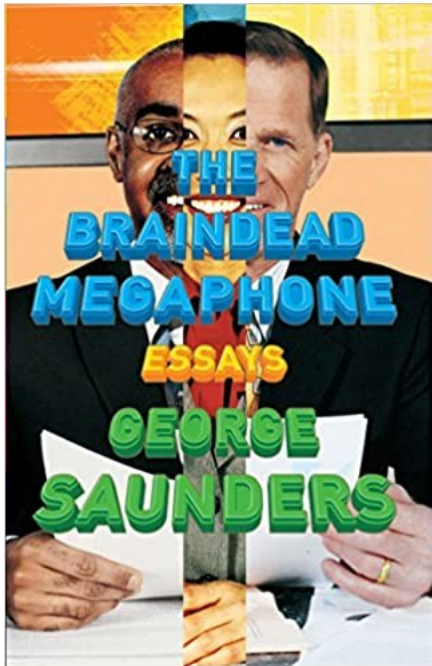


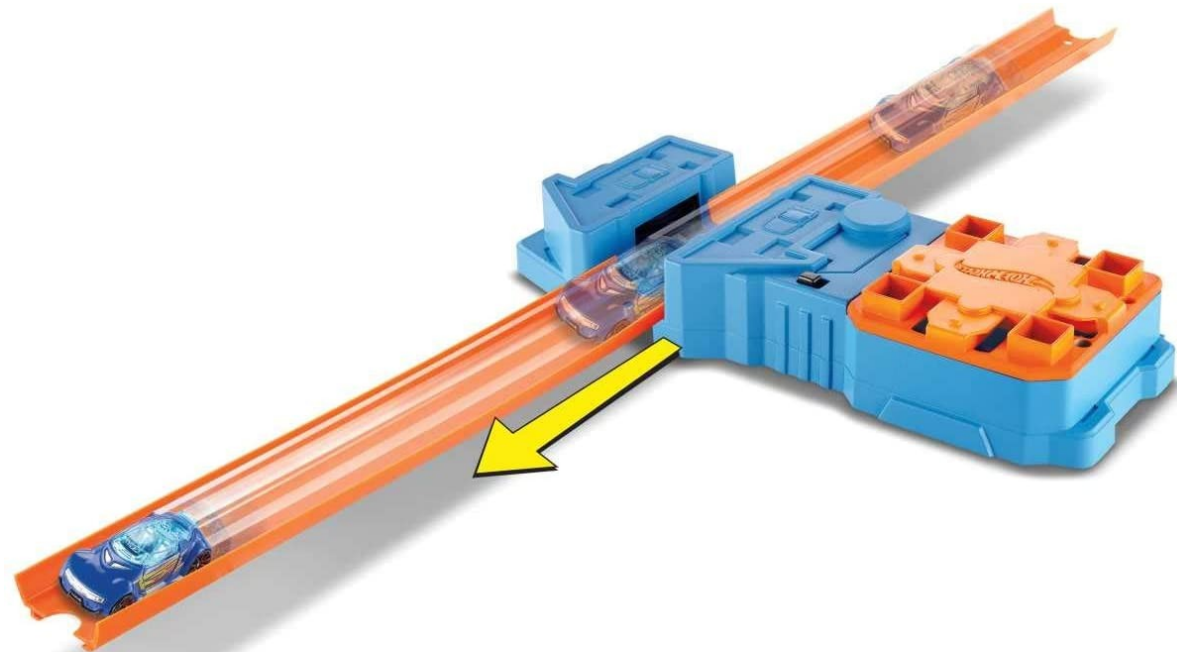
Story

Created by Caitlin Horrocks for the Grand Rapids Public Library,
GR Reads 2020

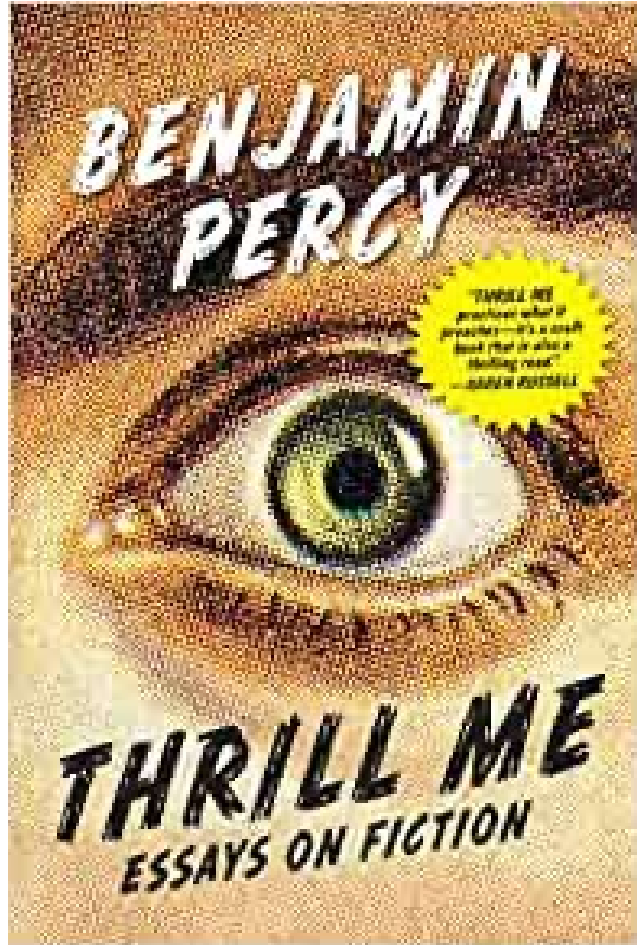
From *The Braindead Megaphone* by George Saunders



