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The Complete Guide To Writing Science Fiction: Volume One - First Contact (The Complete Guide To Writing Series)



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Synopsis

Dragon Moon Press follows its highly successful Complete Guide to Writing Fantasy series with a comprehensive writer’s guide on science fiction. The book leads the writer from the pitfalls and clichÃƒÂ©s of a first story to selling and promoting a novel, and the writing life beyond. Topics in this guide range from the history of SF to alien creation, world building, space travel, and future medicine Ã Â- a perfect reference and writing guide for someone wishing to write science fiction. The Complete Guide to Writing Science Fiction is written by established professionals, contributors from other DMP guides, and up-and-coming talents: Jeanne Allen Bud Sparhawk Piers Anthony Michele Acker Milena Benini Bob Nailor Orson Scott Card Michael McRae Ian Irvine Tina Morgan Wil McCarthy Darin Park Simon Rose Kim Richards ...and introducing Carol Hightshoe

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Dragon Moon Press; 1 edition (September 18, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1896944396

ISBN-13: 978-1896944395

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,864,858 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #93 inÃ Â Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Science Fiction & Fantasy #1525 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Reference > Writing Skills #4943 inÃ Â Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Publishing & Books

Customer Reviews

"The Complete Guide to Writing Fantasy is a broad compendium of advice and resource material developed and compiled by writers who understand the struggle involved in mastering the craft." ~Jacqueline Carey, Author Kushiel’s Legacy trilogy "In short, if you were going to look up ’experts’ to talk to about some aspect of the world you are building, these are the people you’d ask." ~Moira Allen

David A. Law is a published writer/editor who also operates a software company for writers - Intellectus Enterprises. Dave is chairman of e-publisher, Virtual Tales, and editor for Flash Me

Magazine. He lives in Calgary, Alberta.Darin Park won the Publisher's Choice Award in Futures Magazine in 2001 for his story "The Devil, You Say?" Darin co-edited The Complete Guide to Writing Fantasy Volume One. Canadian born, Darin now lives in Australia.

A very inferior book, discussing either obvious points on writing a sci-fi, or even worse: giving a bunch of misleading advice (such as characterization does not matter in Sci-fi) in a tedious and dragging style if the author has nothing much to say but just a simple line-- There are of course some exceptions such as chapter 14 (SLASH & BURN: WHEN TO MAKE YOUR MANUSCRIPT BLEED) by Tina Morgan.The Kindle edition lacks a table of contents so that you can at least skip over some of these very bad-written chapters and check the next one hoping for just a pinch of good guide in creative writing-- In most cases, you will find yourself scrolling down pages after pages without encountering anything valuable or new . I am quite sorry that I wasted my money on this collection of articles. You be more careful.If you are a beginner it is not a straightforward Teach-Yourself-book and if you are already familiar with literary/creative writing it is like reading a collection of low-level essays most of which will not get a grade high grades if not an F.

This has been great for me. After reading many of the essays I've come to realize that I love reading science fiction, but my writing is definitely more fantasy than scifi. The genre is clearly defined and although I'm not writing LOTR kind of fantasy, my writing is not about the science. It's about the characters and plot.Good to know!If you do want to write good hard science fiction, this is a great place to start learning what that really means.

I liked this book, and while I am just starting to read on the topic, I feel like it gets you going in the right direction. It gives a beginer like me an idea of what to expect and what to ask. The information in it is pretty general so I guess i would call it a beginer's guide. But if thats you I would highly recomend it as a starting point.

This is definitely towards the bottom of the writing books I've read over the last fourteen years, since I started buying them regularly. I could not bring myself to read the last few essays because anyone trying to write off of this advice certainly won't need publishing advice. Each chapter of this book is a different essay and I'm surprised they were able to find so many that were so inferior. With the exceptions of Chapter Nine and Chapter Twelve I have seen every piece of advice in this book done significantly better elsewhere over the years. This book does seem to be aimed at the absolute

beginner but some of the content is frankly dubious. You would be much better off reading previous how to write science fiction books. As I mentioned, there are two shining exceptions which are probably worth reading: Chapter Nine: I Don't Know that Bug-Eyed Monster from Adam: Cliches in SF by Milena Benini and Chapter Twelve: Science Fiction as Western Union by Orson Scott Card. Chapter Nine is a simple and useful summary of SF cliches and how to use and avoid them. Chapter Twelve is an excellent argument about sermonizing in your writing and the real reasons not to do it. I should place the caveat there that I am biased towards Orson Scott Card's teaching style, having enjoyed his writer's boot camp immensely. So you should take my praise of him with a grain of salt. Even so, two essays are certainly not worth the price of a book. Perhaps if you get it used. Better yet rent this from a library and just read those two chapters because this book will have to get pretty cheap to be worth the price. I would recommend instead to beginning SF writers:Ã Â How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy (Genre Writing Series)Ã Â and The Science Fiction Writing Series edited by Ben Bova.Ã Â Writing Science Fiction & Fantasy (Writing Series) (Writing Series)Ã Â is also a nice introductory work, or the previous edition was at least. For other topics, you are probably better off looking at how to books that are not SF specific.

