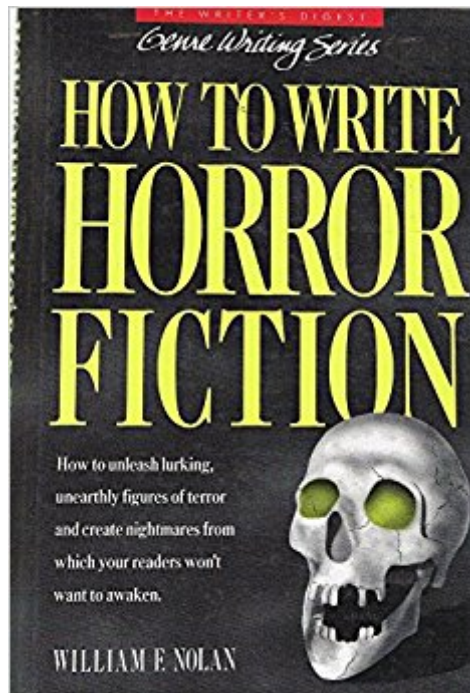The book was found

How To Write Horror Fiction (Genre Writing Series)

Synopsis

The aspiring horror writer would do well to sink his fangs into this book before the next full moon: this guide is a ghoulish romp through the work of today's masters of the macabre (including Nolan), full of useful suggestions designed to punch up one's writing to a salable level. In his chatty manner, Nolan manages to cover all the neophyte's questions on effective prose technique, but what makes this book different from the usual nuts-and-botts writing guide is the inclusion, in its entirety, of his own short short story, "The Pool." Here, the tale is painstakingly dissected for a discussion of its components, with the author illustrating his reasoning behind each step as he works towards a unified vision of sheer terror. The powerful clarity of this example provides an invaluable teaching tool, one that offers the newcomer real insight on the elements of good fiction. Nolan also stresses the importance of drawing from the well-spring of one's own experience, both as an idea source and to lend plausibility to writing. Above all, he encourages would-be Stephen Kings to learn by action, to begin by submitting work to small press periodicals while honing their skills. By way of inspiration, he adds short bios of successful authors who struggled early, yet prevailed to become the genre's giants. Despite all this cheer-leading, Nolan's simple approach lends credence to his expansive claim that horror fiction is both a perfectible and profitable craft.

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Customer Reviews

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I hesitate to write a review. The problem I have with reviews is someone is telling you their opinion and you are using that to decide whether to buy or not. I almost didn't buy this because of the negative reviews but I took the plunge.Having said that . . . . . Glad I did. Some of this I've read before and some was new, but he has a way of writing that helps you absorb what he is saying. I liked his analysis of The Pool very much. It makes sense. I bought this book used so didn't spend a lot of money but I got my money's worth and then some.Will it teach you to write? Maybe not. Will it help you set up your plot? I think it will. And it shows how to get your novel running in a peak and drop fashion, if that makes sense.

This book is a little thin. Although decent, overall, it could have been longer. Not for longer's sake, but the short sections in which Nolan writes left me wanting.As an example, he has you read excerpts by novelists and short story writers that are supposed to represent strong story endings; and, as you comply, you might nod perplexed, hoping he'd have commented more on what you were supposed to learn. (Specifically, he points out "shocking final lines," and I couldn't figure out what was shocking about them). It's not that Nolan doesn't know what he's talking about. He could have expounded in these areas, though.Like on page 25, he supplies an exciting list of what he calls "supernatural belief systems" as an aid in generating horror ideas. By the time you reach the end of the list, you see he's starting a new topic of discussion. The list wasn't self-explanatory.He

also says something that bothered me: It's okay to let your characters run away from you: "Once you have created a realistic character . . . you may be surprised to find that he or she will take off on a tangent as you write, doing things you hadn't planned or expected this character to do. That's fine."Well, not really. Maybe "that's fine" in the discovery stage of plot, but not during the true writing of it. What happens when you become enamored with a character, quite arrogantly considering her to have a life of her own, is she does go off in her own direction-completely trashing your plotline. Or worse, if you're a lazy writer who never plots, your character will take you to irrelevant places. You'll write rambling, senseless prose.I believe Nolan would agree. He's too successful not to. I just wish, again, he hadn't switched off the topic so quickly. He could have warned against this outcome. Beginning writers could easily end up with some sloppy results.DON'T LET YOUR CHARACTERS PLAY. YOU'RE THE WRITER. YOU MUST CREATE CHARACTERS THAT ARE GOING TO DO WHAT YOU NEED THEM TO DO.The point is still, as Nolan was getting at, to create effective characters. But do create them with motivations that will promote the plot in the right direction.Slim, yes. But this book is nevertheless pretty decent. Not fantastic. . .just "pretty decent," if I can somehow connote my meaning to you with a couple of vague words.My feelings about this book were just as vague. At first I was hoping for a book full of gimmicks and tips and stuff that would practically write horror for me. I got something tamer. If you can already compose a piece of fiction, this book will help you slant it into, perhaps, a salable horror story. If you've not yet wrestled basic story structure, however, there's little in this book to make your writing work. This book is window dressing for the skills you should already possess.And that's not bad, as long as you know what you're getting. Nolan initiates his guidebook with an overview of the field of horror. In the next few chapters he talks about creating monsters, finding horror ideas in your past, creating protagonists, building suspense, and writing enticing "hooks" to open your story.In subsequent chapters he weighs the cons and pros of putting gory details in your story, gives you examples of how to end your story (see the beginning of this review), and tops off the book with contact information (possibly outdated) for publishers. And to top off the top-off, he gives mini-biographies of Stephen King, Anne Rice, James Herbert, Peter Straub, Dean R. Koontz, and Robert R. Mcammon, meant to inspire you with delineations of their struggles as writers. Oh, and there's also an Appendix of suggested stories and reference material. It's a nice top-off-top-off to the top-off contact information.Up in that last paragraph should be indications of Chapter 10: "A Dip in The Pool." I've saved it for last, though, because just when I'd thought this book would be merely entertaining (and it was entertaining), Chapter 10 jumped out at me with a very useful set of fangs. I've personally never seen it done in a book of writing, to date, and I've always wanted it.Nolan supplies one of his own short stories in its

