genocide.* Manhattan Beach, CA: East West Discovery Press, 2010. Nine-year-old Nat is forced out of his Cambodian home and marched into the countryside when the Khmer Rouge comes into power. Nat is separated from his family and endures forced labor in rice fields from dawn to midnight with little food. Over the next four years, Nat confronts starvation, fear, and brutality. With the help of his friend Malis, Nat finds hope and the strength to escape, eventually reuniting with the family he loves.

**POV**