

This is not for you.
-dedication, [House of Leaves](#)

I was immediately drawn into the rest of the book before even beginning to read the body of the novel. As I read on, I questioned the nature of this mysterious dedication. Who wrote it—the true author of the book, Mark Danielewski; Johnny Truant, the author of the forward; or the omnipresent editors, who never fully step into the story, but are always around for a side comment or two?

The central narrative of *House of Leaves*, is conveyed through many layers of storytelling. Like the Talmud, there is a core of information surrounded by multiple layers of commentary. At the heart of it is the spurious film *The Navidson Record*, a documentary supposedly created by the notoriously gifted cinematographer Will Navidson. Commenting on this film is Zampanò, a man who is dead before we know him. He has left behind a number of fictional works as well as several commentaries on the phony film.

Through the Introduction I was immediately immersed in the life of Johnny Truant. In this introduction we also learn of his connection to Zampanò. While examining the crime scene surrounding Zampanò's mysterious death, Johnny and his friend Lude uncover Zampanò's life's work and decide to publish it. In essence, *House of Leaves* is that publication. Throughout this documentation are footnotes made by both Johnny and the Editors. Through these footnotes we learn more Zampanò, Navidson and Johnny. We also learn that the Editors are not actually the true editors of the book, but that they are also creations spawned from Danielewski's mind.

The physical format and placement of the text within the page break down the conventions of a typical narrative. The novel is at first familiarly book-like, that is, the

body of the text contains the main narrative and the footnotes briefly comment where they are appropriate. As the reader becomes more immersed in the text, however, predictable structure begins to break down. Footnotes begin to invade body, body fades, and text becomes melded. As the footnotes begin to physically merge, certain concepts touched on in Zampanò's text become the subject of Truant's jaded ramblings. For example, Zampanò mentions a broken water heater that Navidson deals with in one of his films. In the footnotes of that page, Truant tells us that his water heater is also broken. At this point, it may strike the reader as an eerie coincidence, but later Truant confesses to have added the "water" to the original writing. This calls into question the reader's confidence in Truant to maintain the integrity of Zampanò's work. Soon, however, it becomes apparent that not only is Truant overstepping into the space reserved for the actual text, but Zampanò's ideas also begin to seep into his space. For example, Truant mentions that he feels "a bit like a broken thermos—fine on the outside, but on the inside nothing but busted glass." Later in the text, Zampanò describes a scenario where Navidson's abusive father batters the family car with a thermos, another coincidence that the reader can hardly ignore. Truant and Zampanò's text space aren't the only ones violated in this book, however. Supposedly Navidson's first film centered around an illusion in which he films a house and a hallway inside of it that is clearly longer than the external structure would permit.

With this constantly twisting narration, Danielewski involves and toys with his reader. *House of Leaves* keeps the reader guessing who is telling the truth and who to believe.