SCRIBE

DIGEST

WORDS THAT MATTER

It's true that the most difficult circumstances produce the best masterpieces. In fact, creativity thrives when physical and mental activities are restricted by disability.



Q4
2023

Cece Bell
Alice Wong
Christa Couture
Nicola Griffith
Raymond Antrobus

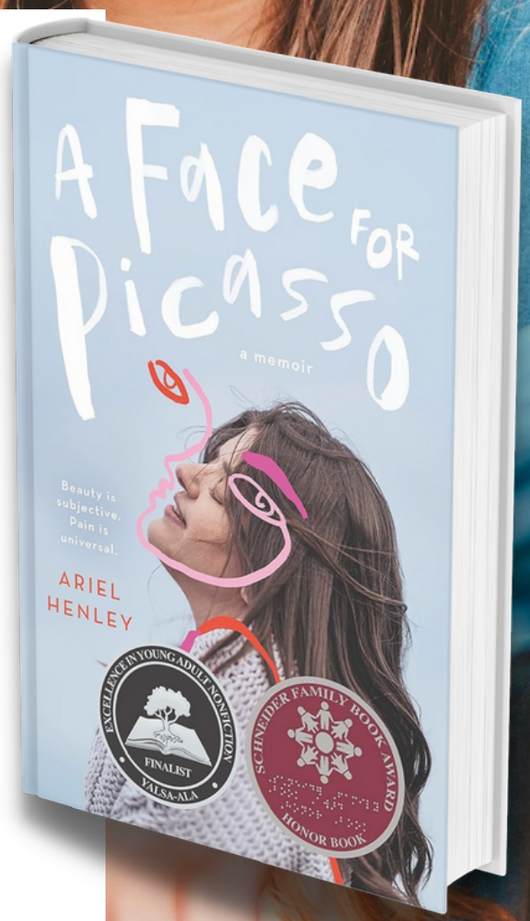
IN MOMENT

Here is a list of a few notable disabled authors, many of whom have received praise and awards for their writing prowess.

WWW.SCRIBEDIGEST.COM

Ariel and Zan, identical twin sisters, were diagnosed with Crouzon syndrome at a tender age of eight months. This rare condition causes the premature fusion of the bones in the head. Remarkably, they became the first known surviving twins with this condition.

In her memoir for young adults, Ariel delves into the themes of beauty and identity, highlighting the importance of resilience, sisterhood, and the unwavering determination required to rebuild your life and sense of self repeatedly.



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IN THE FOCUS

Author Spotlight

Lisette Auton



Get to know

Lisette Auton resides in a land-locked municipality in the northeastern region of England alongside her literary rescue companion, Harper Lee. Although she yearns to have been born in a coastal area like the rest of her extensive family, she compensates for this by seizing every opportunity to retreat to the seaside.

I held the distinction of being the inaugural Wreckling in Haven Point, yet I was far from being the final one. Presently, our ranks have swelled to forty-two, excluding the mermaids. As a Wreckling, the majority of my time was occupied with bickering, indulging in meals, and devising thrilling escapades. Additionally, Wrecklings were entrusted with the task of executing wreckings, thus earning us our distinctive title.

www.lisetteauton.co.uk

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Editor's Note

A SPOTLIGHT ON THE BRILLIANCE OF FAMOUS HANDICAPPED AUTHORS



Welcome to the captivating embrace of the October to December 2023 issue of Scribe Digest.

In this edition, we traverse the hallowed paths of literary history, shining a spotlight on the brilliance of famous handicapped authors whose indelible words have shaped our literary landscape.

Immerse yourself in the timeless allure of famous books penned by disabled authors, each page a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Journey through the labyrinth of writer's block, finding solace and inspiration in strategies to overcome creative stagnation.

Uncover the curious habits of beloved authors, delving into the eccentricities that breathe life into their craft.

As autumn leaves yield to winter's hush, explore the magic of writing in this seasonal transition, where words weave tales that echo through the frost-kissed air.

Sincerely,

The Editorial Team
Scribe Digest

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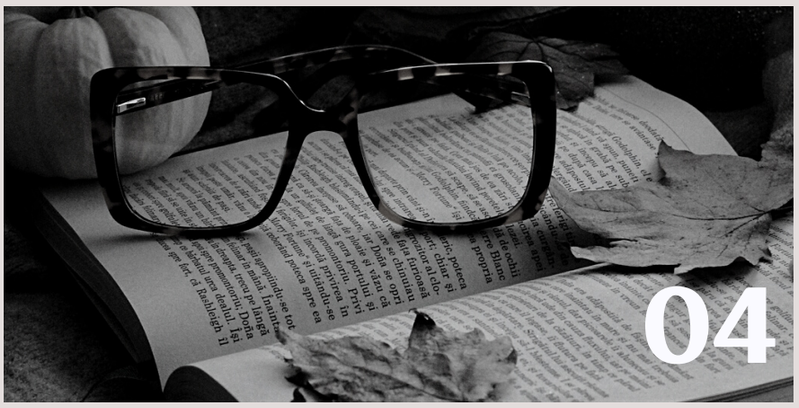





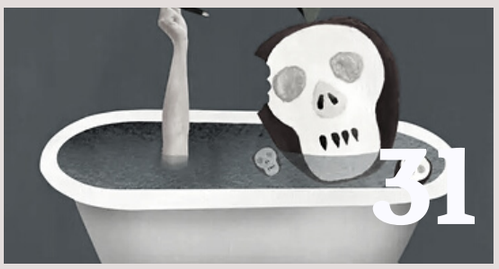



Editor's Note 04

As autumn leaves yield to winter's hush, explore the magic of writing in this seasonal transition, where words weave tales that echo through the frost-kissed air.

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Many of them believed in superstitions and had quirky little rituals for success. Who knew?! Famous authors – they're just like us!

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Witers Block - the inability to begin or continue writing for reasons other than a lack of basic skill or commitment.

Featured Publishers

HarperOne

COACH HOUSE BOOKS

BEACON PRESS
IGNITING HEARTS & MINDS

PICADOR

BOA EDITIONS LTD

GRAYWOLF PRESS

SCHOLASTIC

SOFT SKULL PRESS

AVID READER PRESS

Delacorte Press

Broadleaf BOOKS

SQUARE FISH

Exhibitions

International, National and Local



The London Book Fair New Title Showcase showcases all titles, covering face-out and listing important details in a printed catalog and online searchable catalog. Attracting thousands of attendees, the event attracts publishers, literary agents, distributors, librarians, booksellers, authors, and movie producers.



The Public Library Association (PLA) is the largest association in the United States, serving 10,000 members in public libraries across the country. With over 120,000 libraries, the library market is estimated to be a $5 billion dollar industry. The NTS offers an online searchable catalog for books, providing additional exposure to the tens of thousands of individuals visiting local libraries each year.

KIND OF SPARK



By Elle McNichol

Elle McNicoll is a highly acclaimed author who has achieved both commercial and critical success. Her debut novel, A Kind of Spark, has won numerous awards including the Blue Peter Book Award, the Overall Waterstones Children's Book Prize, and Blackwell's Book of 2020. In addition, she has been nominated for the prestigious Carnegie Award three times and has been shortlisted for several other awards such as the Books Are My Bag Awards, the Branford Boase Award, and The Little Rebels Award. Her second novel, Show Us Who You Are, has also received critical acclaim and was named Blackwell's Book of the Month.

www.dianemariebrown.com



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Ms. Murphy's lesson on the witch trials that took place in Juniper has left a lasting impact on me. As someone who is neurodivergent, I can relate to feeling different from others. The witches who were accused and persecuted were also seen as different and were not given a fair chance to defend themselves. It's important to remember their story and to continue to speak up for those who may not have a voice. I hope to raise awareness and understanding in my community so that we can learn from the past and create a more inclusive future.

A Peter Blue Book Award Winner for Best Story of the Year!

"This debut novel from neurodivergent author McNicoll will bring readers to tears and have them cheering for Addie as she learns how much she has to offer the world." ***-School Library Journal, Starred Review***

"The author, herself neurodivergent, imbues Addie's unapologetically autistic perspective with compassion and insight." **-Kirkus Reviews**

EL DEAFO



The prospect of beginning at a new school can be quite daunting, particularly when one is equipped with a conspicuous hearing aid fastened to their chest. In Cece's previous educational institution, all her classmates shared the same deafness, but now she stands out. She is convinced that her peers are fixated on the Phonic Ear, a formidable device that enables her to hear her teacher.

Unfortunately, it appears that this very aid might deter any potential friendships from blossoming.

Cece stumbles upon a surprising revelation when she discovers that the Phonic Ear enables her to hear her teacher's voice not only in the classroom but also in other parts of the school, such as the hallway, teacher's lounge, and even the bathroom.

This newfound ability feels like a superpower to Cece, and she begins to envision herself as El Deafo, the Listener for All. However, being a superhero comes with its own set of challenges, and Cece finds herself feeling isolated and different from her peers. Despite this, she hopes to use her powers to find a true friend who accepts her for who she is.

CECE BELL

"Bell's book should be an inspiration for those who are 'different,' and it should help others to understand just what being different means. Required reading isn't always fun reading. El Deafo should be the first and is definitely the second."—***New York Times Book Review***

"This funny and poignant memoir in graphic novel format about a child grappling with hearing loss, entering school and making friends is ideal for kids navigating new experiences."—***Shelf Awareness***

"Her whimsical color illustrations (all the human characters have rabbit ears and faces), clear explanations and Cece's often funny adventures help make the memoir accessible and entertaining."—***Kirkus Reviews, starred review***

"Bell's earnest rabbit/human characters, her ability to capture her own sonic universe ("eh sounz lah yur unnah wawah!"), and her invention of an alter ego—the cape-wearing El Deafo, who gets her through stressful encounters . . . all combine to make this a standout autobiography."—***Publishers Weekly, starred review***



Cece Bell, residing in Christiansburg, Virginia, is a renowned author who has achieved great recognition for her literary works. One of her notable accomplishments includes being the author of the critically acclaimed book El Deafo, which was honored with the Newbery Honor and Eisner Award.

This exceptional piece of literature not only received four starred reviews but was also acknowledged as a best book of 2014 by Parents magazine and became a New York Times bestseller. Additionally, Cece Bell's talent extends to her work Rabbit and Robot, which was recognized with a Geisel Honor.



Cece Bell's #1 *New York Times* Bestseller graphic novel El Deafo is the origin story of a student with hearing loss and a hearing aid becoming a superhero.
A John Newbery Medal Winner
Now an Apple+ Animated TV Series!

"This warmly and humorously illustrated full-color graphic novel set in the suburban '70s has all the gripping characters and inflated melodrama of late childhood: a crush on a neighborhood boy, the bossy friend, the too-sensitive-to-her-Deafness friend, and the perfect friend, scared away."—***School Library Journal, starred review***

"This memoir is thus exceptionally informative and entertaining in relation to some aspects of deaf communication, but, most centrally and powerfully, it is exceptional for its perceptive, indomitable protagonist and complex story of friendship, growth, and classroom and family dynamics."—***The Horn Book Magazine, starred review***

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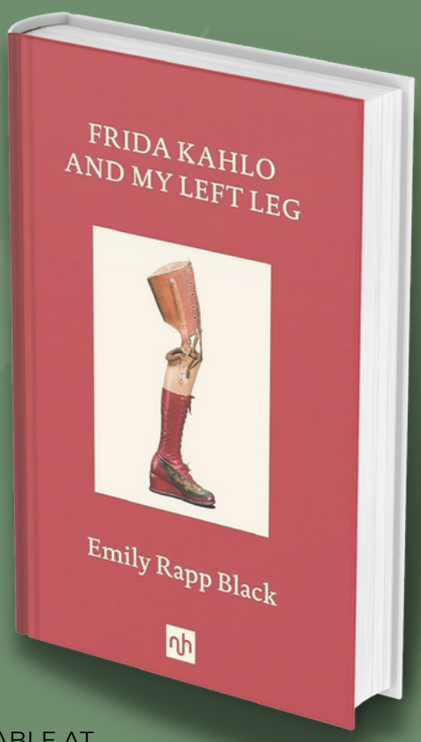

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Emily Rapp Black, an amputee, found a connection with Frida Kahlo's painting The Two Fridas.

Born with a prosthetic limb, Rapp Black had to hide her disability from the world. Kahlo, who suffered lifelong injuries, inspired Rapp Black to share her own life experiences, including losing her infant son to Tay-Sachs, giving birth to a daughter, and learning to accept her body. Kahlo's work inspired Rapp Black to find a way forward when everything seemed lost.



EMILY RAPP BLACK

AMANDA LEDUC



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Amanda Leduc explores the influence of fairy tales, including the Brothers Grimm, on our expectations and behavior, particularly the mistreatment of disabled characters, such as the Beast, and the connection between disability rights and new stories celebrating difference.

A CBC BOOKS BEST NONFICTION OF 2020
AN ENTROPY MAGAZINE BEST NONFICTION 2020/21
A NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK OF THE DAY (07/23/2022)



DISABLED ACTIVIST, WRITER, AND CONSULTANT

ALICE WONG

Asian American disabled woman in a power chair, founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project.

www.disabilityvisibilityproject.com

Alice Wong is a well-known disabled activist, writer, editor, media maker, and consultant. She has made significant contributions to the disability community through her work as the founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project, an online community that aims to create, share, and amplify disability media and culture.

In addition to her work with the Disability Visibility Project, Alice is also involved in several other projects. She is a co-partner in DisabledWriters.com, which helps editors connect with disabled writers and journalists. She was also involved in #CripLit, a series of Twitter chats for disabled writers, and #CripTheVote, a nonpartisan online movement that encourages political participation among disabled people. Alice is also a co-partner in Access Is Love, a campaign that aims to promote accessibility as an act of love rather than a burden or an afterthought.

Alice's areas of interest are diverse and include popular culture, media, politics, disability representation, Medicaid policies and programs, storytelling, social media, and activism.