Edited by Dave A. Law and Darin Park (sorry, the name of the book was too big to include the editors into the title).I received this book from EDGE/Tesseract, which is also in league with Dragon Moon Press, who happened to be the publisher of this particular book. On a side note to this, they also have a couple volumes of a guide to writing fantasy, which may be of interest to those of you who are not into SF.I'm going to do this review in two ways. First I'm going to talk about the book as a whole, second I'm going to address each article individually, and third I'll end with a conclusion. Here goes:This book should be on your required reading list for genre-related non-fiction. If you write science fiction, get this book because it will help you in so many different ways, especially if you're just starting out in the SF field. This book covers everything from the early history of SF to sub-genres, creating believable aliens to getting your science right, writing to editing, and submitting to the life of a published author. In a lot of ways it is too much subject matter for one book, but I imagine that Dragon Moon is intending to do with this what they did with their guide to fantasy--multiple volumes--which would help expand upon the ideas that were intentionally left alone. In short, this is one of the most useful books for writers of SF that I have read since Orson Scott Card's how-to book on SF & F. It's definitely worth more than the $24.95 USD price.Edit: I forgot to mention that the back of the book includes an extensive collection of resources that I have found remarkably useful. It includes websites, publishers, and all of the works that were cited within

the articles, among other things.Now for the criticism, which is sort of bad criticism and simple observational criticism which is neutral. There were some articles that had spelling and grammar errors, though the vast majority of the book was generally perfect. Also, it seems as though there was a printing problem throughout the book that I can't imagine being an editorial issue. The italicized capped "N" was consistently replaced with an italicized capped "I" with a little dot under it. This has to be some sort of printing fluke. It's hard to miss otherwise. Other than that, and what will be mentioned in the individual article discussions, there little wrong with this guide. With authors like Orson Scott Card, Wil McCarthy, Piers Anthony, Michele Acker, and Kim Richards in the table of contents you can see how good this guide really is. The reason I'm doing the articles last is because you may not want to read my take on the individual articles, since overall the book is really awesome. But, in case you want to know what I thought of them individually, here they are:Part One: Defining 1. Time Line: A History of Science Fiction by Darin Park This article gives a very, very, very brief history of SF. I did learn a few things about the history of SF, but I think the weakest part of the article--other than some grammar and spelling errors--is that it is too broad. If another volume shows up I would really like to see certain aspects of SF's history expanded upon. It's a good article for the ill-versed reader, but it is very much glossing over the vast history of SF. 2. Searching For the Definitive Definition of Science Fiction by Jeanne Allen Addressing the age-old question of "what is Science Fiction"? The great thing about this article is that it paints the argument perfectly. What is science fiction? Well, how about, what isn't science fiction? It's impossible to come up with a definitive definition, essentially. Darn good article. 3. Science First, Fiction Second: That's Science Fiction by Bob Nailor Nailor does a good job here discussing some of the myths in science fiction and basically pointing out that if you intend to write SF, even if you don't know the science and you're simply making something up that can't happen anyway (such as FTL travel), you still need to present it in a way that works. Technobabble used appropriately makes your writing seem effective, etc. He also uses some well known SF writers (Heinlein, Asimov, etc.) to support his point. 4. The Many Faces of Science Fiction: Sub-Genres by Kim Richards The title says it all basically. This is another of the articles that could do with expanding, especially on the subject of the blurred lines between different genres. Still a good introduction, but I think that sub-genres are vastly more complex than this.Part Two: Building 1. Technology and Science Fiction by Wil McCarthy Basically, if you want to write SF, you have to get the science right. McCarthy basically says what anyone else who writes SF seriously will tell you. Readers will drop you like a hat if you create a technology that is absolutely idiotic and unbelievable, within limits of course (readers are likely to accept that a FTL ship works, but only because that's just a general acceptance in SF).