entirety. As you read it, he interjects paragraphs of explanation. He'll tell you why he included a sentence describing a character's smile. He'll tell you the importance of information in his dialogue. He'll tell you how he switched points of view at the end. Etceteras.I wish this were a trend. What I'd really like to see is an author who takes us through the entire process, from generating an idea (right before our eyes), to developing it, to writing it, to revising it, to selling it, to showing us the finished product--so we can actually revel in a short story in our hands and know exactly how the author produced it. Too often, we see a finished product without gaining a full understanding of how it came to be.Though not what I just described, Chapter 10 of Nolan's HOW TO WRITE HORROR FICTION was a mighty fine step in this direction. I benefited from it. I'd buy the book again just to have "The Pool" as a reference.This book was nice. I'm not sorry I bought it through , and I'll defer to it when I need a flavor injection before starting my next horror story. Just make sure you don't need any more instruction than that. You must have reasonably strong fiction skills to begin with. HOW TO WRITE HORROR FICTION is just the lovely paint on a picture; but, without the initial sketch, it's just useless splatter on canvas--and at best it will help you write abstract garbage.So learn how to write elsewhere. THEN come to Dr. Nolan and be honed. He's a good writer. He'll give you a nudge in that direction.

I've been writing non-fiction for years and wanted to get some quick and easy ideas on how to format my new non-fiction story. This book gave me a keen insight on the hows and whys. Hightly recommend it to anyone who wants to write horror stories. Tom Monson [...]

It wont help you write horror.I write horror stories, and the process is very simple, but Nolan never gets around to furnishing the reader with instructions to duplicate what he does.

As someone who has read a few dozen how to write books as well as gorged on thousands of horror novels/movies/TV shows over four decades, this book didn't tell me much I didn't already know. The one important piece of advice in here was to never stop to revise a first draft or else you run the danger of never finishing it. Just make a note to yourself ("add dialogue attributions/tags here," "add setting details here," "do research on [blank]", etc.) and move on. You can fix all that stuff in your next draft.This is an OK book, one you can read in a few hours. The author breaks down one of his short stories and explains what makes each part work, which was also nice. He talks about the differences between short stories and novels, and how if you promise readers a certain monster, you damn well better deliver and not turn it into a Scooby-Doo episode where the

"monster" is unmasked as some cranky old man pulling a real estate scam at the end. Also, no werewolves with wings or other weird, unexpected nonsense unless that's explained upfront. Why? Because readers feel cheated if they sign up for one thing and you give them something else. He does talk about different kinds of endings, which was helpful, and says extremely dark endings where everybody dies are better used in short stories than novels because readers have invested less time into those characters. The author recommends reading outside the horror genre to gain a wider exposure to writing styles and ideas, which I already knew, but is great advice. As a tip from me, two related genres that will help your horror writing in particular are noir (crime) and suspense, and action/adventure novels will help you write exotic locations and fight scenes (particularly those involving guns or explosives).This is an OK book, but not something you will read more than once or refer to often. Most of the resources (zines, publishers, etc.) are hopelessly outdated by several decades (the book was released in 1991).The best book on writing horror and the paranormal as of this review isÂ Writing the Paranormal Novel: Techniques and Exercises for Weaving Supernatural Elements Into Your Story.. It's not amazing, but it is helpful (note that there is a little information overlap with this book). I can't really recommend any other how to write horror books. Most are pretty basic, and the ones that have a bunch of different authors contributing essays (ugh) are too scattershot and unfocused to be of much help. Various combination autobiographies/how to write by successful horror authors like Stephen King or Richard Laymon aren't all that helpful either. You're better off getting regular how to write any kind of fiction books to ground yourself in the basics of the craft first, then pick up some guides on how to write for specific genres.

A very thorough discussion of the elements of writing horror. The only part that might be dated is the section on markets. The rest I found of value for my own information, and that's what's important. In fact, I can't think of anything I felt was lacking. The chapter-by-chapter discussion is topped off with a broken down analysis of Nolan's own horror story, The Pool, showing how he applied the different tips he earlier discussed.

How to Write Horror Fiction (Genre Writing Series) How to Write Realistic Zombies and Post-Apocalyptic Fiction: The Top Writer's Toolkit for Science Fiction Action and Horror (How to Write Realistic Fiction Book 4) Now Write! Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror: Speculative Genre Exercises from Today's Best Writers and Teachers How to Write Realistic Monsters, Aliens, and Fantasy Creatures: The Top Writer's Toolkit for Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction (How to Write Realistic Fiction Book 3) Writing Mastery: How to Master the Art of Writing & Write 3,000 Words Per

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