

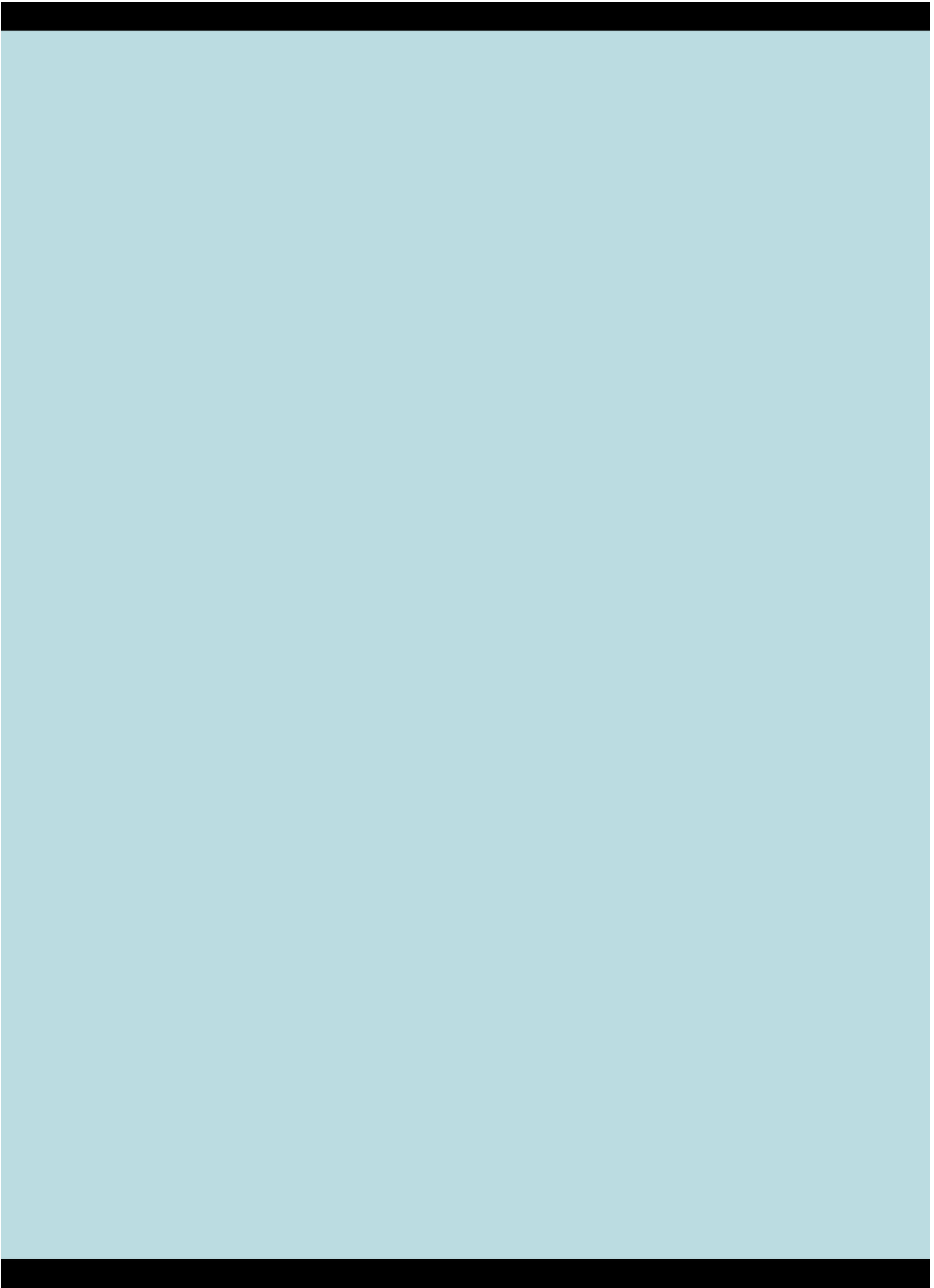


GRANT SNIDER

CREATOR OF INCIDENTAL COMICS AND THE SHAPE OF IDEAS









I WILL  
JUDGE YOU  
BY YOUR  
BOOKSHELF

GRANT SNIDER

Abrams ComicArts, New York

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2019950078

ISBN 978-1-4197-3711-4  
eISBN 978-1-68335-860-2

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Many of the comics in this collection have appeared previously online at [incidentalcomics.com](http://incidentalcomics.com).  
Portions of this book were first published in the following publications and websites:

Promotional poster for *Finish: Give Yourself the Gift of Done* by Jon Acuff  
(Portfolio/Penguin, 2017): "Perfect."

*El Espectador*: "A Reader's Manifesto."

Evernote: "What to Put in Your Notebook."

*The Kansas City Star*: "I Have a Problem" (originally titled "Confessions of a Book Fiend" on my blog), "Stray Books," "Literary Devices," "Ban This Book," "Required Summer Reading," "Advocacy for Animals Ignored by Children's Books," "This Is a Work of Historical Fiction," "Story Structures," "Summer Night," "Pig Latin," "Pig Latin Redux," and "We Are the Introverts."

*The New York Times Sunday Review*: "How to Make Write."

*The New York Times Book Review*: "Perfect Reading Spots," "Reading Is Dangerous," "The Story Coaster," "Behind Every Great Novelist Is . . .," "Reading Goals," "Choose Your Own Memoir," "The Writer's Block," "Please Do Not Leave Children Unattended in the Library," "My Holiday Wish List," "The Very Bad Picture Book," "Haruki Murakami Bingo," "The Three Rays," "Dances with Books," "The Book of the Future," "The Many Faces of the Novel," "Reader's Block," "The Book Fair," "Poetic Justice," "Literary Consolation Prizes," "Types of Readers," "A Writer's Routine," "The Writers' Retreat," "A Writer's Hierarchy of Needs," "The Nine R's," "How to Become a Literary Recluse," and "The End."

*The New Yorker*: "Punctuation."

[newyorker.com](http://newyorker.com): "Other People's Bookshelves" and "Ode to an Unfinished Book."

*The Southampton Review*: "Story Lines," "Books Are . . .," "The Cannon of Literature," "The Troubled Typeface," "Adventures of the Ampersand," "The Ingredients of Shakespeare," "Character Development," "Strunk and White's Writers' Style Guide," "Types of Narrators," "Pen Names," "Writing Exercises," "Great Aspirations," and "Ode to Lost Pens."

*A Velocity of Being: Letters to a Young Reader*, edited by Maria Popova and Claudia Bedrick  
(Enchanted Lion Books, 2018): "The Library."

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For more about *I Will Judge You by Your Bookshelf*, *The Shape of Ideas*, and Grant Snider, visit [incidentalcomics.com](http://incidentalcomics.com).



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---

To my parents, for always letting me steal  
from their bookshelf.



Thanks to my first reader, Kayla, for everything. Without you I would waste all my time eating bowls of Lucky Charms while obsessing over color variations in Photoshop. Thanks to my second reader and second brain, Gavin. Thanks to Charlie Kochman and Judy Hansen for making this book a reality. Thanks to Pam Notarantonio and Theresa Venezia for their design expertise and putting up with my unconventional formatting. Thanks to Pamela Paul, Nicholas Blechman, Matt Dorfman, Lauren Christensen, Parul Sehgal, Gal Beckerman, and everyone else at the *New York Times Book Review*—the back page has been a wonderful canvas for my ideas. Thanks to Lou Ann Walker and the rest of the *Southampton Review* for publishing my comics in the same pages as Billy Collins. Thanks to everyone at the *Kansas City Star* for taking an early chance on my comics and letting me misspell onomatopoeia in every possible way. Thanks to all my cartooning heroes—if you look closely, you can see their influence in every line. And thanks to all the librarians at the Wichita Public Library and Derby Public Library who continue to let me check out ridiculous amounts of books with very little hassle.

---







---

# I confess:

I'm in love with books.

I read in social situations.

I will use *anything* as a bookmark.

I confuse fiction with reality.

I am wanted for unpaid library fines.

I steal books from my children.

I like my realism with a little bit of magic.

I like to sniff old books.

I am searching for a miracle cure for writer's block.

I care about punctuation—a lot.

I will read the classics (someday).

I am writing The Great American Novel.

I carry a notebook with me at all times.

I write because I must.

I hope you don't mind me asking...

can I borrow a few books?

---

I'm in love  
with books.

# I HAVE A PROBLEM.

A DANGEROUS, UNSAVORY ADDICTION HAS CONSUMED MY LIFE. CAN YOU GUESS WHAT IT IS?

NOPE.



TRY AGAIN.



YOU GOT IT.



THAT'S RIGHT: BOOKS. UNFORTUNATELY, TEMPTATION HAS SET UP SHOP ON EVERY CORNER.

PUBLIC LIBRARY



BIG-BOX STORE



YARD SALE



INDIE BOOKSHOP



USED-BOOK HUT



COMIC SHACK



DUMPSTER



ANARCHIST READING ROOM



WHEN I PASS ONE OF THESE PLACES, A DESPERATE VOICE GOES OFF INSIDE MY HEAD:

YOU. NEED.



MORE.



BOOKS!



OF COURSE, WHO HAS TIME TO READ NOWADAYS? I'LL NEVER EVEN OPEN MOST OF THE BOOKS I GET—UNLESS I END UP AS ONE OF THESE PEOPLE:

HOBO



BORED HEIRESS



GOLF-HATING RETIREE



CHILD GENIUS



INMATE



MONK



LITERATURE CRITIC



NOVELIST



I NEED TO SEEK HELP SOON. OTHERWISE, MY ADDICTION MAY PROVE TO BE FATAL...

RESHELVING ACCIDENT



PLOT TWIST OVERLOAD



MOTH ATTACK



POP-UP BOOK EXPLOSION



RIVAL BOOK FIEND



LONG-SUFFERING WIFE



LIBRARY FINE MAFIA



THE END.



# MY BOOKSHELF

THE BOOK I  
COULDN'T PUT  
DOWN



THE BOOK I  
COULDN'T  
PICK UP

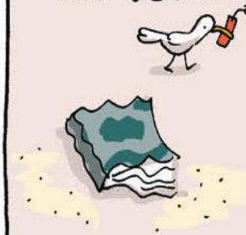


THE BOOK YOU  
GAVE ME



(I HAVEN'T READ  
IT YET - SORRY!)

THE BOOK I  
BROUGHT TO  
THE BEACH



THE BOOK I  
TRIED SO HARD  
TO LIKE



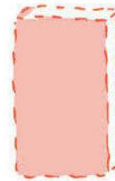
THE BOOK I  
SOMEHOW OWN  
THREE COPIES OF



THE BOOK THAT  
SAVED MY LIFE



THE BOOK I  
LENT YOU



(CAN I HAVE  
IT BACK?)

THE BOOK I  
FALL ASLEEP TO  
EVERY NIGHT



THE BOOK I  
MISTOOK FOR  
A HAT



THE BOOK I'M  
DESPERATELY  
TRYING TO WRITE

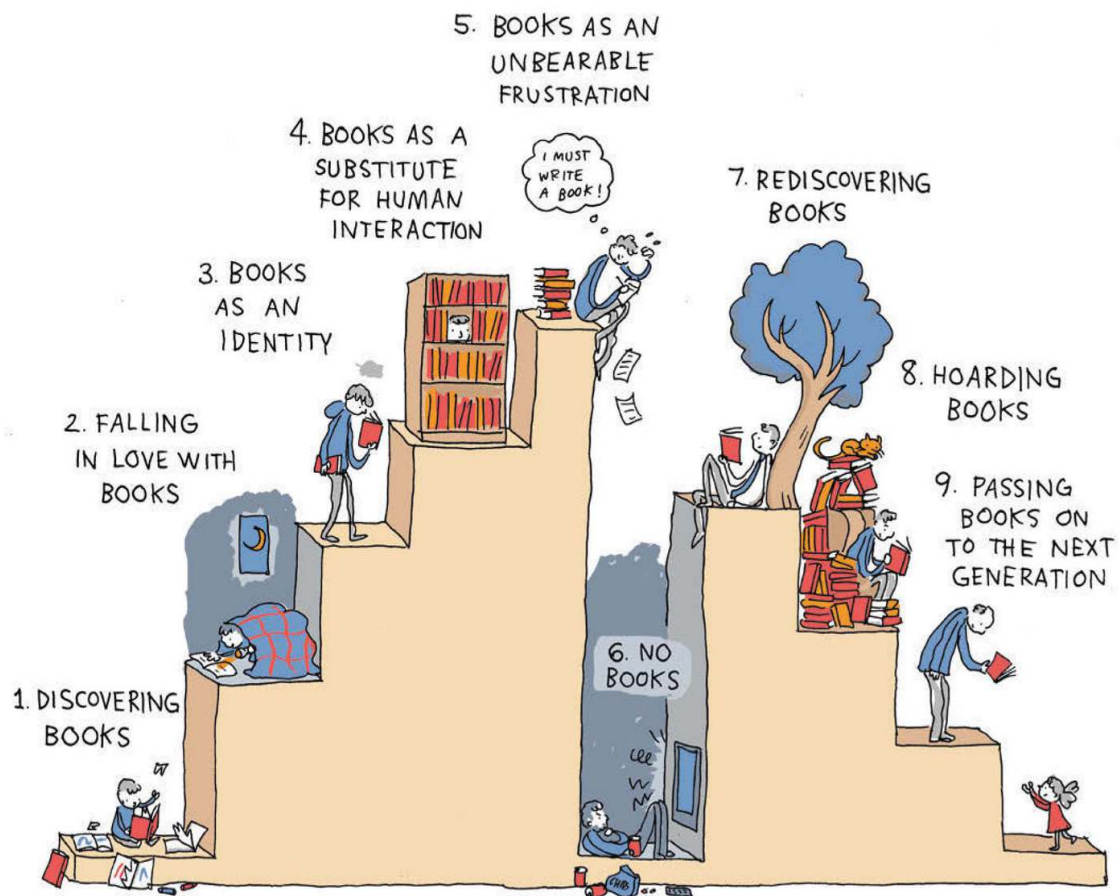


ALL THE BOOKS  
THAT CHANGED  
MY LIFE

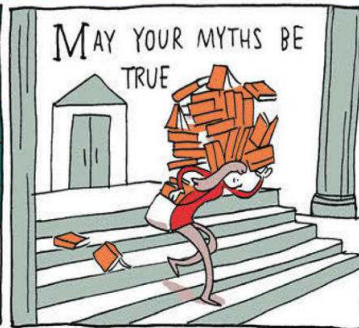




## STAGES OF THE READER



## A READER'S BLESSING



# COMMITMENT PHOBIA





## OTHER PEOPLE'S BOOKSHELVES

I WOULD NEVER JUDGE A  
BOOK BY ITS COVER.



THE SPINES, HOWEVER, ARE A  
DIFFERENT STORY.



SO IF YOU INVITE ME  
OVER - BEWARE.



ONCE REFRESHMENTS  
ARE SERVED...



GAMES ARE  
PLAYED...



AND SONGS ARE  
SUNG...



I WILL SLIP  
AWAY.



AND THERE, IN A  
QUIET ROOM...

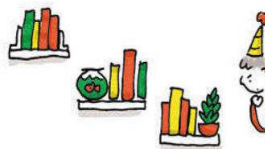


I WILL JUDGE YOU BY  
YOUR BOOKSHELF.



WHAT DOES  
YOUR  
BOOKSHELF SAY  
ABOUT YOU?

STYLISH BUT  
SHALLOW



STUCK IN HIGH  
SCHOOL

LORD OF  
THE  
FLIES?



