



## The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Reading List

If you're looking for a story that will take you away from it all this summer, you can't do better than Anthony Doerr's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *All the Light We Cannot See*. Set during World War II, the parallel stories of a blind French girl and a gadget-obsessed German boy will introduce you to characters you'll never forget and will take you into a world you'll be sad to leave. On the other hand, if you prefer some nonfiction that will help sharpen your communication skills, we have four books to recommend, and you'll find capsule reviews [here](#). Please note: Apple Mail users may need to scroll down manually.

## Last Call: 10 Seats Left for July Master Class

"Telling Your Story: A Master Class for Nonprofit Leaders" will be held in Los Angeles on July 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, and only 10 seats remain for this one-time only event. If you've never participated in any Goodman Center workshops or webinars, this intensive two-day class will provide a solid grounding in telling personal stories, organizational stories, and delivering those stories (and more) in your presentations. And if you have participated before, you will still have the opportunity to build on that experience and take your communications skills to a new level. Find more information and register [online](#) before the class fills.



### Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center

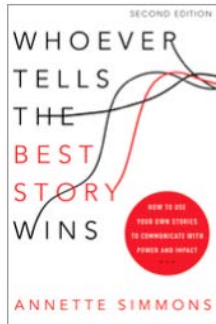
<p>CAMPAIGN BETTER</p> <p><b>Strategic Communications: Cutting Through the Clutter</b></p> <p>July 21 &amp; 28 11am - 12pm PT</p>	<p>TELL BETTER STORIES</p> <p><b>Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative</b></p> <p>Sept. 11, 18, 25 &amp; Oct. 2 9am - 10am PT</p>	<p>PRESENT BETTER</p> <p><b>Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes</b></p> <p>September 16 &amp; 17 11am - 12pm PT</p>
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Click on the class title for more info!

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**Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins** by Annette Simmons (AMACOM, 2007)

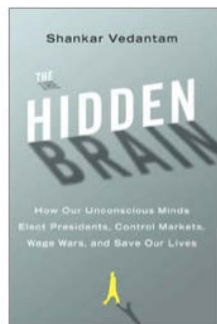


As a big fan of storytelling guru Annette Simmons' *The Story Factor*, I had high hopes for this book which provides further perspectives on harnessing the power of narrative. Happily, Simmons does not disappoint, delving deeper into implementing many of the concepts she laid out in her earlier title.

The second section of her book is particularly useful for those interested in practical application. Offering prompts and exercises to get the storytelling juices flowing, Simmons encourages readers to roll up their sleeves and jump right into crafting their stories. Following each exercise, Simmons tells an example story, taking any abstraction out of the learning process. If you do the work, you'll find it has two benefits: not only will you develop your storytelling skills but you'll also end up with a large collection of your own stories, just waiting to be tapped.

As with *The Story Factor*, *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins* is a deceptively quick read. Simmons' conversational style makes the concepts she covers easily accessible, sometimes masking their depth at first blush. Don't be shy about taking your time on this one - there's a lot to discover.

**The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives** by Shankar Vedantam (Spiegel & Grau, 2010)

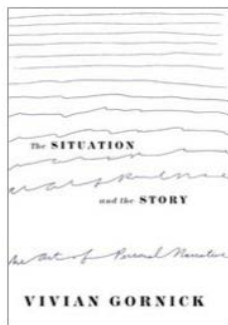


While the power of the subconscious mind is certainly not a new idea, NPR Science Correspondent Shankar Vedantam effectively describes how much clout this imperceptible force can actually have on our decision-making.

Vedantam is an excellent storyteller who mixes empirical data and anecdotal evidence to illustrate how subtle messages in our environment create unconscious biases that can then lead to, among other things, racial and sexist prejudices. One series of studies that the book focuses on shows children as young as three exhibiting subconscious racial biases - sometimes against their own race.

Since we are all inclined to these biases, Vedantam asserts that awareness of their existence is the first step in consciously overcoming them. If you're interested in taking a closer look at your own biases, take an Implicit Association Test (IAT) [here](#). Designed by a group of social psychologists to measure subconscious attitudes, IATs might just shine some light on your own hidden brain.

**The Situation and the Story: The Art of the Personal Narrative** by Vivian Gornick (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002)



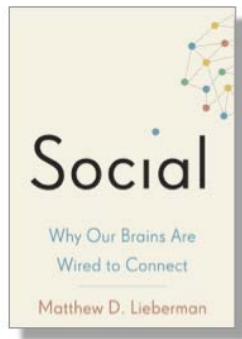
This concise writing guide is essential reading for anyone interested in telling stories that are simultaneously personal *and* universal. Gornick, an acclaimed memoirist in her own right, draws from the work of well-known and obscure writers alike to illustrate the book's central lesson:

"Every work of literature has both a situation and a story. The situation is the context or circumstance, sometimes the plot; the story is the emotional experience that preoccupies the writer: the insight, the wisdom, the thing one has come to say."

In other words, the "situation" is what happens, and the "story" is what it means, both to the storyteller and within the broader context of society. Without the story, you simply have a recitation of events, and without the situation, you're just navel gazing.

Even if you're not aiming to be the next Joan Didion, Gornick's insight into how to make these two crucial elements work together will be useful for any storytelling effort, individual or organizational.

**Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect** by Matthew D. Lieberman (Crown/Archetype, 2014)



What if I told you that eating a bar of chocolate elicited the same response from your brain as receiving positive feedback? Or that the brain's response to being rejected was identical to breaking a leg? Using fMRI technology, neuroscientist Matthew D. Lieberman has conducted a series of studies and found compelling evidence that suggests just that: in your brain, there is no difference between physical sensation and feelings brought on by social interactions.

From this, Lieberman asserts that, like physical pain and pleasure, social pain and pleasure must also be necessary to survival and therefore products of evolutionary design. It's no coincidence that being charitable feels good, and being left out feels bad. It turns out, being a part of a community and caring about the welfare of others are not necessarily moral choices, but physical necessities.

Though it can be dense at times, the final section of the book is not to be missed, as Lieberman explores in brief the broader implications of his findings. How would our society look if our organizational practices, models of education, and understanding of personal happiness all took into account our fundamental need to connect? I may be biased, but I for one think there would be a lot more storytelling.

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## About Us

free-range thinking is written by Andy Goodman and Celia Hoffman. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit [www.thegoodmancenter.com](http://www.thegoodmancenter.com).

To reach Andy directly, please call (323) 464-3956 or send an email to [andy@thegoodmancenter.com](mailto:andy@thegoodmancenter.com).

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