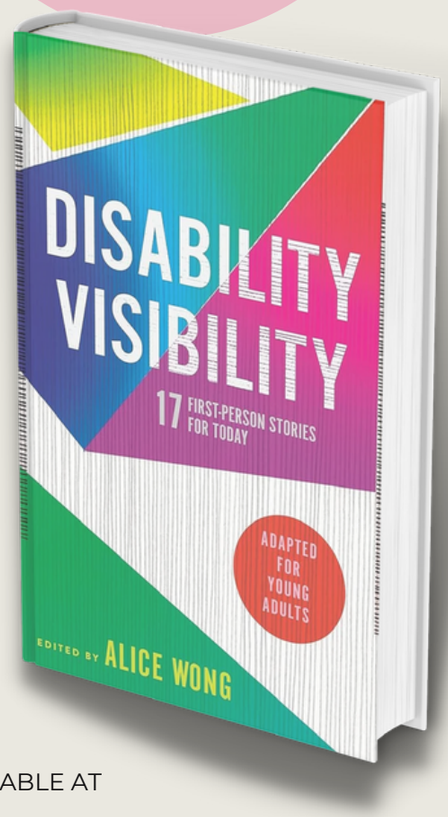
In 2023, Alice became a columnist for Teen Vogue and recipient of the Community Award from the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies. She also was a voice actor portraying Alice, a character loosely based on her, in season two of Human Resources, an animated series on Netflix. In partnership with Eater, Alice co-edited Low and Slow, a series of food writing by disabled people.

Disability Visibility

First-Person Stories from the 21st Century

The United States has a significant population of people with disabilities, with one in five individuals being affected. While some disabilities are easily noticeable, others are not, but all are underrepresented in media and popular culture. To address this issue, activist Alice Wong has compiled a collection of contemporary essays by disabled individuals, which is particularly timely as it coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Harriet McBryde Johnson's debate with Peter Singer and works by Keah Brown and Haben Girma are featured in an anthology that explores disability experiences. The collection includes blog posts, manifestos, eulogies, and Congressional testimonies, allowing readers to question their understanding of disability and celebrate disability culture in the present. It also highlights the passions and talents of the disabled community.



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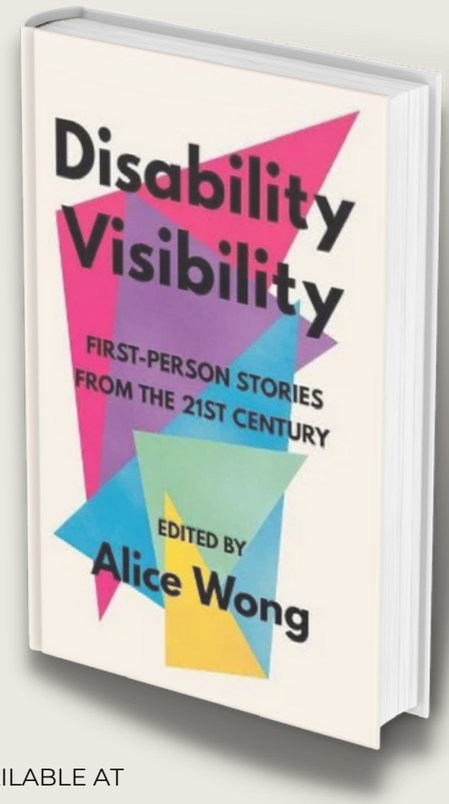

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Disability Visibility

17 First-Person Stories for Today

Disability Visibility is a compilation of seventeen essays that provide a unique and thought-provoking perspective on the disability experience. Written by disabled individuals, these essays delve into the complexities of ableism and inequality, while also celebrating the wisdom, passion, and joy that can be found within the disability community. Rather than viewing disabled individuals as needing to be "fixed," these essays encourage readers to recognize the rich history, culture, and movements of the disability community.

Disabled young people will be proud to see themselves reflected in this hopeful, compelling, and insightful essay collection, adapted for young adults from the critically acclaimed adult book, Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century that "sheds light on the experience of life as an individual with disabilities, as told by none other than authors with these life experiences." --***Chicago Tribune***



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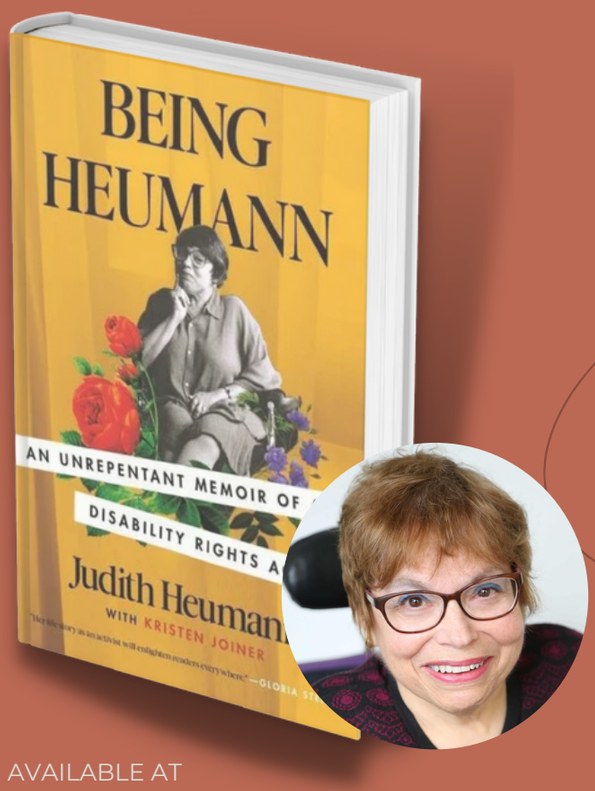
Rebekah Taussig, a paralyzed girl, longed for more stories that allowed disability to be complex and ordinary. Her essays, Sitting Pretty, explore the challenges of living in a body that doesn't fit, the complications of kindness and charity, and the pervasiveness of ableism in everyday media.

Taussig's work highlights the need for more stories and voices to understand the diversity of humanity and challenges society to be patient, vigilant, practical, imaginative, kind, and relentless in writing an entirely different story.



REBEKAH TAUSSIG

JUDITH HEUMANN



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Judy Heumann, a paralyzed woman, fought for equality and inclusion in society from Brooklyn and San Francisco to Washington, New York City. She won a lawsuit against the New York City school system for denying her a teacher's license due to her paralysis. She also led the Section 504 Sit-In in San Francisco, the longest takeover of a governmental building in US history.

Working with over 150 disabled activists, she pressured the Carter administration to implement protections for disabled people's rights, sparking a national movement and leading to the creation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

TALIA HIBBERT

www.taliahibbert.com











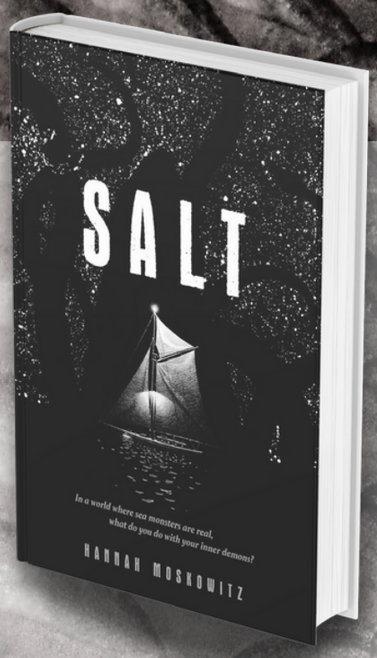
Talia Hibbert, a bestselling author with the New York Times, USA Today, and Wall Street Journal, lives in a bedroom filled with books. She writes diverse romance, emphasizing the importance of representation for marginalized identities. Her books, Brown Sisters, are published by Avon Romance and Nixon House, and are represented by Handspun Literary. For PR inquiries, contact Jessica Lyons at Harper Collins. Talia's interests include makeup, junk food, and sarcasm.

HANNAH MOSKOWITZ

At the age of seven, Hannah Moskowitz wrote her first story about a kitten named Lilly who was being chased by cat hunters. Unfortunately, the story was disqualified from a contest due to its violent content. However, this did not deter her from pursuing her passion for writing. She went on to publish several books, including BREAK, which made it to the ALA's 2010 list of Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults.

Her other works, such as GONE, GONE, GONE (2012) and TEETH (2013), also received critical acclaim and earned starred reviews from Booklist, Kirkus, and The Bulletin. In 2016, her book NOT OTHERWISE SPECIFIED was recognized as the Bisexual YA Book of the Year by the Bisexual Book Awards. Today, she resides in Maryland and continues to inspire young writers with her captivating stories.





Indi, a sixteen-year-old boy, lives in the Mediterranean with his siblings, Beleza, and Oscar. His parents' journal contains clues to a treasure, which Indi tries to escape. Beleza's obsession with hunting monsters distracts him, while Oscar becomes a pirate and Zulu's mind is wasted.

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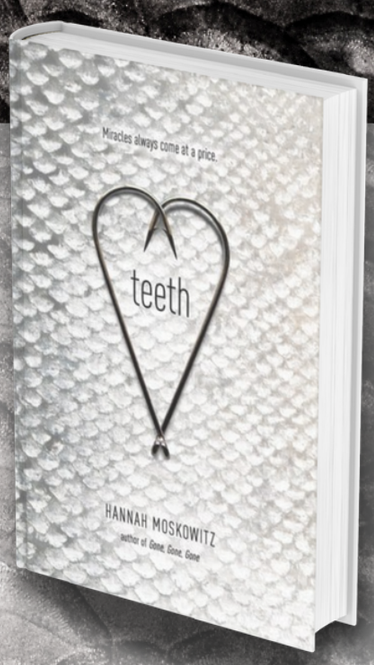

Rudy's life is thrown into turmoil when his family moves to a remote island to save his brother. He becomes increasingly isolated, surrounded by Diana, who questions his understanding of love, and Teeth, who reveals violent secrets. Rudy must choose between his brother's happiness and his own, as he grapples with the complex relationships and secrets that shape his understanding of the world around him.

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Jonah embarks on a mission to break every bone in his body, seeking strength to cope with the stresses of home, girls, and the world. As his self-destructive spiral accelerates, he must decide whether to find true strength or surrender to his breaking point, as everything around him is falling apart.

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Christa Couture

Christa Couture is a multi-talented individual who has achieved recognition as a performing and recording artist, non-fiction writer, and broadcaster. In addition to her impressive artistic accomplishments, she takes great pride in her Indigenous heritage, identifies as queer, embraces her disability, and cherishes her role as a mother. Her latest album, *Safe Harbour*, was released in March 2020, showcasing her musical prowess. Christa's written work has been featured in esteemed publications such as Room, Shameless, Augur magazines, and cbc.ca. She has captivated audiences with her compelling speeches and storytelling at various events, including *The Walrus Talks, CBC's DNTO, Moses Znaimer's ideaCity*, and *Imaginate* in Port Hope, ON. Christa is a valued contributor to *CBC Radio*'s *Now or Never* and *The Next Chapter*, and she also serves as a weekday afternoon host on *106.5 ELMNT FM* in Toronto, ON.

http://christacouture.com/

Are there writers or musicians whose work helped you overcome grief and loss?

Joan Didion's book "The Year of Magical Thinking" felt like the first kindred spirit I'd found after my first son died. Since my second son died it's become harder to find work that I can continue to relate too—but maybe by making my own I'll find others.

You create such beauty, sonically and lyrically, from grief. Do you ever feel conflicted about this?

Yes, it can be hard to reconcile. After the most recent tragedy in my family I wondered if I could ever return to making music at all—as important as writing and creating is to me, as much as I enjoy it, three years ago I was on a very different path, and it's one that I desperately ache for now that it's gone. Making these little beautiful works felt like a distant second to what I wanted, but at the same time, I'm so grateful to these little beautiful works for being there in the distance regardless, for giving me something to pour my energy into, even if it isn't what I had planned.

Is performing your music difficult?

I don't find it difficult, though it can be emotional. At its best it's cathartic and freeing to release some of these stories every night by telling them over and over. It helps me continue to process and learn about the experiences I've written about. Sometimes the emotions are too close to the surface, or the audience isn't totally on track with me, and then I feel too vulnerable, but I can play different songs when I need to, depending on how I'm feeling. Mostly I like to pour my heart out though and I've already drawn lines on what I'm willing to reveal and not when I chose which songs to record for the album.

What is is like to have three "permanent records" filled with the people in your life who shaped you, especially those you have lost?

It is meaningful to me that the songs make their way into the world—I feel sometimes by sharing them, I'm really just asking a big "know what I mean?", looking for that conversation that can happen through sharing music and hopefully the reply "yes" so that we can all feel a little less lonely. Like anyone, I am comforted by finding common ground with others—grief in particular can be a kind of exile, so when a person lets me know that they connect with my work, it helps break down those feelings of isolation, for both of us.

I admire your ability to be vulnerable when you tell your story through music and interviews. Is there anyone you admire for this?

Any writing or music that inspires bravery in you? In my teen years, which were also my early writing years, I listened to a lot of Tori Amos and Ani Difranco. That's likely a predictable fact for anyone who's heard my earlier work. They have both inspired me as honest, brave, willing, trusting, vulnerable and intelligent songwriters. Amanda Palmer is another artist who inspires me in the way she talks and blogs about her work, thoughts and experiences. She's incredibly generous that way and has inspired me on numerous occasions not so much through her music, but just how she engages publicly.

How do you approach songwriting?

Songwriting for me is like night vision—how you can't see an object by looking directly at it and only by looking away does it appear peripherally. I write by feeling, not thinking, and to aim for a song is to miss it—they just come, whether I'm ready or not. I worry that if I become too analytical about my relationship with the muse, I'll scare her away. Which is all very artsy-fartsy, but true! Not that I can't be practical about the craft of songwriting, but the songs I create and eventually share are all ones that came as gifts, in those creative, meditative, unexpected moments, which are often while I'm driving, just falling into or waking from sleep, or noodling absentmindedly on my piano or guitar.



