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The Joy Of Writing Sex: A Guide For Fiction Writers

"A wonderful and handy compendium of how to write—and how *not* to write." —Carolyn See

T H E J O Y O F

W R I T I N G

S E X



Interviews, Examples, and Advice from
Today's Most Celebrated Writers

R E V I S E D A N D U P D A T E D

E L I Z A B E T H B E N E D I C T
A U T H O R O F *A L M O S T*



Synopsis

Twelve years after it was first published, *The Joy of Writing Sex* remains the classic writer's resource on creating compelling sex scenes. Elizabeth Benedict covers all the issues, from the first time, to married sex and adultery, to sex in the age of AIDS. Her instruction, supported with examples from the works of today's most respected writers—among them, Dorothy Allison, Russell Banks, Alan Hollinghurst, Joyce Carol Oates, Carol Shields, and John Updike—focuses on crafting believable sex scenes that hinge on freshness of character, dialogue, mood, and plot. In this revised edition, Benedict addresses the latest sexual revolution, intimacy on the Internet; adds new interviews with Edmund White, Darren Strauss, Stephen McCauley, and other writers; and updates her selections to include examples from the best fiction of the past few years.

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Customer Reviews

This was recommended in place of Susie Bright's *How to Write a Dirty Story*, and I have to say compared to it, this is a much better book. It focuses on sex, and the wide variety that's out there. One thing that I really enjoyed is that the author doesn't ignore important topics: AIDS, Adultry,

incest, and many other things. She doesn't treat any subject as taboo, nor does she approach them with embarrassment. They are simply topics she discusses. I was pleased to see that she touches on all types of sex: first times, married sex, adultery, recreational, etc etc. She brings up points that anyone writing a sex scene needs to think about, and reminds you that sometimes the sex isn't the main purpose of the scene, and that it doesn't have to be graphic to get the point across. I found this book to be much more helpful than others. Instead of telling people how to prepare, it uses examples to show Benedict's points, and picks those examples apart so the reader can understand exactly why such things are necessary.

Man, it's one thing to think about sex, another thing to have sex, and waaaaay different to write about it. It's difficult to the max, especially when you really don't want to come off sounding like you're writing porn - or even erotica. Elizabeth Benedict has done a favor for all of us writers who have struggled with the topic, right down to interviewing famous writers of famous sex scenes. It's a resource for MFA students, authors, teachers, and just ordinary people who like to write for their own pleasure. *The Joy of Writing Sex* is sane and straightforward, entertaining and informing, hip and...sexy!

If you are writing modern fiction, the odds are you will include a sex scene somewhere in your story. The problem I see in most published fiction is that the sex is predictable, i.e. it's almost always fantastic. This could also be interpreted as boring, leading me to frequently skim over 2-5 pages searching for the point where the story starts again. Authors who strive diligently to avoid dead spaces anywhere else in their novels will let the action come to a dead halt while the characters get laid. Ms. Benedict shows you how to avoid this all-too-common problem. Just as some scenes in a story are located in a bar, along a street, or at a society party, some scenes happen in the bedroom (or kitchen, or back seat of a car), and these scenes can do everything a scene is supposed to do. They can move along the plot, reveal characterization, disclose an important piece of backstory, and/or up the conflict. This is why Ms. Benedict's advice can help all of your writing, especially when she asks you to explore your characters' attitude toward sex. What are their attitudes to everything else in the world? It's a great question to ask yourself each time you lead your characters into a new situation - they've got opinions and reasons for them! If your sex scenes are only sex, and you wish they were a lot more, I highly recommend this book. One caveat: the examples include gay sex as well as hetero, and this may be offensive to some readers.

You can write serious literary works and have sex scenes as Benedict illustrates. Is it going to make our parents blush? Probably, but she even deals with those issues. She teases out some of the best examples of being specific and not necessary explicit--what are the sights, sounds and smells surrounding our characters, not just the body parts they are using. What are they thinking and what are they saying? I found great validation in my book, "Forever Retro Blues," that my sex scenes were not just gratuitous, but functioned as part of the whole story. I wrote with intuition because I did not yet have this book, but I know I will do better in the future for reading Benedict's book.

I'm a freelance writer, looking to expand and improve my writing, and *The Joy of Writing Sex* is one of the best resources I've found. It's not just about writing erotica. It gives the reader tips and guidelines for introducing love scenes into any genre, and how to make it believable, and provides examples from modern literature. Elizabeth Benedict doesn't say or do anything cutsie, and that makes the book not only informative, but a pleasure to read. I think that possibly the best thing about this book, other than the examples, are the excerpts Benedict included from the interviews she conducted with authors about their work.

I read this book cover to cover and thoroughly enjoyed it. Ms. Benedict not only gives examples of erotic scenes and different scenarios like 'the first time' and 'adultery', but gives good pointers on how to write each of them. She teaches you how to get inside your characters' heads and realize their backgrounds, beliefs, anxieties, etc. before writing The Big Scene. It is important that you know your characters because if you don't, you'll produce nothing but empty pornography. Get this book if you want to write about quality sex.

Great book to flesh out your approach to writing about sex. The author rightfully points out that writing about sex evokes the oft hidden world of the writer's own inhibitions. Great integration tips for sexual discussions within a larger story

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