

TOHBY RIDDLE BOOKS THAT CHANGED ME



*Toby Riddle is an award-winning Sydney illustrator, cartoonist, designer and young-adult author. His latest picture book for children is *Unforgotten* (Allen & Unwin, \$35).*

A Pattern Language

Christopher Alexander

When I was studying architecture, it seemed terms such as "cosy" or "nook" were taboo. Yet terms such as these acknowledged our physical and psychological needs. *A Pattern Language*, by a team of authors including architect and mathematician Christopher Alexander, methodically confirmed what we intuitively know – from the smallest spaces to urban environments.

Winesburg, Ohio

Sherwood Anderson

Published in 1919, this is one of those lost classics that has begun to enjoy a critical revival. After being an early influence on writers such as Hemingway, Faulkner, Wolfe, Steinbeck and Fitzgerald, Anderson was gradually forgotten. This book consists of poignant sketches that reveal the quiet desperation, even madness, of inhabitants of a small rural town on the cusp of industrialisation.

Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family's Feuds

Lyndall Gordon

Emily Dickinson's poetry offers a masterclass in communicating vast meaning in a few stark words. I found this book full of insightful commentary on her unique poetics, while also telling of the high drama that formed the backdrop to her mid-19th century New England life.

Selected Essays

Ralph Waldo Emerson

One of the few thinkers Nietzsche had anything good to say about. These stirring and ecstatic essays, especially those about art, beauty or the self, are so intellectually and spiritually ambitious that they can't help but fire one up about one's life and one's purpose. The work of a great mind.

The Black Swan

Nassim Nicholas Taleb

An incredibly entertaining polemic about the randomness of reality and the impact of the unpredictable. Skewering human follies such as certainty, excessive faith in predictive methods, the need to overlay narrative on events and thinking we know more than we do, Taleb exposes a more realistic approach to reality. I found it had ramifications for the handling of ideas as a visual artist and writer.