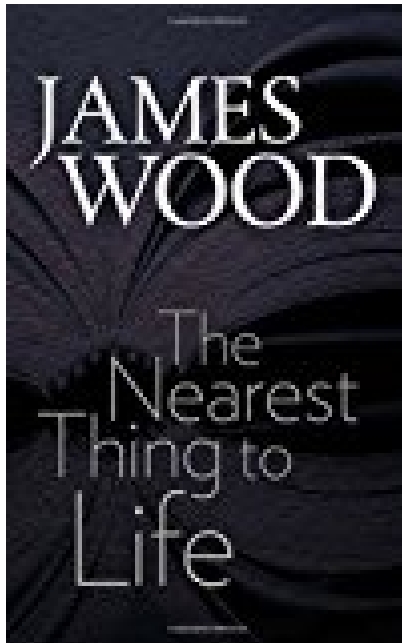


# The Nearest Thing to Life The Mandel Lectures in the Humanities

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## BOOK DETAILS

- Author : James Wood
- Pages : 144 Pages
- Publisher : Brandeis
- Language : English
- ISBN : 161168742X



## **BOOK SYNOPSIS**

In this remarkable blend of memoir and criticism, James Wood, noted contributor to the New Yorker, has written a master class on the connections between fiction and life. He argues that, of all the arts, fiction has a unique ability to describe the shape of our lives and to rescue the texture of those lives from death and historical oblivion. The act of reading is understood here as the most sacred and personal of activities, and there are brilliant discussions of individual works - among others, Chekhov's story "The Kiss," W.G. Sebald's *The Emigrants*, and Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Blue Flower*. Wood reveals his own intimate relationship with the written word: we see the development of a provincial boy growing up in a charged Christian environment, the secret joy of his childhood reading, the links he makes between reading and blasphemy, or between literature and music. The final section discusses fiction in the context of exile and homelessness. *The Nearest Thing to Life* is not simply a brief, tightly argued book by a man commonly regarded as our finest living critic - it is also an exhilarating personal account that reflects on, and embodies, the fruitful conspiracy between reader and writer (and critic), and asks us to reconsider everything that is at stake when we read and write fiction.

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