

Stories Told in Unusual Ways

A BookTalk Presentation by Scott Clark - April 2014

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_contemporary_epistolary_novels

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/oct/12/twitter-fiction-140-character-novels>



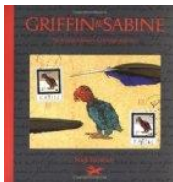
The Mezzanine

Nicholson Baker
Awarding member of the Nobel Prize
Nobel Prize

The Mezzanine [1988]

Nicholson Baker

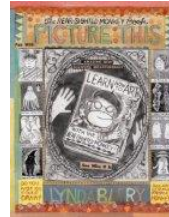
In his startling, witty, and inexhaustibly inventive first novel – first published in 1986 – the author of *Vox* and *The Fermata* uses a one-story escalator ride as the occasion for a dazzling reappraisal of everyday objects and rituals. From the humble milk carton to the act of tying one's shoes, *The Mezzanine* at once defamiliarizes the familiar world and endows it with loopy and euphoric poetry. Nicholson Baker's accounts of the ordinary become extraordinary through his sharp storytelling and his unconventional, conversational style. At first glance, *The Mezzanine* appears to be a book about nothing. In reality, it is a brilliant celebration of things, simultaneously demonstrating the value of reflection and the importance of everyday human experiences.



The Griffin and Sabine series

Nick Bantock

Griffin: It's good to get in touch with you at last. Could I have one of your fish postcards? I think you were right -- the wine glass has more impact than the cup. --Sabine
But Griffin had never met a woman named Sabine. How did she know him? How did she know his artwork? Who is she? Thus begins the strange and intriguing correspondence of Griffin and Sabine. And since each letter must be pulled from its own envelope, the reader has the delightful, forbidden sensation of reading someone else's mail. *Griffin & Sabine* is like no other illustrated novel: appealing to the poet and artist in everyone and sure to inspire a renaissance in the fine art of letter-writing, it tells an extraordinary story in an extraordinary way.



Picture This [2010]

Lynda Barry [741.5 qBar]

A series of portraits by the creator of *What It Is* features a myopic monkey protagonist and includes pieces originally painted on typed science and arithmetic notes from the 1920s, in a collection that follows her everyday and fantastical routines.



Fahrenheit 451: The Authorized Adaptation [2009]

Art by Tim Hamilton, based on the novel by Ray Bradbury [741.5 Bra]

For Guy Montag, a career fireman for whom kerosene is perfume, this is not just an official slogan. It is a mantra, a duty, a way of life in a tightly monitored world where thinking is dangerous and books are forbidden.

In 1953, Ray Bradbury envisioned one of the world's most unforgettable dystopian futures, and in *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451*, the artist Tim Hamilton translates this frightening modern masterpiece into a gorgeously imagined graphic novel. As could only occur with Bradbury's full cooperation in this authorized adaptation, Hamilton has created a striking work of art that uniquely captures Montag's awakening to the evil of government-controlled thought and the inestimable value of philosophy, theology, and literature.

Including an original foreword by Ray Bradbury and fully depicting the brilliance and force of his canonic and beloved masterwork, *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451* is an exceptional, haunting work of graphic literature.



Letters From Skye [2013]

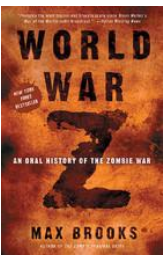
Jessica Brockmole

A sweeping story told in letters, spanning two continents and two world wars, Jessica Brockmole's atmospheric debut novel captures the indelible ways that people fall in love, and celebrates the

power of the written word to stir the heart.

March 1912: Twenty-four-year-old Elspeth Dunn, a published poet, has never seen the world beyond her home on Scotland's remote Isle of Skye. So she is astonished when her first fan letter arrives, from a college student, David Graham, in far-away America. As the two strike up a correspondence—sharing their favorite books, wildest hopes, and deepest secrets—their exchanges blossom into friendship, and eventually into love. But as World War I engulfs Europe and David volunteers as an ambulance driver on the Western front, Elspeth can only wait for him on Skye, hoping he'll survive.

June 1940: At the start of World War II, Elspeth's daughter, Margaret, has fallen for a pilot in the Royal Air Force. Her mother warns her against seeking love in wartime, an admonition Margaret doesn't understand. Then, after a bomb rocks Elspeth's house, and letters that were hidden in a wall come raining down, Elspeth disappears. Only a single letter remains as a clue to Elspeth's whereabouts. As Margaret sets out to discover where her mother has gone, she must also face the truth of what happened to her family long ago.



