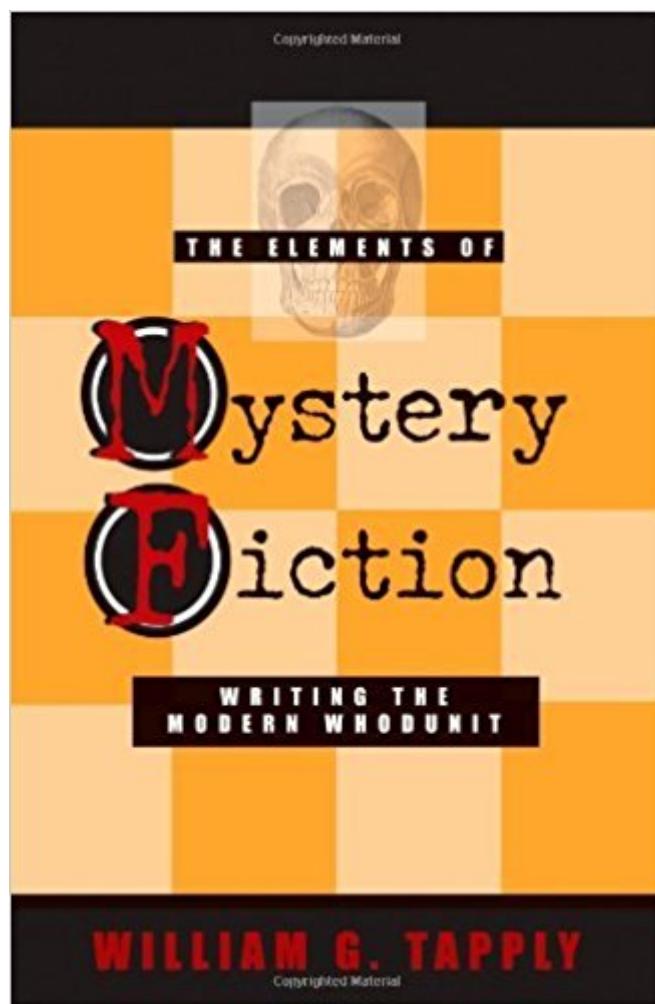


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The Elements Of Mystery Fiction: Writing The Modern Whodunit



Synopsis

The Elements of Mystery Fiction: Writing the Modern Whodunit has guided and inspired mystery writers—veterans as well as beginners—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 read—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.

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Customer Reviews

I've looked at a lot of books on writing mysteries, and most of them are full of general advice on writing novels, with little that is specific to the genre of mysteries. This book is different -- it is cram-packed with specific advice on how to plot a compelling mystery. Even the chapters devoted to elements common to all novels are approached in a way that is specific to mystery novels. For instance, in the chapter on point-of-view, Tapply discusses how to make POV choices that will best serve the elements of mystery. Similarly, in the chapter on structure, he discusses how to structure the story in such a way that tension continues to build, and so on. I highly recommend this book to anyone who writes, or aspires to write, any kind of mystery story.

I've read a lot of how-to-write-mystery books, and this is one of the best. It's very straightforward, covering the conventions (fair play, etc.) and clear, effective style. I thought he was a little conservative about the genre at times, as when he advised against having two protagonists. But he knows mysteries inside and out. One piece of advice he gives is that--after you have an idea for a book--write out the crime in chronological order (first thing). Then start mixing it up to create your puzzle, clues, red herrings, etc. I thought, "Why didn't I think of that?" I tried it out right away, and he's absolutely right. Everyone aspiring to write mysteries should read this.

This type of book is usually a bit of a disappointment, but my wife (budding writer) and I (eternal critic) liked it more than we expected. There isn't much on plotting, which was disappointing, but there is tons of commentary on who the main character can be and why they are on their quest of investigation. There's a late chapter by Philip Craig on his experience writing his Martha's Vineyard mysteries that is not exactly instructive, but utterly fascinating.

A good practical useful book. With 'how to books' you obviously read a lot of things you already know, you wouldn't be reading the book if you were not already interested in the subject so a review shouldn't reflect whether you gained anything new from the work or not. It rather stuns me, how harsh some readers can be in reviewing such books. My attitude to a 'how to book' is that the author has set out to strive to help others, and share their knowledge; that alone deserves a five star. Good work!

I have read scores of writing "how-to" books and this is one I would recommend for both would be writers of mystery novels and even would be writers of novels in general. I was really inspired by the personal stories (especially the one about the 55 year old waiting 20 years to have his second novel

published and turning it into a series) and I found the advice substantive, realistic, and solid. I was surprised that there are so few reviews, this ought to be a best seller! Some of the information presented pertains to the publishing/bookselling business in general, but the meat of the book is geared toward writing mysteries, with lots of information I will file in my brain as I sit down to write my second book.

I have read so many books on writing a mystery that I've lost track of them all. However, I have to say this book by William Tapply is the best, hands down. This is a true nuts-and-bolts approach to the craft. I highlighted so many portions on my Kindle that the book is bleeding yellow! One thing that really hit home with me (and I'm a non-fiction writer who dreams of writing a mystery) was the advice to "first write the story of the murder itself". Just reading those few words got a lot of plot confusion clear within my head. I finally realized that if I understood the relationship between victim and murderer I'd be a lot further down the line in plotting the story. A wonderful read, can't say enough good stuff about it.

Concise and inspiring.

Lots of useful information. Since I got this on Kindle, I made copious notes while reading it and will try to incorporate some into my next book. Reading the book also gave me several ideas of where the next book is going. I think I hit the basics with *The Twin Murders*, but I wish I'd had this book earlier. Most of the interviews at the end were not that helpful, but most of them were interesting.

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