What bookstore are you most excited to walk into and see your book displayed on the shelf

Another Story on Roncesvalles in Toronto! Even before I moved to Toronto six years ago, I would visit that bookstore, and now that I live here, it's become part of my world. While I didn't get to walk in, exactly, as they're still not open for in-store shopping, last week I did get to walk up to Another Story and, to my surprise and enormous delight, my book was on display in the window. It was my first bookstore sighting of the book! Unexpected plus at the one store I've dreamed of seeing it in, well, I couldn't have asked for more.

What particular something have you managed to achieve with this book that you're especially proud of?

When my editor, Barbara Pulling, was going through the manuscript, she noted an error in the part where I liken all my scars to punctuation marks—namely that chronologically, I didn't have one of the scars yet that I included. But she was so charmed by the description, she left it in. I am proud that I managed to charm a brilliant editor out of fixing a mistake.

Tell us about your ideal reader, and where you imagine them reading your book.

I have this image of the book: I'm holding my hands out with a collection of stories in them. Some of the stories are very sad, but my invitation is that you don't have to touch them, you can just look; that, don't worry, I won't drop this mess on your lap and run! My ideal reader is not only someone who wants to look closely, with curiosity, with compassion, but who also wants to hold up their own sad stories in their hands in return. I imagine them reading by a window, where they can look up and out.

What authors and works inspired you on your journey in creating this book?

Oh gosh, so many inspiring works along the way. One author whose words came to mind often is Caitlin Doughty. I saw her speak at a conference a few years ago and she said, "Don't write a book unless you absolutely have to. It's too hard otherwise!" And every time I felt like I was hitting a wall or I felt stuck or overwhelmed with writing, I thought of that—it validated the difficulty and helped me gauge my desire to move forward. It was unexpectedly useful.

What's something you know now that you didn't know when you set out to write your book?

I went into writing this book with a checklist of losses. I knew each chapter would focus on one of those losses, and I began my first draft going down the list. I thought I was well familiar with my grief for each experience, until I started researching and writing the divorce chapter. I write in that chapter about revisiting old emails and unearthing (not just remembering) sadness for the end of my marriage. That was happening in real time while writing the book, and it caught me off guard. I didn't know I still carried that grief.

Now that it's written, do you have more plans for the book? What are your next projects?

Earlier this year, someone asked me what my next book will be, and I balked. I'm not ready to write another one! Yet... but I have been working on a short animated film connected to the book, and that film has blossomed into an even larger project with stories of loss. Animation has been the perfect companion for exploring grief, how abstract it can be, how it can shift and move. I went to film school over twenty years ago, so I'm really dusting off some old skills, but I can't wait to share it.

Who are you most grateful to for support in bringing your book into the world?

This book wouldn't exist if it weren't for my partner, Marsha. I wrote this book in the first two years of my daughter's life, and that was only made possible by a lot of calendar shuffling and schedule changes and even letting me spend the mornings of our only holiday in 2018 working on it. Her giving me time was this book's greatest benefactor, plus her boundless cheerleading, and I'm deeply grateful to her.



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REVIEWS

"How to Lose Everything is a gift of a book that sparkles and sings, a sad story that's also delightful to read, richly told and bursting with wisdom. There is something to marvel at on every single page."—***Kerry Clare, author of Waiting for a Star to Fall and Mitzi Bytes***

"How to Lose Everything is a collection of naked stories of enduring love, profound presence and a deep witnessing of the most precious moments of life. Couture writes through layers of grief and loss to show us what it means to love, to build a continuous life after losing everything and to be alive, anyway. A lovely and tender debut memoir that I'll carry with me always."—***Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, author of Noopiming: The Cure for White Ladies***

"How to Lose Everything is the most staggering account of loss since the Book of Job. And, like Job, Christa Couture has refused to lose faith. This is a powerful memoir of unimaginable suffering and unconquerable spirit."—***Wayne Grady, author of Up from Freedom***

"Christa Couture knows better than most how fragile are our bodies, our aspirations, our human arrangements; how resistant they are to protection, how prone they are to rupture. A prolonged cry of anguish would be a reasonable response from someone who has endured her devastating losses; but How to Lose Everything is a thoughtful, spirited, even-handed, good-humoured, and unflinchingly honest anatomy of grief, forbearance, hope, and healing. Expect the miraculous, because here you will find it. Expect the gorgeous, because Christa Couture writes exactly as she sings: with heart, and beautifully."—***Bill Richardson, author of I Saw Three Ships: West End Stories***

"It is not possible to reach this kind of poetic and beautiful telling of such a heartbreaking personal history without years of profound reflection and living with grief. How does a person survive such staggering losses? … It is a huge relief to set down the burden of needing to be strong and get through everything. This is the timely and compassionate story that we all need to hear."—***Leela Gilday, singer and songwriter***

"In How to Lose Everything, Christa Couture's warmth and humour never leave the room, even as she replays her life's most devastating scenes. Is she tragic? Tough? Vulnerable? Strong? She's all these things, unapologetically, and I learned so much from her beautiful refusal to stay silent."—***Michelle Parise, author of Alone: A Love Story***

"As someone who also had cancer as a teenager, as well as being a new mother myself, reading this book felt like a heartfelt conversation with a friend. Christa Couture has experienced so much loss, but doesn't define herself by that: she is a woman in constant transformation, and writes about herself and her experiences with profound love and an astonishing acceptance."—***Harriet Alida Lye, author of The Honey Farm and Natural Killer***

"Reading Christa's story … listening to Christa's words … hearing Christa play piano … they are all important voices in this land bookended by salt water. I can't say enough good things or write enough kind words to say how wonderful and essential they are."—Jim Bryson, singer and songwriter

"How do you lose everything? Christa Couture knows and she's here to lovingly and ever-so-gently let you in on her hard-won wisdom. She'll break your heart and put it back together anew: feeling the scars, hearing the echoes, and patiently waiting for the subtle openings of heart-bursting light. Listen closely, because she'll teach you how to walk again."—***Carys Cragg, author of Dead Reckoning***

"Christa's voice and the things that make her remarkable are so tangible in her narrative: it is bravely open, it is generous when retelling of great sadness, it is candid and kind, with a sharp and quick humour that sneaks up on you in the most delightful way, at the right time."—***Gabrielle Papillon, singer and songwriter***



Nicola Griffith

Nicola Griffith is a native of Yorkshire, England, where she earned her beer money teaching women's self-defence, fronting a band, and counselling at a street drugs agency, before discovering writing and moving to the US. Her immigration case was a fight and ended up making new law: she was the first openly queer person for whom the State Department declared it to be "in the National Interest" to live and work in this country. This didn't thrill the more conservative power-brokers, and she ended up on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, where her case was used as an example of the country's declining moral standards.

In 1993 a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis slowed her down a bit, and she concentrated on writing. Her novels are Ammonite (1993), Slow River (1995), The Blue Place (1998), Stay (2002), Always (2007), Hild (2013), So Lucky (2018), Spear (2022) and Menewood (Oct 2023). She is the co-editor of the BENDING THE LANDSCAPE series of original short fiction.

In 2015 Nicola founded the Literary Prize Data working group whose purpose initially was to assemble data on literary prizes in order to get a picture of how gender bias operates within the trade publishing ecosystem. (The $50,000 Half the World Global Literati Prize was established as a direct result.) In 2016 she began #CripLit, an online community for disabled writers for which, with Alice Wong, she co-hosts an occasional Twitter chat.
Nicola, now a dual US/UK citizen, holds a PhD from Anglia Ruskin University—and that's a story in it's own right—is married to writer Kelley Eskridge, and lives in Seattle.

Can you start by telling me a bit about the process of writing this novel? Why this novel right now? How do the thriller elements link to your goals about disability and representation?

I was diagnosed with MS in 1993, and a few years later I was watching TV, and there was a segment about a man in a wheelchair who had been tortured and killed. And I suddenly was hit with this sense of disability as vulnerability, literally as victimhood in that way, being a target. I wanted to write this. I wrote a draft, a short novella, and I sold it … then I pulled it from publication. The story was wrong. So I stuck it in a drawer and forgot about it, but it was always knocking at the back of my head.

What changed?

I wrote a blog post a couple of years ago called "Coming Out as a Cripple," thinking about disability in social terms. It was at that point that I suddenly realized what the problem was [with So Lucky]. The original version relied on an epiphany of a central character. It was using a disabled person as a metaphorical opportunity for the education and entertainment for non-disabled people.

Meanwhile, through all this, you're writing other books and working on a Ph.D.?

I interrupted my next Hild book to do a Ph.D. and then I interrupted my Ph.D. to do this book. I sent off the first draft of my Ph.D. thesis and then I had this three-week period where I had no deadlines. I thought, well, I'm going to tackle this story. I thought it was going to be a short story, but I sat down and this thing came tearing out. By the time the end of the holidays came and I got my thesis back, I had the first draft of So Lucky. Then I met my publisher for lunch in May of 2017, and he said, "I'll publish." Kind of record timing.

Is there a connection between your dissertation and this book?

It was actually the Ph.D. that got me to write So Lucky. My thesis was on what I do [as a writer], how I create "focalized heterotopias."



Which means what?

It's my portmanteau. For my focalized character, through whom the reader understands the text—the protagonist—I create a heterotopia, an othered space. Let's take Hild as an example: Hild is queer. She's a woman, but she's never punished for being a woman or being queer. She's not threatened with rape. There's no homophobic violence. Other women in the book are not in a heterotopia, so they have a harder time.

Right, so you typically present a story in which the main character is grounded in her differences and the world doesn't punish her for them. That's not at all your approach in this new book: Mara is alienated from her own disability throughout most of the book.

So Lucky is different. It wasn't about normalizing Mara's difference; the book is about discovering her difference. The closest in queer fiction would be a coming-out narrative, and I've never wanted to do that. I just spent a whole year writing a Ph.D. that says I don't do that! This book was not about norming disability, but [had to be about] pointing to it.

Do you think readers—not to mention reviewers—understand what you are trying to do with this book?

I've run into some problems because of the speed [from submitting the draft to publication] figuring out how to describe the novel. Normally, by the time a book approaches the pre-publicity stage, I've sorted out with the publisher how to talk about the book, but this one is so new that it's going out with the label "autobiographical fiction." Partially my own fault because I didn't have the label to give them.

What would be a better label?

A novel.

Hah!

It's a novel. Mara is not me. I use some elements of myself in her as I do in all my books. There are parts of me in Hild, but Hild is not me.

You have MS, Mara has MS, so can you explain a bit more what's the problem with calling the novel autobiographical?

It's a problem for women particularly because, historically, the idea that fiction is autobiography is used to dismiss the creativity of the author. It's something that Joanna Russ pointed out in How to Suppress Women's Writing, which everyone on the planet should read. [Russ] lays out methods to reduce the ability of women to be called artists. Labeling something as autobiographical is denial of agency or maybe pollution of agency. From a male author, autobiographical fiction is art, but for a woman, it's: "She just transcribed her experiences. It's not creative." If this book [is] pigeonholed immediately in that way, it will perpetuate the idea [disability as tragedy] that I wrote this book to dismantle.

So this is a novel with a social purpose?

Disability: People think of it as sad, miserable, or perhaps inspirational. I didn't want readers to see the book as miserable and sad. I didn't want the book to be didactic, to be "why ableism is bad!" I wanted it to be a novel. I like books where stuff happens. I like my character to have interior life, and I like the reader to really empathize with that character, to live the life as she is living the life.
And I wanted disabled readers to read it and say, "Oh yeah, a book about people like me." I wanted non-disabled readers to read it and just begin to get a clue of their non-disabled privilege. The novel does have a social purpose, but it doesn't do social purpose.

Is that why you included the thriller elements?

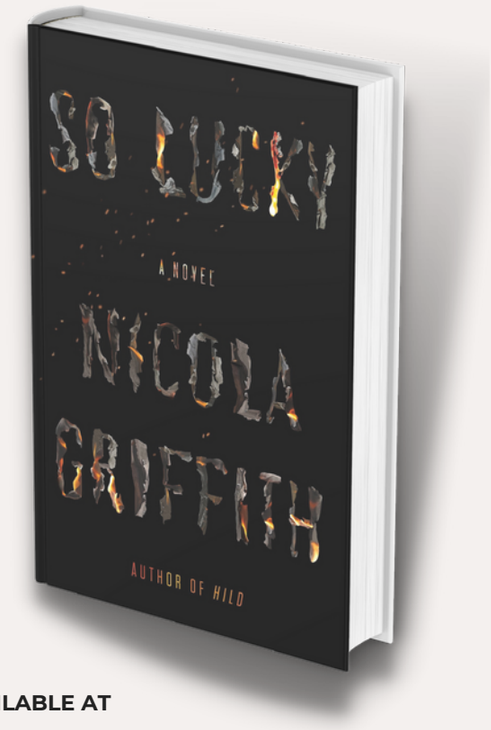
I wanted actually to bring them in earlier, but every time I tried I couldn't make it work. I needed this crossover point in the book where Mara starts to really seriously externalize her feeling of vulnerability and feeling like a victim, so she can do something about it. It's out there, it's no longer vague feelings of anxiousness. I couldn't do it at the beginning.

Let's broaden the conversation a bit as we wrap up. I had read Hild not long after it came out, but I first got to know you through the #CripLit chat about disability and literature. Can you talk about your collaboration with disability justice activist Alice Wong and the bigger issues facing disability in literature?

After "Coming Out as a Cripple," I went on Twitter and said, "give me fiction I can read!" And people said no, we can't, most of it's rubbish. We need some #CripLit.

I started to think about movement fiction and identity fiction and queer fiction. The big beginning of queer fiction is the Well of Loneliness, and that is a miserable book. Stephen sacrifices herself at the end so [her lover] can have a "normal life." [There's a] parallel to Me Before You, in which the disabled character sacrifices himself so the non-disabled character can have a normal life—that shame and internalized hatred.

We are desperately in need of seeing ourselves. Telling our stories is what builds culture, builds a sense of self. I really want that to happen. For me there's a really exciting feeling of creating my own culture now. I felt as though I was doing that a little with my very early novels, but there was already a lot of queer lit, and some of it was pretty good. There isn't enough disability fiction, and I feel I'm part of a group building a culture. I'm really excited because I know disabled people will read this book and see themselves.