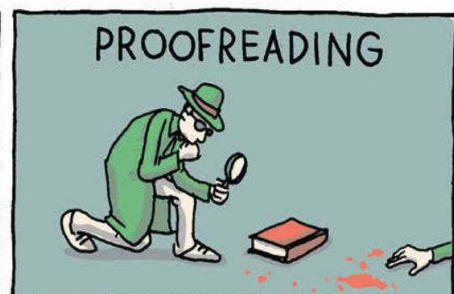
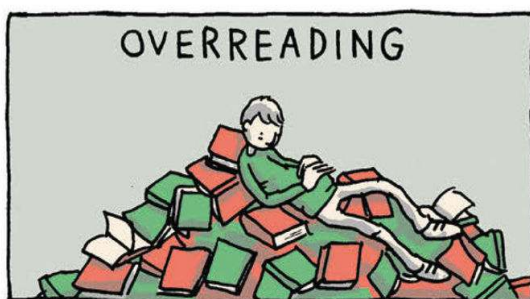
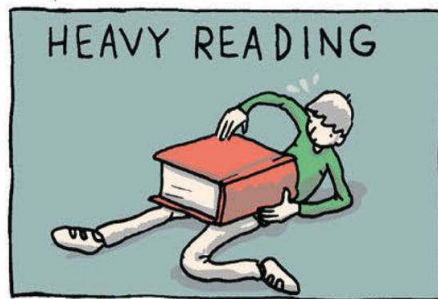




I read  
in social  
situations.





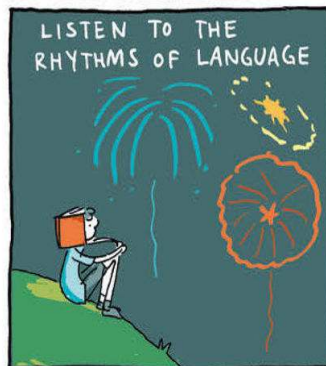
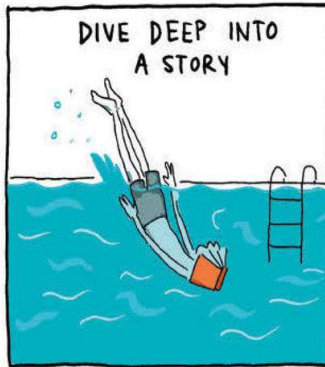
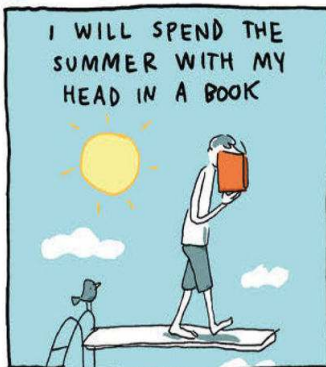




# STRAY BOOKS



# STUCK IN A BOOK





# A READER'S MANIFESTO



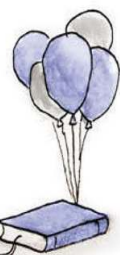


I will use  
*anything* as  
a bookmark.

## SOME POTENTIAL BOOKMARKS



Post-it  
notes



balloons



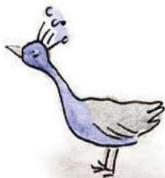
grocery  
list



bonsai  
tree



feather



"El Gato"



sheer  
memorization



another  
book



yourself

# MY POEM





# UNDERSTANDING POETRY

(AFTER MARK STRAND)



## ODE TO AN UNFINISHED BOOK

I ADMIT, I PICKED YOU UP WITH UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS...



THE WAY I'D LOOK READING YOU THROUGH A COFFEE SHOP WINDOW.



THE HOURS I'D SPEND POOLSIDE, LOST IN YOUR WORLD.



HOW SMART I'D SOUND DISCUSSING YOU AT PARTIES.



BUT NOW HERE WE SIT.



YOU ON THE END TABLE.



ME IN MY CHAIR.



STUCK.

I TRY TO REASON THROUGH MY DILEMMA.

TO FINISH	NOT TO FINISH
- see how it ends	- more free time
- NO READER'S GUILT	- can start a new book!
- build "GRIT"	- it's not for a grade
- won't be haunted by it FOREVER	- who am I trying to impress?

IT DEVOLVES INTO A POINTLESS PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE.

IS THE BOOK HALF-FINISHED?



IS THE BOOK HALF-STARTED?

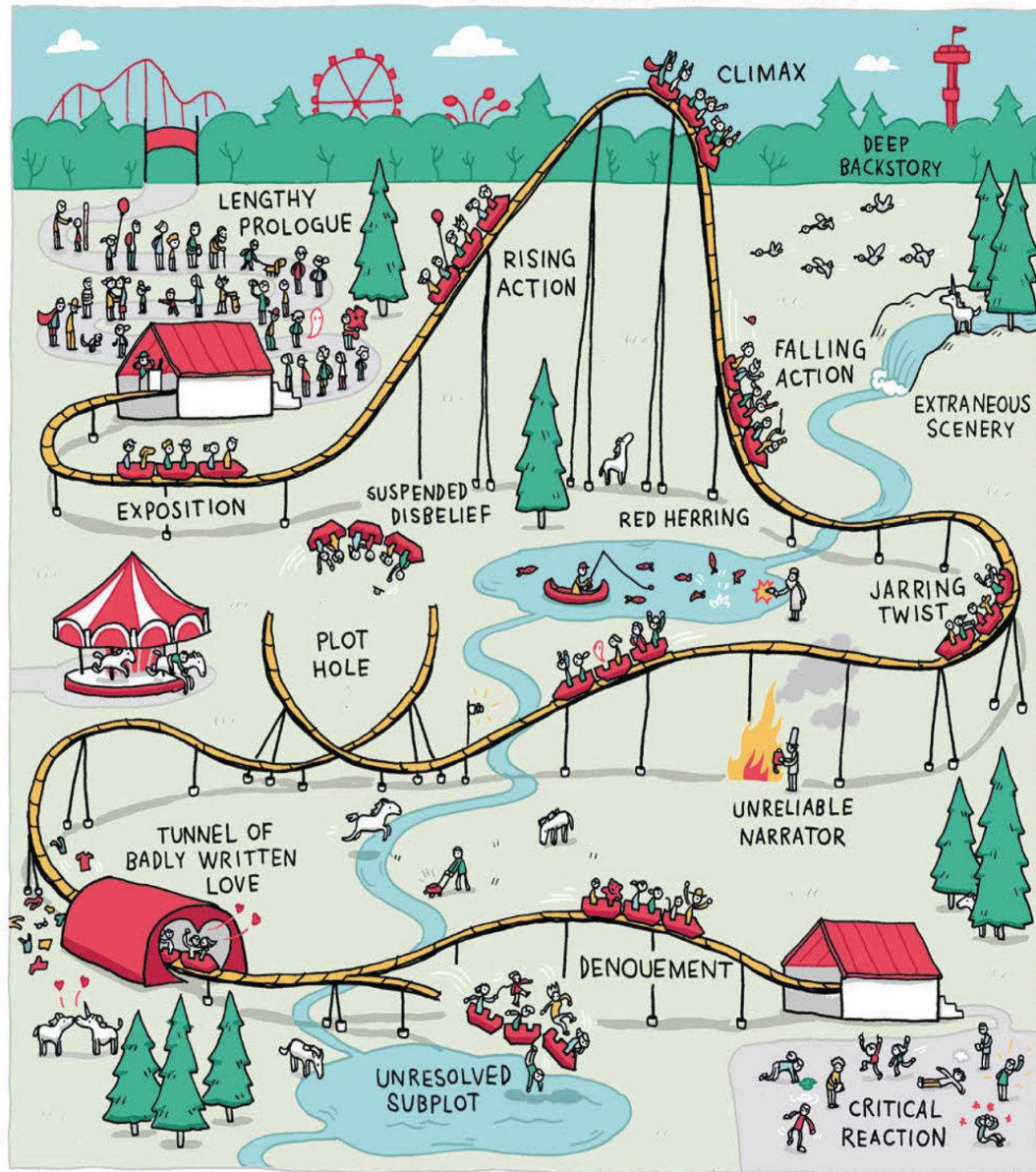
IS IT A SYMBOL OF MY INABILITY TO FINISH ANYTHING?



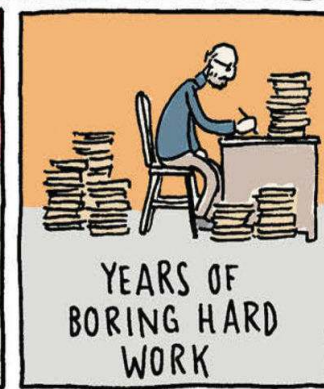
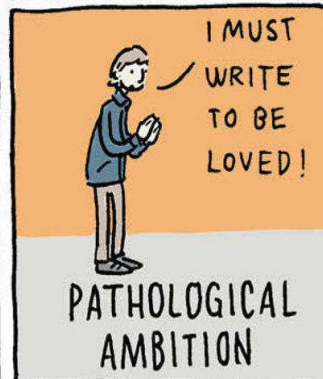
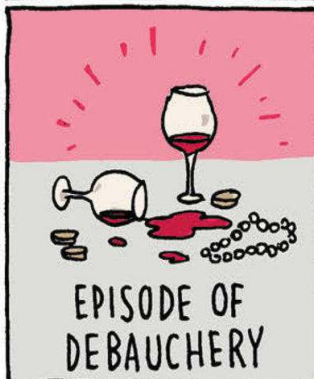
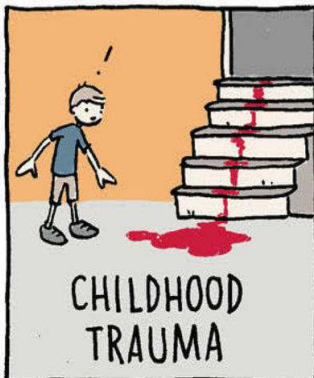


I confuse  
fiction  
with reality.

# THE STORY COASTER



# BEHIND EVERY GREAT NOVELIST IS...





# READING GOALS

THIS YEAR I  
WILL READ



MORE THAN ONE  
BOOK AT A TIME.



I WILL FINALLY  
READ THE CLASSICS



EVEN IF IT KILLS  
ME.



I WILL MEMORIZE  
POETRY



AND PROCLAIM  
IT TO THE WORLD.



I WILL RECOGNIZE  
UNRELIABLE  
NARRATORS



AND FALL FOR  
THEM, FOOLISHLY.



I WILL FIND  
JOY



IN THE MEMOIRS  
OF OTHERS.



I WILL REDISCOVER  
CHILDREN'S BOOKS



AND MAYBE EVEN  
SHARE THEM  
WITH MY CHILDREN.



I WILL READ  
DIVERSELY



AND UNIVERSALLY.



I WILL  
JOURNEY FAR  
OUTSIDE  
MYSELF



WITHOUT LEAVING  
MY CHAIR.



# CHOOSE YOUR OWN MEMOIR

I WAS  
BORN INTO  
A FAMILY  
WITH:

OLD MONEY



NEW MONEY



NO MONEY



THEN  
CAME:

THE INVASION



FAMILY DEMONS



ENGLISH BOARDING  
SCHOOL



I ESCAPED  
INTO:

HARD DRUGS



THE CIRCUS



HARD LITERATURE



NOW I'M  
WRITING  
THIS  
MEMOIR:

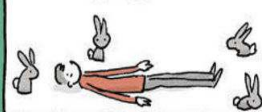
TO SETTLE THE  
SCORE



TO EXORCISE  
DEMONS



BECAUSE I CAN  
THINK ABOUT NOTHING  
ELSE



I'VE  
CHANGED  
A FEW  
FACTS:

TO ALTER THE  
NATURE OF TIME



TO PROTECT CERTAIN  
PEOPLE



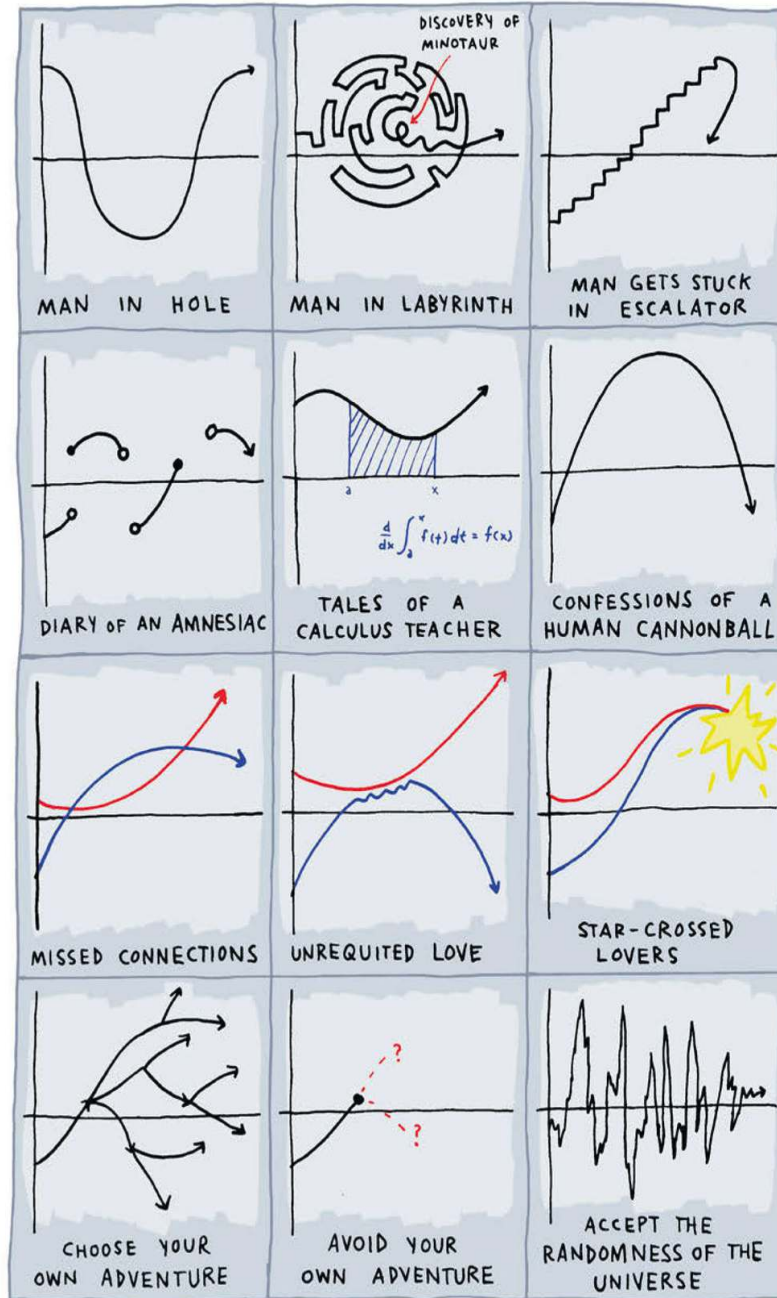
TO REVEAL  
A GREATER TRUTH



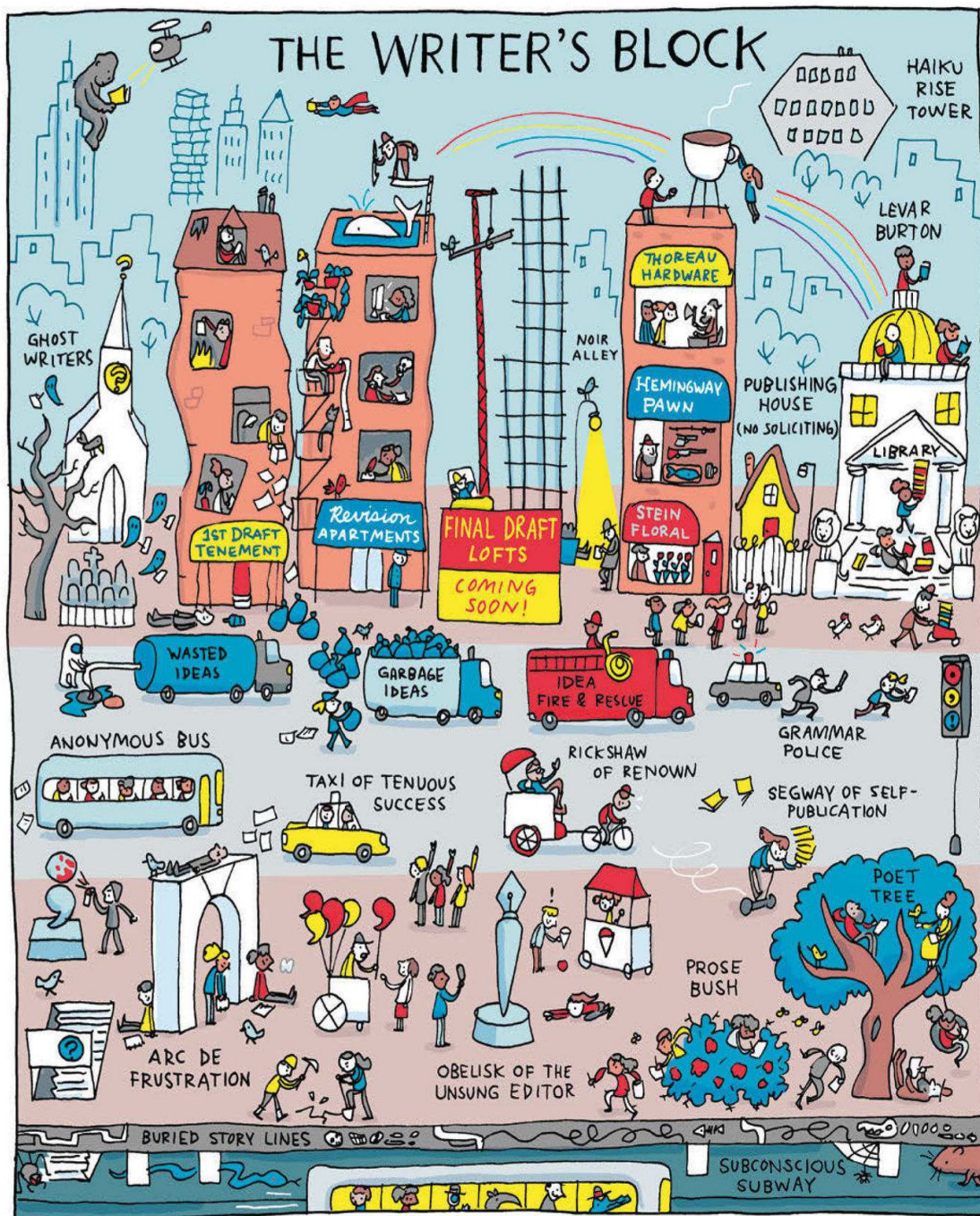


# STORY LINES

(AFTER KURT VONNEGUT)

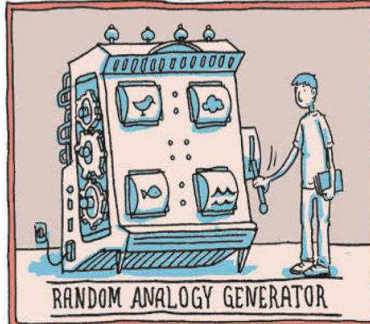








# LITERARY DEVICES



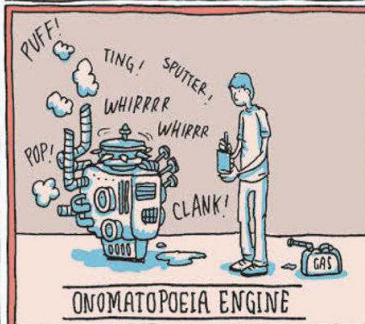
RANDOM ANALOGY GENERATOR



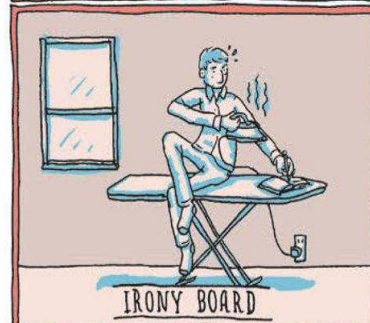
FORESHADOW PUPPET



THE GREAT GOLDEN  
HAMMER OF HYPERBOLE



ONOMATOPOEIA ENGINE



IRONY BOARD



METAPHOR MIXER &  
SIMILE STRETCHER



PERSONIFICATION PRESS



ADVANCE-ALERT  
ALLITERATION ALARM

I am  
wanted for  
unpaid library  
fines.



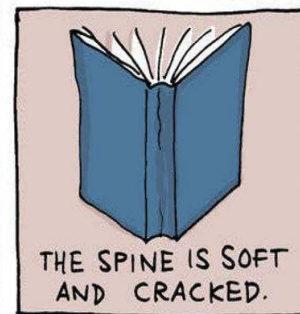
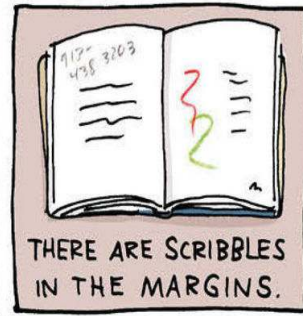


## MY HOLIDAY WISH LIST





## the beloved book





# BAN THIS BOOK.

IT CONTAINS  
GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE



UNREALISTIC SEX



AND SUBLIMINAL  
SATANISM.



IT WILL TERRIFY  
OUR CHILDREN



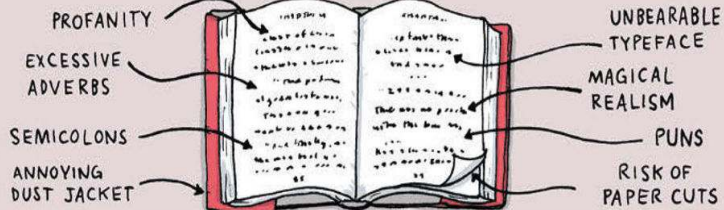
INCITE TEEN  
REBELLION



AND KEEP COLLEGE  
STUDENTS FROM  
THEIR STUDIES.



WHO KNOWS WHAT HORRORS ARE HIDDEN WITHIN?



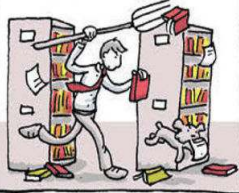
SO PROTEST THE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



STAGE SIT-INS AT  
BOOKSTORES



PILLAGE YOUR  
LOCAL LIBRARY



BURN EVERY LAST  
COPY.

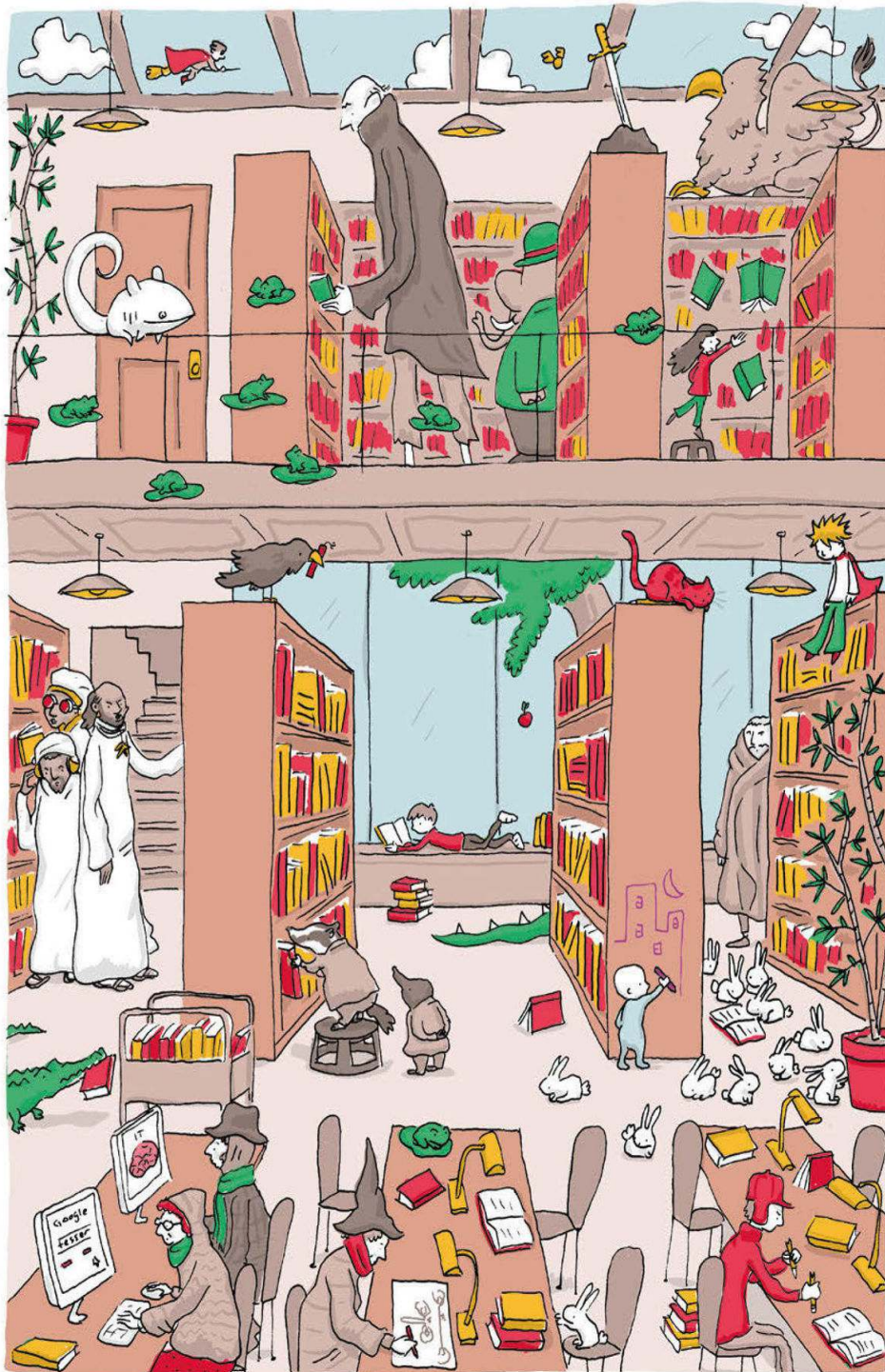


WHATEVER YOU DO,  
DON'T READ IT!



YOU MIGHT  
ACTUALLY ENJOY IT.





I steal books  
from my  
children.

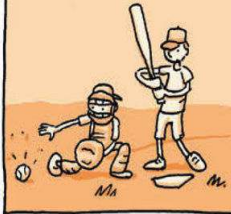


# The Very Bad Picture Book



# REQUIRED SUMMER READING

THE CATCHER  
IN THE RYE



LORD OF  
THE FLIES



CAT'S  
CRADLE



THE SOUND  
AND THE FURY



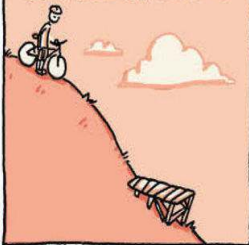
ON THE  
ROAD



FAHRENHEIT  
451



GREAT  
EXPECTATIONS



THINGS  
FALL  
APART



THE  
SUN  
ALSO  
RISES



THE OLD MAN  
AND THE SEA



CRIME AND  
PUNISHMENT

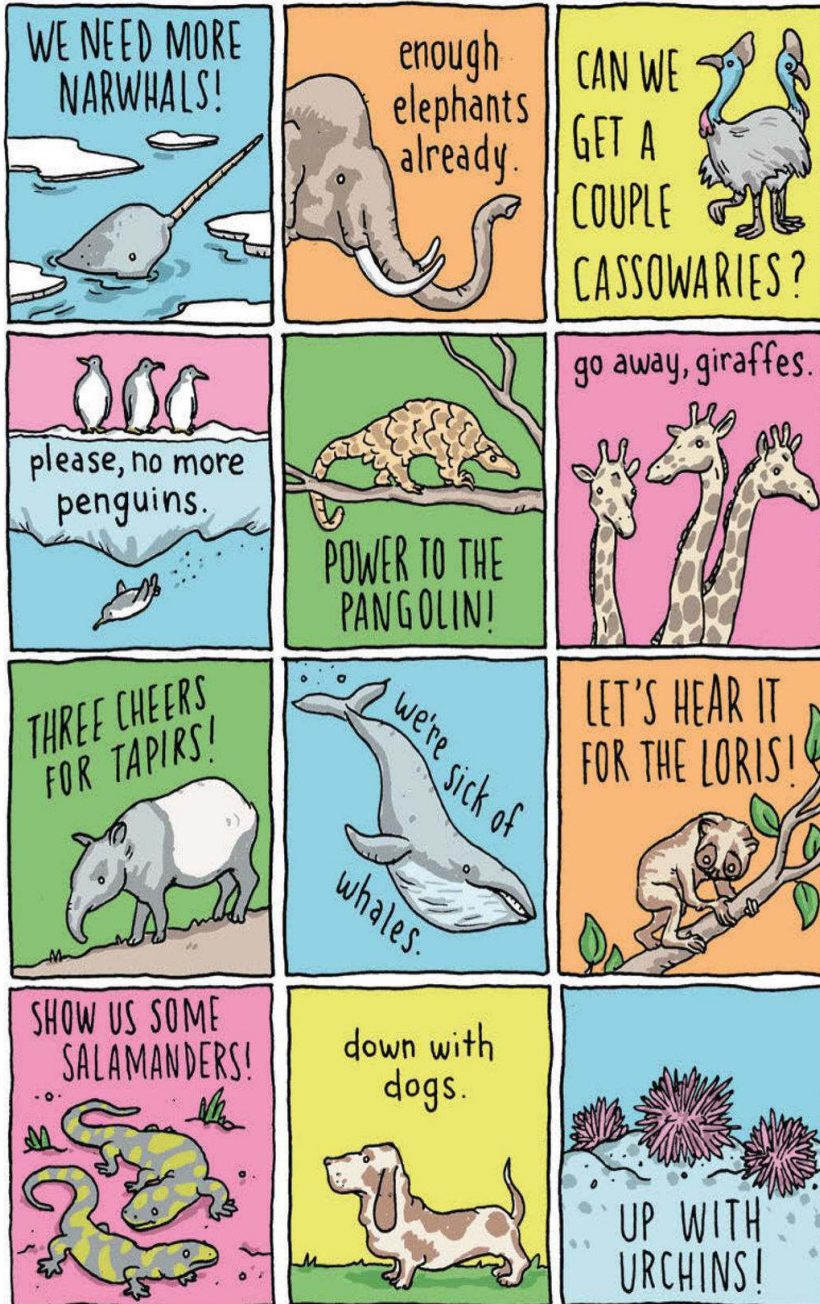


A WRINKLE  
IN TIME





# ADVOCACY for ANIMALS IGNORED by CHILDREN'S BOOKS





# Portrait of a Parent Reading

(AFTER GUYAS WILLIAMS)

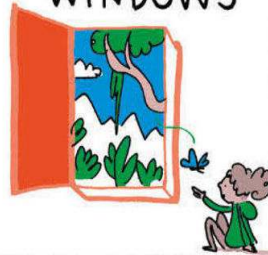


# BOOKS ARE...

MIRRORS



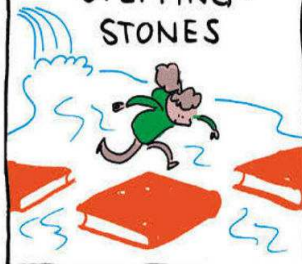
WINDOWS



SLIDING GLASS  
DOORS



STEPPING-  
STONES



OVERCOATS



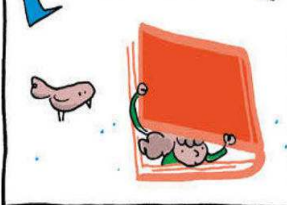
ANCHORS



SPRINGBOARDS



ESCAPE  
HATCHES



QUIET  
CORNERS



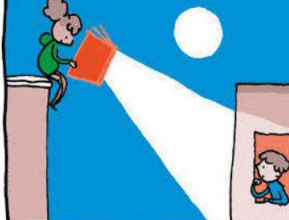
WARM  
BLANKETS



FLYING  
CARPETS



BEACONS TO  
NEW READERS



(AFTER RUDINE SIMS BISHOP)

# THE CANNON OF LITERATURE







I like my  
realism with  
a little bit of  
magic.