[World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War](#)

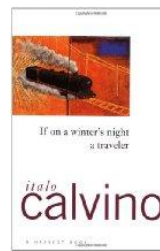
Max Brooks

The Zombie War came unthinkable close to eradicating humanity. Max Brooks, driven by the urgency of preserving the acid-etched first-hand experiences of the survivors from those apocalyptic years, traveled across the United States of America and throughout the world, from decimated cities that once teemed with upwards of thirty million souls to the most remote and inhospitable areas of the planet. He recorded the testimony of men, women, and sometimes children who came face-to-face with the living, or at least the undead, hell of that dreadful time. *World War Z* is the result. Never before have we had access to a document that so powerfully conveys the depth of fear and horror, and also the ineradicable spirit of resistance, that gripped human society through the plague years.

Ranging from the now infamous village of New Dachang in the United Federation of China, where the epidemiological trail began with the twelve-year-old Patient Zero, to the unnamed northern forests where untold numbers sought a terrible and temporary refuge in the cold, to the United States of Southern Africa, where the Redeker Plan provided hope for humanity at an unspeakable price, to the west-of-the-Rockies redoubt

where the North American tide finally started to turn, this invaluable chronicle reflects the full scope and duration of the Zombie War.

Most of all, the book captures with haunting immediacy the human dimension of this epochal event. Facing the often raw and vivid nature of these personal accounts requires a degree of courage on the part of the reader, but the effort is invaluable because, as Mr. Brooks says in his introduction, "By excluding the human factor, aren't we risking the kind of personal detachment from history that may, heaven forbid, lead us one day to repeat it? And in the end, isn't the human factor the only true difference between us and the enemy we now refer to as 'the living dead'?"

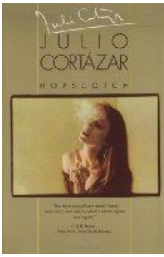


[If on a Winter's Night a Traveler](#) [1981]

Italo Calvino

If on a Winter's Night a Traveler is a marvel of ingenuity, an experimental text that looks longingly back to the great age of narration—"when time no longer seemed stopped and did not yet seem to have exploded." Italo Calvino's novel is in one sense a comedy in which the two protagonists, the Reader and the Other Reader, ultimately end up married, having almost finished *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*. In another, it is a tragedy, a reflection on the difficulties of writing and the solitary nature of reading. The Reader buys a fashionable new book, which opens with an exhortation: "Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade." Alas, after 30 or so pages, he discovers that his copy is corrupted, and consists of nothing but the first section, over and over. Returning to the bookshop, he discovers the volume, which he thought was by Calvino, is actually by the Polish writer Bazakbal. Given the choice between the two, he goes for the Pole, as does the Other Reader, Ludmilla. But this copy turns out to be by yet another writer, as does the next, and the next.

The real Calvino intersperses 10 different pastiches--stories of menace, spies, mystery, premonition--with explorations of how and why we read, make meanings, and get our bearings or fail to. Meanwhile the Reader and Ludmilla try to reach, and read, each other. *If on a Winter's Night* is dazzling, vertiginous, and deeply romantic. "What makes lovemaking and reading resemble each other most is that within both of them times and spaces open, different from measurable time and space."

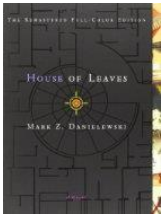


[Hopscotch](#) [1966]

Julio Cortazar

Horacio Oliveira is an Argentinian writer who lives in Paris with his mistress, La Maga, surrounded by a loose-knit circle of bohemian friends who call themselves "the Club." A child's death and La Maga's disappearance put an end to his life of empty pleasures and intellectual acrobatics, and prompt Oliveira to return to Buenos Aires, where he works by turns as a salesman, a keeper of a circus cat which can truly count, and an attendant in an insane asylum. Hopscotch is the dazzling, free-wheeling account of Oliveira's astonishing adventures.