AVAILABLE AT

REVIEWS

"A compact, brutal story of losing power and creating community . . . *So Lucky* is beautifully written, with a flexible, efficient precision that embodies the protagonist's voice and character." —**Amal El-Mohtar, *The New York Times Book Review***

"A short, fast-paced whirlwind of a novel . . . Spine-tingling and in places downright terrifying" —***The Independent (UK)***

"A narrative that at once informs, confronts, puzzles and engages. I have little doubt that readers who take it up will be rewarded." —***Lambda Literary***

"This book is a body-slam of empowerment, a roar of frustration so sustained and compelling that it cannot be ignored… a tough, accomplished novel, a book that readers didn't know they needed." —***The Arts Fuse***

"A fresh and powerful novel and antidote to the sense of victimhood." —***Booklist***

"So Lucky is somehow both a tense psychological thriller and a subtle character portrait, packed full of pleasure (so closely observed) and pain (so deep, so real). Nicola Griffith is an essential writer, and with this book she's given us something personal, political, and totally unputdownable." —***Robin Sloan, author of Sourdough***

"All too often, stories glide past issues of the body, as if our minds operated suspended in air above us, as if everything we experience doesn't come through our physical selves. But what happens when our relation to our own body turns adversarial Successfully disguised as a page-turning thriller, So Lucky is also a deep meditation on marginalization, vulnerability, and resistance." —***Karen Joy Fowler, author of The Jane Austen Book Club***

"In So Lucky, Nicola Griffith replicates the actual experience of becoming disabled. This genre-violating story begins straightforwardly then slides into a hallucinatory exploration of the body, reality, and identity. It is disorienting, destabilizing, and game-changing. I have never read anything like it." —***Riva Lehrer, artist and curator***

"Nicola Griffith is a brilliant creator of fierce female protagonists. With So Lucky, she fires a gritty, scary, wrathful, sometimes blisteringly funny broadside at the monsters of ableist culture." —***Maria Dahvana Headley, author of The Mere Wife***

"In Nicola Griffith's So Lucky, Mara is a vibrant, active, social justice minded woman stalked by a phantom. The phantom threatens her work, her relationships—nothing less than her identity. This angry, funny, cleverly-written piece about the onset of disability in a world that values fitness above all ushers in a new wave of disability story. Or let's hope so." —***Susan Nussbaum, author of Good Kings Bad Kings***

"Nicola Griffith's So Lucky is compelling reading, a tour de force of the onset of disability. This is the first novel I have read that describes an autobiographical experience of disability from Day One with a relentlessness that can parallel disability itself. It is intense, sad, and dramatic, combining mystery, romance, terror (internal and external), and hope. Just like life itself." —***Steven E. Brown, Co-Founder of the Institute on Disability Culture***

https://nicolagriffith.com/









Raymond Antrobus

Raymond Antrobus was born in Hackney, London to an English mother and Jamaican father. He is the recipient of fellowships from Cave Canem, Complete Works iii and Jerwood Compton Poetry. He is one of the world's first recipients of an MA in Spoken Word Education from Goldsmiths, University of London. Raymond is a founding member of Chill Pill and the Keats House Poets Forum. He has had multiple residencies in deaf and hearing schools around London, as well as Pupil Referral Units. In 2018 he was awarded the Geoffrey Dearmer Award by the Poetry Society (judged by Ocean Vuong). Raymond currently lives in London and spends most his time working nationally and internationally as a freelance poet and teacher.

https://www.raymondantrobus.com/

The Perseverance

A Novel

In the wake of his father's death, the speaker in Raymond Antrobus' *The Perseverance* travels to Barcelona. In Gaudi's Cathedral, he meditates on the idea of silence and sound, wondering whether acoustics really can bring us closer to God. Receiving information through his hearing aid technology, he considers how deaf people are included in this idea. "Even though," he says, "I have not heard / the golden decibel of angels, / I have been living in a noiseless / palace where the doorbell is pulsating / light and I am able to answer."

The Perseverance is a collection of poems examining a d/Deaf experience alongside meditations on loss, grief, education, and language, both spoken and signed. It is a book about communication and connection, about cultural inheritance, about identity in a hearing world that takes everything for granted, about the dangers we may find (both individually and as a society) if we fail to understand each other.

REVIEWS

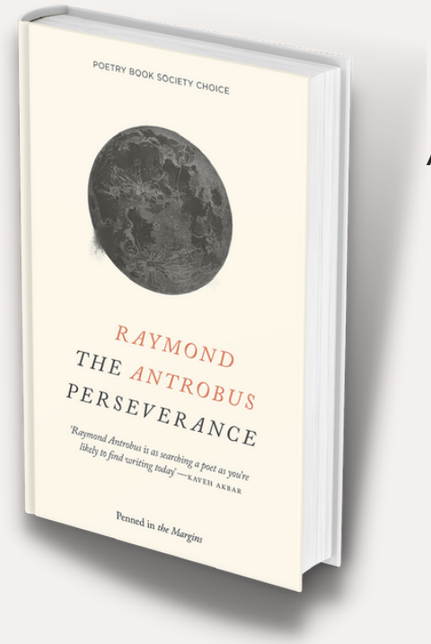
"Intimate and searching."
— ***The New York Times Book Review***

"Raymond Antrobus's compelling debut, The Perseverance, confronts deeply rooted prejudice against deaf people."
— ***The Guardian***

"Remarkable. Antrobus, who was born deaf, writes about grief, race and violence in lines that are startlingly immediate and provocative."
— ***The Washington Post***

"The Perseverance relates Antrobus's experiences of being biracial and d/Deaf in sharp and beautiful poems. . . . These poems are expressive and beautiful and will leave readers thinking differently about sound and silence."
— ***BuzzFeed***

"Antrobus can be gentle, tactile, and pointed in this book—which collects into an affirmation, a pronouncement."
— ***The Millions***



AVAILABLE AT

Excerpt

Echo

My ear amps whistle as if singing
to Echo, Goddess of Noise,
the ravelled knot of tongues,
of blaring birds, consonant crumbs
of dull doorbells, sounds swamped
in my misty hearing aid tubes.
Gaudí believed in holy sound
and built a cathedral to contain it,
pulling hearing men from their knees
as though Deafness is a kind of Atheism.
Who would turn down God?
Even though I have not heard
the golden decibel of angels,
I have been living in a noiseless
palace where the doorbell is pulsating
light and I am able to answer.

What?

A word that keeps looking
in mirrors, in love
with its own volume.

What?

I am a one-word question,
a one-man
patience test.

What?

What language
would we speak
without ears?

What?

Is paradise
a world where
I hear everything?

What?

How will my brain
know what to hold
if it has too many arms?



The day I clear out my dead father's flat,
I throw away boxes of moulding LPs:
Garvey, Malcolm X, Mandela speeches on vinyl.

I find a TDK cassette tape on the shelf.
The smudged green label reads Raymond Speaking.
I play the tape in his vintage cassette player

and hear my two-year-old voice chanting my name, Antrob,
and Dad's laughter crackling in the background,
not knowing I couldn't hear the word "bus"

and wouldn't until I got my hearing aids.
Now I sit here listening to the space of deafness

— Antrob, Antrob, Antrob.

'And if you don't catch nothing
then something wrong with your ears —
they been tuned to de wrong frequency.'

KEI MILLER

So maybe I belong to the universe
underwater, where all songs
are smeared wailings for Salacia,
Goddess of Salt Water, healer
of infected ears, which is what the doctor
thought I had, since deafness
did not run in the family
but came from nowhere;
so they syringed olive oil
and salt water, and we all waited
to see what would come out.

And no one knew what I was missing
until a doctor gave me a handful of Lego
and said to put a brick on the table
every time I heard a sound.
After the test I still held enough bricks
in my hand to build a house
and call it my sanctuary,
call it the reason I sat in saintly silence
during my grandfather's sermons when he preached
The Good News I only heard
as Babylon's babbling echoes.

MORE REVIEWS

"Outstanding."
— ***Chicago Review of Books***

"Emotionally textured and sonically charged. . . . the poem ['Sound Machine'] gyrates through interrogations of grief and ancestry twinned with a brooded meditation on masculinity and selfhood."
— ***Ocean Vuong, author of On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous***

"The Perseverance is an insightful, frank and intimate rumination on language, identity, heritage, loss and the art of communication. . . . These are courageous autobiographical poems of praise, difficulties, testimony and love."
— ***Malika Booker, author of Pepper Seed***

"Honest, raw and striking. . . . Antrobus captures the feeling of isolation that comes with navigating a world not made for everyone who exists within it."
— ***Arkansas International***

"Clear, unflinching. . . . We expand our comprehension of humanness in encountering these poems, and recognize the limits of language that is only spoken and heard—The Perseverance is language embodied and utterly present."
— ***Orion Magazine, Khadijah Queen Recommends***

"An affecting, accessible, and astonishingly raw collection of poems."
— ***October Hill Magazine***

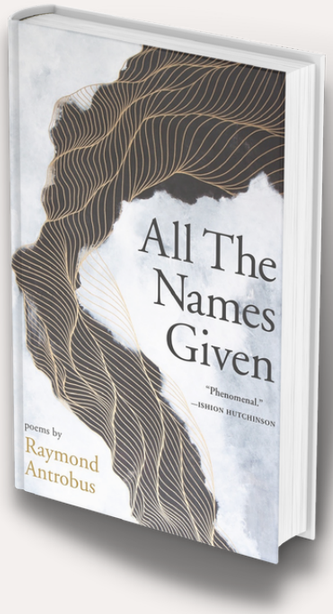
"A memorable collection. . . . Antrobus interlaces wit and pathos as he examines his identity as a deaf British Jamaican man in a world between sign language and speech."
— ***The Sunday Times***

"At every turn, Antrobus pushes back against flattening, against the tidy narrative—an invidious Ted Hughes poem gets radically revised, an aunt's misheard utterance becomes 'a faint fog horn, a lost river.' It's magic, the way this poet is able to bring together so much—deafness, race, masculinity, a mother's dementia, a father's demise—with such dexterity."
— ***Kaveh Akbar***

"It channels Danez Smith, Malika Booker and Caroline Bird, in formal poems, erasures, free verse, innovative use of Makaton symbols, translation, prose, and a blackout version of Ted Hughes' 'Deaf School'; probably the best poem I read all year, and it doesn't even have any words in it."
— ***Will Barrett, Poetry School***

"Antrobus's evocative, musical honesty is unforgettable."
— ***Publishers Weekly, Starred Review***

"Innovative and urgent. . . . Deserves a wide readership."
— ***BookPage***



AVAILABLE AT

OTHER BOOK

Raymond Antrobus continues his exploration of language, miscommunication, place, and memory in his highly acclaimed collection, All The Names Given. In this collection, Antrobus delves into the history and significance of his own surname, which carries a complex and troubled past. Through his poems, he reflects on his childhood, navigating the complexities of intimacy, brutality, racial identity, and cultural heritage.

The collection takes readers on a journey across different locations, seamlessly shifting between England, South Africa, Jamaica, and the American South. Antrobus skillfully transitions from exploring his family history to capturing the tumultuous emotions of adolescence, and finally delving into the intricacies of marriage. Throughout the collection, Antrobus incorporates [Caption Poems], inspired by Deaf sound artist Christine Sun Kim, which serve to bridge the gaps between the poems and provide additional layers of meaning.

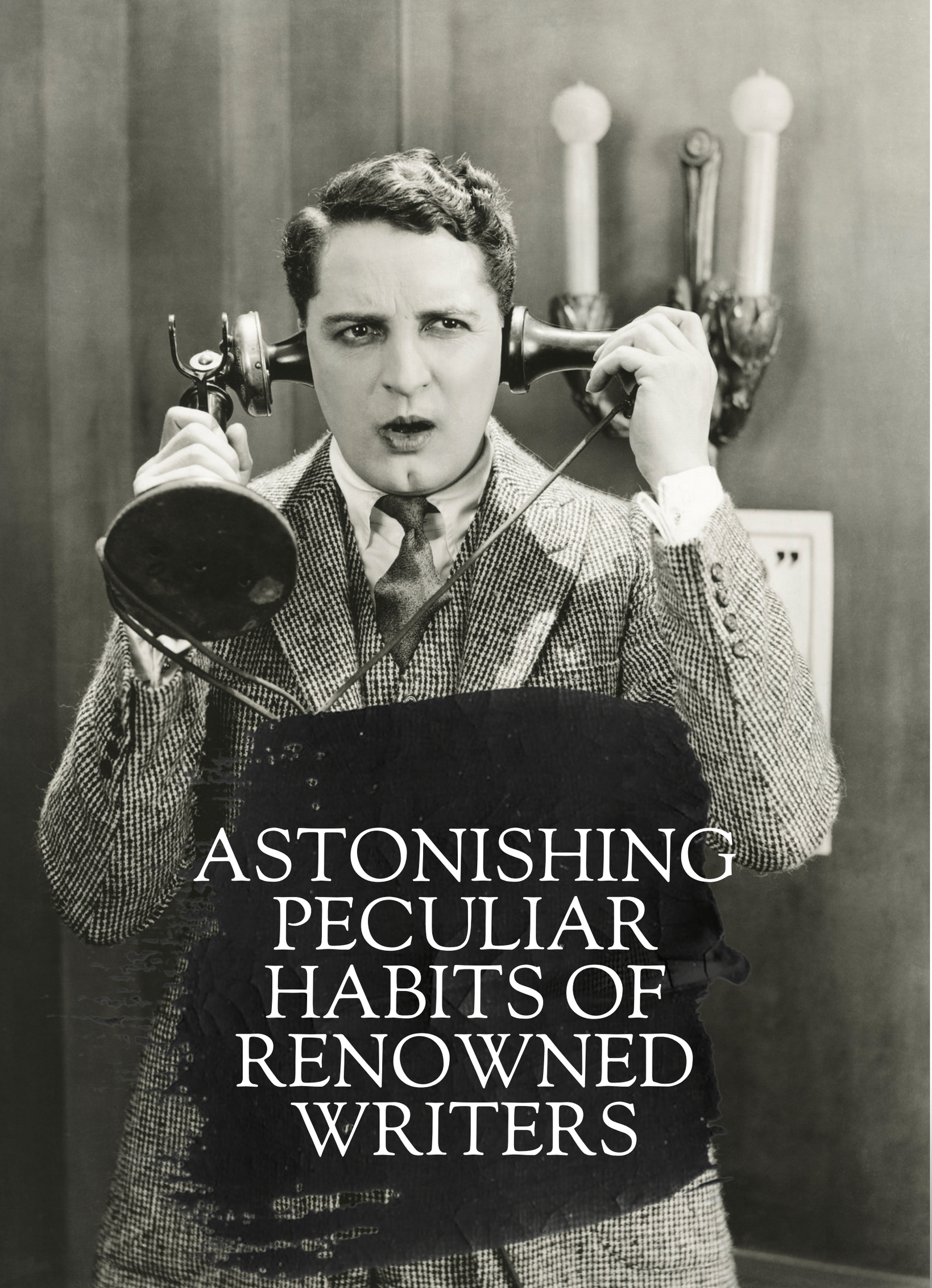
All The Names Given is a masterful work, showcasing Antrobus' formal sophistication, profound insights, and unflinching honesty. It is a poignant and timely book that captures the essence of humanity and serves as a testament to the enduring power of remembrance.

