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Stewart Brand's Reading List: 76 Books to Sustain and Rebuild Humanity

by [Maria Popova](#)

From Homer to home health, by way of Shakespeare, conceptual physics, and a gender-imbalance lament.

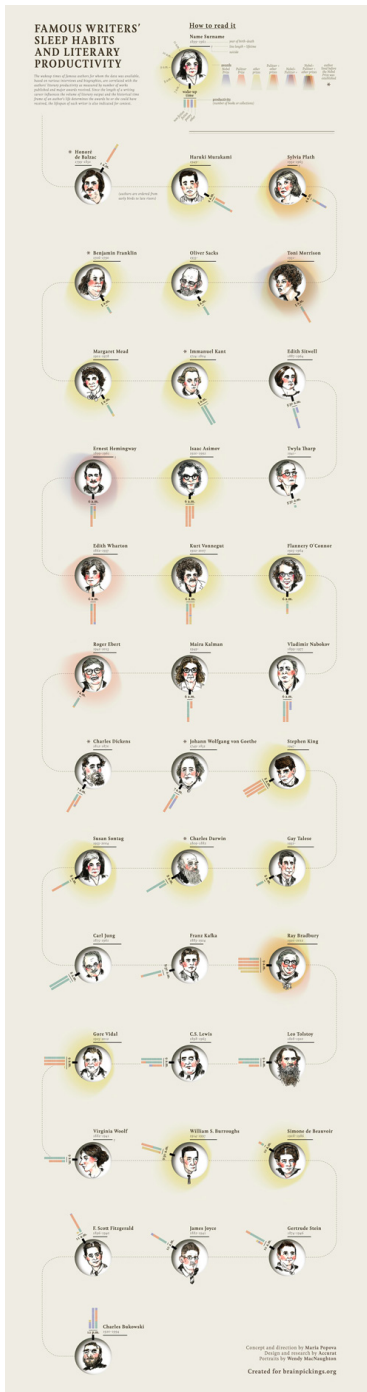
UPDATE: The folks at the Long Now kindly invited me to contribute my own reading list — [see it here](#).

On the heels of [Brian Eno's reading list](#) comes another installment in the Long Now Foundation's effort to assemble 3,500 books most essential for sustaining or rebuilding humanity, as part of their collaboratively curated library for long-term thinking, the **Manual for Civilization**. Here, futurist, environmentalist, and Long Now co-founder **Stewart Brand** — best-known for authoring the era-defining *Whole Earth Catalog* and originating the commonly (mis-)quoted aphorism that “**information wants to be free**” — offers his 76-book contribution to the cumulative library of 3,500, including *Brain Pickings* favorites like Nobel-winning behavioral economist Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Bill Bryson's magnificent illustrated edition of *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, and Lewis Hyde's modern manifesto for the creative life, *The Gift*.

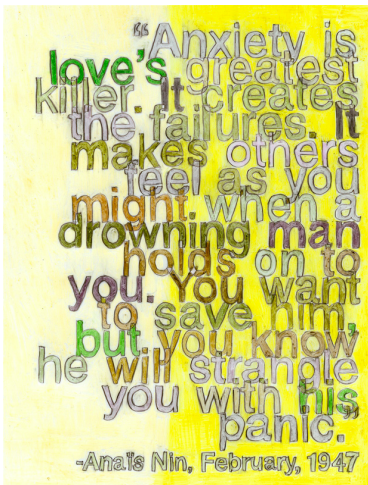
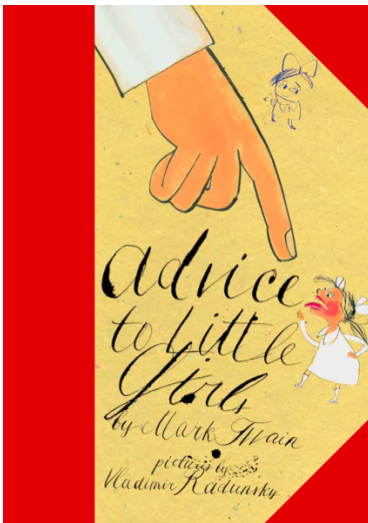