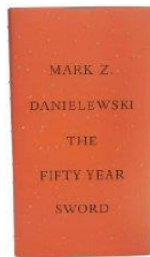
happening is a big part of reading the book. The verse-riffs narrations, endlessly alliterative and punning (like Joyce) and playfully, bleakly existential (like Beckett), begin at opposite ends of the book, upside down from one another, with each page divided and shared. Each gets 180 words per page, but in type that gets smaller as they get closer to their ends (*Glas* was more haphazard), so they each gets exactly half a page only at the midway point of the book: page 180—or half of a revolution of 360 degrees. A time line of world events, from November 22, 1863 ("the abolition of slavery"), to January 19, 2063 (blank, like everything from January 18, 2006, on), runs down the side of every page. The page numbers, when riffled flip-book style, revolve. The book's design is a marvel, and as a feat of Pynchonesque puzzlebookdom, it's magnificent. The book's difficulty, though, carries a self-consciousness that Joyce & Co. decidedly lack, and the jury will be out on whether the tricks are of the for-art's-sake variety or more like a terrific video game. – Publishers's Weekly review



[House of Leaves](#) [2000]

Mark Z. Danielewski

Now, for the first time, this astonishing novel is made available in book form, complete with the original colored words, vertical footnotes, and newly added second and third appendices.



[The Fifty-Year Sword](#) [2012]

Mark Z. Danielewski

The story remains unchanged, focusing on a young family that moves into a small home on Ash Tree Lane where they discover something is terribly wrong: their house is bigger on the inside than it is on the outside.

A captivating atmospheric journey, one that defies the norm of just reading a book. Danielewski, like his undeniably creepy and possibly ethereal antagonist, isn't merely a storyteller. He creates experiences, multi-dimensional pieces of art that don't conform to one genre, and that beg for physical engagement from the audience. *The Fifty Year Sword* follows in the tradition of Henry James' 'The Turn Of The Screw' and the work of Washington Irving, but in a distinctly postmodern context. It's a beautifully haunting, resonant multimedia adventure. – The A.V. Club review

Of course, neither Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Will Navidson nor his companion Karen Green was prepared to face the consequences of that impossibility, until the day their two little children wandered off and their voices eerily began to return another story -- of creature darkness, of an ever-growing abyss behind a closet door, and of that unholy growl which soon enough would tear through their walls and consume all their dreams.



[S](#) [2013] [*not owned by the libraries*]

Doug Dorst and J.J. Abrams



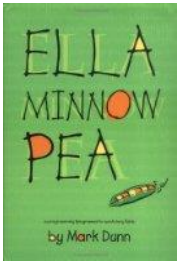
[Only Revolutions](#) [2008]

Mark Z. Danielewski

A pastiche of Joyce and Beckett, with heapings of Derrida's *Glas* and Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* thrown in for good measure, Danielewski's follow-up to *House of Leaves* is a similarly dizzying tour of the modernist and postmodernist heights—and a similarly impressive tour de force. It comprises two monologues, one by Sam and one by Hailey, both "Allmighty sixteen and freeeee," each narrating the same road trip, or set of neo-globo-revolutionary events—or a revolution's end: "Everyone loves the Dream but I kill it." Figuring out what's

A young woman picks up a book left behind by a stranger. Inside it are his margin notes, which reveal a reader entranced by the story and by its mysterious author. She responds with notes of her own, leaving the book for the stranger, and so begins an unlikely conversation that plunges them both into the unknown. The book: *Ship of Theseus*, the final novel by a prolific but enigmatic writer named V.M. Straka, in which a man with no past is shanghaied onto a strange ship with a monstrous crew and launched onto a disorienting and perilous journey. The writer: Straka, the incendiary and secretive subject of one of the world's greatest mysteries, a revolutionary about whom the world knows nothing

apart from the words he wrote and the rumors that swirl around him. The readers: Jennifer and Eric, a college senior and a disgraced grad student, both facing crucial decisions about who they are, who they might become, and how much they're willing to trust another person with their passions, hurts, and fears.



[Ella Minnow Pea](#) [2001]

Mark Dunn

Ella Minnow Pea is a girl living happily on the fictional island of Nollop off the coast of South Carolina. Nollop was named after Nevin Nollop, author of the immortal pangram,* “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.” Now Ella finds herself acting to save her friends, family, and fellow citizens from the encroaching totalitarianism of the island’s Council, which has banned the use of certain letters of the alphabet as they fall from a memorial statue of Nevin Nollop. As the letters progressively drop from the statue they also disappear from the novel. The result is both a hilarious and moving story of one girl’s fight for freedom of expression, as well as a linguistic tour de force sure to delight word lovers everywhere.