A Guardian Best Book of the Year

Finalist for the T. S. Eliot Prize and The Costa Poetry Award

"Exquisite." —The New York Times Book Review

"Brave, tender and generous. . . . A haunting study of what we can find in the silences of history when history is recognized as more than a noun, when recognized as something alive and kinetic." —Camonghne Felix, author of Build Yourself a Boat



ASTONISHING PECULIAR HABITS OF RENOWNED WRITERS



Photo: BUZZFEED

Agatha Christie

Agatha Christie, renowned for her mystery novels like Murder on the Orient Express, had a peculiar habit of enjoying apples while contemplating murder mysteries in her bathtub. This habit positively impacted her creative process, leading to her remarkable achievements. Christie authored over 60 detective novels, including The Mousetrap, which continues to captivate audiences with an estimated two billion copies sold worldwide.

Charles Dickens

In addition to his literary achievements, Charles Dickens was a social critic who used his writing to highlight the moral compass that guided him. Through his insightful depictions of socioeconomic conditions, Dickens exposed the harsh realities of his era and advocated for change. His novels, such as A Christmas Carol and Great Expectations, not only entertained readers but also served as a powerful tool for social commentary.



Photo: BUZZFEED



Photo: BUZZFEED

Dr. Theodor Seuss Geisele

Dr. Seuss, the beloved author and illustrator also known as Theodor Seuss Geisel, had a fascinating way of overcoming writer's block. He possessed a remarkable collection of almost 300 hats, which he kept in his secret closet. Whenever he found himself lacking inspiration, Dr. Seuss would retreat to this special place and carefully select a hat to wear. It was through this whimsical ritual that he managed to unlock his creativity and bring to life timeless children's books, such as the iconic masterpiece, The Cat in the Hat.



Photo: BUZZFEED

Isabel Allende

Isabel Allende, a Chilean-American author, commenced writing her debut novel on January 8, 1981, which was initially intended as a letter to her dying grandfather. This letter eventually evolved into her first book, The House of the Spirits. Allende has since started all of her books on the same day, January 8, not only because of the triumph of her first book but also because it allows her to be in solitude without any disturbance.

Patricia Highsmith

Patricia Highsmith, the brilliant mind behind captivating psychological thrillers like Strangers on a Train, The Price of Salt, and The Talented Mr. Ripley, had a unique way of keeping her readers on the edge of their seats. Interestingly, she managed to remove any mystery surrounding her eating habits. As per a close friend, she had a penchant for indulging in fried eggs and bacon, making it a staple in almost every meal she enjoyed.

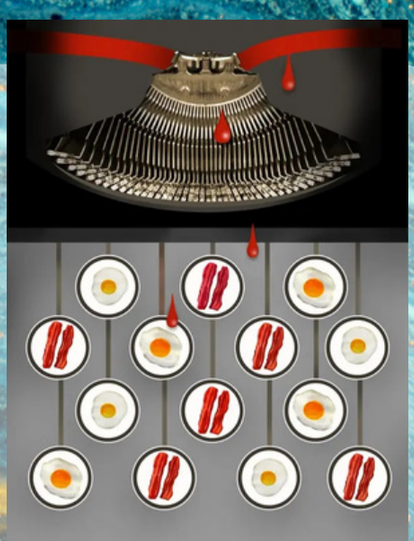


Photo: BUZZFEED



Photo: BUZZFEED

John Steinbeck

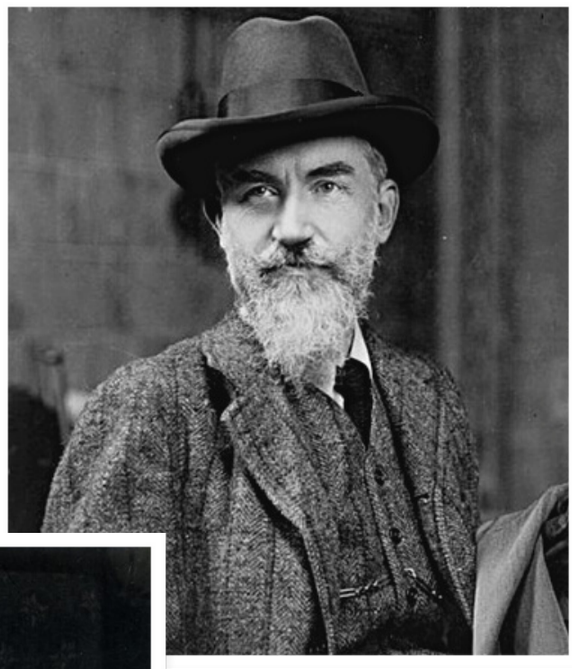
John Steinbeck, a renowned author, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature and a Pulitzer Prize for his work, including classics like The Grapes of Wrath. His unique writing habit, including keeping 24 sharpened pencils on his desk, emphasized his attention to detail. Steinbeck's concise writing style, coupled with his dedication to his craft, led to the success of his works.

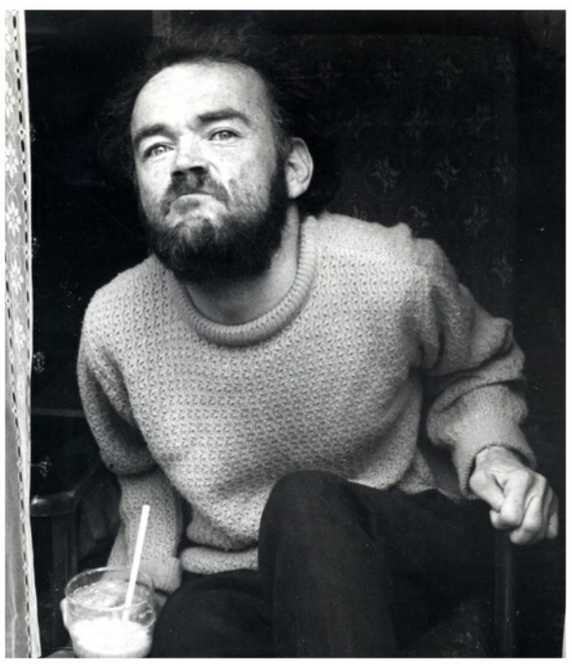
Triumphant Authors

Despite Disabilities

OCT - NOV - DEC 2023







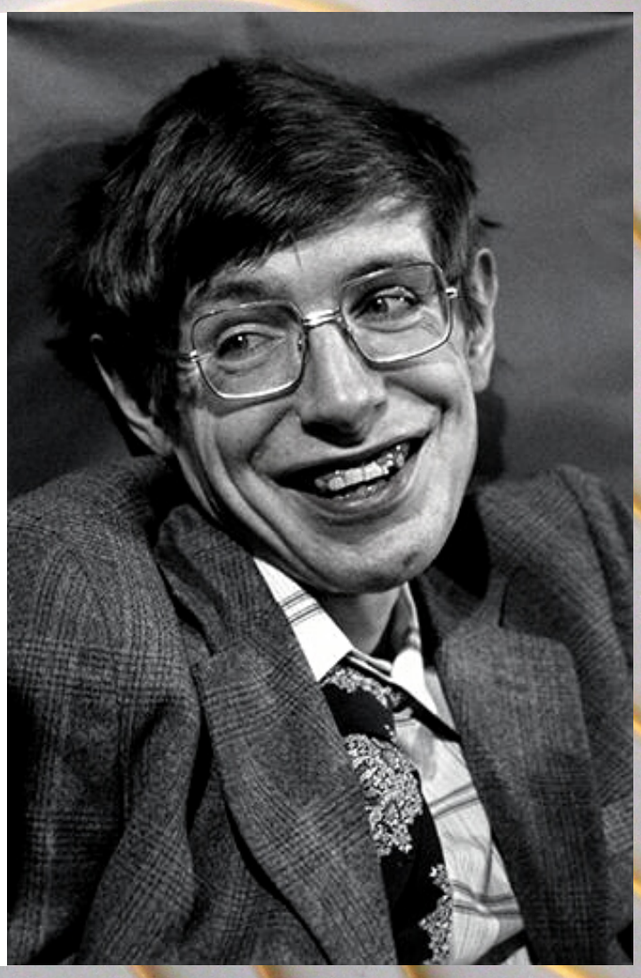


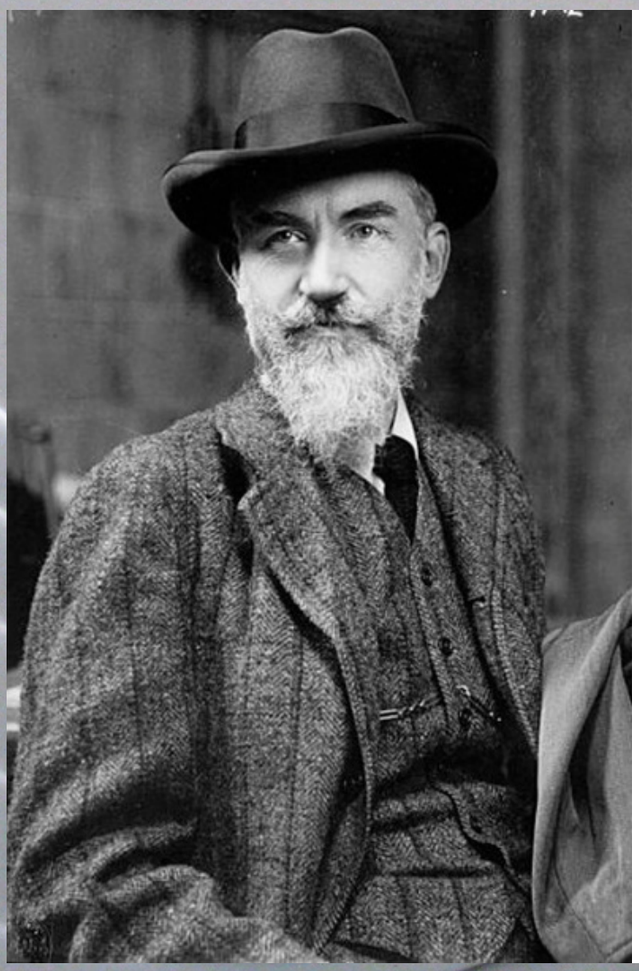


Despite facing challenging adversities, numerous exceptional authors, writers, and poets have managed to achieve great success. These writers, who often struggle with physical and mental disabilities, have managed to thrive in their creative endeavors. Their exceptional literary skills have earned them widespread recognition and praise, showcasing the resilience and creativity of individuals with disabilities in the literary world.

Stephen Hawking

One of the most prominent authors with disabilities that often comes to mind is the renowned Stephen Hawking, who was not only talented but also wheelchair-bound. Despite being a theoretical physicist by profession, Hawking made a significant impact as a writer with his notable works like 'A Brief History of Time' and 'The Universe in a Nutshell'. His writing prowess extended beyond non-fiction novels and essays, as he even ventured into the realm of children's books. Collaborating with other exceptional writers and novelists, Hawking co-authored several books that showcased his diverse literary abilities. Unfortunately, Hawking battled amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a debilitating neurogenerative disease that eventually left him paralyzed.





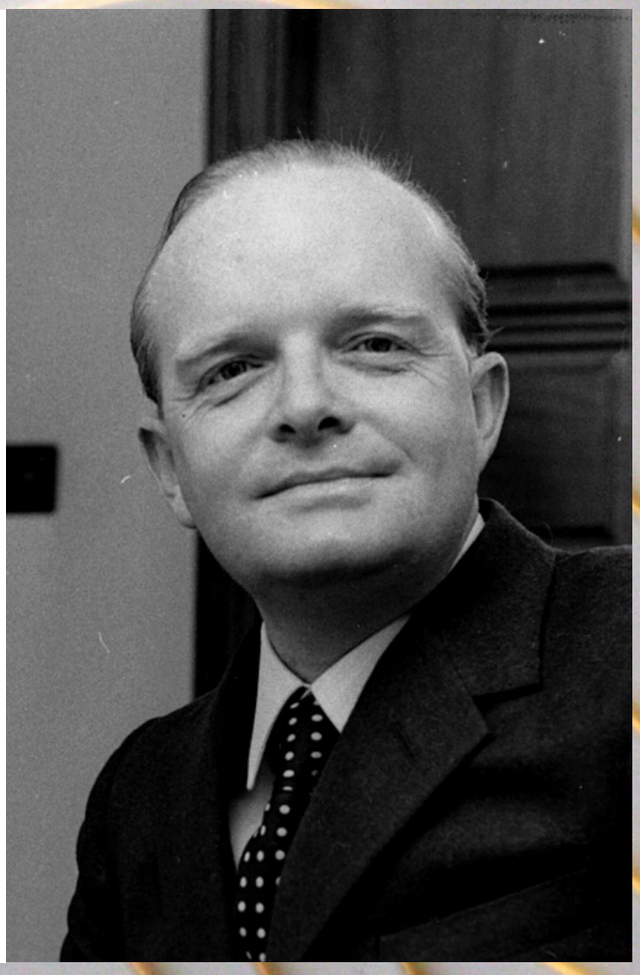
George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw, an Irish playwright, is known for his contribution to comic drama. His plays, including ‘Pygmalion,’ ‘Arms and the Man’ and ‘Major Barbara,’ have been widely acclaimed.