“A story is made of things that fling our little car forward”



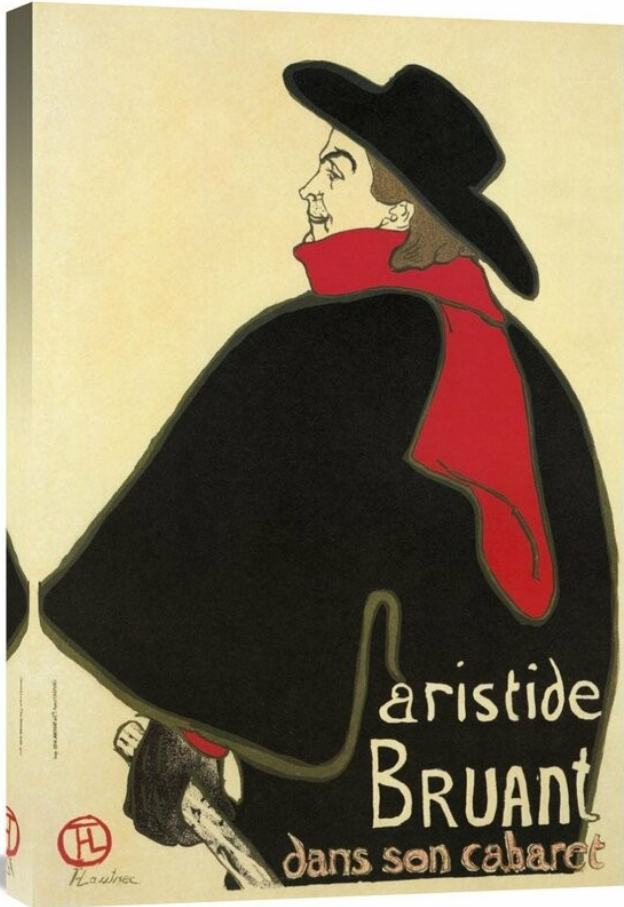
From *Thrill Me* by Benjamin Percy



Create lower-order goals

“Lower-order goals drive your scenes. Stacie needs to get to the store to buy beer for the graduation party. Johnny needs to sneak out his parent’s house one night to meet up with a girl. Sam needs to hammer plywood over the windows before the hurricane arrives. Think of these as micro-finish lines, something for readers to constantly race toward. Any marathon runner knows that though their goal is to cross the finish line, they keep their desire piqued by...a thousand tiny accomplishments that add up to a victory.”

Sample scene from *The Vexations*



à Charles Leode
Trois Gymnopédies

1

3.

Erik Satie

Lent et grave (Slowly and solemnly)

p

1 2 1 2 3 4 5

1 3 1 2 1 2 1 4 1

ff

2 1 4 3

A writing exercise

Write a scene that contains both a “lower order goal” and a “higher order goal.”

Lower order possibilities:

Get the car fixed, or even just refueled.

Pick out a new shirt.

Make it home before curfew.

Get across the room before the time runs out in gameshow *Floor is Lava*.

Make a sandwich.

Make a ten-layer wedding cake you’ve promised to make for a friend even though your baking skills aren’t that great.

Etc.

- Think about what “higher order goals” your character might have that are being reflected in this scene, or in their actions.

Ex. Are they making that wedding cake because they’re trying to salvage a friendship? To forge a new one? Because they’ve always struggled with keeping friends, and they’re trying to prove to themselves that they can do it? Why have they struggled with friendship? What degree of self-knowledge or self-awareness do they have about this situation?

- You can know what kind of higher-order goals your character has or is struggling with as you begin the scene, or just start writing, and let ideas emerge.
- By the end of the exercise, you should have a scene where a character is trying to cross a mini-finish line, but is also engaging in some larger struggle or effort.

Questions?

Feel free to email me
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