McCarthy does a good job going into the use of ideas and researching. His methods might not be for everyone, but he still provides you with a unique insight into how important the science in SF really is. 2. World Building by Kim Richards The simplest way to explain this is that it's fantasy world building, only from an SF approach. Aliens instead of goblins and elves, alien cultures instead of medieval countries, etc. Depending on the type of SF you intend to write this could be a hit or miss. I found it useful because I do like designing alternate worlds, and it did give a glossed over version of dealing with alien creations. 3. Alien Creation Michael McRae Just read the title and you'll know what this is about. McRae does go into this by making a point that your aliens don't have to be human, but they have to have a human element to them. If something is too alien it will be impossible to translate it to an audience of people who are human. So, even if your aliens have twelve arms and three mouths, you have to make it so the audience can identify with it. A really good article here for anyone wanting to make aliens. 4. Navigating Your Way Through Outer Space: Facts, Theories, and Conjecture by Jeanne Allen Another very brief article, but I think this is still effective. It should be expanded though, and I hope that Dragon Moon does so. Allen discusses the vastness of space--stars, galaxies, and beyond--while pointing out how harsh space is. Everything from radiation to the effects of zero gravity on the human body, methods of creating artificial gravity to methods of space travel--real and otherwise--and even the enhancement of humans via artificial means. A good introduction to everything, and very valuable. 5. I Don't Know That Bug-Eyes Monster From Adam: Cliches In SF by Milena Benini A discussion of the cliches in SF. Really it's impossible for this to be any more limited because there are so many cliches in SF anyway. However, it serves as an example of the types of things that have been done to death already and what you need to do to make sure that any cliche elements you use come off as more creative and interesting.Part Three: Crafting 1. Bringing Characters To Life by Tina Morgan Basically a brief discussion on how to make your characters more lifelike. Giving them little habits and such to make them seem real. We've heard it before, but I think the basics of writing tend to be left out of genre specific books for writers. Now genre writers have a place they can go to get most, if not all, of the necessary info. 2. Attack of the Monster Plot: Ideas, Settings, and Plots by Milena Benini Another basic look to an important element of writing. It was a decent article, I thought, and it did manage to help me really think about some of the issues I'm having with a novel I'm currently working on. 3. Science Fiction As Western Union by Orson Scott Card Card talks in some detail about some things you shouldn't do with fiction in general: don't intentionally send a religious message or preach to your audience, etc. He raises some good points and defends his position by stating that he has written stories from various viewpoints, including non-religious viewpoints, even though he himself is

a religious man. 4. Slash & Burn: When To Make Your Manuscript Bleed by Tina Morgan Another basic approach to a common fiction element. This discusses all the little things within editing that you should be aware of. Rules like "show don't tell" and "don't be redundant" come into play here. It's a good article and certainly worth the read. Again, this is basic though. It works, but you'll want to go look for more expansive takes on some of the points made if you don't already know about them.Part Four: Specializing 1. Laugh Lines by Bud Sparhawk Humor...as in knock-knock jokes and other funnies. Okay, not really, but Sparhawk goes into the uses of humor in SF writing, whether it be within a serious work or a work that is intentionally being funny (like what Douglas Adams did). I think there could have been better humorous examples provided by Sparhawk, but I think he still gets his point across. 2. Going Where Others Have Gone Before...And Want To Go Again by Carol Hightshoe This article discusses Fan Fiction. The interesting thing about it is that when I started reading it I expected to see only things related to FF, except Hightshoe goes even further by addressing shared-world series (such as Star Wars and Star Trek). This is a really good article that also delves into the issues of copyright infringement in FF (true FF I mean, not shared-world stuff). You might be interested to know that Lucas is one of the few franchise owners that actually encourages FF and Fan Films provided they follow some guidelines (no slash, and length limitations). More reasons to love Lucas I suppose. This was a fascinating read even though I have no intention of writing FF or writing within a shared-world (though I imagine I may try it one day). 3. Writing Graphic Novels and Other Forms of Sequential Art by Dave A. Law This article was partially useless to me and partially interesting. First, it's useless to me because I have no real desire to get into graphic novels. This doesn't mean the article is bad, what it means is that it just doesn't provide information that I really intend to use. For someone who is interested in this field it will provide some valuable information, especially if you're interested but know very little about the field. It's a good introduction to how things work, particularly on the publishing side. 4. Science Fiction For Younger Readers Aged Eight to Twelve by Simon Rose This has to be the first article I have ever seen that addresses SF for kids and young adults. I've seen far too many ones that take on fantasy, but never on SF. The interesting thing about this is that much of what is required to make SF for adults work ends up not being required in the same manner for kids. Science doesn't have to be explained too much, it just has to be believable to kids, and since kids are more likely to accept something as believable in a book it's not too complicated to make SF stories for kids. I enjoyed this article a lot.Part Five: Publishing and Beyond 1. So You've Finished Your Short Story/Novel, Now What? Michele Acker Everything from conventions to workshops, markets to agents, etc. Everything that takes place between having completed your story to getting it published, and the means to do so.

Acker also delves into the different types of publishers (print, POD, electronic, etc.) and talks with actual agents and editors on some very important subjects. Very useful article here. 2. The Art & Science of Book Promotion by Ian Irvine Those of you looking for a speculative fiction look into the world of promoting your newly published book should look no further than here. Irvine goes into detail on the various methods by which you can promote your book, while also addressing how the publisher may or may not help promote you. I learned a lot from this article and, in the end, I still want to be a writer. I can deal with having to work my [...] off. 3. The Writing Life by Piers Anthony What can you say about this article other than saying that this shows the grim reality of what it's like to be a writer before and after being successful (if you are successful)? That's about all you can say really. It ain't an easy life.The conclusion is: buy this book. Period. Okay, well don't if you don't want to, but you should really consider it if you're a writer and want to work with SF. It's an awesome book! Plain and simple!

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