Despite his success, Shaw had to deal with a disorder called ADD, which affected his ability to focus and make rational decisions. This condition often led him to be impulsive and restless. However, it did not stop him from pursuing his passion for writing and making a mark in the world of literature.

Truman Capote

Capote possessed a wide range of talents and skills. Not only was he a skilled writer, excelling in the creation of novels, dramas, and screenplays, but he also showcased his acting abilities. One of his notable works, 'In Cold Blood,' delved into the chilling true crime story of the 1959 murders of four individuals in a close-knit farming community. Additionally, Capote gained fame for his masterpiece, 'Breakfast at Tiffany's.' Furthermore, he played a significant role in assisting his lifelong friend, Harper Lee, in crafting her renowned novel, 'To Kill a Mockingbird.' It is worth mentioning that Capote faced the challenges of epilepsy, which impacted his life.



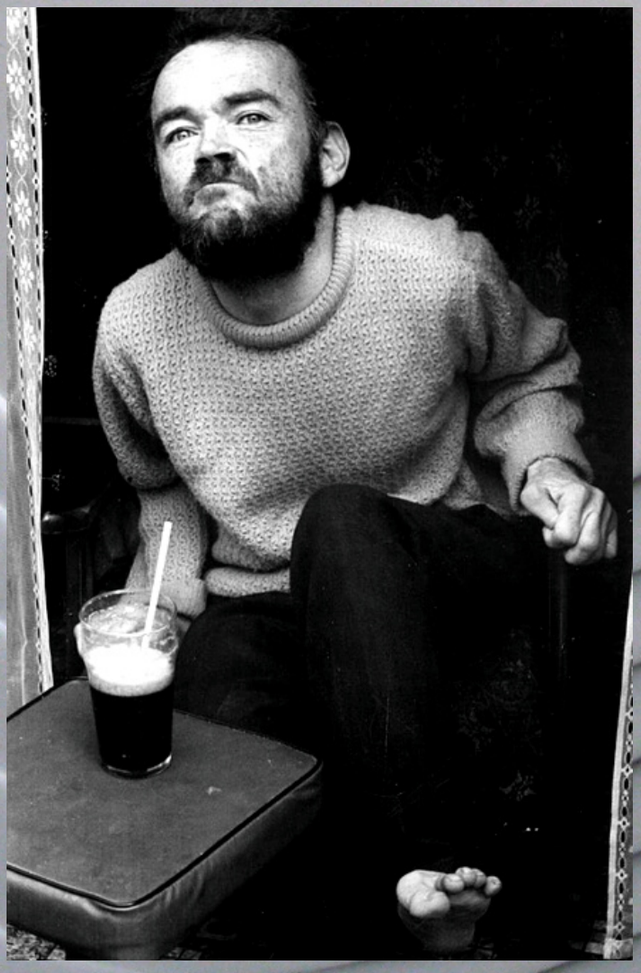


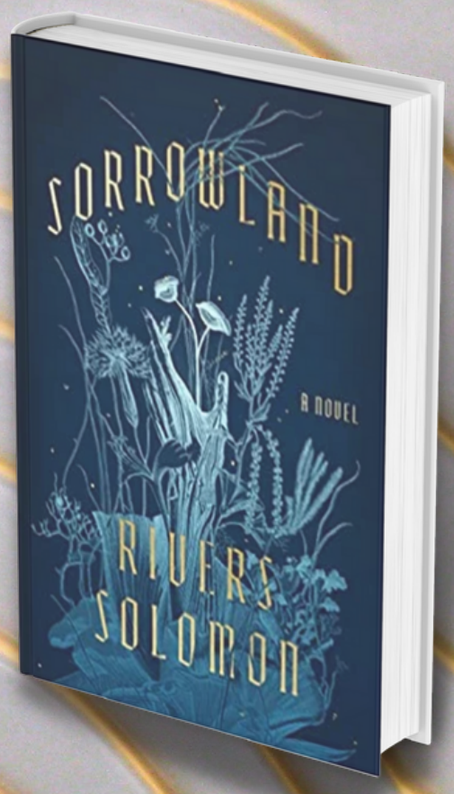
F Scott Fitzgerald

Fitzgerald, an accomplished American author, showcased his versatility through his writings, which encompassed short stories, essays, novels, dramas, and screenplays. His novels, often situated in the vibrant Jazz Age, delved into the captivating themes of ambition, loss, money, romance, and class. Among his notable works, 'The Great Gatsby' stood out as his most renowned masterpiece, while 'Tender is the Night' and 'The Beautiful and Damned' also contributed to his literary legacy. Despite his remarkable talent, Fitzgerald faced challenges in the form of an unidentified learning disability, possibly dyslexia, and battled with alcoholism.

Christy Brown

Christy Brown, an Irish author and artist, faced the challenges of cerebral palsy, a neurological disorder that caused spasticity in his limbs and stiffness due to high muscle tone. Despite these difficulties, he gained widespread recognition for his memoir, 'My Left Foot,' which chronicled his life experiences. Additionally, he authored 'Down all the Days,' which is considered his greatest work.





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PICADOR

by Rivers Solomon

Vern, seven months pregnant and desperate to escape her strict religious compound in America, flees for the woods to raise twins. However, she is a hunted woman and faces brutality from the community. To understand her metamorphosis and protect her family, Vern must confront the past and future, both inside the woods and outside. The book, Sorrowland, is a genre-bending gothic fiction that explores the violent history of America and the secrets of the compound she fled. It marks the arrival of a bold voice in American fiction, highlighting the dangers of monsters and the importance of understanding the past.

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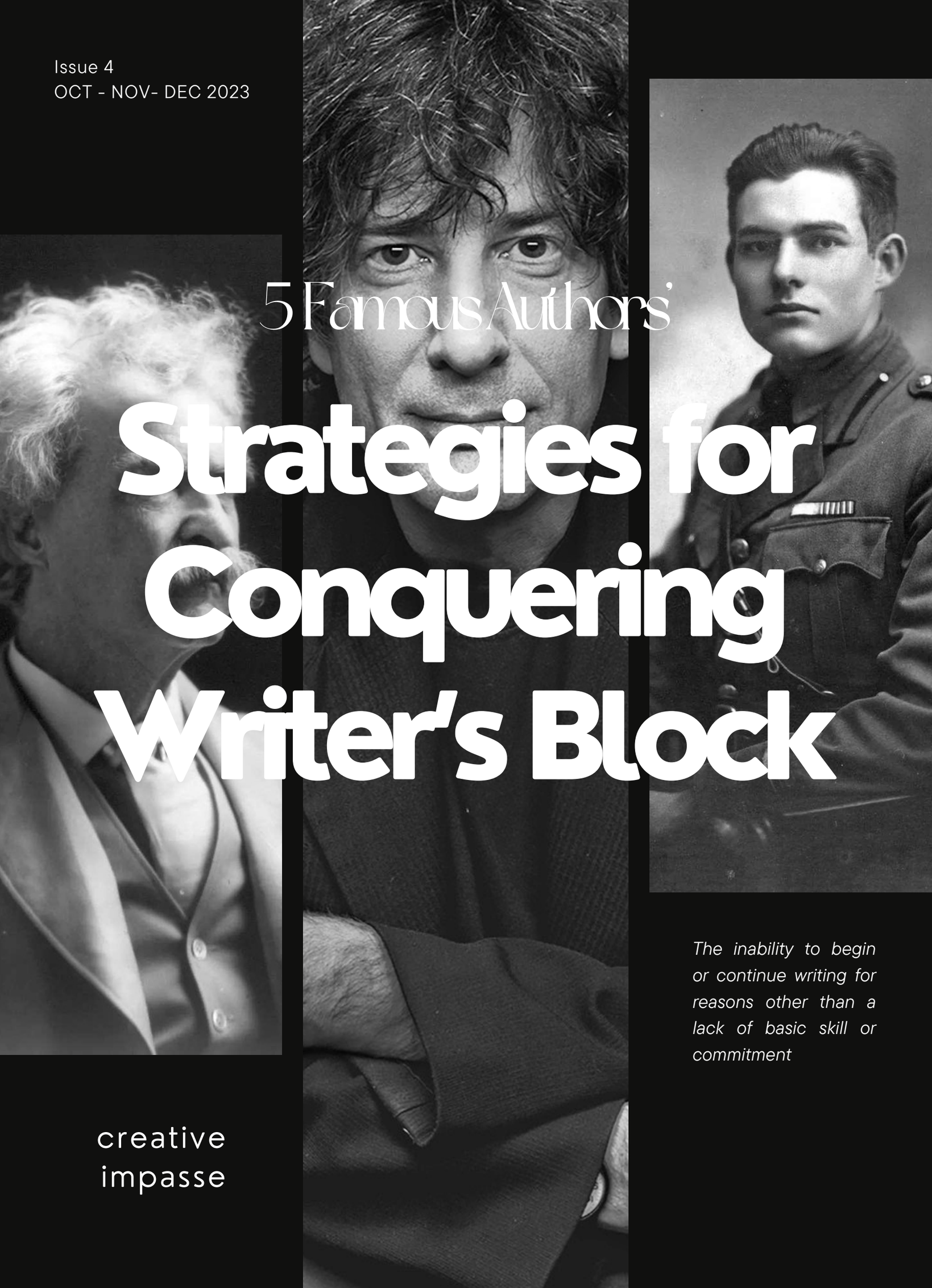
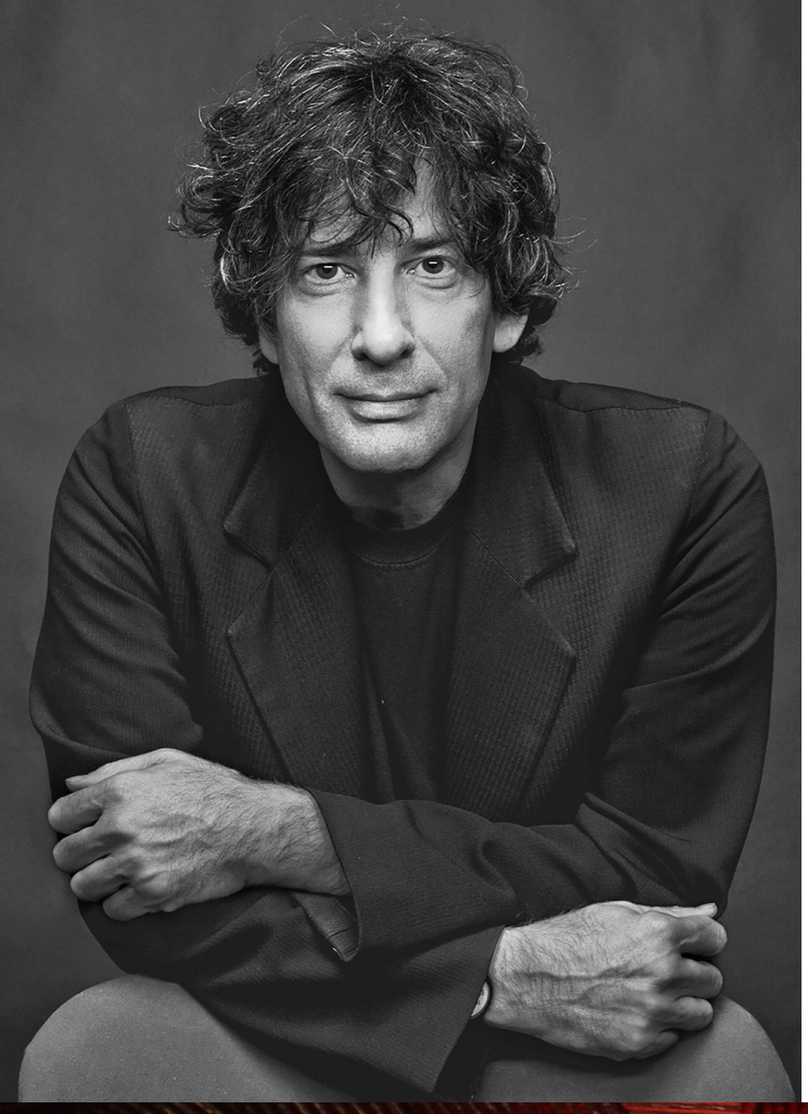


5 Famous Authors'

Strategies for Conquering Writer's Block

The inability to begin or continue writing for reasons other than a lack of basic skill or commitment

creative impasse



01.