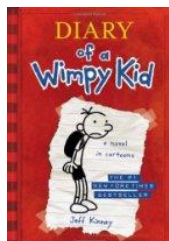
*pangram: a sentence or phrase that includes all the letters of the alphabet



[Flowers for Algernon](#) [1966]

Daniel Keyes

With more than five million copies sold, Flowers for Algernon is the beloved, classic story of a mentally disabled man whose experimental quest for intelligence mirrors that of Algernon, an extraordinary lab mouse. In poignant diary entries, Charlie tells how a brain operation increases his IQ and changes his life. As the experimental procedure takes effect, Charlie's intelligence expands until it surpasses that of the doctors who engineered his metamorphosis. The experiment seems to be a scientific breakthrough of paramount importance—until Algernon begins his sudden, unexpected deterioration. Will the same happen to Charlie? An American classic that inspired the award-winning movie Charly.



[Diary of a Wimpy Kid](#) (series of novels 2007-present)

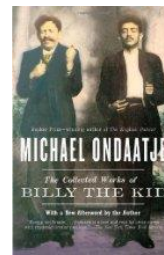
Jeff Kinney [j Kinney]

It’s a new school year, and Greg Heffley finds himself thrust into middle school, where undersized weaklings share the

hallways with kids who are taller, meaner, and already shaving. The hazards of growing up before you’re ready are uniquely revealed through words and drawings as Greg records them in his diary.

In book one of this debut series, Greg is happy to have Rowley, his sidekick, along for the ride. But when Rowley’s star starts to rise, Greg tries to use his best friend’s newfound popularity to his own advantage, kicking off a chain of events that will test their friendship in hilarious fashion.

Author/illustrator Jeff Kinney recalls the growing pains of school life and introduces a new kind of hero who epitomizes the challenges of being a kid. As Greg says in his diary, “Just don’t expect me to be all ‘Dear Diary’ this and ‘Dear Diary’ that.” Luckily for us, what Greg Heffley says he won’t do and what he actually does are two very different things.

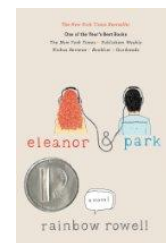
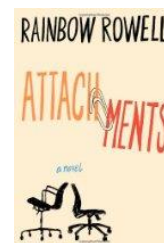


[The Collected Works of Billy the Kid](#)

[1970]

Michael Ondaatje [818 Ond]

Drawing on contemporary accounts, period photographs, dime novels, and his own prodigious fund of empathy and imagination, Michael Ondaatje's visionary novel traces the legendary outlaw's passage across the blasted landscape of 1880 New Mexico and the collective unconscious of his country. **The Collected Works of Billy the Kid** is a virtuoso synthesis of storytelling, history, and myth by a writer who brings us back to our familiar legends with a renewed sense of wonder.



[Attachments](#)

[Eleanor & Park](#)

[Fangirl](#)

Rainbow Rowell

Attachments – Beth Fremont and Jennifer Scribner-Snyder know that somebody is monitoring their work e-mail. (Everybody in the newsroom knows. It's company policy.) But they can't quite bring themselves to take it seriously. They go on sending each other endless and endlessly hilarious e-mails, discussing every aspect of their personal lives.

Meanwhile, Lincoln O'Neill can't believe this is his job now- reading other people's e-mail. When he applied to be "internet security officer," he pictured himself building firewalls and crushing hackers- not writing up a report every time a sports reporter forwards a dirty joke. When Lincoln comes across Beth's and Jennifer's messages, he knows he should turn them in. But he can't help being entertained-and captivated-by their stories. By the time Lincoln realizes he's falling for Beth, it's way too late to introduce himself. What would he say . . . ?

Eleanor & Park – Set over the course of one school year in 1986, this is the story of two star-crossed misfits—smart enough to know that first love almost never lasts, but brave and desperate enough to try. When Eleanor meets Park, you'll remember your own first love—and just how hard it pulled you under.

Fangirl - In Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*, Cath is a Simon Snow fan. Okay, the whole world is a Simon Snow fan, but for Cath, being a fan is her life--and she's really good at it. She and her twin sister, Wren, ensconced themselves in the Simon Snow series when they were just kids; it's what got them through their mother leaving.

Reading. Rereading. Hanging out in Simon Snow forums, writing Simon Snow fan fiction, dressing up like the characters for every movie premiere.

Cath's sister has mostly grown away from fandom, but Cath can't let go. She doesn't want to. Now that they're going to college, Wren has told Cath she doesn't want to be roommates. Cath is on her own, completely outside of her comfort zone. She's got a surly roommate with a charming, always-around boyfriend, a fiction-writing professor who thinks fan fiction is the end of the civilized world, a handsome classmate who only wants to talk about words . . . And she can't stop worrying about her dad, who's loving and fragile and has never really been alone.

