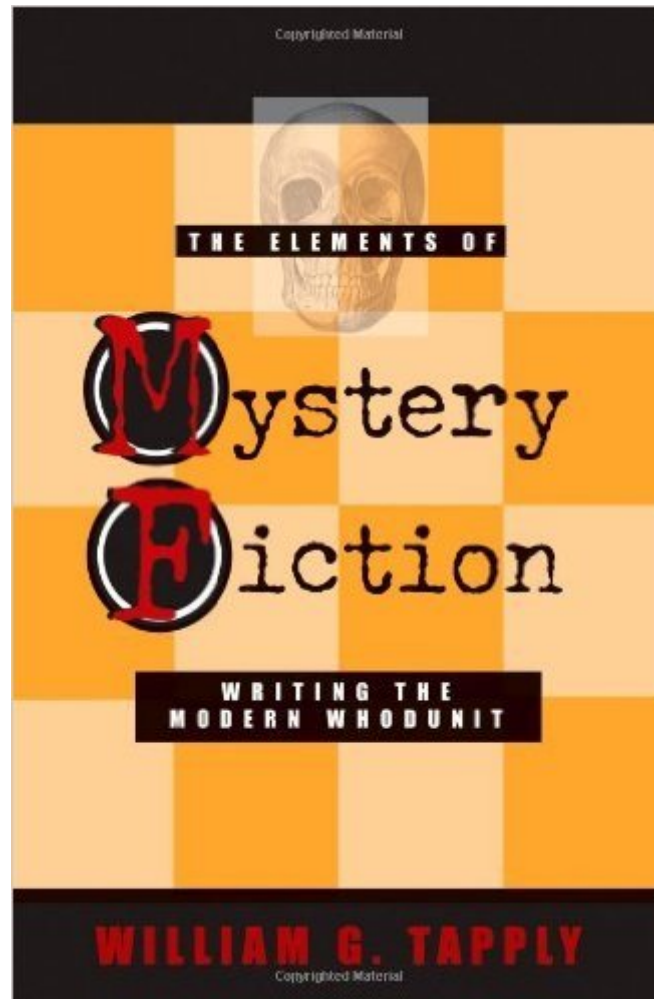


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The Elements Of Mystery Fiction: Writing The Modern Whodunit



Synopsis

The Elements of Mystery Fiction: Writing the Modern Whodunit has guided and inspired mystery writersâveterans as well as beginnersâfor nearly a decade. Here William G. Tapply, with more than 20 popular mystery and suspense novels under his belt, isolates the crucial elements of the mystery novels that publishers want to publish and readers want to readâoriginal plots, clever clues, sympathetic sleuths, memorable villains, multidimensional supporting characters, true-to-life settings, sharp narrative hooks, and, of course, smooth writing. In clear, readable prose using examples from many of our best contemporary mystery novelists, Tapply shows how the writer can create the pieces and fit them together to make a story you can't put down. This new expanded edition of Elements contains original chapters by some of our best contemporary writers and most prominent personalities in the publishing world discussing writing and business issues that are vital to mystery writers in the 21st century.

Book Information

File Size: 461 KB

Print Length: 213 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: Poisoned Pen Press; 2 edition (July 20, 2010)

Publication Date: October 2, 2006

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B003WQARP2

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #335,180 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #36

inÂ Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Writing #88 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Genres & Styles > Mystery & Detective #89 inÂ Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Reference

Customer Reviews

William G. Tapply has great credentials for explaining about how to write mystery fiction: His series

of Brady Coyne mysteries have been providing much reading pleasure to mystery fans for decades. He's also collaborated on novels with Linda Barlow and Philip R. Craig. The fishing happy aspect of Brady Coyne's fictional life reflects Mr. Tapply's personal love for and great knowledge of fishing (and he's also written widely on the subject in non-fiction form). When I'm reading a mystery, I often feel that something is missing. The Elements of Mystery Fiction showed me how to analyze a mystery to see what its strengths and weaknesses are. I'm sure my mystery reviews will be much better as a result. As a non-fiction writer, I've never been able to figure out a writing process that would work with mysteries. Novels are much easier. You can just start from an intriguing premise, put the hero or heroine in a tricky spot, and let the book write itself . . . as Stephen King suggests. Mr. Tapply thoughtfully describes the process he uses for writing mysteries. It's a bear! But I can see why it works. You cannot leave anything to chance. Having seen the large challenges and bulky process involved, I can also see why many novelists prefer to write suspense books rather than mysteries. Those are much easier to write! This new edition adds several new chapters that are written or contributed to through interview by other mystery authors and experts exploring: Writing the Mystery Series -- Philip R. Craig Standalone or Series Mystery?

I've been a professional writer for many years, but all non-fiction. I don't have a novel in me. On the other hand, I've certainly read (and reviewed!) hundreds of mystery novels, and have long been devoted to the creative spirit behind them. I recently gave one book in a mystery series a disappointing ("it lost me") review, and wondered about what the author had done wrong. Serendipitously, I found this copy of The Elements of Mystery Fiction in my To Read pile. I had totally forgotten that it was given to me as a gift, a few years ago, by the book's publisher. (In the spirit of full disclosure: he is a longtime personal friend, and his wife, Barbara Peters, wrote one chapter in the book. That wouldn't keep me from giving this a poor review if I thought the book's advice was lackluster, but you should be aware of my background here.) I've read a lot of writing books, both instructional and "get your head screwed on straight" (Bird by Bird is my favorite in the latter category). Many of the "how to write" books go over the same tired rules, and half the how-to is interchangeable with any generic "fiction writing" advice. Tapply doesn't fall into any of these traps. Suggestions like "Show, don't tell" are given in the context of writing mysteries. For instance, he writes, "Give your readers the same kind of sensory impressions they use in their own lives to interpret their world. When you explain or elaborate for your readers, you deprive them of the opportunity to participate." And with mysteries, he emphasizes, the reader wants to participate (along with the protagonist) in solving the crime.

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