# CONFLICT IN LITERATURE





# HARUKI MURAKAMI

# B I N G O



# THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS





# THE THREE RAYS





# FAHRENHEIT 351

One night they came for  
our books.



They tried to destroy them.

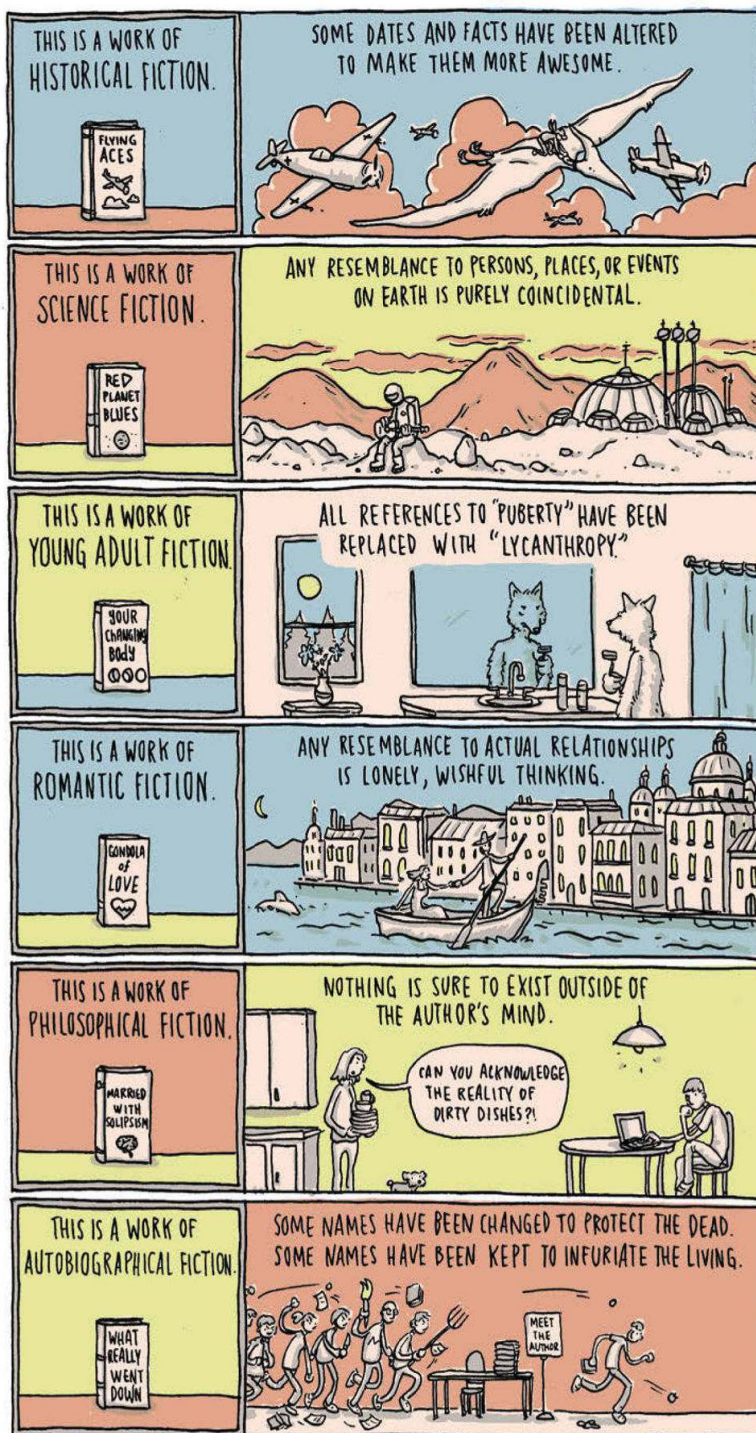


We feared all was lost.



But our books were even  
better warm.

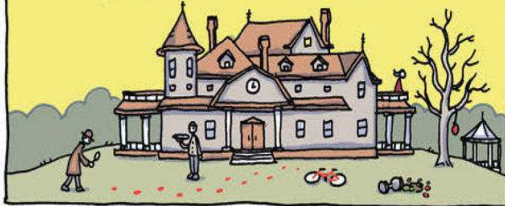




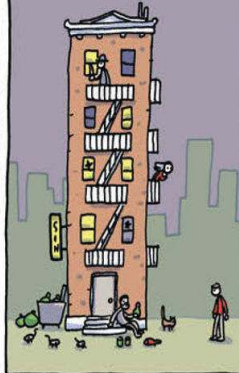


# STORY STRUCTURES

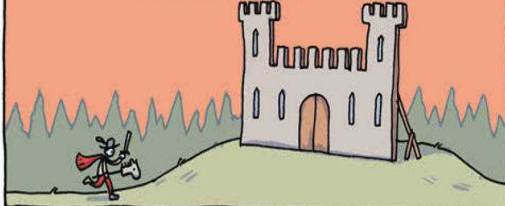
MURDER MYSTERY MANSION



CAUTIONARY  
TALE  
TENEMENT



FORTRESS OF FARCE



STAR-CROSSED LOVERS  
OBSERVATORY



COMING-OF-AGE  
CANTILEVER



CHOOSE YOUR  
OWN ADVENTURE  
TREE HOUSE



AQUEDUCT OF INDECIPHERABLE  
ALLEGORY



TRAGICOMEDY TENT





I like to sniff  
old books.

# when you are gone

I will miss your  
gentle noises



your reassuring  
presence

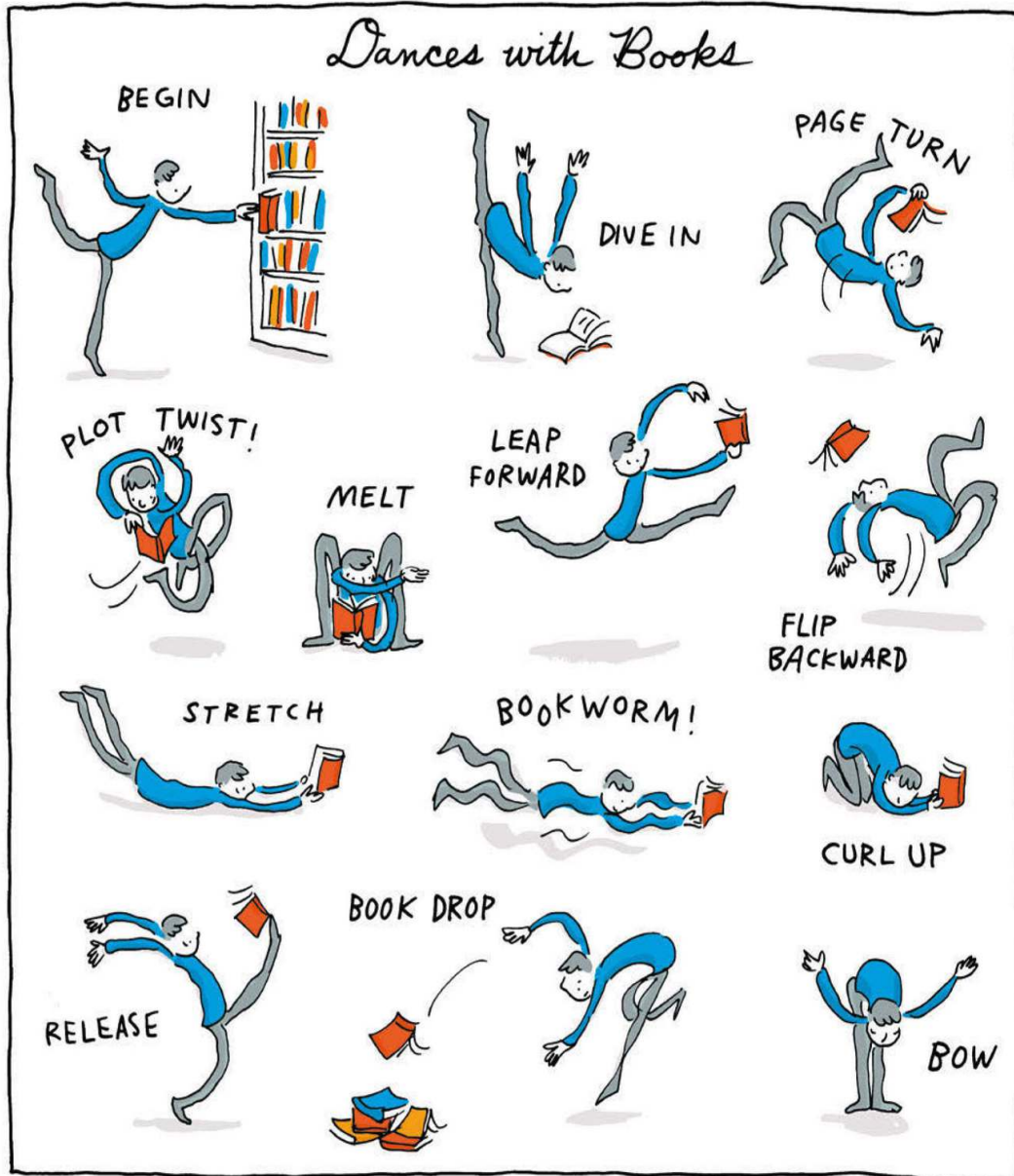


sharing you  
with others



your smell



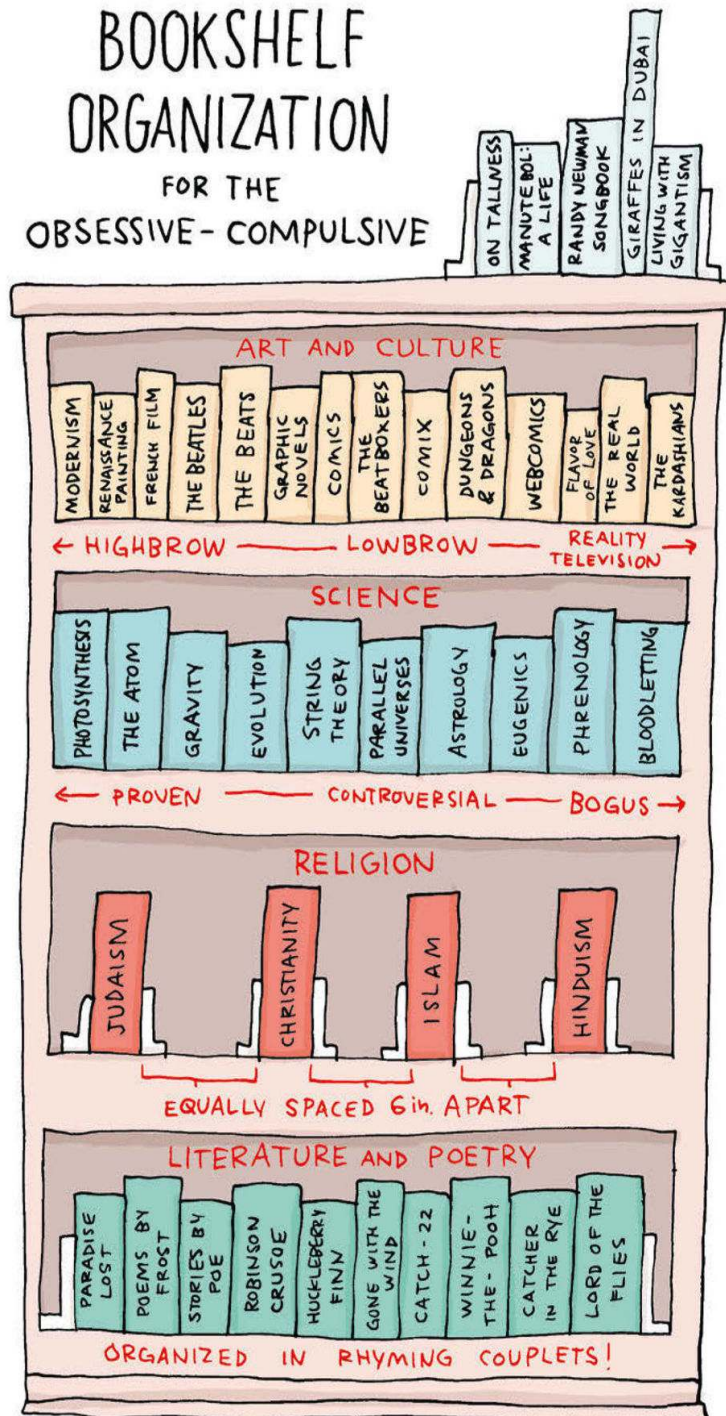


(AFTER REMY CHARLIP)



# BOOKSHELF ORGANIZATION

FOR THE  
OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE



# THE BOOK OF THE FUTURE





# THE MANY FACES OF THE NOVEL

PROTO-NOVEL



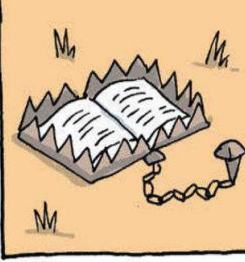
ALLEGORICAL NOVEL



GOthic NOVEL



SATIRICAL NOVEL



HERETICAL NOVEL



GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL



EXPERIMENTAL NOVEL

FINISH ME,  
I DARE YOU.



GREAT RUSSIAN NOVEL



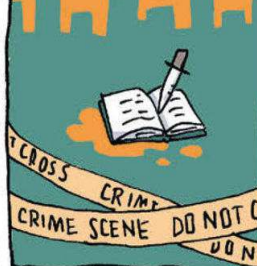
TABOO NOVEL



HOAX NOVEL



GENRE NOVEL



FORGOTTEN NOVEL

WHO READS  
NOVELS ANYWAY?











I am  
searching for  
a miracle cure  
for writer's  
block.



## advice to writers

PUT PAPER (BLANK)  
TO PENCIL (SHARP).



TRY TO MAKE SPARKS.



IF SOMETHING IGNITES,  
STAY UP WRITING



BY THE FIRE YOUR  
WORDS ARE LIGHTING.



IF BY MORNING,  
YOU END UP CHARRED -



DON'T GIVE UP.  
WRITING'S HARD.











## Mindfulness



# THE SPECTER OF FAILURE





# POETIC JUSTICE





# Literary Consolation Prizes

THICK BOOK AWARD



MEDAL OF GRAMMAR



FIRST NOVEL ENCOURAGEMENT STICKERS



UNPUBLISHED AUTHOR PIZZA PARTY



FORMERLY PRECOCIOUS WRITER ISSUE



UNNECESSARY PUNCTUATION RIBBON



SELF-PROCLAIMED GENIUS GRANT



LOVECRAFT PRIZE FOR ZOMBIE FICTION



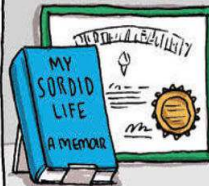
EPIC TRILOGY COMPLETION TALISMAN



OVERINFLATED AMBITION BALLOON



CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY



PARTICIPATION TROPHY



I care about  
punctuation—  
a lot.

