

How to Read Nonfiction Like a Professor

A Smart, Irreverent Guide to
Biography, History, Journalism,
Blogs, and Everything in
Between

Thomas C. Foster

HOW TO READ NONFICTION LIKE A PROFESSOR. Copyright © 2020 by Thomas C. Foster. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, address HarperCollins Publishers, 195 Broadway, New York, NY 10007.

HarperCollins books may be purchased for educational, business, or sales promotional use. For information, please email the Special Markets Department at SPsales@harpercollins.com.

FIRST EDITION

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for.

ISBN 978-0-06-289581-3 (pbk.)
ISBN 978-0-06-300847-2 (Library edition)

20 21 22 23 24 LSC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The Books in the Book

I HAVE SPENT A lot of time slinging names and titles at you, and you have been really good sports about it. But I figure you don't really want to slog back through all those pages to find a book you want to check out further. Sound about right? So, here's the list, brought to you by the best of my limited abilities. I have limited the list to those I actually discuss, if only for a couple of sentences. There are quite a few others that only make cameo appearances and so would merely clutter this list; for those, please check the index.

Newspapers also make appearances here, especially the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, the *Dayton Daily News*, and the *Lansing State Journal*. I hope, despite signs to the contrary, that daily papers will continue to play a significant role in the cultural life of our country. So, too, with magazines, whose numbers have dwindled precipitously in my lifetime, disastrously during my adulthood. There are only a handful of general interest magazines left, yet those—*The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *Harper's*, *Vanity Fair* among them—remain an important home for serious, muscular journalism. Periodicals have long been the lifeblood of our national discussion, places for more than sound bites and snarky one-liners. If they should vanish, I fear for the republic.

Agee, James, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941)

Ambrose, Stephen E., *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (1996)

Augustine, *Confessions* (C.E. 397–400)

Barnes, Julian, *Levels of Life* (2013), *Nothing to Be Frightened Of* (2008)

Boo, Katherine, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2012)

Brooks, David, *The Road to Character* (2015)

Brown, Daniel James, *The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* (2013)

Chernow, Ron, *Alexander Hamilton* (2004)

Coates, Ta-Nehisi, *Between the World and Me* (2015)

Comey, James, *A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership* (2018)

Davidson, Cathy N., *Now You See It: How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform the Way We Live, Work, and Learn* (2011)

Didion, Joan, *The White Album* (1979); *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2005)

Dillard, Annie, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974)

Franklin, Benjamin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1793)

Frey, James, *A Million Little Pieces* (2003)

Gladwell, Malcolm, *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking* (2005); *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (2000)

Grann, David, *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2017)

Hanna-Attisha, Mona, M.D., *What the Eyes Don't See* (2018)

Hemingway, Ernest, *Death in the Afternoon* (1932); *A Moveable Feast* (1964)

Hillenbrand, Laura, *Seabiscuit: An American Legend* (2001)

Hitchens, Christopher, *God Is Not Great* (2007)

Lawrence, D. H., “Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine” (1925)

Lerner, Ben, *The Hatred of Poetry* (2016)

Maddox, Brenda, *Nora: A Biography of Nora Joyce* (1988)

McCullough, David, *1776* (2005)

McPhee, John, *Annals of the Former World* (1998)

Newman, John Henry, *The Idea of a University* (1852, 1858); *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864)

Oates, Joyce Carol, *A Widow’s Story* (2011)

Obama, Barack, *Dreams from My Father* (2004); *The Audacity of Hope* (2006)

O’Connor, Cailin, and James Owen Weatherall, *The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread* (2019)

Oreskes, Naomi, and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* (2010)

Orwell, George, “Shooting an Elephant” (1936)

Pollan, Michael, *How to Change Your Mind* (2018)

Powers, Ron, *Tom and Huck Don’t Live Here Anymore* (2001)

Robinson, Marilynne, “Save Our Public Universities,” *Harper’s* (March 2016)

Sedaris, David, *Holidays on Ice* (1997)

Shetterly, Margot Lee, *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race* (2016)

Specter, Michael, *Denialism: How Irrational Thinking Hinders Scientific Progress, Harms the Planet, and Threatens Our Lives* (2009)

Thompson, Hunter S., *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971)

Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden* (1854); *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849)

Townshend, Pete, *Who I Am* (2012)
Tyler, Steven, *Does the Noise in My Head Bother You?* (2011)
Tyson, Neil deGrasse, *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* (2017)
Wolfe, Tom, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968)
Wolff, Michael, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*
(2018)
Woodward, Bob, and Carl Bernstein, *All the President's Men*
(1974)
Woodward, Bob, *Fear: Trump in the White House* (2018)
Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own* (1929)
Young, Neil, *Waging Heavy Peace: A Hippie Dream* (2012)
Zapruder, Matthew, *Why Poetry?* (2017)