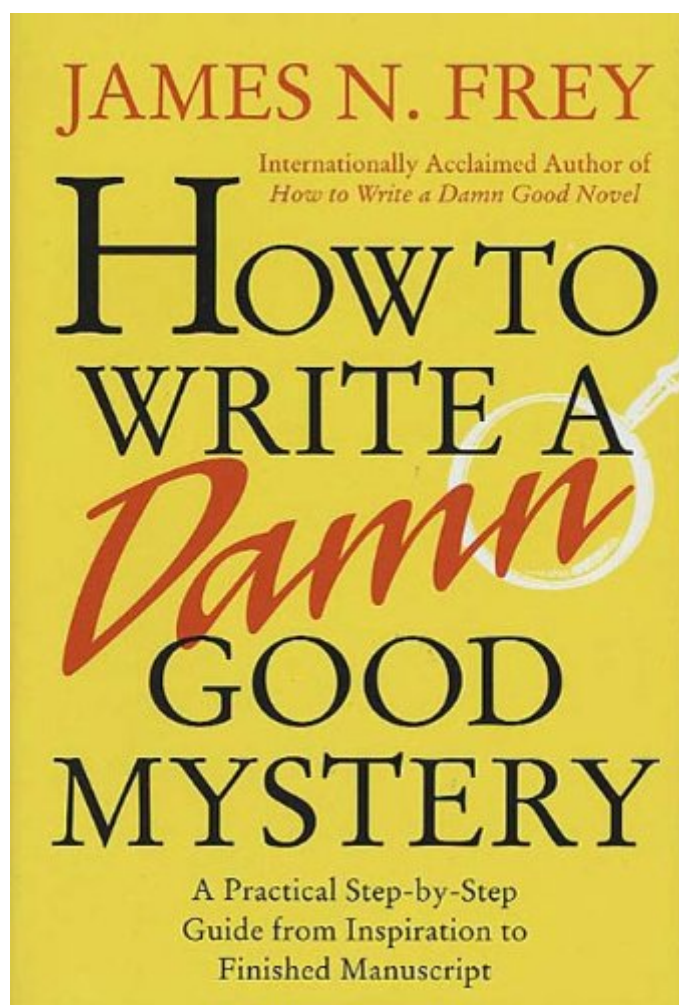


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How To Write A Damn Good Mystery: A Practical Step-by-Step Guide From Inspiration To Finished Manuscript



Synopsis

Edgar award nominee James N. Frey, author of the internationally best-selling books on the craft of writing, *How to Write a Damn Good Novel*, *How to Write a Damn Good Novel II: Advanced Techniques*, and *The Key: How to Write Damn Good Fiction Using the Power of Myth*, has now written what is certain to become the standard "how to" book for mystery writing, *How to Write a Damn Good Mystery*. Frey urges writers to aim high-not to try to write a good-enough-to-get-published mystery, but a damn good mystery. A damn good mystery is first a dramatic novel, Frey insists-a dramatic novel with living, breathing characters-and he shows his readers how to create a living, breathing, believable character who will be clever and resourceful, willful and resolute, and will be what Frey calls "the author of the plot behind the plot." Frey then shows, in his well-known, entertaining, and accessible (and often humorous) style, how the characters-the entire ensemble, including the murderer, the detective, the authorities, the victims, the suspects, the witnesses and the bystanders-create a complete and coherent world. Exploring both the on-stage action and the behind-the-scenes intrigue, Frey shows prospective writers how to build a fleshed-out, believable, and logical world. He shows them exactly which parts of that world show up in the pages of a damn good mystery-and which parts are held back just long enough to keep the reader guessing. This is an indispensable step-by-step guide for anyone who's ever dreamed of writing a damn good mystery.