# Proofreader's Marks



Delete



Set in italics



Set in Italy



Preferably in Rome



Insert ellipsis



Insert cyclopsis



Wrong font



Horribly wrong font

... Ant problem



Insert colon



"Good grief!"



Add mustache



Add a Stetson hat



Curl mustache



Flying mustache!



More drama



More hypnosis



Insert space



Write faster



Got bored, played  
tic-tac-toe

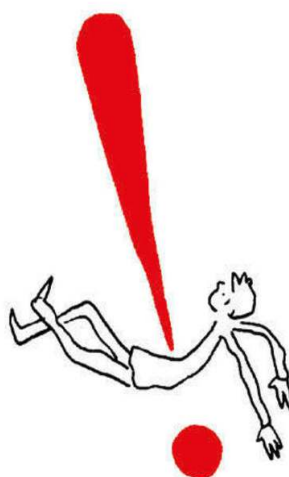
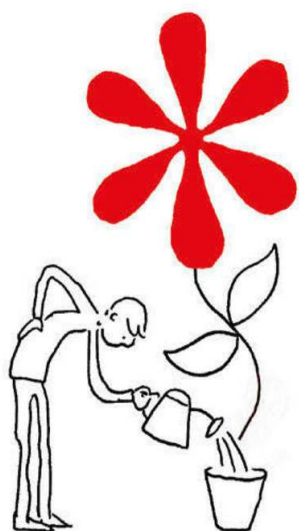
Word  tornado



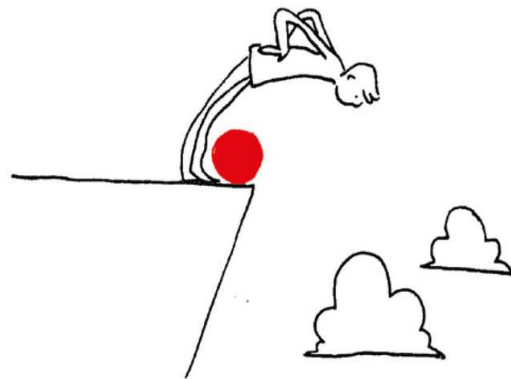
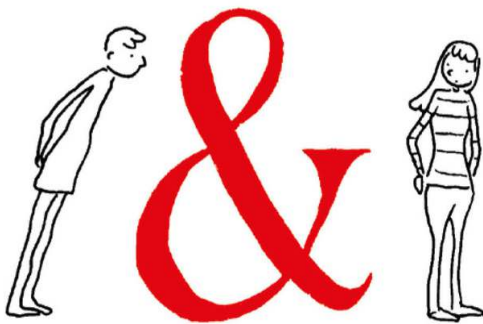


# SUMMER NIGHT

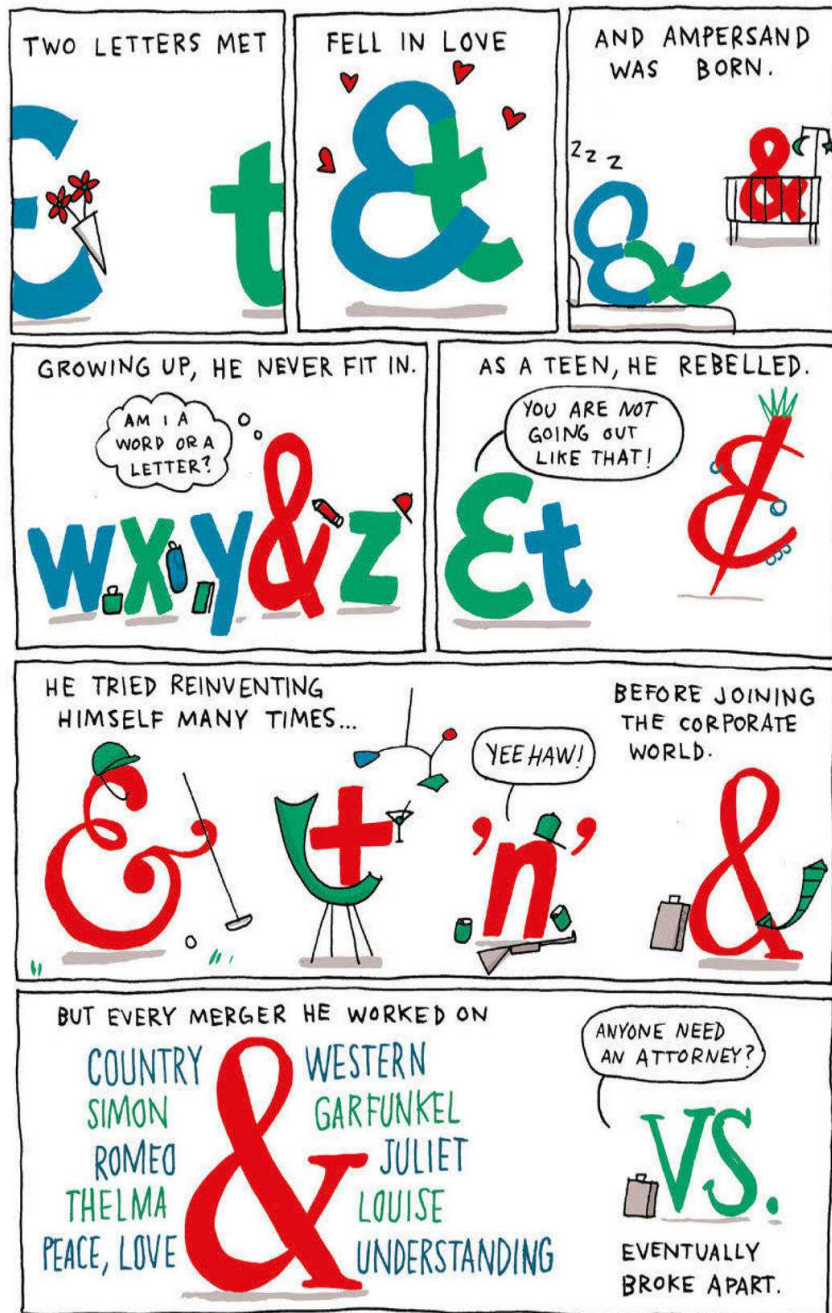


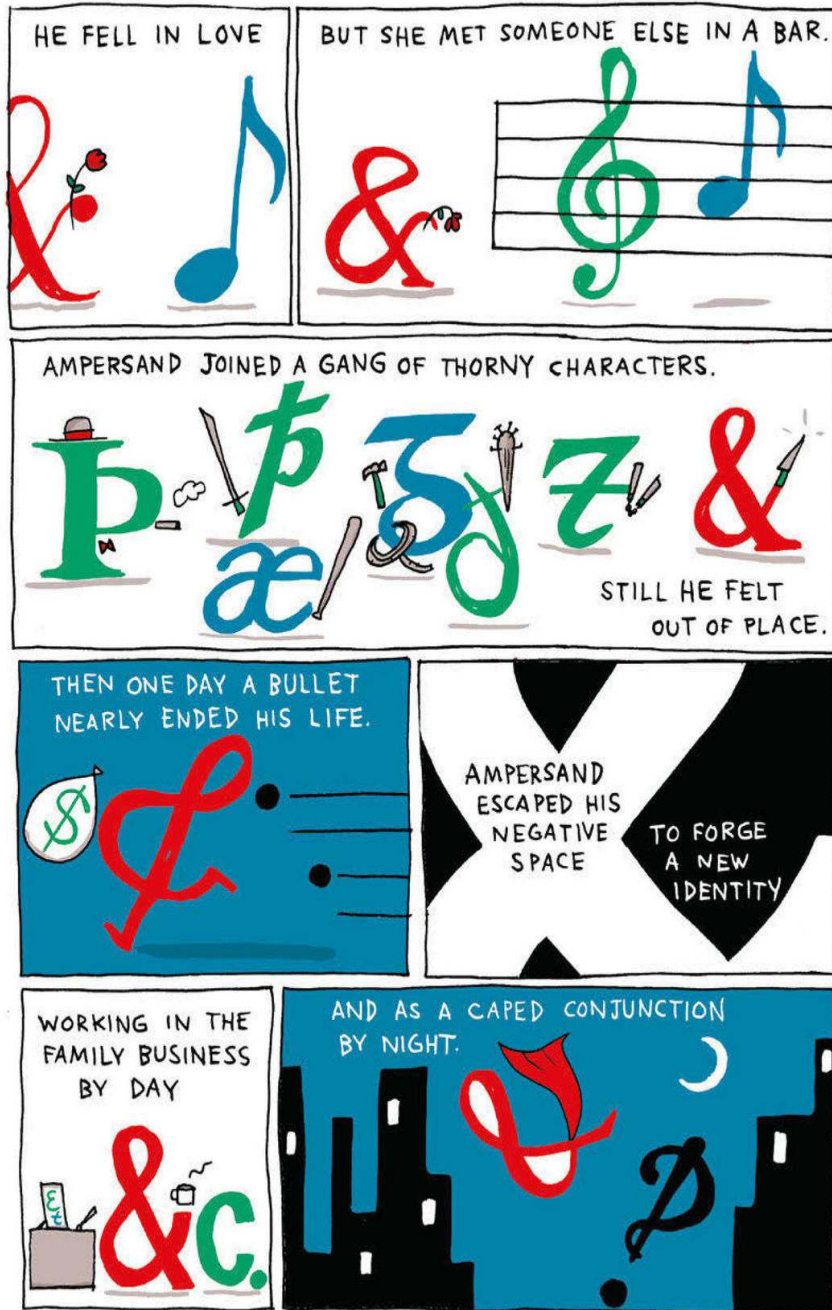






# adventures of the ampersand





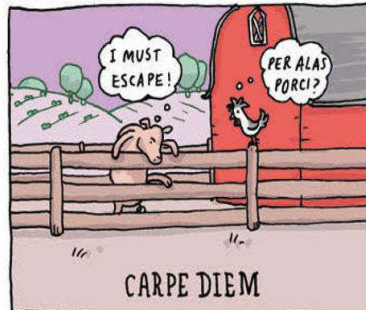
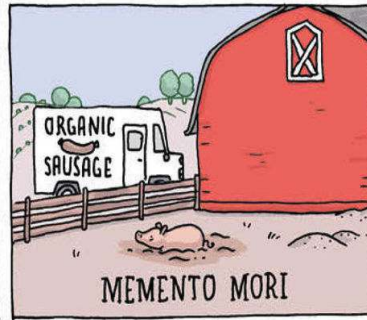


I will read  
the classics  
(someday).

## THE INGREDIENTS OF SHAKESPEARE

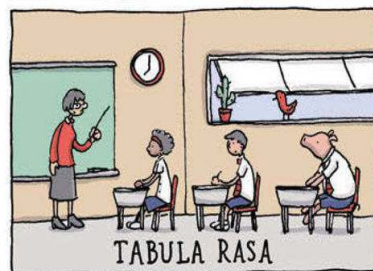


# PIG LATIN

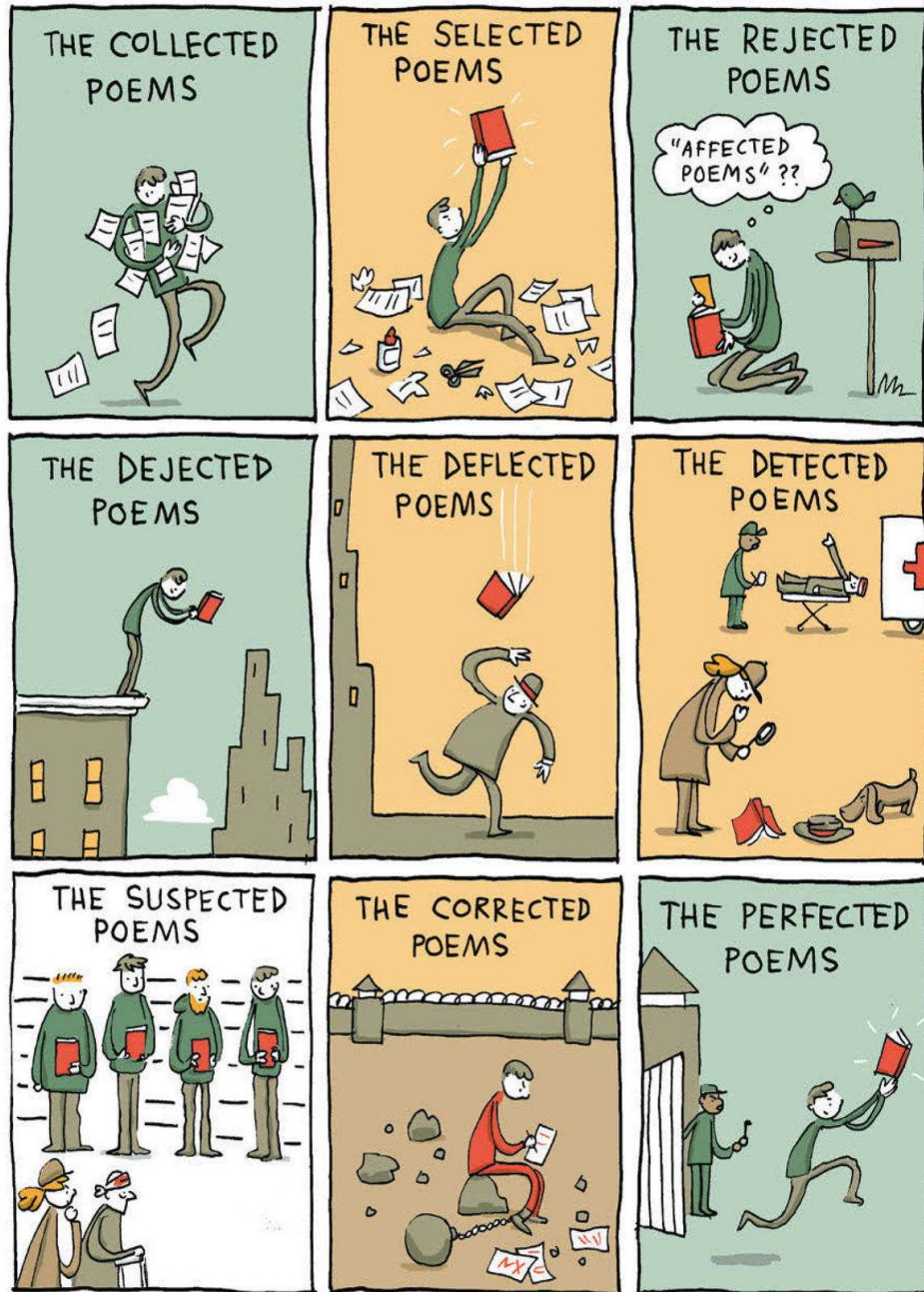




# PIG LATIN REDUX



# a book of poems





# UNEXPECTED RAIN SONG

(after Langston Hughes)

Let the rain  
surprise you.



Let the rain wash away  
your distractions.



Let the rain fall on your  
heels like quicksilver.



Let the rain challenge  
your sense of fashion.



The rain demands  
expressive dance.



The rain plays  
rhythmic trance music.



The rain brings poets  
and earthworms.



The rain paints in  
drunken watercolors.



I love the rain.





# WE ARE THE INTROVERTS.

YOU CAN  
OFTEN  
FIND US  
IN OUR  
NATURAL  
HABITATS.

PLACES OF  
ART



PLACES OF  
BOOKS



OUTSIDE IN  
NATURE



INSIDE OUR  
OWN BRAINS



PERHAPS YOU  
WILL RECOGNIZE  
THESE FAMOUS  
INTROVERTS:

J.D. SALINGER



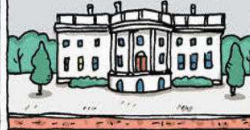
EMILY DICKINSON



MICHAEL JACKSON



ABRAHAM LINCOLN



DR. SEUSS



WHAT  
ANIMAL  
BEST  
DESCRIBES  
US?

