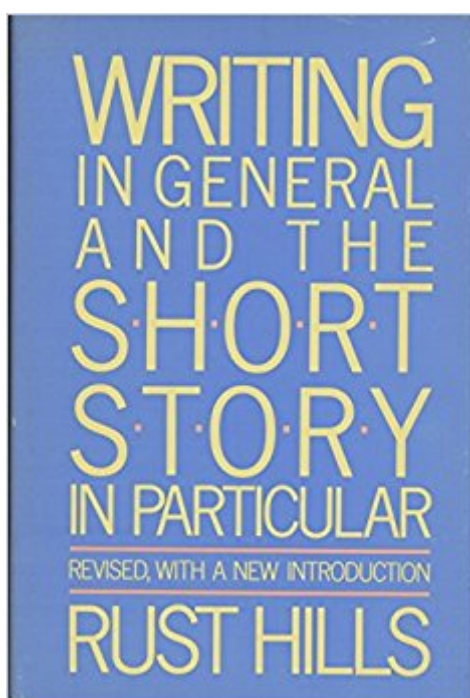


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Writing In General And The Short Story In Particular: An Informal Textbook



Synopsis

Here is a practical guide to writing short stories that explains all the essential techniques of fiction - from character and plot to flashback and foreshadowing - in a way that is both understandable and useful to the beginning writer. Long considered a classic in the field, *WRITING IN GENERAL* is the product of a lifetime of reflection by one of our best literary minds. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

"There are now not enough commercial magazines regularly publishing literary fiction to count on the fingers of a single hand," says Rust Hills. So why bother writing literary short stories, or books about doing so? Because, says Hills, a longtime fiction editor at *Esquire*, "what young writers want to write, or ought to want to write, is literature." In *Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular*, Hills examines "the essential techniques of fiction and how they function." The short story is a tricky form, with no margin for error: "The successful contemporary short story," says Hills, "will demonstrate a more harmonious relationship of all its aspects than will any other literary art form, excepting perhaps lyric poetry." Many of the fictional elements discussed in this book will not be new to most fiction writers. We know that stories must have beginnings, middles, and ends; we know about epiphany and suspense and stock characters. But Hills claims that much of how we look at fiction derives from drama theory and from the formulas of "slick fiction" (fiction that once served the purpose mindless television now serves). Learned but not pedantic, Hills addresses

these elements strictly in terms of literary short fiction. An interesting side note here is Hills's discussion of the shift in support for American writers. "It is no longer the book publishers and magazines," he says, "but rather the colleges and universities that ... provide the major financial support for the great majority of American writers today." Given that, we might find it odd that this book comes from a man best known for his magazine editing. But we shouldn't. "Teaching fiction writing and editing magazine fiction have ... the same rather odd ultimate purpose in common: trying to get someone else to produce a fine short story." One caveat emptor: our copy of this edition fell quite apart upon our first, gentle reading of it. --Jane Steinberg --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

• "When [Hills] writes about writing, we should all pay close attention." -- Richard Yates
• "Admirable, wise, and comradely." -- John Leggett "Every aspiring fiction writer ought to read this." --WRITER'S DIGEST --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

L. Rust Hills (d. 2008) was fiction editor at Esquire from 1957 to 1964. The obituary for him in the LA Times (Aug. 16, 2008): "L. Rust Hills, the former longtime fiction editor at Esquire who was known for publishing the work of the best American writers during his 30 years at the magazine, has died. He was 83." The reason I bought this book was to learn from such a distinguished person in the area of fiction writing. I am a bit disappointed, however, in this book because he presents too much information in one paragraph. The contents of this book could have been better presented in an encyclopedia format. Hills seems to be showing how the elements of writing (in general or short story) are interrelated. But he lacks in explaining those elements (fundamentals) in an easy-to-understand way. He tries, though, with sporadic examples. On the positive side, there is definitely things to be learned from Hills. I especially liked his comments on what works in fiction (and doesn't work) as opposed to his explanations.

If you are looking for one of the greatest books to help you begin writing short stories, with just the right amount of novel writing guidance to go with it, this is your book. Starting by explaining the difference in planning and writing each of these genres, and ending with a great number of chapters which explain how to do all the things needed to write a great simple short story and often a simple chapter of a larger story. From the characterization to the plotting of your genre. Openings, closings and foreshadowing are added to the middles you already have in mind. Tension, stress and motivation are other suspense tools to add to a story. Beginnings and endings are important but

when would you determine where to start and where to end...usually after a great first draft. But most of all, all of these things are written in terms that the writer can, or should be learning, to understand. All of this and a whole lot more trimmed down in bite sized packages of knowledge that will make it all fun to do! The worst that could happen would be to really learn to understand and appreciate short stories and novels. Don Bell, Glendale, Arizona tinkerbelldos@cox.net

I'm not an aspiring writer, but I often read things like this to become a better reader. The author's observations are so spot on in addressing what I like to see in a story, and also what I don't like to see. He mentions many passages in literature that I've always marveled at (and enjoyed). As an avid reader, possibly taking some time to learn about the craft will enhance your understanding and appreciation of the writer's task at hand. Thought it well worth the time...

I bought this book after having borrowed it from the college library. I wanted to be able to keep it handy, because it's much more concise and clear than other books that promise the same thing. The author doesn't spend much time on theory, but rather gets down to the bare bones, which is really helpful when you've read many similar titles. Purchase this as a quick read but also as a reference book. The bullet points and reminders are useful to go over when editing.

I own thirty plus writing books and by far Rust Hill's book "Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular" would be the writing book I would be stranded with on a desert island. He breaks down every part of a story in small sections that really helps the reader understand the topic of writing. You will come out of reading this book and feeling like you know all the major concepts and will be able to apply them to your work of fiction. Hands down, this is the best book on writing. I have used it time and time again to refresh the concepts of fiction. I highly recommend this book to everyone who writes fiction, especially short fiction. To , please put this on the kindle!

This made me take another look at short stories, both reading and writing them. I feel like I understand them a lot better and it is a critical resource for those of us trying to write them.

I find this clear, logical and thoughtful; a great book to use for a resource, as well as for beginning short story writers. I am teaching such a class at a university and everyone finds it helpful.

great

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