For Cath, the question is: Can she do this?

Can she make it without Wren holding her hand? Is she ready to start living her own life? Writing her own stories?

And does she even want to move on if it means leaving Simon Snow behind?



[253: The Print Remix](#) [1996]

Geoff Ryman

A cult classic in the making. 253 is the novel about everyone you've ever met and wished you hadn't or wished you could again. 252 passengers and one driver on the London Underground. They all have their own personal histories, their own thoughts about themselves and their travelling neighbors. And they all have one page devoted to them. Some characters are tragic, some are inspiring, some are mad/proud/foolish/infuriating (delete where appropriate) and some are just like the person near you right now. You'll meet Estelle who's fallen madly in love with Saddam Hussein; James, who anaesthetizes sick gorillas for a living; and Who?, a character that doesn't know where, or what, on earth he is. It's a seven-and-a-half minute journey between Embankment and the Elephant & Castle. It's the journey of 253 lifetimes...This is the full text of the celebrated interactive novel that startled the Web when it first went on line. Only it can't crash, the downloading time is quicker and you can read it on the Tube, the train, the bus,, the plane, by foot - even by car, so long as you're not driving.



[The Invention of Hugo Cabret](#) [2007]

[Wonder Struck](#) [2011]

Brian Selznick

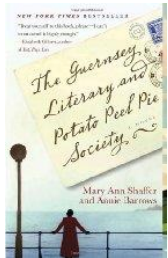
Hugo Cabret – Orphan, clock keeper, and thief, Hugo lives in the walls of a busy Paris train station, where his survival depends on secrets and anonymity. But when his world suddenly interlocks with an eccentric, bookish girl and a bitter old man who runs a toy booth in the station, Hugo's undercover life, and his most precious secret, are put in jeopardy. A cryptic drawing, a treasured notebook, a stolen key, a mechanical man, and a hidden message from Hugo's dead father form the backbone of this intricate, tender, and spellbinding mystery.

Wonder Struck – Playing with the form he created in his trailblazing debut novel, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, Brian Selznick once again sails into uncharted territory and takes readers on an awe-inspiring journey.

Ben and Rose secretly wish their lives were different. Ben longs for the father he has never known. Rose dreams of a mysterious actress whose life she chronicles in a

scrapbook. When Ben discovers a puzzling clue in his mother's room and Rose reads an enticing headline in the newspaper, both children set out alone on desperate quests to find what they are missing.

Set fifty years apart, these two independent stories--Ben's told in words, Rose's in pictures--weave back and forth with mesmerizing symmetry. How they unfold and ultimately intertwine will surprise you, challenge you, and leave you breathless with wonder. Rich, complex, affecting, and beautiful--with over 460 pages of original artwork--Wonderstruck is a stunning achievement from a uniquely gifted artist and visionary.



[The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society](#) [2008]

Mary Ann Shaffer

"I wonder how the book got to Guernsey? Perhaps there is some sort of secret homing instinct in books that brings them to their perfect readers." January 1946:

London is emerging from the shadow of the Second World War, and writer Juliet Ashton is looking for her next book subject. Who could imagine that she would find it in a letter from a man she's never met, a native of the island of Guernsey, who has come across her name written inside a book by Charles Lamb....

As Juliet and her new correspondent exchange letters, Juliet is drawn into the world of this man and his friends—and what a wonderfully eccentric world it is. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society—born as a spur-of-the-moment alibi when its members were discovered breaking curfew by the Germans occupying their island—boasts a charming, funny, deeply human cast of characters, from pig farmers to phrenologists, literature lovers all.

Juliet begins a remarkable correspondence with the society's members, learning about their island, their taste in books, and the impact the recent German occupation has had on their lives. Captivated by their stories, she sets sail for Guernsey, and what she finds will change her forever.

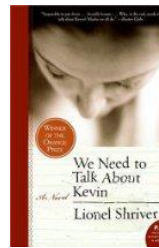
Written with warmth and humor as a series of letters, this novel is a celebration of the written word in all its guises, and of finding connection in the most surprising ways.



[Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus](#)

Mary Shelley

Few creatures of horror have seized readers' imaginations and held them for so long as the anguished monster of Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The story of Victor Frankenstein's monstrous creation and the havoc it caused has enthralled generations of readers and inspired countless writers of horror and suspense.