THE LONE WOLF?



THE HERMIT CRAB?

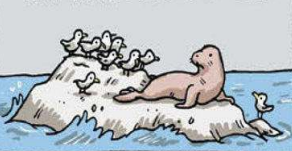


THE BROWN RECLUSE?



NO!  
IT IS THE  
MONK  
SEAL.

AWKWARD AROUND OTHERS...



BUT GRACEFUL IN ITS ELEMENT.



SO FORGET  
WHAT  
YOU'VE  
HEARD.  
INTROVERTS  
KNOW  
HOW TO  
PARTY.

GAME NIGHT



DANCE - OFF



THE AFTER-PARTY



## TYPES OF READERS

PICKY



VORACIOUS



DRAMATIC

TO READ, OR NOT  
TO READ?



INDECISIVE



OVERPREPARED



UNDERPREPARED



GUILTY



NOCTURNAL



PHONY



CONTORTIONIST



NEGLECTFUL



RECLUSIVE





# DAY JOBS OF THE POETS







I am writing  
The Great  
American  
Novel.







# PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS for WRITERS





# STYLES OF WRITING

ACTIVE WRITING



PASSIVE WRITING



CONSTRAINED WRITING



FLOWERY WRITING



EXPERIMENTAL WRITING



FIGURATIVE WRITING



STRONG WRITING



FORCED WRITING



GHOSTWRITING



FRAGMENTED WRITING



REWRITING



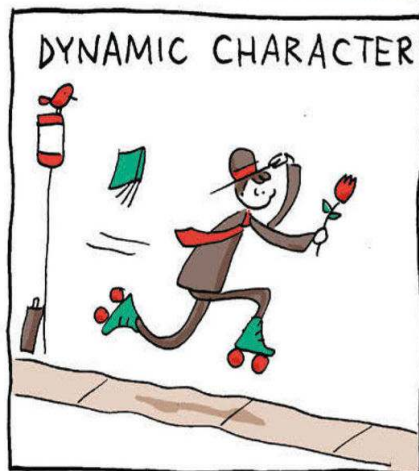
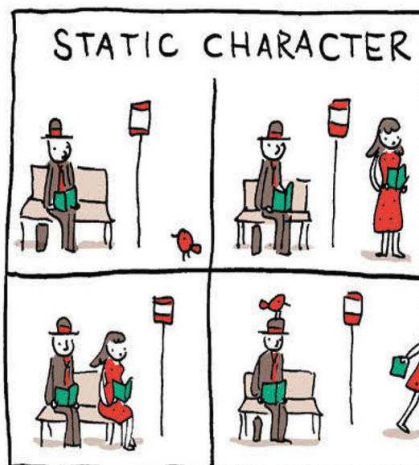
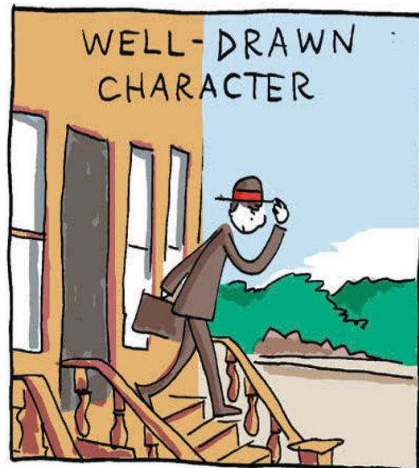
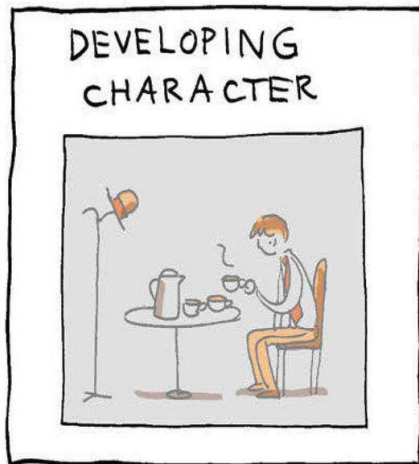
PERSUASIVE WRITING



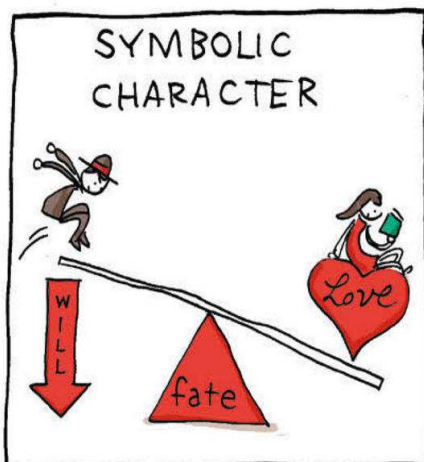
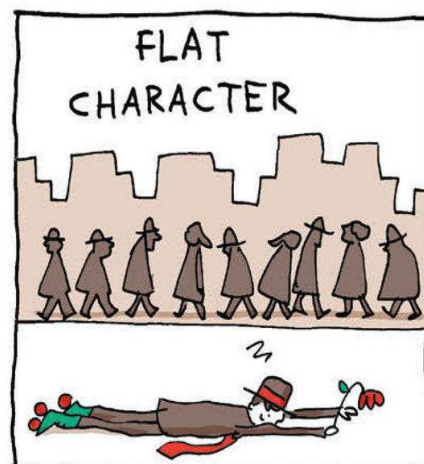
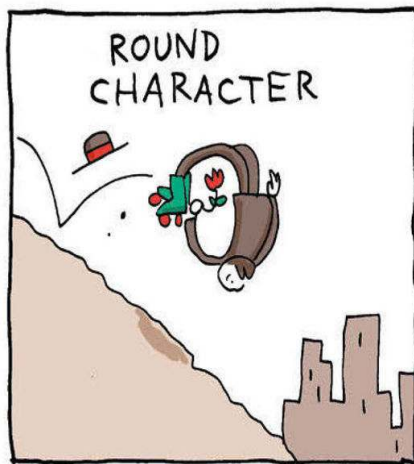




# CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT







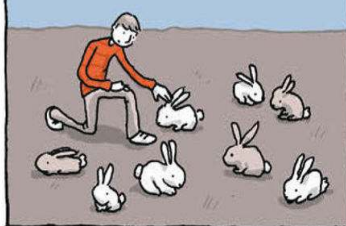


# HOW TO MAKE WRITE

THE ENVISION



THE INSPIRE



THE CREATE



THE REVEAL



THE REVISE



THE SUBMIT



THE LIE-AWAKE



THE REFUSE



THE REACT



THE REGRET



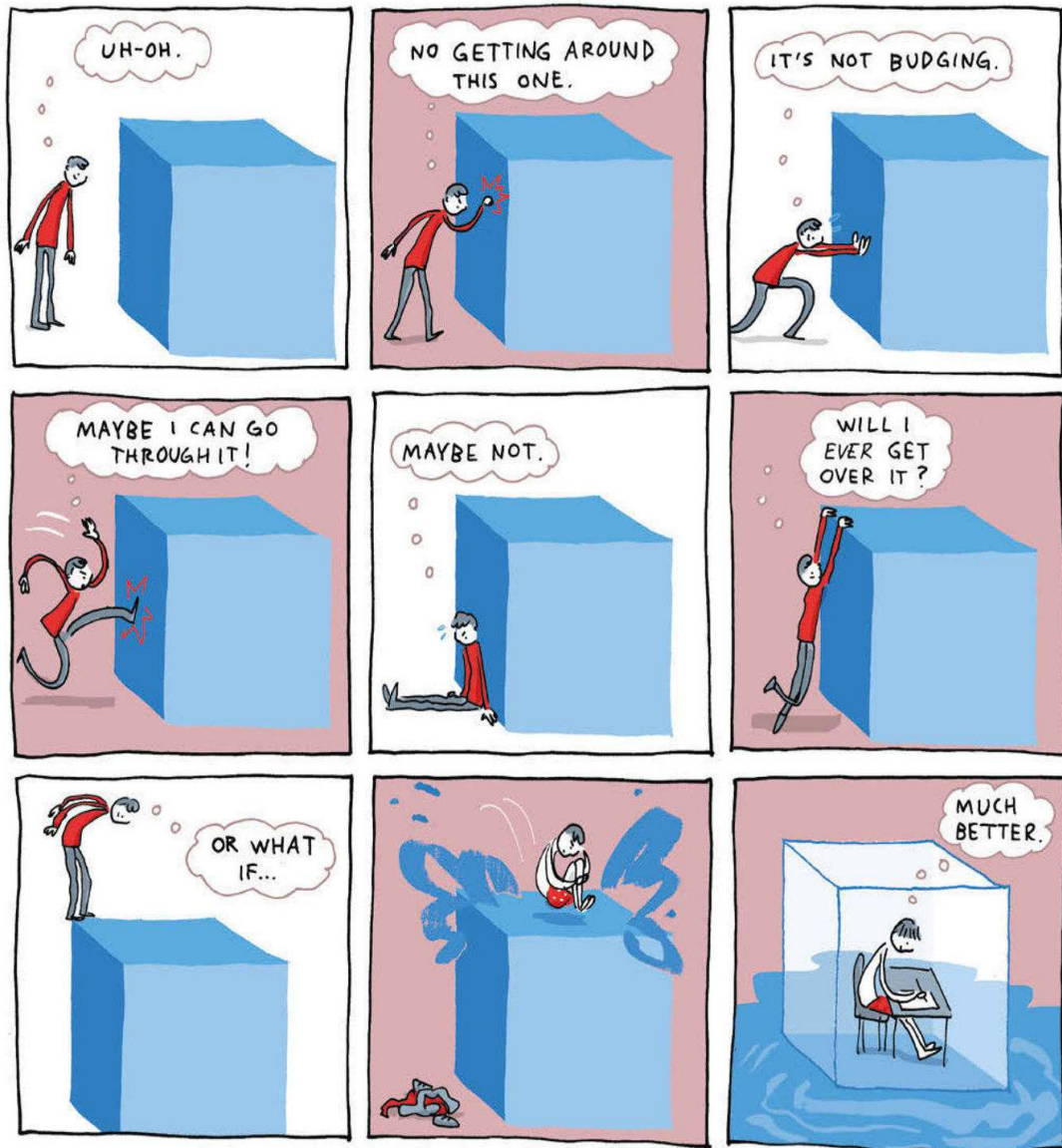
THE RECOVER



THE RESTART



# BLOCKED





STRUNK AND  
WHITE'S

# WRITERS' STYLE GUIDE

OMIT THE NEEDLESS.



PREFER THE ACTIVE  
TO THE PASSIVE.



AVOID STYLES THAT ARE  
LOOSE, INDEFINITE, OR COLLOQUIAL.



USE FIGURES OF SPEECH SPARINGLY.





DON'T BE TOO FANCY. BUT TAKE NO SHORTCUTS.



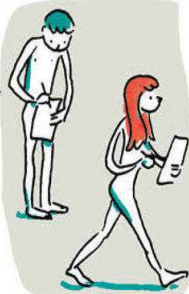
AVOID AWKWARD CONSTRUCTIONS.



EDIT, EDIT, EDIT!



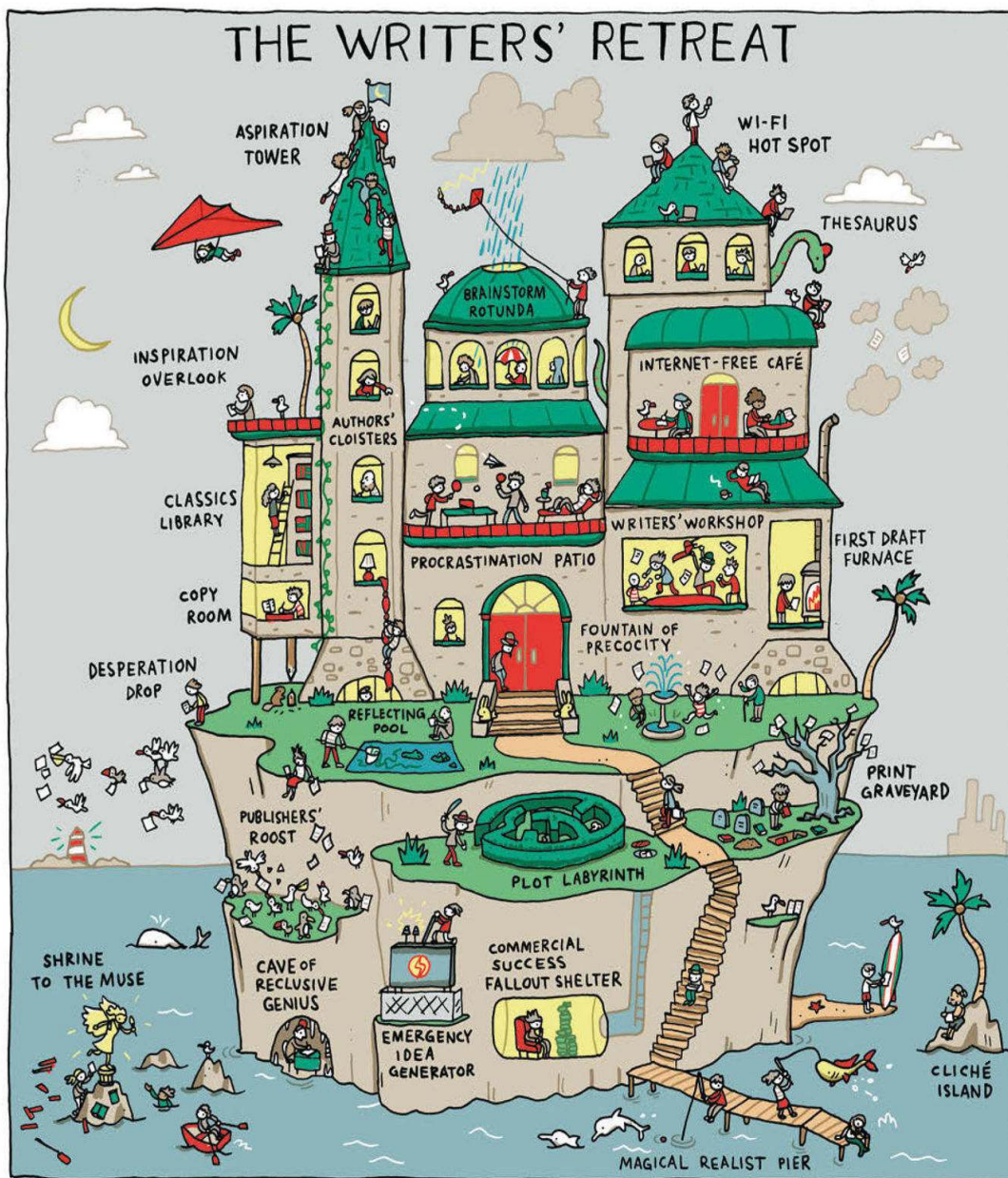
STRIP DOWN TO ESSENTIALS.



ONE MUST MASTER THE RULES OF STYLE IN ORDER TO TRANSCEND THEM.



I carry  
a notebook  
with me at  
all times.





## TYPES OF NARRATORS

### FIRST PERSON

I AM WRITING  
A NOVEL.



### UNRELIABLE

IT IS GOING  
EXTREMELY WELL.



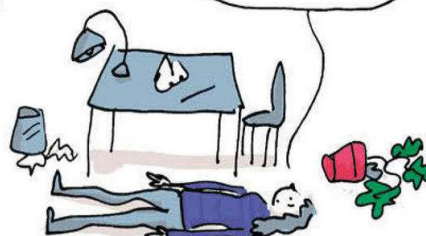
### SECOND PERSON

YOU MUST KEEP  
WRITING!



