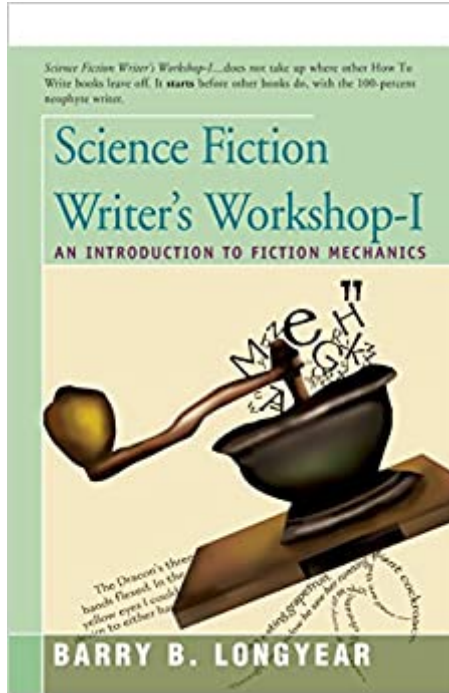


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Science Fiction Writer's Workshop-I: An Introduction To Fiction Mechanics



Synopsis

“About a year after (my stories began being published), magazine editor George Scithers, suggested to me that since I was so new at being published, I must be very close to what I had to learn to move from fooling around with writing to actually producing professional stories. There are a lot of aspiring writers out there who would like to know just that. Write that book. *Science Fiction Writer’s Workshop*—I is that book. It’s the book I was looking for when I first started writing fiction.” —Barry B. Longyear

Book Information

Paperback: 170 pages

Publisher: Open Road Distribution (April 12, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1504030141

ISBN-13: 978-1504030144

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #766,288 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in *Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Science Fiction & Fantasy* #858 in *Books > Reference > Words, Language & Grammar > Reference* #1033 in *Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Publishing & Books > Authorship*

Customer Reviews

Hugo, Nebula, and Campbell Award winner, Barry Longyear is author of the acclaimed *Enemy Mine*, made into a major motion picture by Fox. Recent works include *The Enemy Papers* and *Yesterday’s Tomorrow*. Having completed training as a PI, the current work is a mystery titled *The Hangman’s Son*. He lives with his wife, Jean, in New Sharon, Maine.

I bought this collection of short stories on the recommendation of a friend. Could not get into the first few stories, so just quit and donated the book to a local charity. The writing style isn’t particularly clear and it’s hard to get involved (or to care about) the characters or the action.

I read a borrowed copy of the original paperback of *It Came from Schenectady*, oh, gee, perhaps twenty years ago (hey! kids! this was, like, back before the Internet (or) was around to make book

finding really easy!). I never saw a copy in a book store, so I missed my chance to have one of my own. It is a pleasure to see back in print. This is a wild ride from one of the really inventive minds in science fiction. The stories range from thought-provoking to hilarious. I'll second the motion of another reviewer who encourages a serious reading of the introduction. Longyear has one hell of a sense of humor.

This is the best guide for beginning writers-and some professionals, for that matter-that I have ever seen. I have most of the well-known books, but this one works the best. It teaches the mechanics of good story construction through explanation, example, and exercises for the reader. For example, in one chapter the reader is challenged to create "backfill" using a variety of different methods. In several places, the reader must evaluate a flawed story opening, or whatever, and figure out what is wrong with it (yes, answers are provided). In another place, the aspiring writer has to "diagram the schematic of a complete story situation", quote unquote. There are many more examples I could give you, of many different types. Suffice it to say that this 150 page book will kick-start you to a higher level of technical competence. Buy it now.

I met Barry Longyear at Odyssey 2008 and was so impressed with him as a writer and teacher that I bought this book. Although I consider myself a semi-pro writer, I have learned a tremendous amount from what he calls an "introduction." It is straightforward and contains numerous examples from Longyear's own award winning stories. He includes rejected versions and the subsequent revised stories which did sell, along with critiques. I am now reading this book for a second time and doing the exercises (the first time I read straight through). I am also reading one short story from his book *It Came From Schenectady* to see how he applied the lessons. At least one other science fiction writer I know considers this his "go-to" book. As far as the sequel, Barry said that he did write it. I believe it is a pdf book which you can order through his personal website for around \$33. I plan to do that next year.

This is a spiffy collection of short stories by the author, and includes the stories listed below. Rating my enjoyability of each of the component stories (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest):
Rating & Title
9 - Forepiece (Prologue)
8 - Collector's Item
7 - Dreams
7 - The House of If
6 - The Initiation
9 - The Portrait of Baron Negay
8 - SHAWNA, Ltd.
8 - A Time For Terror
9 - The Homecoming (Hugo Nominee)
8 - Twist Ending
10 - Catch The Sun
9 - Adagio
7 - Where Do You Get Your Ideas ?
Although the most loudly trumpeted piece in this collection is "The Homecoming"

(which was nominated for a Hugo award), my personal favorite is, by far, "Catch The Sun", which could easily have been a major award winner in it's own right, if it'd been published as a stand alone novel. In hindsight, I'd guess the only reason it didn't get the Hugo nod is that it was published right on the heels of Homecoming, in the same calendar year, right after the latter was nominated ... and was thus ineligible. In any case, it's the best of the bunch, in my reckoning. This collection is a solid offering by Longyear, even though the title is a bit obscure, and doubtless deterred sales by confusing people walking past it in the book aisles. Style wise, the stories in this collection are an odd mix of quirky ideas, developed into stories by the author. Some follow the same general style as Harlan Ellison and The Twilight Zone motif, and others are more in the hard scifi vein. Overall, this is a very strong and enjoyable collection ... well worth the cover price, even if you have to buy it new.

Joel (_Guardians of the Flame_ series) Rosenberg turned me on to this book. In the afterword to his _Emile and the Dutchman_, he said that anybody aspiring to write SF/fantasy should "either get a copy...or cop to not being serious." To put it into plain English, this is simply the best book available for would-be writers. Although a lot of the information is specifically aimed at SF/fantasy writers, the exercises presented would do a lot for anybody at all who seriously wants to write fiction. Longyear gives examples of what he's talking about that anybody can understand, and explains the whys and wherefores of fiction writing with uttermost clarity. There are other books for would-be SF/fantasy writers on the market, but this one is, in my own view, the very best. It would serve admirably well as a text for a "creative writing" course, or as such a course in and of itself

This collection of short stories from Barry Longyear is a masterpiece. There are no weak links here. Every single story, from the shortest to the longest, is fantastic. I loved them all. I've gone over the stories several times trying to pick a favorite. I can't decide. They are all that good. I can't recommend this book highly enough.

Read the introduction in this book. I know introductions are usually a waste of space, but Longyear is hilarious. And he gives you such deep insight into where he gets his ideas that you just can't pass it up. I've lost track of how many times I've read and re-read this collection of short stories. Some are funny. Some are sober. They are all fascinating.

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