Neil Gaiman’s Hibernation Strategy

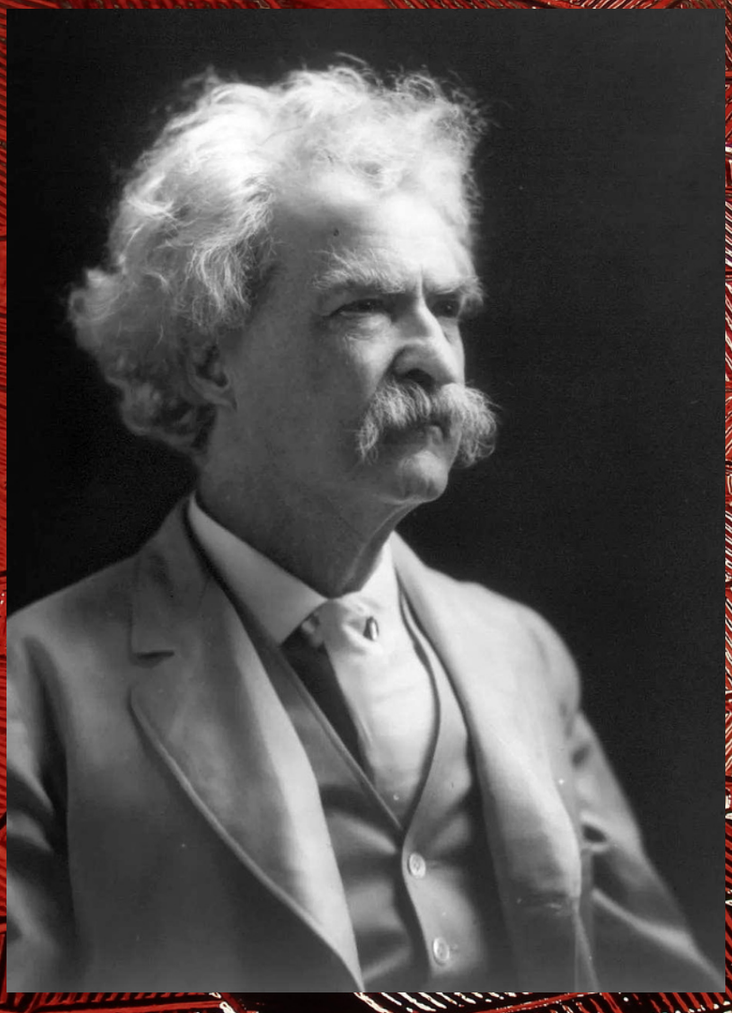
Neil Gaiman, the acclaimed writer of graphic novels and children's books, provides valuable guidance for those moments when you find yourself at a loss for how to conclude your novel or write the conclusion of a blog post.

“Put it [your writing] aside for a few days, or longer, do other things, try not to think about it. Then sit down and read it (printouts are best I find, but that’s just me) as if you’ve never seen it before. Start at the beginning. Scribble on the manuscript as you go if you see anything you want to change. And often, when you get to the end you’ll be both enthusiastic about it and know what the next few words are. And you do it all one word at a time.”

02.

Mark Twain’s Outlining Strategy

During your elementary school years, it is likely that your writing instructor emphasized the importance of outlining your work repeatedly. This advice was also followed by the renowned American author Mark Twain, who believed that the key to progress lies in taking the first step. According to Twain, breaking down complex and overwhelming tasks into smaller, more manageable ones is the secret to getting started. By adopting this approach, one can effectively overcome writer's block. When your writing project is already divided into achievable steps, you no longer need to worry about what to write or where to find inspiration each day, as you already have a clear direction to follow.



03.

Ernest Hemingway's Hoarding Strategy

If you have experienced writer's block, but suddenly discover a surge of inspiration flowing back to you, do not deplete your resources! It is essential to always maintain a reserve of inspiration.

"The best way is always to stop when you are going good and when you know what will happen next. If you do that every day ... you will never be stuck. Always stop while you are going good and don't think about it or worry about it until you start to write the next day. That way your subconscious will work on it all the time. But if you think about it consciously or worry about it you will kill it and your brain will be tired before you start."





04.

Maya Angelou's "Just Write" Strategy

Just like any other art or sport, writing requires practice to achieve perfection. You need to keep pushing yourself to write consistently in order to find inspiration and improve your skills. Maya Angelou, the renowned author of I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, suggested that even when you face writer's block, you should make it a habit to write every day, regardless of the quality of your work.

"What I try to do is write. I may write for two weeks 'the cat sat on the mat, that is that, not a rat.' And it might be just the most boring and awful stuff. But I try. When I'm writing, I write. And then it's as if the muse is convinced that I'm serious and says, 'Okay. Okay. I'll come.'"



05.

Hilary Mantel's "Get Away From Your Desk" Strategy

"At times, the most effective approach to overcoming writer's block is to declutter your mind. Writer's block frequently occurs when your thoughts about your everyday life become too overwhelming and occupy your mind. It is crucial to create a void for your creativity to flourish. Renowned British writer Hilary Mantel, who has been h*onored with awards for her work including Wolf Hall, shares this valuable guidance."*

"If you get stuck, get away from your desk. Take a walk, take a bath, go to sleep, make a pie, draw, listen to music, meditate, exercise; whatever you do, don't just stick there scowling at the problem. But don't make telephone calls or go to a party; if you do, other people's words will pour in where your lost words should be. Open a gap for them, create a space. Be patient."



The Collected Schizophrenias: Essays

by: Esmé Weijun Wang

Esmé Weijun Wang's book, The Collected Schizophrenias, is a poignant exploration of the complex mental and chronic illness. The book delves into the complexities of schizophrenia, a condition that is not a single unifying diagnosis. Wang's journey towards her diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder, a rare form of psychosis, and the complex factors such as PTSD and Lyme disease are explored. Wang's analytical eye, honed as a former lab researcher at Stanford, allows her to balance research with personal narrative, dispelling misconceptions and providing insight into a condition long misunderstood. The Collected Schizophrenias is an invaluable resource for those seeking to understand and support those struggling with mental and chronic illness.

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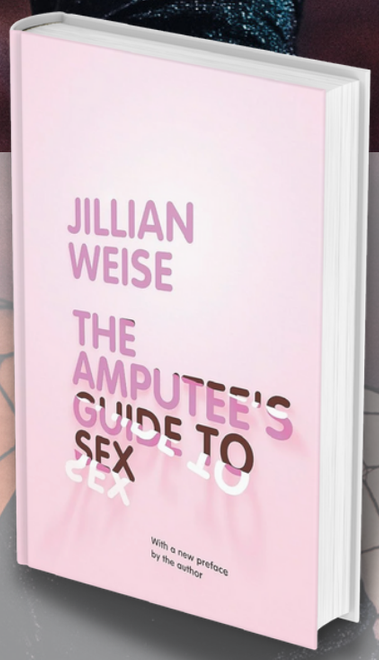
JILLIAN WEISE

Jillian Weise is a multi-talented individual who excels in various fields. Not only is she a poet, but she is also a performance artist and a disability rights activist. Her literary accomplishments include the publication of several books, such as "The Amputee's Guide to Sex," "The Colony," and "The Book of Goodbyes." Her exceptional writing skills have earned her prestigious awards, including the James Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets and the Isabella Gardner Award from BOA Editions. Weise's work has been featured in numerous renowned publications like A Public Space, The Huffington Post, and The New York Times. In addition to her writing, she has been recognized for her talent through residencies and fellowships from esteemed institutions such as the Fine Arts Work Center, the Fulbright Program, the Lannan Foundation, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Currently, she holds the position of Associate Professor at Clemson University.

https://jillianweise.com/





Jillian Weise's The Amputee's Guide to Sex aims to change disability discourse by addressing the portrayal of "cripples" as asexual characters. The collection explores themes of desire, the body, pain, and possession, rewriting Elizabeth Bishop's poem "In the Waiting Room" and addressing male curiosity and lust. The book has been praised for its bold and compassionate approach, addressing challenges in speaking for a community and resisting ableist paradigms.

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Winner of the Isabella Gardner Poetry Award *The Book of Goodbyes* speaks to a certain deranged love that throws into question sex, legality, gender-politics, disability, and the end of an affair. The book shifts between lyric and narrative, hyper-realism and magical realism, fact and fiction, and is organized like a play with Act I, Intermission, Act II, and Curtain Call.

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Anne Hatley, a young teacher, joins the research colony of James D. Watson, a DNA pioneer, to cure a rare gene affecting bone growth. As she pioneers an experimental procedure, she falls in love with a fellow colonist, the "suicide gene" possessor, and consults Charles Darwin. The Colony explores ethics in the Age of the Genome, blending wellsian dystopia, medical mystery, Hawthornian allegory, and reality show.

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MARCELO IN THE REAL WORLD



By Francisco X. Stork

Francisco X. Stork, a Mexican author, emigrated from Mexico at nine. His tenth novel, I Am Not Alone, won the Schneider Family Book Award. His other works include Marcelo in the Real World, The Last Summer of the Death Warriors, The Memory of Light, Disappeared, Illegal, and On the Hook.

Stork's work has been recognized by the Texas Institute of Letters, the Texas Institute of Letters, and the International Latino Book Award. His most recent work, On the Hook, received four starred reviews and won the International Latino Book Award.



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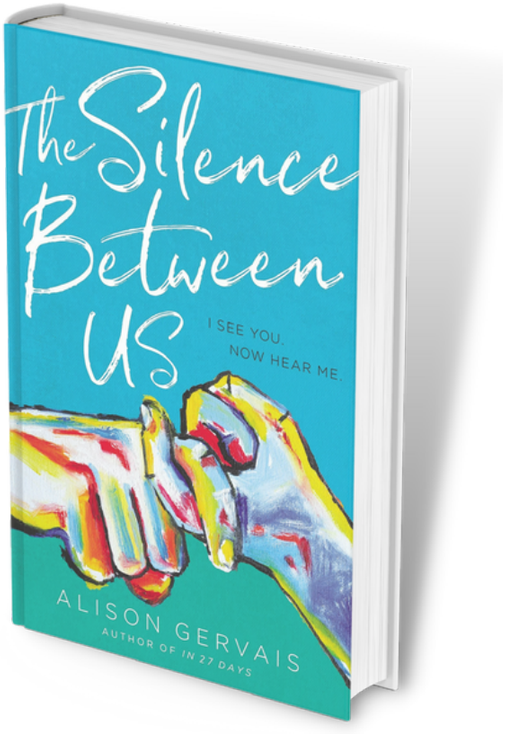
The concept of a "cognitive disorder" suggests that there may be an issue with the way I think or perceive reality. However, I want to emphasize that my perception of reality is perfectly fine. In fact, there are times when I perceive even more of reality than others. Marcelo Sandoval, for instance, experiences a unique phenomenon where he hears music that no one else can hear due to a condition similar to autism. Despite this, his father has always been skeptical about Marcelo's differences and the music he hears.

As a way to expose Marcelo to the "real world," his father challenges him to work in the mailroom of his law firm for the summer. It is during this time that Marcelo encounters Jasmine, a coworker who surprises him with her beauty and personality, as well as Wendell, the son of another partner in the firm. Through his experiences in the mailroom, Marcelo learns about competition, jealousy, anger, and desire. However, it is a picture he discovers in a file depicting a girl with half a face, that truly connects him to the real world. This image exposes him to the suffering and injustice that exist, inspiring him to take action and fight against them.

THE SILENCE BETWEEN US

"It's time we see more Deaf characters in books. It's time we see more books celebrating sign language and Deaf culture," said author Alison Gervais.



The Silence Between Us:

- Features a Deaf protagonist and an #OwnVoices perspective on Deaf and Hard of Hearing culture
- Is a clean YA romance by Wattpad sensation Alison Gervais
- Is perfect for fans of Nicola Yoon and CeCe Bell

Maya, a deaf teenager, faces the challenge of moving to a new city and attending a hearing school for the first time. This transition becomes even more difficult as she tries to adapt to the hearing culture, which she finds frustrating. However, Maya is pleasantly surprised when some of her classmates, like Beau Watson, make an effort to learn American Sign Language (ASL). As Maya looks towards her future dreams beyond graduation, she remains determined and focused, not allowing anything, including an unexpected romance, to distract her. Even when people in her life, both deaf and hearing, question aspects of her deaf identity, Maya stands proudly, refusing to believe that her deafness is a disadvantage.

Schneider Family Book Award, Best Teen Honor Book 2020

"This is a great YA contemporary (clean) romance that follows Maya as she navigates a new school and plans for her future. The addition of representation by a Deaf character was really beautifully done. Highly recommend for people looking for a sweet, engaging, and educational romantic read." (*YA and Kids Book Central*)

ALISON GERVAIS

"Gervais deftly renders both the nuanced, everyday realities of life with disability and Maya's fierce pride in her Deafness, delivering a vibrant story that will resonate with Deaf and hearing audiences alike. -- ***Booklist***

This is a great YA contemporary (clean) romance that follows Maya as she navigates a new school and plans for her future. The addition of representation by a Deaf character was really beautifully done. Highly recommend for people looking for a sweet, engaging, and educational romantic read. -- ***YA and Kids Book Central***

Alison Gervais (In 27 Days), herself Hard of Hearing (HoH), portrays Maya as frustrated by setbacks yet exuberant in her pride as a member of the Deaf community. The everyday discrimination Maya faces doesn't weigh her down--'Discrimination? Welcome to my world.' Gervais depicts signed dialogue in the 'choppy English' characteristic of ASL, immersing the reader in Maya's life. The Silence Between Us is a boon to young adult literature, helping to remedy the shortage of Deaf protagonists with the spitfire Maya and her momentous self-confidence. The Silence Between Us is a boon to young adult literature, helping to remedy the shortage of Deaf protagonists with the spitfire Maya and her momentous self-confidence. -- ***Shelf Awareness***



Alison Gervais began writing at the age of five and gained recognition by posting her work on Wattpad in 2011. She graduated from Colorado State University - Pueblo with a degree in English and published her first novel, In 27 Days, in 2017. Alison currently resides on the East coast with her husband, their daughter, two cats, and one very mischievous German Shepherd.

http://alisongervais.com/



Gervais (In 27 Days) uses her own experiences of hearing loss to lend authenticity to this novel about a teenage deaf girl starting over at a new school. [...] Gervais adroitly pulls readers into her world--conveying ASL through all caps and spelled-out words--as well as her work navigating the deaf and hearing worlds and her awareness of who she is. -- ***Publishers Weekly***

A unique and deftly written novel showcasing a strong deaf character and how she deals with all that her situation entails, 'The Silence Between Us' is a compelling and thoroughly entertaining read from cover to cover. -- ***Midwest Book Review***

Alison Gervais' The Silence Between Us, not only captures the anxiety most young people feel when they've been uprooted from their community of friends, but in Maya's case, it's exacerbated by the fact she is deaf and newly planted in a hearing school. As nervous as Maya is, her wonderful sense of humor enlivens the story for the reader. Gervais has a perfect grasp of the challenges facing Maya and fleshes them out empathetically. Her portrayal of Maya and the pitfalls she faces, in my opinion, is spot on. More subtle is Maya's natural defensiveness even against those students who attempt to befriend her, throwing up barriers when she suspects pity as their motivation. -- ***Ginny Rorby, author of Hurt Go Happy***

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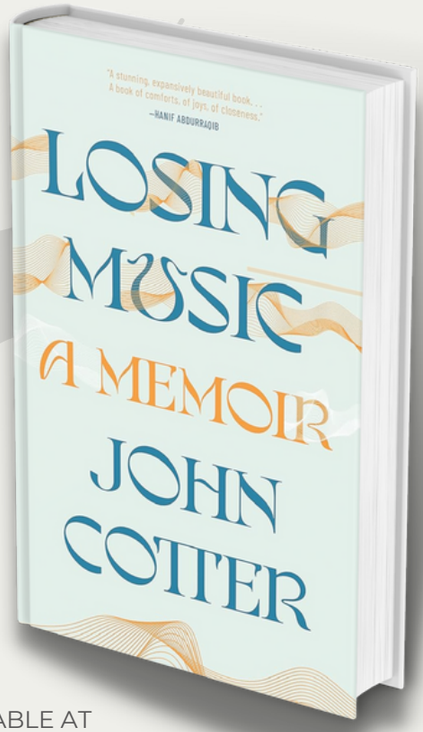
SAMANTHA IRBY

https://www.samanthairby.com/





I am squeezed into my push-up bra and sparkly, ill-fitting dress. I've got the requisite sixteen coats of waterproof mascara, black eyeliner, and salmon-colored streaks of hastily applied self-tanner drying down the side of my neck. I'm sucking in my stomach, I've taken thirty-seven Imodium in case my irritable bowels have an adverse reaction to the bag of tacos I hid in my purse and ate in the bathroom while no one was looking, and I have been listening to Katy Perry really loudly in the limo on the way over here. I'm about to crush a beer can on my forehead. LET'S DO THIS, BRO.