### LIMITED

I DON'T THINK  
I CAN DO THIS...



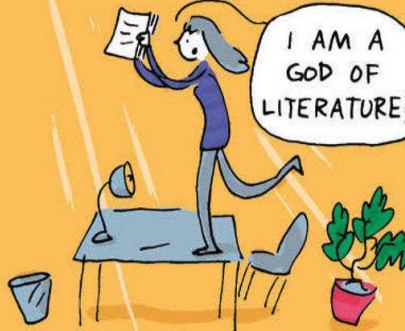
### THIRD PERSON

SUDDENLY, SHE WAS  
STRUCK BY INSPIRATION!



### OMNISCIENT

I AM A  
GOD OF  
LITERATURE!



# Pen Names

TRUTH  
TELLER



BIRD-  
WATCHER



LANGUAGE  
CONNOISSEUR



MEMORY  
KEEPER



IMAGINARY-  
FRIEND MAKER



SCREAMER  
INTO THE VOID



CONVERSATION  
THIEF



PROFESSIONAL  
PROCRASTINATOR



CREATOR AND  
DESTROYER OF  
WORLDS





# ONE PAGE AT A TIME

IF YOU WERE TO  
WRITE ONE  
PAGE A DAY



EACH DAY FOR  
A YEAR



AND A YEAR  
AFTER THAT



AND SO ON...



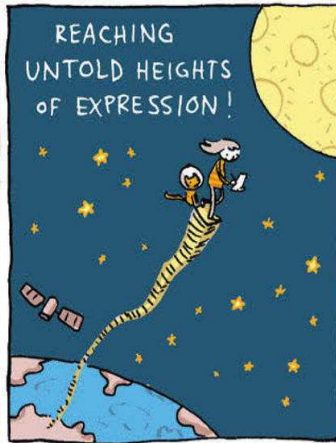
THINK OF WHAT YOU  
COULD CREATE:



A TOWERING BODY  
OF WORK



REACHING  
UNTOLD HEIGHTS  
OF EXPRESSION!



OR ELSE JUST COUNTLESS  
SCRAPS OF UNREALIZED  
POTENTIAL



THAT THREATEN TO CONSUME YOU COMPLETELY.





Writing a poem is like  
riding a bicycle.



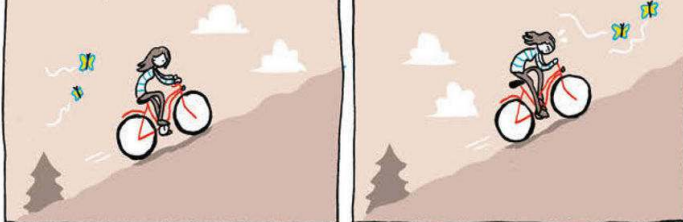
Impressive at a  
young age

but considered eccentric  
among adults.



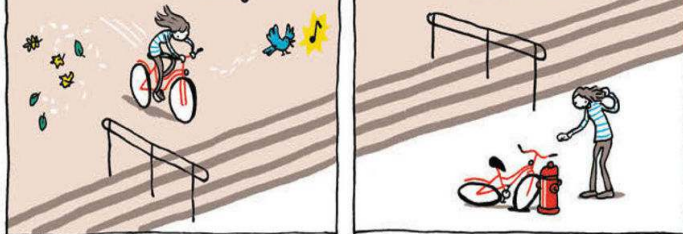
A simple, solitary  
pursuit

in which time slows  
to reveal small moments.



Full of exhilarating  
sounds and images.

With attempts at simile  
that often fall flat.



Writing a poem is not like  
riding a bicycle.

Writing a poem is like  
riding a bicycle while  
writing a poem.



Each time  
it must be  
learned anew.

# ENOUGH

IF YOU ARE  
WRITING FOR THE  
APPROVAL OF  
OTHERS...



GOOD LUCK.



ALL THE  
ACCOLADES IN  
THE WORLD...



WILL NEVER  
BE ENOUGH.



SO STOP  
CHASING  
RECOGNITION.



AND START  
WRITING FOR  
YOURSELF  
AGAIN.



# NEW LINES



I walk a tightrope of language.

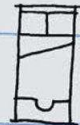


I stumble into meaning.



I'm fully in command until

my subject turns on me.



I strive for beauty



but rarely succeed.

I skip from thought



to thought



and drift

into a raging sea.



Still I keep going

without knowing where the next line leads.





# WHAT TO PUT IN YOUR NOTEBOOK



# PERFECT

THIS IS THE PERFECT  
BOOK YOU WILL  
NEVER WRITE.



THIS IS THE  
PERFECT RACE  
YOU WILL NEVER  
RUN.



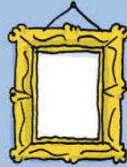
THIS IS THE PERFECT  
IDEA THAT WILL  
NEVER STRIKE.



THIS IS THE PERFECT  
PERSON YOU WILL  
NEVER BECOME.



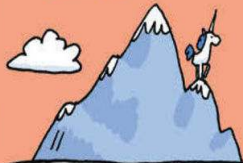
THIS IS THE  
PERFECT PAINTING  
YOU WILL NEVER MAKE.



THIS IS THE  
PERFECT SONG YOU  
WILL NEVER HUM.



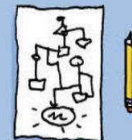
THIS IS THE  
PERFECT MOUNTAIN  
YOU WILL NEVER  
CLIMB.



THIS IS THE  
PERFECT CAKE YOU  
WILL NEVER BAKE.



THIS IS THE  
PERFECT SOLUTION  
YOU WILL NEVER  
FIND.

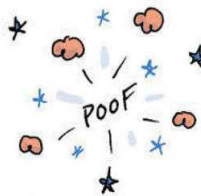


THIS IS PERFECTION:



IT DOESN'T EXIST.

TIME TO DESTROY  
PERFECT...



AND GET  
SOMETHING DONE.



I write  
because I  
must.



# WHY WE WRITE







CAN YOU SPOT THE DIFFERENCE?





# WRITING EXERCISES

CLEAR A SPACE.



SIT IN SOLITUDE.



IMITATE YOUR PREDECESSORS.



STRETCH BEYOND THEM.



STRENGTHEN YOUR VOICE.



CUT WEIGHT.





## THE NINE R's

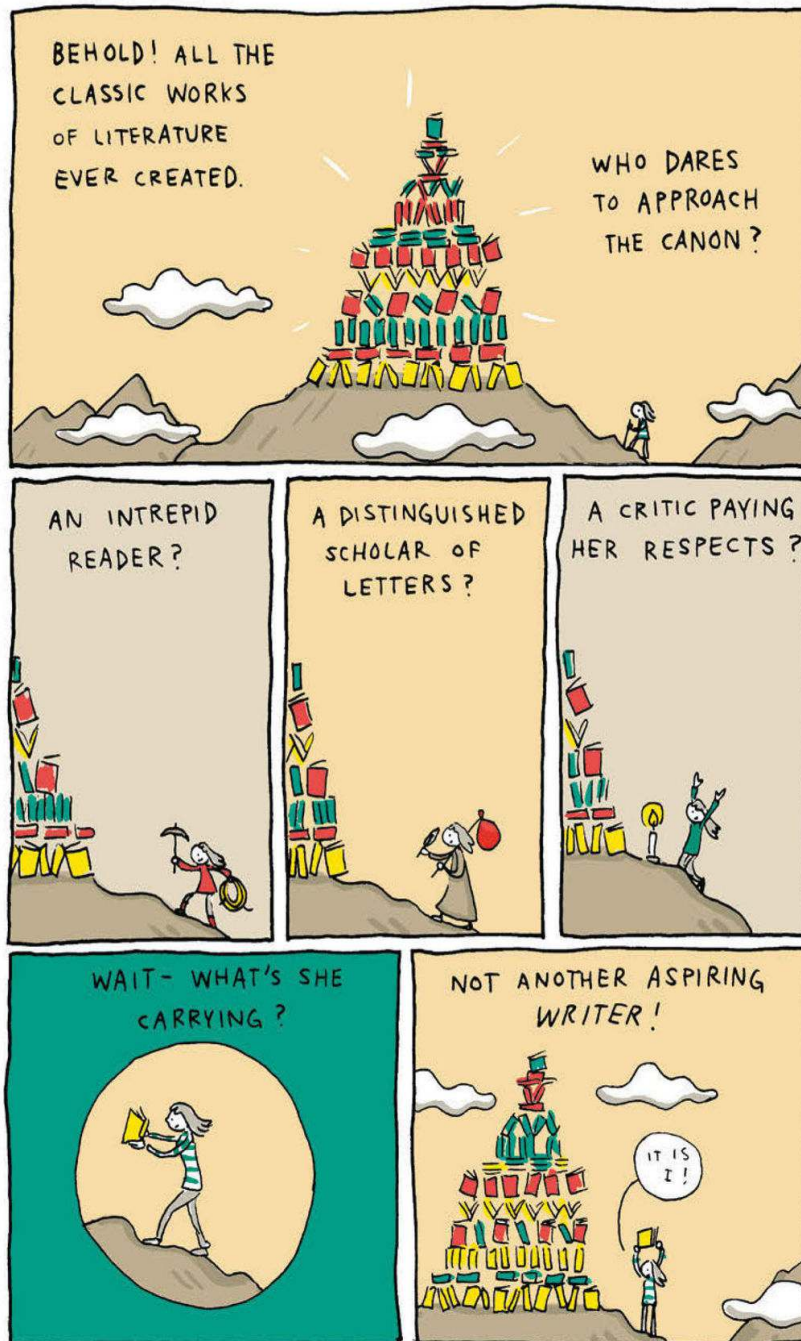




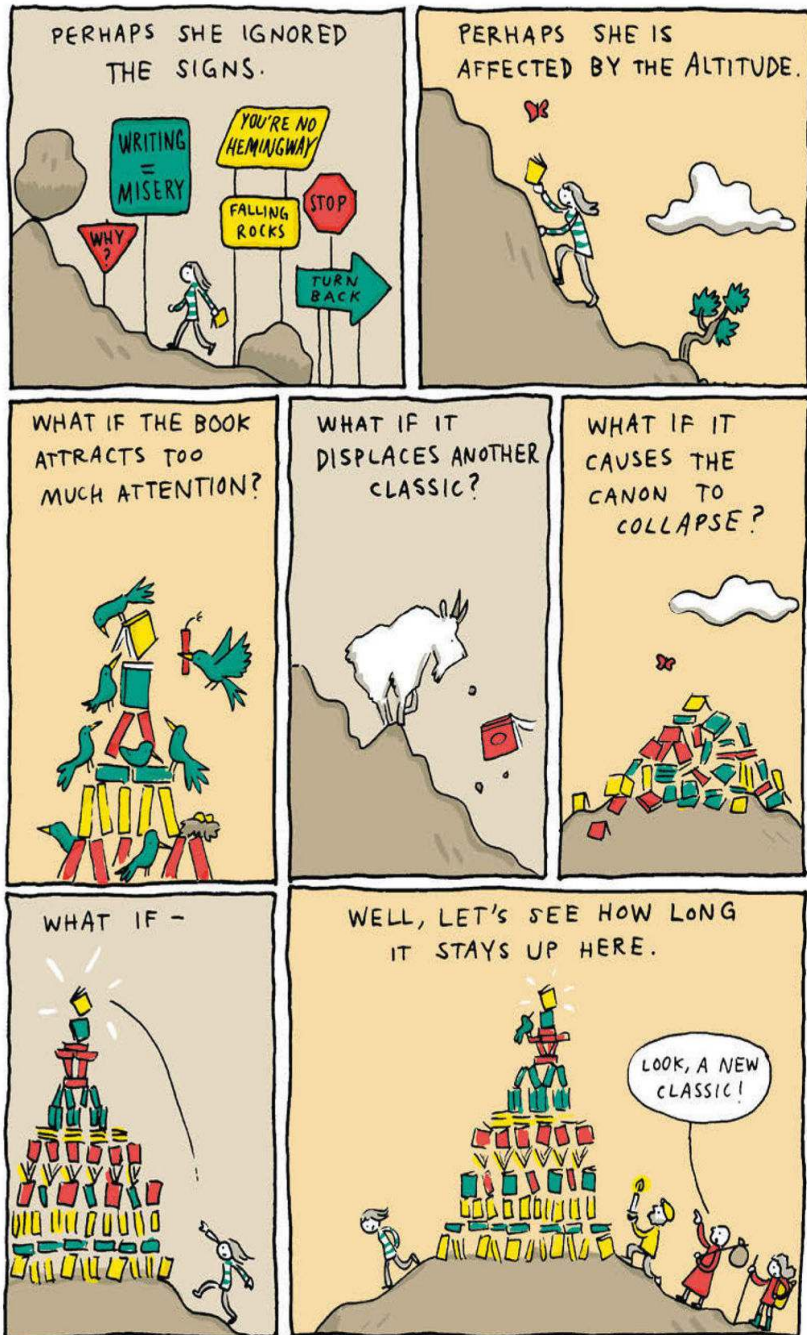
## HOW TO BECOME A LITERARY RECLUSE



# GREAT ASPIRATIONS



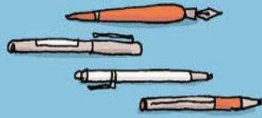






# ODE TO LOST PENS

TO ALL THE  
FELT-TIPS, GELS,  
FOUNTAINS, AND  
BALLPOINTS



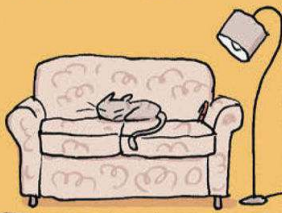
DROPPED FROM  
MY POCKETS



DROWNED AT  
LAUNDROMATS



WEDGED BETWEEN  
COUCH CUSHIONS



STRANDED ON  
STREETS



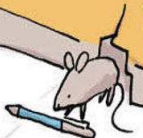
MISTAKEN FOR  
TWIGS



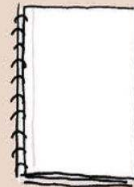
FALLEN INTO THE  
ABYSS



STOLEN BY  
CLEVER MICE



NEVER TO TOUCH  
A PAGE



MAY YOU RETURN  
TO ME



ON SOME  
UNFAMILIAR  
SIDEWALK



AT THE MOMENT  
I NEED YOU MOST.



# COGITO ERGO SUM









# INDEX

I'm in love with books.

- 7: I Have a Problem
- 8: My Bookshelf
- 9: Stages of the Reader
- 10: A Reader's Blessing
- 11: Commitment Phobia
- 12: Other People's Bookshelves

I read in social situations.

- 15: Perfect Reading Spots
- 16: Reading Is Dangerous
- 17: Stray Books
- 18: Stuck in a Book
- 19: A Reader's Manifesto

I will use *anything* as a bookmark.

- 21: Some Potential Bookmarks
- 22: My Poem
- 23: Understanding Poetry
- 24: Ode to an Unfinished Book

I confuse fiction with reality.

- 27: The Story Coaster
- 28: Behind Every Great Novelist  
Is . . .
- 29: Reading Goals
- 30: Choose Your Own Memoir
- 31: Story Lines
- 32: The Writer's Block
- 33: Literary Devices

I am wanted for unpaid library fines.

- 35: Please Do Not Leave Children  
Unattended in the Library

36: My Holiday Wish List

37: The Beloved Book

38: Ban This Book

39: The Library

I steal books from my children.

- 41: The Very Bad Picture Book
- 42: Required Summer Reading
- 43: Advocacy for Animals Ignored  
by Children's Books
- 44: Portrait of a Parent Reading
- 45: Books Are . . .
- 46: The Cannon of Literature

I like my realism with a little  
bit of magic.