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Customer Reviews

I liked the book and as an author, I know there are many different ways to write a book - but each of us are best qualified to write about the strategies that we personally use -- that could be one reason why so many different people write how to books about writing. So, I'll say that there are many ways to write and I use different strategies, but I enjoyed Frey's book. I will admit that I skipped through many of the examples :) I also have several other how to books about writing thrillers and mysteries and I learn something new from each one. How to Write a Damn Good Mystery by James N Frey My next book will be a kidnapping mystery and it's my 13th book, so I wasn't looking for the usual "how to write" book. I wanted to read something that delved into the nuances of mysteries and this was just what I needed. There are a couple of chapters on character development, point of view, writing, editing, rewriting etc - but the other chapters were the most interesting to me. Frey begins by talking about why people read mysteries. How can we write a story that appeals to our target audience, if we don't know what they want? The Good, the Bad and the Ugly - moves into sorting through our ideas and getting started. There is an entire story and plot, behind the obvious plot in a mystery. To be "mysterious" and to use red herrings, and to include those twists and surprises that readers love, we need to develop and completely understand the "hidden" part of the story. Creating the Villain is another important element - is the villain three dimensional? Can the reader relate to them? Are they evil enough? A great and memorable villain must be well developed and realistic. This leads right into a chapter about being intimate with the villain. Once you understand the villain and have developed them thoroughly, it's time to move on to the hero and/or heroine. You must also fully develop the hero or heroine. At this point Frey talks about the hero's journey and how that assists you in the development of your hero or heroine. ****The hero's journey will also help you to discover the type of secondary characters you can use and why they are needed. Creating an effective plot for an edge of your seat mystery requires plotting and this can take many forms and chapter 9 explains some of these tips. You need a believable detective - whether a professional or an amateur. How will they figure out the mystery? Will they have help? Who will help them? The gripping climax is one of the most critical elements of the mysteries I love to read, so I was very glad to see a complete chapter devoted to the climax of the book. Part of the climax is capturing the

villain and that is the topic in chapter 15. There is so much great information in this book and if you plan to write mysteries - I highly recommend that you read this book. It's definitely worth the cost and if you are a beginning author - there is plenty of information in this book to help you with the writing basics.**** If you aren't familiar with the Hero's Journey, there are all kinds of articles online and a number of books that you can use to understand the details of the hero's journey - or do a search for "hero's journey" or "writers journey" for books and articles.

I own a lot of books on writing. Lots and lots, in fact. However, I have a few favorites that stand out, and this one of them. Frey has an engaging writing voice and this made HTWADGM a delightful read, rather than a dry how-to guide. I like a book in which the writer strongly expresses his/her opinion and advocates his/her working methods. I'm not at all threatened by this, and I feel perfectly free to disagree, but it helps me see where he/she is coming from, and to decide intelligently whether the advice is compatible with what I'm writing. Many of the writing guides on my shelf offer generic advice, unflavored by perspective, and I find these much less interesting and helpful than those with personality. I found Frey's discussion of archetypes particularly helpful, and his outline of the writing process is clear and structured in a way that honors the creative process. I never recommend reading only one "how-to" book when learning a subject, but if you're studying the art of mystery writing, make this one the many books you read.

I'm fully satisfied.

James Frey does an exceptional job at helping out authors with this book. It's actually more than a book; I'd call it a guide even though it's not written in a step-by-step format. As a nationally published author of several books, I was slightly skeptical on what I'd learn from this, but I was willing to give it a try. I was wrong! Not about the book, but about what I'd learn -- Mr. Frey tells you so many little tricks to implement that once you've read of them, they seem so natural. If you're writing your first mystery novel, or your tenth, buy this book and you're bound to find something awesome inside that will make your manuscript so much better! Stuart Gustafson

As a self-confessed collector of books on writing, I found this one of the best of a very few such books that I have found merit the title of "most helpful and clear" how-to volumes. Frey is blunt, sometimes funny, always informative, and, for anyone thinking of writing just about any kind of novel, his book is a must. His writer's voice feels as if he is sitting across the table from you at your

favorite coffee shop, telling you all his secrets. It's a great read. Even if you don't intend to write a mystery, per se, you will learn valuable lessons about the process of engaging, and sustaining, your reader's interest from cover to cover by following Frey's advice. On the whole, I found this even more helpful than his "How to Write a Damned Good Novel." If you know someone who is writing a novel, or trying to, this would be a good gift book for him or her to add to a writer's library. His How-To books are terrific, in my not so humble opinion!

How to Write a Damn Good Novel, II:
Advanced Techniques For Dramatic Storytelling

James N. Frey's follow up to the award winning HOW TO WRITE A DAMN GOOD NOVEL. It has the same humorous style that is long on sound character development and the interaction of all characters within the novel. He challenges you not to write an ordinary story that will make it to a publisher, but to pen a "Damn good, mystery." This is so important today as mysteries become harder to sell to an agent or to attract a publisher. That is the line in the trade, but reading the top ten NYT yesterday I did notice that seven were mysteries/thrillers from the big names. It's all here from plot to character to climax to closure. A good title to use as a start if you are unfamiliar with the style. Writing as a Small Business

Sins of the Fathers: A Brewster County Novel
Under the Liberty Oak
Guns Across the Rio: A Texas Ranger in Old Mexico
Natchez Above The River: A Family's Survival In The Civil War

Frey is phenomenal. He teaches writing with wit and wisdom. Anyone interested in writing a mystery should read this book.

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