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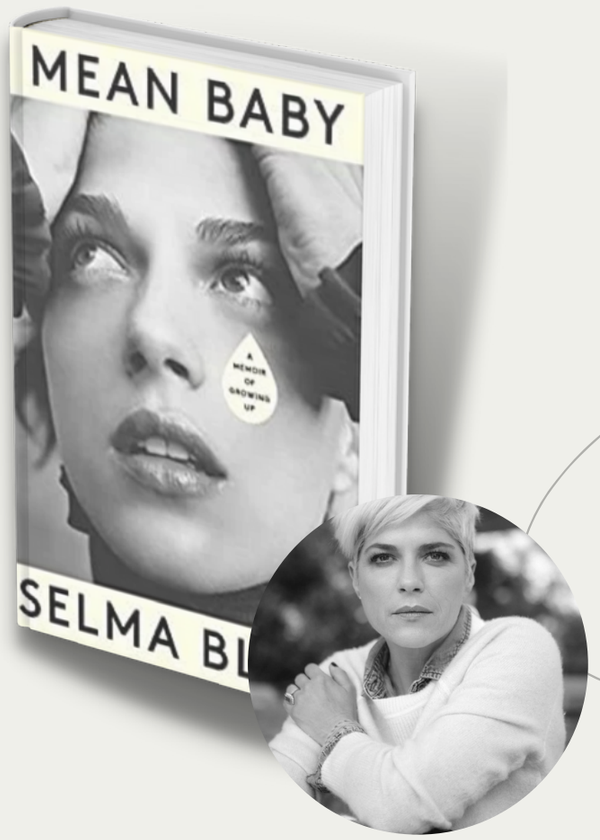
John Cotter, a thirty-year-old with a disability, began experiencing a ringing in his ears, partial deafness, dizziness, and vertigo. Despite his writing career, he found himself "crippled and dependent," seeking treatment for his condition.

After discovering there was no reliable test or treatment for his condition, Cotter quit teaching and began visiting doctors and treatment centers. His journey through hopelessness and adaptation to disability led him to reflect on age-old questions about fate, coincidence, and making meaning of inexplicable misfortune in Losing Music.



JOHN COTTER

SELMA BLAIR



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Selma Blair Beitner, a celebrated Hollywood actress and model, was once a mean baby with a terrible reputation. She bit her sisters, lied, and got drunk from Passover wine at the age of seven. Despite her fame, Selma could never shake the darkness that surrounded her.

She secretly drank to escape her dark past. In her memoir, Mean Baby, Selma reveals her addiction to alcohol, her devotion to her mother, and moments of death. The memoir explores brutal violence, passionate love, friendship, motherhood, and the unexpected salvation of a multiple sclerosis diagnosis.

Your Hearts, Your Scars

by: Adina Talve-Goodman

Adina Talve-Goodman, born with a congenital heart condition, survived multiple surgeries and a heart transplant at age nineteen. Her seven essays, Your Hearts, Your Scars, tell the story of her chronic illness and her search for love and meaning.

She shares her experiences of taking her heart home from the hospital, passing it around the Thanksgiving table, attending summer camp for young transplant patients, and a memorable night on the town. Her posthumously published work is a reflection on chance and gratitude, a testament to hope and kindness.

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My Body and Other Crumbling Empires

by: Lyndsey Medford

Lyndsey Medford, a writer, activist, and theology student, has experienced autoimmune diseases and the growing prevalence of chronic illnesses, including COVID. Her book, "My Body and Other Crumbling Empires," explores the complexities of our bodies and the need for a radical reimagining of the world. Medford's experiences with her rare autoimmune disease highlight the importance of accessibility, the interconnected nature of individual and public health, and the wisdom gained from living with our particular bodies. By focusing on the interconnected nature of individual and public health, Medford encourages a healing together, addressing the root causes of illness, systemic racism, poverty, and sin's separation.

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CREATIVE WRITER, DEAF ADVOCATE & INSTRUCTOR

Sara Novic

"A coming-of-age story that explores the complexities of community and the ways in which language defines us."—Kirkus Reviews

https://sara-novic.com/

Sara is the author of the novel GIRL AT WAR (2015), the nonfiction project AMERICA IS IMMIGRANTS (2019), and Reese's Book Club April 2022 pick, TRUE BIZ, all from Random House.

Sara has an MFA from Columbia University, where she studied fiction and literary translation. She teaches creative writing and Deaf studies at Emerson College and Stockton University, and lives in Philadelphia.

REVIEWS

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • REESE'S BOOK CLUB PICK • A "tender, beautiful and radiantly outraged" (The New York Times Book Review) novel that follows a year of seismic romantic, political, and familial shifts for a teacher and her students at a boarding school for the deaf, from the acclaimed author of Girl at War

"For those who loved the Oscar-winning film *CODA*, a boarding school for deaf students is the setting for a kaleidoscope of experiences."—*The Washington Post*

ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR: NPR, *The Washington Post, Publishers Weekly, Booklist*

"This is brilliant."—Publishers Weekly (starred review)

"[A] touching and witty celebration of Deaf culture . . . moving and revelatory."—Booklist (starred review)

True Biz

In February, readers are transported to the world of the River Valley School for the Deaf, a residential school for the deaf. The students, including Charlie, Austin, and February, are driven by their desire for freedom and independence from the constraints of politicians, doctors, and parents. Their lives are shaped by personal and political crises, as Charlie, Austin, and February discover their fates are intertwined.

The novel explores the power of sign language and lip-reading, the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, the fight for civil rights, the isolation and injustice experienced by the deaf community, the complexities of first love and loss, and the unwavering determination, courage, and happiness found in human connections.

The story takes readers on an unforgettable journey into the Deaf community, while also celebrating the universal importance of human relationships.



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America is Immigrants

This dazzling volume brings American immigrant stories to life in short biographies written by award-winning writer Sara Nović, with charming full-color illustrations by Alison Kolesar. At a time when public debate is focused on who belongs in America, this book honors the crucial contributions of our friends and neighbors who have chosen to make this country their home.

Featured within are war heroes and fashion designers, Supreme Court justices and pop stars, athletes and civil rights leaders, as well as:

- the doctors who saved Ronald Reagan's life
- the creators of iconic American products like Levi's, Chevy cars and trucks, and Nathan's Famous hot dogs
- the scientists who contributed to the Manhattan Project
- the architects behind landmarks of the American skyline like the World Financial Center in New York City, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, and the Sears Tower in Chicago
- Plus these familiar names from every walk of life:

Solutions and Other Problems

by: Allie Brosh

Solutions and Other Problems is a collection of humorous anecdotes from Allie Brosh's childhood, showcasing the misadventures of her misbehaving animals, and providing a candid examination of her own flaws. It also delves into thought-provoking essays on topics such as grief, loneliness, and powerlessness, while offering insightful reflections on the absurdities of modern life. NPR describes Allie Brosh as a unique voice who captures the essence of life's hilarity, devastation, and strangeness. This edition of the book is presented in full-color, featuring over 1,600 pieces of art that beautifully complement the content. Solutions and Other Problems welcomes back a cherished American humorist, praised for her keen observations, artistic creativity, and comedic wit by none other than Bill Gates himself.

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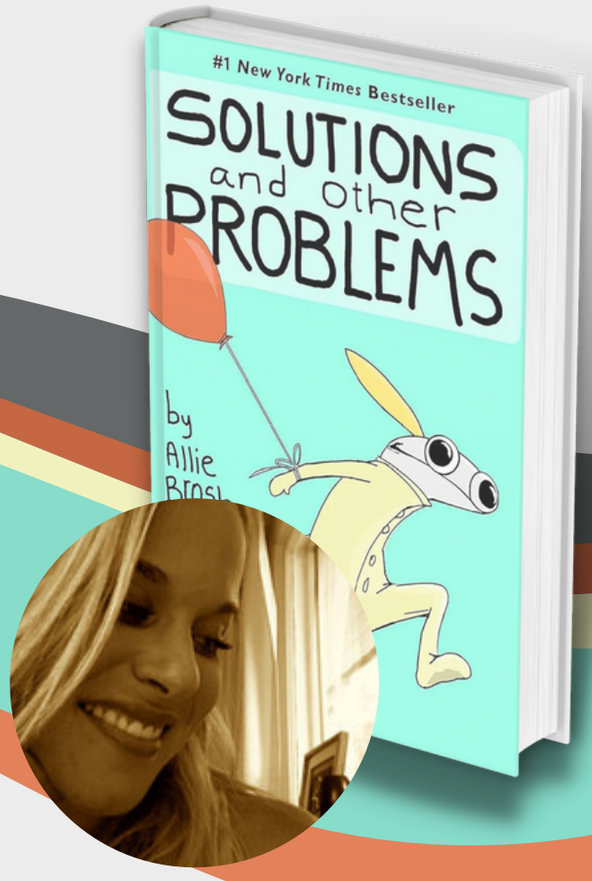



Good Kings Bad Kings

by: Susan Nussbaum

Bellwether Award winner Susan Nussbaum's powerful novel invites us into the lives of a group of typical teenagers—alienated, funny, yearning for autonomy—except that they live in an institution for juveniles with disabilities. This unfamiliar, isolated landscape is much the same as the world outside: friendships are forged, trust is built, love affairs are kindled, and rules are broken. But those who call it home have little or no control over their fate. Good Kings Bad Kings challenges our definitions of what it means to be disabled in a story told with remarkable authenticity and in voices that resound with humor and spirit.

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AVID READER PRESS

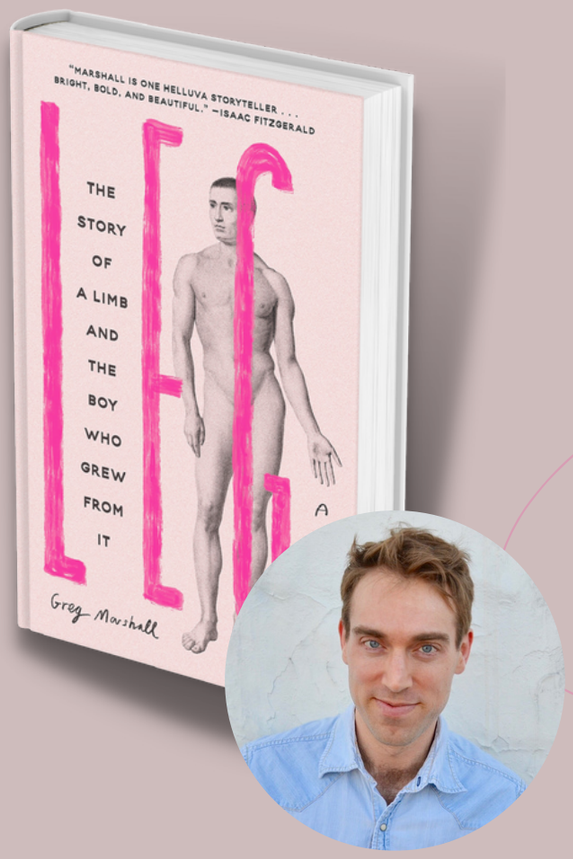
Chloé Cooper Jones, born with sacral agenesis, experienced physical pain and judgment for her appearance throughout her life. She resisted this by excelling academically and retreating to a neutral room.

After becoming a mother, Jones reclaimed spaces she had been denied, traveling from Brooklyn to Rome, Utah, Milan, California, and Phnom Penh. Through memory, observation, experience, and aesthetic philosophy, Jones probes the myths underlying beauty and desirability standards.



CHLOÉ COOPER JONES

GREG MARSHALL



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Greg Marshall's early years were a mix of bizarre and harrowing, as evidenced by VHS tapes from the '90s. The tapes show him limping across a high school stage, in a wheelchair after leg surgeries, and contemplating his love for the Utah Jazz. Marshall's life was marked by a family in crisis, a father with ALS, and a cast of foulmouthed siblings. Fast forward to his life as a gay man, discovering he had cerebral palsy. Leg is a unique and insightful exploration of his unique childhood, highlighting the challenges of transformation and the resilience of spirit. The story is both personal and universal, showcasing the power of youth and the desire to want the world, even when it doesn't feel like it.



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Words

THAT MATTER

It's true that the most difficult circumstances produce the best masterpieces. In fact, creativity thrives when physical and mental activities are restricted by disability.

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