labors of love



1. ***Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*** by David R. Montgomery
2. ***Meditations*** by Marcus Aurelius
3. ***The Odyssey*** by Homer translated by Robert Fagles
4. ***The Iliad*** by Homer translated by Robert Fagles
5. ***The Memory of the World: The Treasures That Record Our History from 1700 BC to the Present Day*** by UNESCO
6. ***The History of the World in 100 Objects*** by Neil MacGregor
7. ***The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*** edited by Robert B. Strassler
8. ***The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*** edited by Robert B. Strassler
9. ***The Complete Greek Tragedies, Volumes 1-4*** edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore
10. ***The Prince*** by Machiavelli, translated by George Bull, published by Folio Society
11. ***The Nature of Things*** by Lucretius
12. ***The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World*** by Peter Schwartz
13. ***The Way Life Works: The Science Lover's Illustrated Guide to How Life Grows, Develops, Reproduces, and Gets Along*** by Mahlon Hoagland and Bert Dodson
14. ***Venice, A Maritime Republic*** by Frederic Chapin Lane
15. ***The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*** by Harold Bloom
16. ***The Map Book*** by Peter Barber
17. ***Conceptual Physics*** by Paul G. Hewitt



18. **The Encyclopedia of Earth: A Complete Visual Guide** by Michael Allaby and Dr. Robert Coenraads
19. **The Foundation Trilogy** by Isaac Asimov
20. **Star Maker** by Olaf Stapledon
21. **The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property** by Lewis Hyde
22. **Powers of Ten: About the Relative Size of Things in the Universe** by Philip Morrison and Phylis Morrison
23. **The Elements: A Visual Exploration of Every Known Atom in the Universe** by Theodore Gray
24. **The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (6 Volumes)** by Edward Gibbon
25. **The Complete Guide to Trail Building and Maintenance** by Carl Demrow and David Salisbury
26. **Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed** by Jared Diamond
27. **A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction** by Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein
28. **Thinking, Fast and Slow** by Daniel Kahneman
29. **The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined** by Steven Pinker
30. **Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier** by Edward L. Glaeser
31. **The Causes of War** by Geoffrey Blainey
32. **Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War** by Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch
33. **A Short History of Nearly Everything: Special Illustrated Edition** by Bill Bryson
34. **The Past From Above: Aerial Photographs of Archaeological Sites** edited by Charlotte Trümpler
35. **Turing's Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe** by George Dyson
36. **Why the West Rules—for Now: The Patterns of History, and What They Reveal About the Future** by Ian Morris
37. **The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community** by William H. McNeill
38. **A History of Civilizations** by Fernand Braudel
39. **The Pattern on the Stone: The Simple Ideas that Make Computers Work** by Daniel Hillis
40. **Imagined Worlds** by Freeman Dyson
41. **The Story of Writing: Alphabets, Hieroglyphs & Pictograms** by Andrew Robinson

SUSAN SONTAG

ON LOVE

NOTHING IS JUDGEMENT, OR MORAL REJECTION,
EXCEPT LOVE. (1)(1/4)

MAJ PEOPLE NEED STAND ALONE + BORN
IN ATTRACTED TO THEM BECAUSE THEY LIVE AND
PERMISSION TO BE THE SAME
(1)(1/4)

BEING IN LOVE MEANS BEING WILLING
TO SUFFER FOR THE OTHER PERSON.
(1)(1/4)

WHAT I WANT TO GET OVER:
THE IDEA THAT THE VALUE OF LOVE LIES
IN THE GIFT ITSELF
(1)(1/4)

QUANTITIES THAT TIE ME ON
(ONE ONE I LOVE YOU DOES NOT AFFECT THE OTHER)

I'M MOST INTERESTED IN PEOPLE
ENHANCED IN A PROJECT OF
SELF-TRANSFORMATION
(1)(1/4)

CAN I LOVE SOMEONE...
...AND STILL THINK THAT?
LOVE IS FEELING SOMETHING
THAT ISN'T NECESSARILY ELICITED
BY THE OTHER PERSON.
(1)(1/4)

1. INTUITION
2. BEYOND FREQUENCY
3. SORCERY (SYMBOL, SORCERY)
4. BLISSFUL; CELEBRITY
5. STRANGER
6. VITALITY, SEXUAL ENTICEMENT, GAIETY; CHARM
7. EMOTIONAL DEPRESSIVENESS,
TENDRANCY (GROSS, PAINFUL,
REPRODUCTION)
(1)(1/4)



