



15 Non-Art Books That Every Artist Should Read

[by **Chris Campbell**, Concept Artist for **Riot Games**]

- From Chris Oatley's ArtCast Episode 69 -

Breaking In At Riot Games & How To Get A Concept Artist Internship

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As artists we spend a ton of time building our tangible skills (drawing, painting, etc.) and that is obviously super important.

But another important part of our craft is learning how to infuse our work with a sense of personality and story.

Below is a list of books that I have found to be wonderful resources for learning how to think about those implicit aspects of design that often bring 'life' to our work.

*- Chris Campbell, Concept Artist For Riot Games
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- 1.) [A Wild Sheep Chase](#), Haruki Murakami - His brand of magical realism is amazing for both it's depth and subtlety. A good thing to learn from when building our own worlds.
- 2.) [Lord of the Rings](#) (the whole trilogy), J. R.R. Tolkien - Come on, it's LOTR.
- 3.) [War and Peace](#), Leo Tolstoy - Tolstoy's ability to weave together believable characters, and in particular delve into how they act around each other when they are at cross purposes, is genius. While artists are often driven to study people for the physical form, Tolstoy was a master of the observational study of motivation, a very important part of storytelling.
- 4.) [In Pursuit of Elegance](#), Matthew E. May - We had to read this my first year at Columbus College of Art and Design and I have often gone back to it when considering ways to creatively problem solve.
- 5.) [The Dead](#), James Joyce - Another master of character, but also a wonderful writer of scene and atmosphere. If you like The Dead (sorry but don't get excited, it has nothing to do with zombies), then check out his book of short stories, Dubliners.
- 6.) [The Things They Carried](#), Tim O'Brien - A master of "feel". O'Brien is a straight-forward writer and a great teacher of not just character, but the importance of detail- which to use and how to use them to enhance a story.
- 7.) [The Sun Also Rises](#), Ernest Hemingway - A genius with his brevity. Again, though not a visual artist someone who understood how to lead the imagination without overburdening the details. I recommend any of Hemingway's novels or short stories, but I had to pick one.
- 8.) [The Inferno](#) (from the Divine Comedy), Dante Alighieri - Dante's Inferno takes the reader through the author's vision of hell. Rarely are things we come up with today as creepy or crazy as an active medieval imagination.
- 9.) [American Gods](#), Neil Gaiman - Wonderful fuel for the imagination and a great lesson on weaving things that inspire us into new stories.
- 10.) [A Good Man is Hard to Find](#), Flannery O'Connor - Shamefully the only female writer on this list, but a master of creating tone within a story through subtle cues.





- 11.) [Faeries](#), Brian Froud and Alan Lee - Ok, ok, this is pretty much an art book, but these guys illustrate with such a connection to folklore and history that it is well worth including on this list.

- 12.) [Nine Stories](#), J.D. Salinger - Even with all the great writers on the list, Salinger may challenge the best of them in his ability to understand character and communicate their moods and intentions.

- 13.) [One Hundred Years of Solitude](#), Gabriel Garcia Marquez - More magical realism, and a masterwork of how events shape both characters and their environments as well as their traditions and habits. A great read for building believability in a fictional world.

- 14.) [Don Quixote](#), Miguel de Cervantes - This book is like 400 years old and it is still really really interesting and funny. Don Quixote is a masterwork of juxtaposition in character and setting and a great lesson in infusing adventure with levity.

- 15.) [Grimm's Fairy Tales](#), Brothers Grimm - I mean, I haven't read ALL the tales, but I repeat that nothing is crazier than a medieval imagination.

Listen to an interview with the author of this list -

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