- 49: Conflict in Literature
- 50: Haruki Murakami Bingo
- 51: The Original Manuscripts
- 52: The Three Rays
- 53: Fahrenheit 351
- 54: This Is a Work of Historical Fiction
- 55: Story Structures

I like to sniff old books.

- 57: When You Are Gone
- 58: Dances with Books
- 59: Bookshelf Organization for the  
Obsessive-Compulsive
- 60: The Book of the Future
- 61: The Many Faces of the Novel
- 62: Reader's Block
- 63: The Book Fair

I am searching for a miracle  
cure for writer's block.

- 65: Advice to Writers
- 66: The Troubled Typeface
- 68: Mindfulness
- 69: The Specter of Failure
- 70: Poetic Justice
- 71: Literary Consolation Prizes

I care about punctuation—a lot.

- 73: Proofreader's Marks
- 74: Horror Story
- 75: Summer Night
- 76: Characters & Punctuation
- 78: Adventures of the Ampersand

I will read the classics (someday).

- 81: The Ingredients of Shakespeare
- 82: Pig Latin
- 83: Pig Latin Redux
- 84: A Book of Poems
- 85: Unexpected Rain Song
- 86: We Are the Introverts
- 87: Types of Readers
- 88: Day Jobs of the Poets
- 89: The National Department of Poetry

I am writing The Great American  
Novel.

- 91: The Cure for Writer's Block
- 92: All I Need to Write
- 93: Performance-Enhancing Drugs  
for Writers

- 94: Styles of Writing
- 95: A Writer's Routine
- 96: Character Development
- 98: How to Make Write
- 99: Blocked
- 100: Strunk and White's Writers'  
Style Guide

I carry a notebook with me  
at all times.

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- 104: Types of Narrators
- 105: Pen Names
- 106: One Page at a Time
- 107: Writing a Poem Is Like Riding  
a Bicycle
- 108: Enough
- 109: New Lines
- 110: What to Put in Your Notebook
- 111: Perfect

I write because I must.

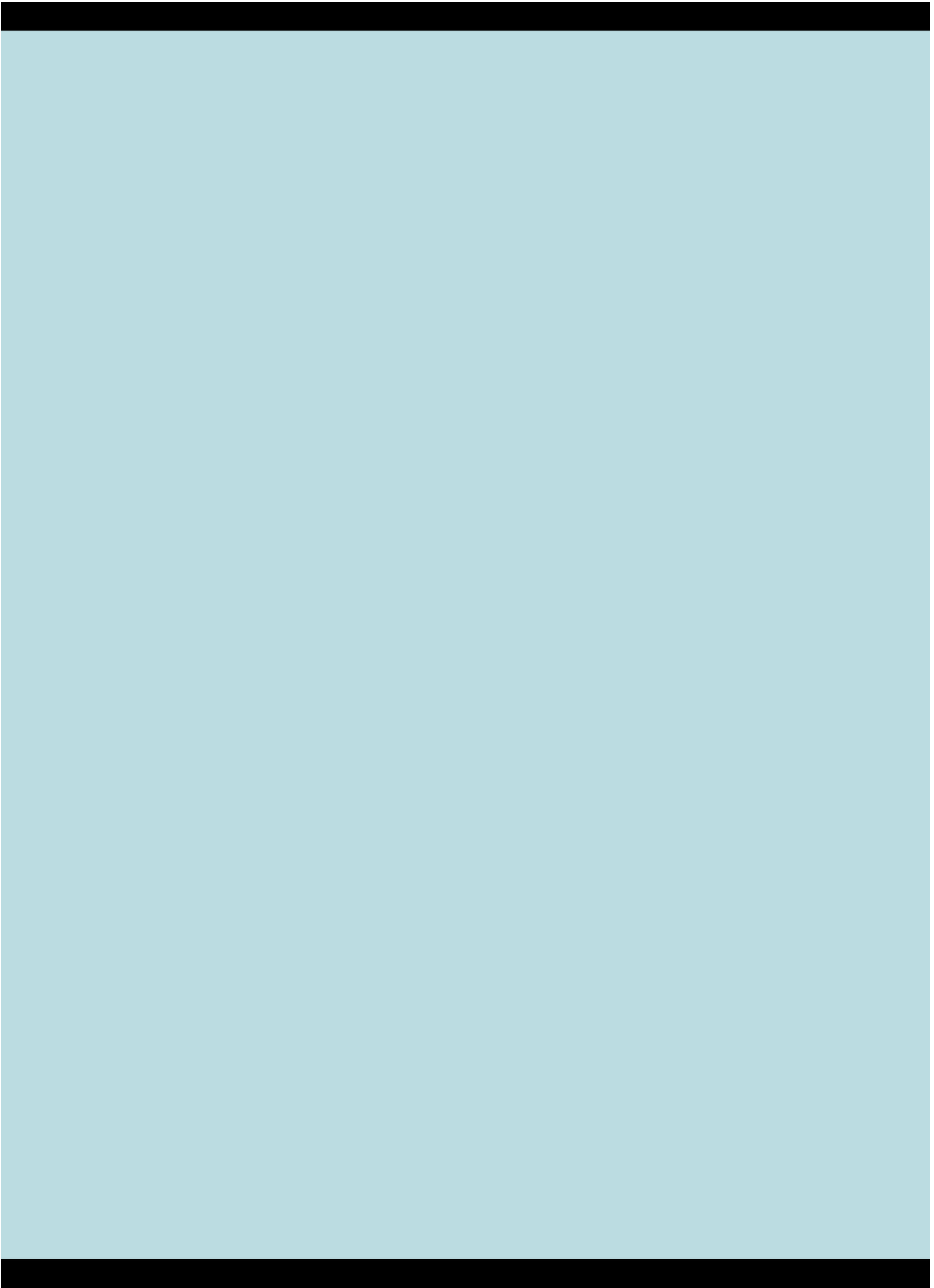
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- 114: A Writer's Hierarchy of Needs
- 115: Can You Spot the Difference?
- 116: Writing Exercises
- 118: The Nine R's
- 119: How to Become a Literary Recluse
- 120: Great Aspirations
- 122: Ode to Lost Pens
- 123: Cogito Ergo Sum
- 124: The End

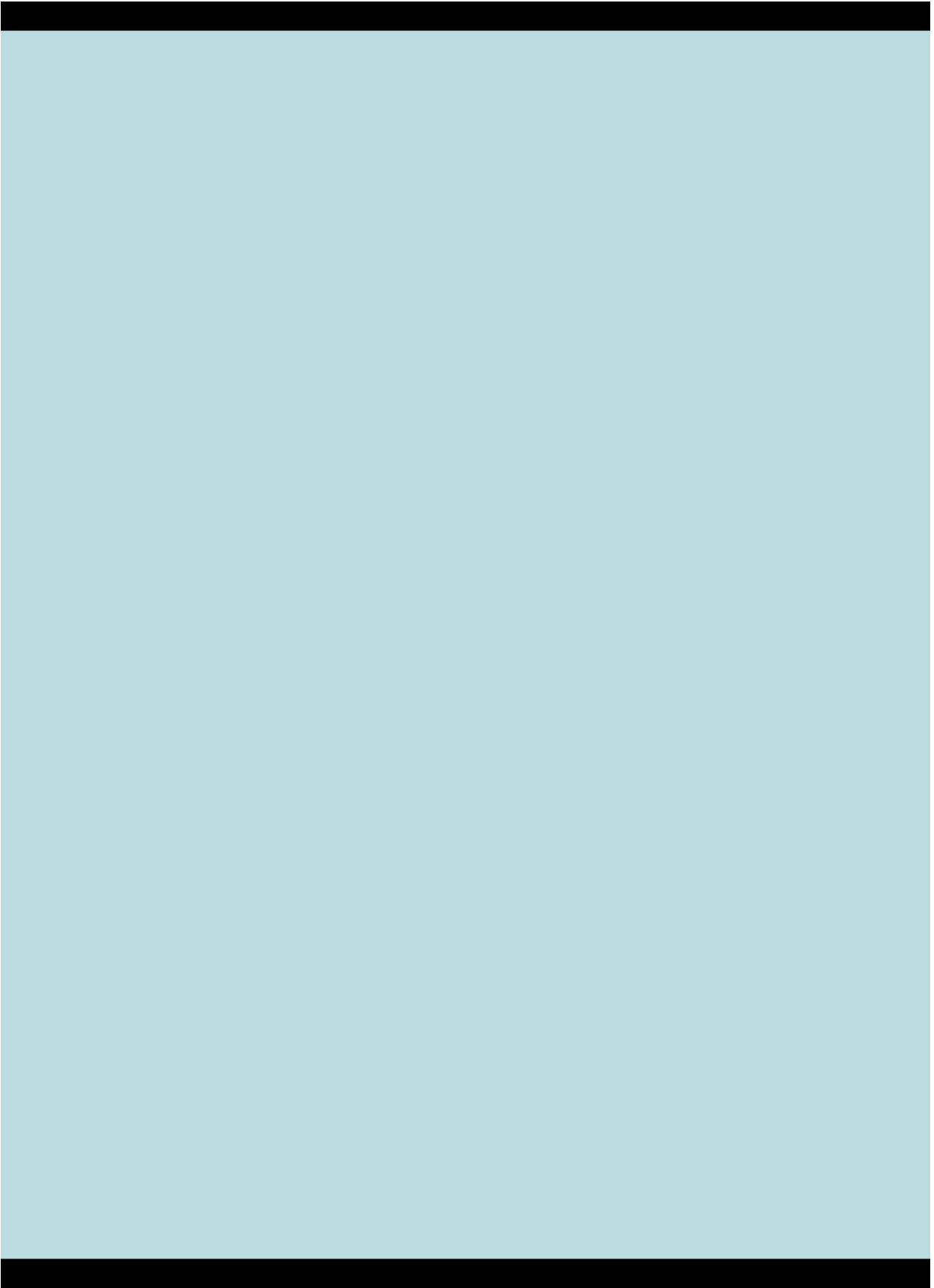




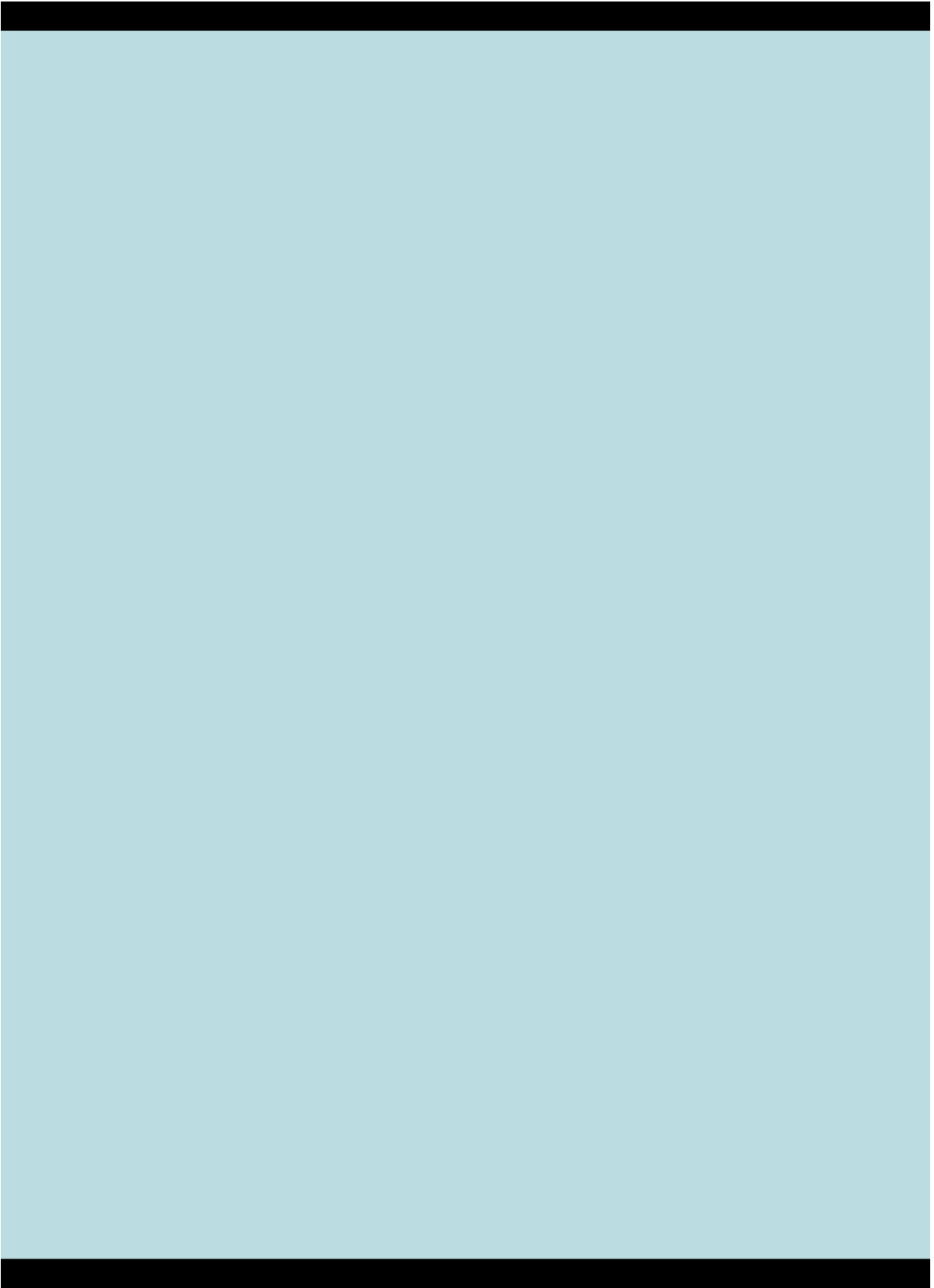
I hope you  
don't mind me  
asking...

can I borrow a  
few books?









# Praise for *The Shape of Ideas*

"What do ideas look like? Where do they come from?' . . . Surprisingly, Snider's beautifully composed cartoons have cogent answers to those questions—or if they don't, he's at least an urgent asker. He's created something unique: a synthesis of comics, philosophy, and poetry: a thoughtful new way of packaging eternal ideas in cartoon boxes." —*Los Angeles Review of Books*



"The tongue-in-cheek wit and self-deprecating style make this a pleasant introduction to the joy and frustration of making any kind of art, and the beautifully designed presentation—with a charming die-cut cover—is a fine proof of concept." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Grant Snider's *The Shape of Ideas* is a creative kaleidoscope of humor, insight, and truth. An inventive window into the creative experience filled with hope and encouragement for daydreamers and doodlers, sketchers and scribbles, inventors, explorers, and spinners of yarns." —*Clare Vanderpool*, Newbery Medal winner for *Moon Over Manifest* and the Printz Honor for *Navigating Early*

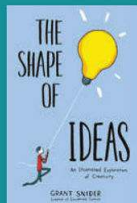
It's no secret, but we are judged by our bookshelves. We learn to read at an early age, and as we grow older we shed our beloved books for new ones. But some of us surround ourselves with books. We collect them, decorate with them, are inspired by them, and treat our books as sacred objects. In *I Will Judge You by Your Bookshelf*, a lighthearted collection of one- and two-page comics, writer/artist Grant Snider explores bookishness in all its forms—the perfect gift for bookworms of all ages.

**Grant Snider** is an orthodontist by day and an artist by night. His comics have been featured in the *Kansas City Star*, the *New York Times*, and the *New Yorker*, as well as the anthology *The Best American Comics*. He is the creator of Incidental Comics and the author/illustrator of *The Shape of Ideas*, *The Shape of Ideas Sketchbook*, and the picture book *What Color Is Night?* Snider lives in Wichita, Kansas, with his wife and their four children. Follow him online at [incidentalcomics.com](http://incidentalcomics.com) and [@grantdraws](https://twitter.com/grantdraws).



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