IF THOSE WHOM WE BEGIN TO LOVE COULD KNOW US
AS WE WERE BEFORE MEETING THEM... THEY COULD PERCEIVE
WHAT THEY HAVE MADE OF US * WHEN LOVE CEASES
TO BE TRAGIC IT IS SOMETHING ELSE * THE INDIVIDUAL ABANDONS
HIMSELF IN SEARCH OF TRAGEDY * BETRAYAL ANSWERS
BETRAYAL, THE MASK OF LOVE IS ANSWERED BY THE DISAPPEARANCE
OF LOVE * FOR ME, PHYSICAL LOVE HAS ALWAYS BEEN BOUND
TO AN IRRESISTIBLE FEELING OF INNOCENCE AND JOY.
THUS, I CANNOT LIVE IN TEARS BUT IN EXALTATION.
* THE LOSS OF LOVE IS THE LOSS OF ALL RIGHTS,
EVEN THOUGH ONE HAD THEM ALL * THOSE WHO
PREFER THEIR PRINCIPLES OVER THEIR HAPPINESS, THEY
REFUSE TO BE HAPPY OUTSIDE THE CONDITIONS THEY SEEM
TO HAVE ATTACHED TO THEIR HAPPINESS * IT IS NOT
HUMILIATING TO BE UNHAPPY * PHYSICAL SUFFERING IS
* AT TIMES I FEEL MYSELF OVERTAKEN BY AN IMMENSE
TENDerness FOR THESE PEOPLE AROUND ME WHO LIVE
IN THE SAME CENTURY AS I DO * I HAVE NOT STOPPED
LOVING THAT WHICH IS SACRED IN THIS
WORLD.

Albert Camus

42. **Brave New World (The Folio Society)** by Aldous Huxley and illustrated by Leonard Rosoman
43. **Dune** by Frank Herbert
44. **The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology** by Ray Kurzweil
45. **Infinite in All Directions: Gifford Lectures Given at Aberdeen, Scotland April–November 1985** by Freeman J. Dyson
46. **What Technology Wants** by Kevin Kelly
47. **The Player of Games** by Iain M. Banks
48. **Consider Phlebas** by Iain M. Banks
49. **Look to Windward** by Iain M. Banks
50. **State of the Art** by Iain M. Banks
51. **Use of Weapons** by Iain M. Banks
52. **Excession** by Iain M. Banks
53. **Across Realtime** by Vernor Vinge
54. **The Discoverers: Volumes I and II Deluxe Illustrated Set** by Daniel J. Boorstin
55. **Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action** by Elinor Ostrom
56. **The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order** by Samuel P. Huntington
57. **The Idea of Decline in Western History** by Arthur Herman
58. **Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers** by Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May
59. **Finite and Infinite Games: A Vision of Life as Play and Possibility** by James P. Carse
60. **One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism** by Rodney Stark
61. **The Future of Life** by Edward O. Wilson
62. **The Coming Population Crash: And Our Planet's Surprising Future** by Fred Pearce
63. **Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth** by James Lovelock
64. **The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization** by Brian Fagan
65. **Medieval Civilization** by Jacques Le Goff
66. **The Civilization of the Middle Ages: A Completely Revised and Expanded Edition of Medieval History** by Norman F. Cantor
67. **Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies** by Jared Diamond
68. **The Eternal Frontier: An Ecological History of North America and Its Peoples** by Tim Flannery

THIS IS YOUR **LIFE.**
 DO WHAT YOU LOVE,
 AND DO IT OFTEN.
 IF YOU DON'T LIKE SOMETHING, CHANGE IT.
 IF YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR JOB, QUIT.
 IF YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME, STOP WATCHING TV.
 IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE, STOP;
 THEY WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU WHEN YOU
 START DOING THINGS YOU LOVE.
 STOP OVER ANALYZING, ALL EMOTIONS ARE BEAUTIFUL.
 LIFE IS SIMPLE. WHEN YOU EAT, APPRECIATE EVERY LAST BITE.
 OPEN YOUR MIND, ARMS, AND HEART TO NEW THINGS
 AND PEOPLE, WE ARE UNITED IN OUR DIFFERENCES.
 ASK THE NEXT PERSON YOU SEE WHAT THEIR PASSION IS,
 AND SHARE YOUR INSPIRING DREAM WITH THEM.
 TRAVEL OFTEN* GETTING LOST WILL HELP YOU FIND YOURSELF.
 SOME OPPORTUNITIES ONLY COME ONCE, SEIZE THEM.
 LIFE IS ABOUT THE PEOPLE YOU MEET, AND
 THE THINGS YOU CREATE WITH THEM
 SO GO OUT AND START CREATING.
LIFE IS LIVE YOUR DREAM
SHORT. AND SHARE
YOUR PASSION.

