The best books on pandemics, as recommended by Christian McMillen, historian of diseases and author of Pandemics: A Very Short Introduction. Pandemics: A Very Short Introduction by Christian W. McMillen. Read. With coronavirus causing widespread panic, we would do well to educate ourselves about the history of pandemics and disease. University of Virginia historian and associate dean Christian W. McMillen, author of Pandemics: A Very Short Introduction, recommends the best introductions to the subject. Photo: Vulture. Just as the film Contagion has found a second life with news of the coronavirus outbreak, so too are novels about epidemics popping up on reading lists around the country. With stakes so high, it’s easy to see why novelists find outbreaks of disease so compelling. Here are 20 great fictional takes, ranging from the historical to the futuristic. A Journal of the Plague Year by Daniel Defoe (1722). $10. $11 now 9% off. The pandemic caused an abrupt, massive shift in consumer behavior. Leisurely in-person browsing is on hiatus indefinitely. While the pandemic caused a spike in interest in Bookshop, buyers have also been flocking to Amazon, which was already the dominant force in bookselling. While Amazon designated books as “non-essential” items, thus elongating shipping times, its vast selection and reputation for consistency have kept its position strong. PANDEMIC our fears of the apocalypse hang by a slender thread of hope. Sigler brings serious game with a book that seriously rocks the action while delving deep into character, and does it with a novel that is as lyrical as it is powerful. Highly recommended. 7 Essential Books About Pandemics. As the world grapples with the coronavirus outbreak, these works remind us that humans have faced deadly plagues for millenniums. People in Bangkok wear face masks to protect against the coronavirus. Credit: Amanda Mustard for The New York Times.