

AG THE Authors Guild

20 Powerful Books on the Writing Craft

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A Goodreads search reveals that there are more than 12,374 published books about the writing process. From learning about the seven basic plots or making sense of character archetypes to overcoming writers' block or writing "down the bones," how do you select the books that will most help your writing career?

Studying the best authors in whatever genre you write, the award-winners; the ones who remain in print after 20, 50, even 100 years; or simply those authors whose books resonate with you long after reading the last page, will inevitably shape WHAT you write. Likewise, look to those same authors when choosing books about HOW to write.

The books below emphasize craft, based on the author's unique insights after years of practicing the art form, and through the writing itself:

1. Julia Alvarez, *Something to Declare*, 1999: Plume Books
2. Margaret Atwood, *Negotiating with the Dead*, 2002: Cambridge University Press
3. Ray Bradbury, *Zen in the Art of Writing*, 1992 (1987): Bantam Books
4. Joan Didion, "On Keeping a Notebook" in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, 2008 (1968): FSG Classics
5. Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life*, 1998 (1989): Harper Collins
6. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *On Authorship* (edited by Mathew Bruccoli), 1996: University of South Carolina Press
7. E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 1955 (1927): Harcourt
8. John Gardner, *The Art of Fiction*, 1991 (1984): Vintage Books
9. Ellen Gilchrist, *Falling Through Space*, 2000 (1987): University of Mississippi Press
10. Spalding Gray, *Monster in a Box*, 1992: Vintage Books
11. Kazuo Ishiguro, *My Twentieth Century Evening and Other Small Breakthroughs*, 2017: Faber & Faber
12. Charles Johnson, *The Way of the Writer*, 2016: Scribner
13. Mary Karr, *The Art of Memoir*, 2015: Harper Collins
14. Madeleine L'Engle *Herself: Reflections on a Writing Life*, 2018 (2001), Convergent Books
15. Toni Morrison, *The Source of Self-Regard*, 2019: Penguin Random House
16. Richard Russo, *The Destiny Thief*, 2018: Knopf
17. Carolyn See, *Making a Literary Life*, 2002: Random House

18. Amy Tan, *The Opposite of Fate*, 2004: Penguin
19. Eudora Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings*, 1998 (1983): Harvard University Press
20. *Writers on Writing: Collected Essays from The New York Times*, 2001: Times Books

What books or authors do you turn to for inspiration or insights about the writing process? Share your favorites!