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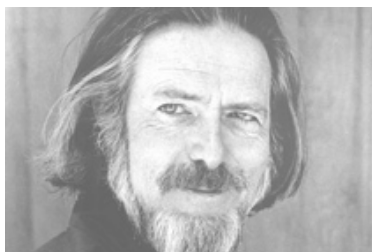
must-reads



7 THINGS I LEARNED IN 7 YEARS OF READING, WRITING, AND LIVING



HOW TO FIND YOUR PURPOSE AND DO WHAT YOU LOVE



AN ANTIDOTE TO THE AGE OF ANXIETY: ALAN WATTS ON HAPPINESS AND HOW TO LIVE WITH PRESENCE

69. **The Epic of Gilgamesh** translated by Andrew George
70. **Beowulf: A New Verse Translation** by Seamus Heaney
71. **How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built** by Stewart Brand
72. **Grand Design: The Earth from Above** by Georg Gerster
73. **The Complete Oxford Shakespeare: Histories, Comedies, Tragedies (Three volume set)**
74. **The Merck Manual Home Health Handbook** by Robert Porter
75. **Lao Tzu's Te-Tao Ching — A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Ma-wang-tui Texts** by Lao Tzu and translated by Robert G. Henricks
76. **The King and the Corpse: Tales of the Soul's Conquest of Evil** by Heinrich Zimmer edited by Joseph Campbell

Only one lament: One would've hoped that a lens on rebuilding human civilization would transcend the hegemony of the white male slant and would, at minimum, include a more equal gender balance of perspectives — of Brand's 76 books, only one is written by a woman, one features a female co-author, and one is edited by a woman. It's rather heartbreaking to see that someone as visionary as Brand doesn't consider literature by women worthy of representing humanity in the long run. Let's hope the Long Now balances the equation a bit more fairly as they move forward with the remaining entries in their 3,500-book collaborative library.

Complement with the reading lists of [Carl Sagan](#), [Alan Turing](#), [Nick Cave](#), and [David Bowie](#),* then join me in [supporting the Manual for Civilization](#).

**I realize these are all male reading lists. I have been unable to find a published reading list by a prominent female public figure — if you know of one, please do get in touch.*

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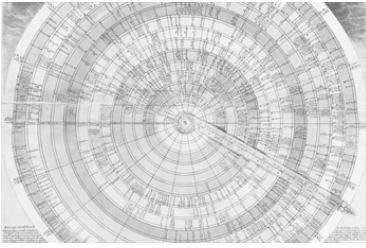
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20-YEAR-OLD HUNTER S. THOMPSON'S SUPERB ADVICE ON HOW TO FIND YOUR PURPOSE AND LIVE A MEANINGFUL LIFE



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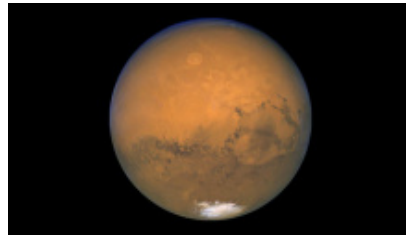
[Carl Sagan's Reading List](#)



[Cupid's Conflicted Arrow: Henri-Frédéric Amiel on Love and Its Demons](#)



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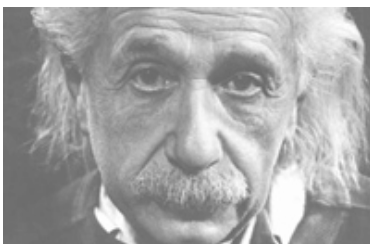
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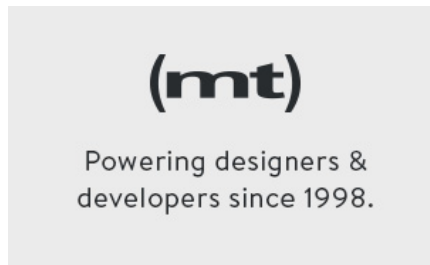
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