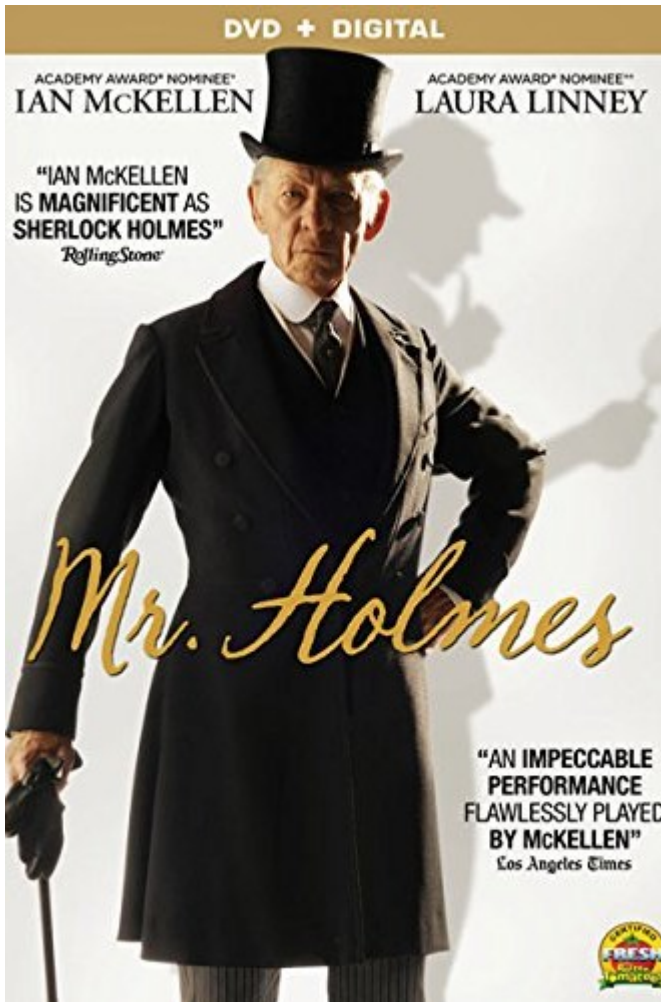


Chris Hoke's Christmas picks

selected by [Chris Hoke](#) in the [December 9, 2015](#) issue

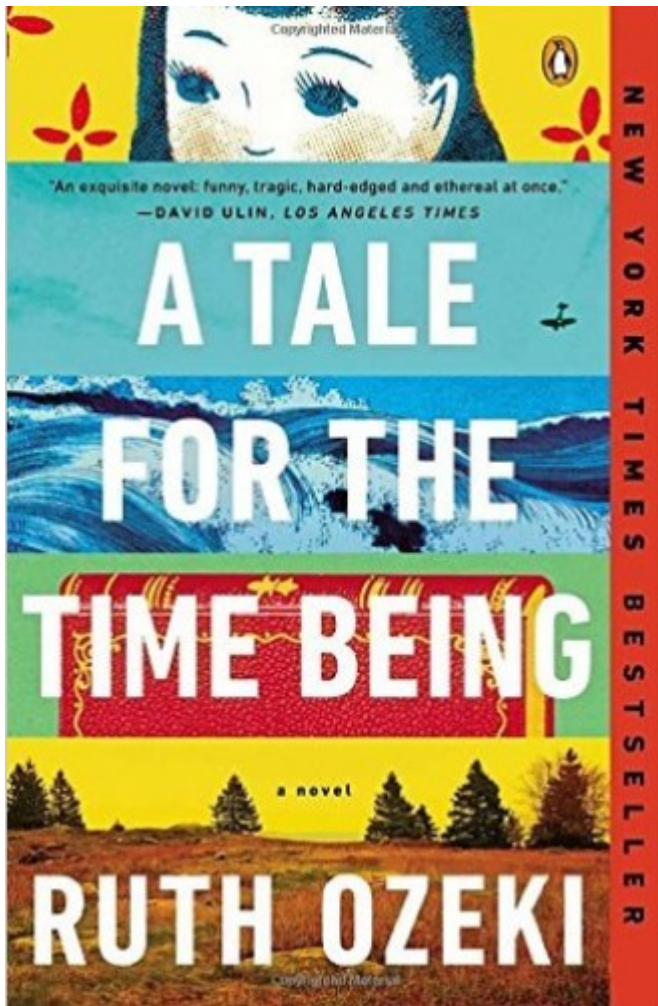
In Review



Mr. Holmes

directed by Bill Condon

LIONSGATE



A Tale for the Time Being

by Ruth Ozeki

Penguin



Documentary Now!

directed by Rhys Thomas and Alex Buono
IFC



Forbidden Island

by Gamewright

Two months ago my wife and I walked downtown to see *Mr. Holmes*, with Sir Ian McKellen playing an aging version of the science-conquers-superstition Sherlock Holmes. I found myself crying in the dark as McKellen's trembling, frail Sherlock struggled in his final years to solve one final mystery: why a woman he almost loved took her own life. This mature spin on modernism's hero left me altered and more tender. Few films offer such courage for self-scrutiny as we face the ultimate mystery of our own lives and the infinite ways we affect others. A similar theme runs through *A Tale for the Time Being*, a novel by Ruth Ozeki (Penguin). The suicide diary of a Japanese teen (written just before the tsunami) washes up on an island in the Pacific Northwest. Writing inside a worn copy of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, young Naoko traces her family lineage, linking her anarchist, feminist Zen monk great-grandmother to her kamikaze pilot great-uncle to her depressed father and, finally, to her own uncertain fate. *Portlandia*'s Fred Armisen has teamed up with *SNL*

's Bill Hader to lampoon our growing obsession with documentaries in *Documentary Now!* on IFC. Six half-hour episodes start with the most recent generation of documentary (hipster reporters trying to track down Mexican drug lord celebrities and getting killed each time) and move backward in time to scrutinize the origins of the genre (hilariously respinning Nanook the Eskimo with how fabricated and absurd even "the first documentary" was). It's worth borrowing a friend's Comcast login (ifc.com) to enjoy some of the smartest satire today and get a tour through the sands of documentary history. I also recommend a board game: last week my wife and I played *Forbidden Island*. Rather than competing, four players are dropped onto a mythical island and must rely on each other's unique skills to gather lost treasures and escape before the island is covered in water and lost forever. It's an addictive family exercise in helping one another, across generations, to recover what is lost with what time we have left.