

RED MONOCLE

by Wim Coleman and Pat Perrin

Words About Stories



We have both always loved stories—not just reading them and writing them but also discovering how the stories we tell affect our culture and our personal lives. Here are some words about stories quoted from our novel *The Maya Gateway*, from our first collaborative effort, *Marilyn Ferguson’s Book of PragMagic*, and from our essay “A Mexico of the Mind” (which appears in *Solamente in San Miguel: Writings from the Authors’ Sala of San Miguel de Allende*).

There are places in the world where stories are real—
where reality itself is knit together by the fabric
of myth and legend.

—*The Maya Gateway*

We all have certain ideas about how the world works: data, beliefs, experiences, and traditions. These are the “stories” on which we base our lives. Never mind, for now, deciding whether they are true or false. We have to pay attention to the fact that they are there. The most crucial thing about the stories we tell ourselves every day is how they shape our thinking. ...

Intimately connected to our thinking processes as well as to our behaviors, stories are powerful influences. In fact, we are all living out the stories of our own lives. In the long run, each story will be complete with a beginning, middle, and end—it will become history. The extent to which we are able to shape our own whole life story varies somewhat with our circumstances and our self awareness.

However, that whole life story is shaped by smaller stories we tell ourselves on a daily basis. Mini stories show up in the comments we make about ourselves: “This is hard for me to do” or “I always have trouble with.. .” or even “I’m so tired.” At the time we say them, such statements may seem absolutely true, but it’s important to recognize that our minds and our bodies are affected by them whether they are true or not...

Our commentaries about ourselves, about events, about others, constantly run through our minds. They are clues to how we are shaping our lives. Not only our physical and mental responses but our expectations in life are based on the stories we tell ourselves daily. We live according to what we believe is possible...

—*PragMagic*



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I just don't have the time to doubt everything anymore.
I've learned to believe a good story when I hear it.

—*The Maya Gateway*

Instead of just an ancient configuration of instincts, we also shape our lives with stories: communal stories about goodness and evil, heroism and cowardice, success and failure—personal stories about responsibilities and relationships and the significance of our desires. As individuals, tribes, and nations, we are guided, even driven, by our stories about what is real and about what matters.

— “A Mexico of the Mind”

If a myth has influenced anyone's life, then in some sense it “happened”—and is therefore history.

—*The Maya Gateway*

Storytelling, like all art, like life, is an act of learning—of finding out. We are mistaken to assume that stories of transformation are only about transformation, mere illustrations. Instead, they are transformation itself, acts of practical alchemy, with the power to alter the reality of every receptive person they touch.

— “A Mexico of the Mind”