[We Need to Talk About Kevin](#) [2003]

Lionel Shriver

Lionel Shriver's resonant story of a mother's unsettling quest to understand her teenage son's deadly violence, her own ambivalence toward motherhood, and the explosive link between them reverberates with the haunting power of high hopes shattered by dark realities. Like Shriver's charged and incisive later novels, including *So Much for That* and *The Post-Birthday World*, *We Need to Talk About Kevin* is a piercing, unforgettable, and penetrating exploration of violence, family ties, and responsibility, a book that the *Boston Globe* describes as "sometimes searing . . . [and] impossible to put down."

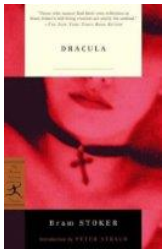


[Humans of New York](#) [2013]

Brandon Stanton [974.7 Sta]

Now an instant #1 *New York Times* bestseller, *Humans of New York* began in the summer of 2010, when photographer Brandon Stanton set out to create a photographic census of New York City. Armed with his camera, he began crisscrossing the city, covering thousands of miles on foot, all in an attempt to capture New Yorkers and their stories. The result of these efforts was a vibrant blog he called "Humans of New York," in which his photos were featured alongside quotes and anecdotes.

The blog has steadily grown, now boasting millions of devoted followers. *Humans of New York* is the book inspired by the blog. With four hundred color photos, including exclusive portraits and all-new stories, *Humans of New York* is a stunning collection of images that showcases the outsized personalities of New York. Surprising and moving, printed in a beautiful full-color, hardbound edition, *Humans of New York* is a celebration of individuality and a tribute to the spirit of the city.



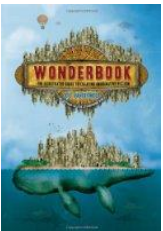
[Dracula](#)
Bram Stoker

During a business visit to Count Dracula's castle in Transylvania, a young English solicitor finds himself at the center of a series of horrifying incidents. Jonathan Harker is attacked by three phantom women, observes the Count's transformation from human to bat form, and discovers puncture wounds on his own neck that seem to have been made by teeth. Harker returns home upon his escape from Dracula's grim fortress, but a friend's strange malady — involving sleepwalking, inexplicable blood loss, and mysterious throat wounds — initiates a frantic vampire hunt. The popularity of Bram Stoker's 1897 horror romance is as deathless as any vampire. Its supernatural appeal has spawned a host of film and stage adaptations, and more than a century after its initial publication, it continues to hold readers spellbound.



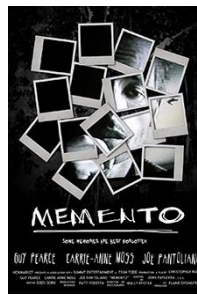
[The Arrival](#) [2006]
Shaun Tan

The Arrival is a graphic novel styled wordless picture book about a migrant family's journey to a new and strange land. A tale of a migrant finding his way in a strange, new city told only through pictures.



[Wonderbook: The Illustrated Guide to Imaginative Fiction](#) [2013]
Jeff Vandermeer [808.3 Van]

This all-new definitive guide to writing imaginative fiction takes a completely novel approach and fully exploits the visual nature of fantasy through original drawings, maps, renderings, and exercises to create a spectacularly beautiful and inspiring object. Employing an accessible, example-rich approach, Wonderbook energizes and motivates while also providing practical, nuts-and-bolts information needed to improve as a writer. Aimed at aspiring and intermediate-level writers, Wonderbook includes helpful sidebars and essays from some of the biggest names in fantasy today, such as George R. R. Martin, Lev Grossman, Neil Gaiman, Michael Moorcock, Catherynne M. Valente, and Karen Joy Fowler, to name a few...



[Memento](#) [date]
[DVD Memento]

American neo-noir mystery-psychological thriller film written and directed by Christopher Nolan, adapted from his younger brother Jonathan Nolan's short story "Memento Mori".

Memento is presented as two different sequences of scenes: a series in black-and-white that is shown chronologically, and a series of color sequences shown in reverse order. The two sequences "meet" at the end of the film, producing one common story. It stars Guy Pearce as Leonard Shelby, a man with anterograde amnesia, which impairs his ability to store new explicit memories, who has developed a system for recollection using hand-written notes, tattoos, and Polaroid photos. During the opening credits, which portray the end of the story, it is shown that Leonard kills Teddy (Joe Pantoliano). The film suggests that this killing is vengeance for the rape and murder of his wife (Jorja Fox) based on information provided by Natalie (Carrie-Anne Moss).

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