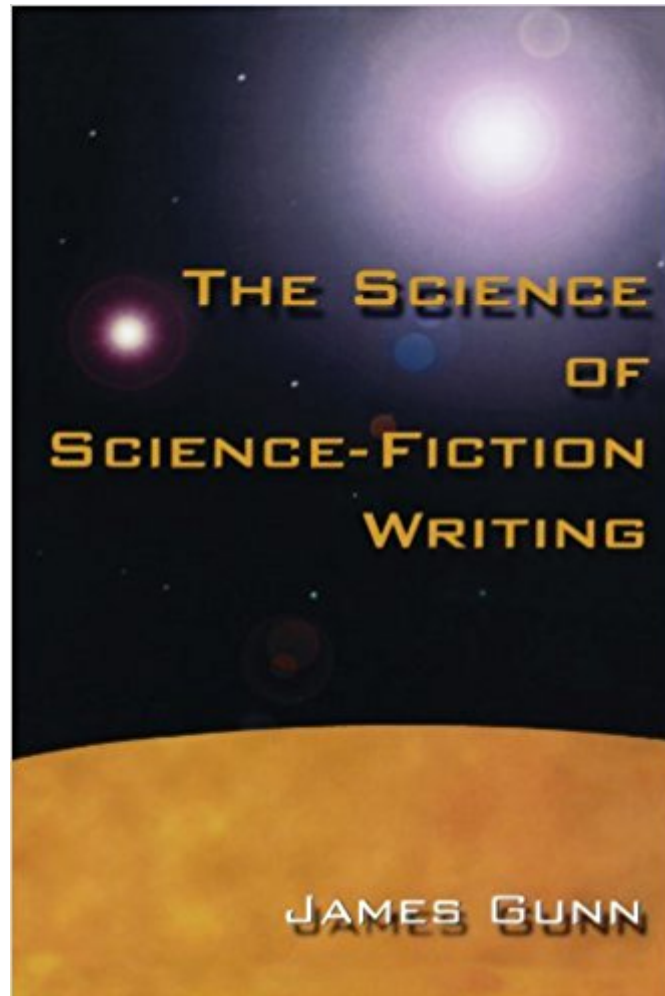




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The Science Of Science Fiction Writing



Synopsis

Written by one of the leading authorities on writing, publishing and teaching science fiction, *The Science of Science Fiction Writing* offers the opportunity to share in the knowledge James Gunn has acquired over the past forty years. He reflects on the fiction-writing process and how to teach it, and the ideas he has shared with his students about how to do it effectively and how to get it published afterwards. The first section discusses why people read fiction, the parts of the short story, the strategy of the science fiction author, scene as the smallest dramatic unit, how to speak well in print, suspense in fiction, how to say the right thing, and how to give constructive criticism. The second section takes a more philosophical approach. Here, Gunn elaborates on the origins of science fiction, its definition, the worldview of science fiction, and the characters that appear in science fiction novels. The third section highlights well-known sci-fi authors: H.G. Wells, Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Henry Kuttner, C.L. Moore, and others, and the impact they have had on the development and progression of science fiction.

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Customer Reviews

"I've shared the annual Lawrence Writer's Workshop with Jim Gunn on and off for nearly thirty years—and many other workshops with many other leaders as well—and I've come to one simple conclusion. He's the best." (Frederik Pohl, Author of *The Space Merchants*, *Gateway*, and *Man Plus*, former president of The Science Fiction Writers of America) This pragmatic overview covers virtually every important aspect of writing science fiction. A valuable tool for aspiring SF

authors, and a treat for fans with an appreciation for literary history and theory. (Kirkus) Practical advice for anyone who aspires to write popular fiction, this clear-sighted guide is a must. (Publishers Weekly) James Gunn (born 1923) is certainly a vastly experienced sf writer..he is also a well-known anthologist, so his advice here may be sager than that to be found in most books of this type. (Interzone)...he [Gunn] clearly and comprehensively explains distinctive characteristics of SF...any wannabe writer could learn a lot from this readable and well-organized guide... (Sfra Review) The Science of Science-Fiction Writing is a course packet for a writing course in sf, except that it is bound, cheaper than most course packets, far better proofread, scrupulous in observing copyright and it is by James Gunn...Gunn's advice is classical, conservative, sensible, stressing character and emotional appeal...He pushes writers toward disciplined service to their audience...he should be learned from, and, if one can't go to one of his workshops, The Science of Science Fiction Writing is a fine place to study what he has to teach. (Science Fiction Studies)...the number one reason to pick up The Science of Science-Fiction Writing is a most invaluable section that one wonders why more books on writing haven't included something similar: an outline of all the advice Gunn gave during a workshop in 1998. It is likely, if a writer subjected his story to the rigorous distillations here, his story would sell somewhere...It introduces and offers morsels of advice that won't be found elsewhere...you could benefit from the sagacity of Gunn's sixty-plus years of experience. (Trent Walters Sf Site) Gunn takes the reader through a careful process of writing SF...The book is very well organized...anyone with an interest in writing SF will find this book of considerable value as Gunn shares his exceptional insight into the world of SF writing. (Extrapolation) Science fiction has often been criticized, especially in its early days, for an alleged tendency to neglect characterization and character development. There has been some basis in truth for this, though anyone who thinks it has always been true or always an intrinsic fault should read the chapter on characters... (Stanley Schmidt) The best introduction in print not only to writing but also to reading science fiction....All SF teachers, indeed any teacher of literature, will benefit from the chapters devoted to the reasons people read fiction, the anatomy of the short story, and the creation of believable characters. Gunn blends his expertise as both teacher and writer to fashion a work of value to any teacher or reader of science fiction. (Anatomy of Wonder, 5th Edition)

James Gunn, emeritus professor of English at the University of Kansas, has published 36 books and nearly 100 short stories. His novels include *The Immortals*, *The Joy Makers*, *The Listeners*, and *The Dreamers*. He has published seven collections of short stories, including *Future Imperfect* and *Breaking Point*. As a professor, he taught fiction writing and science fiction, including a long-running

intensive Writers Workshop in Science Fiction. His books about science fiction include *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*, *Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of Science Fiction*, *Inside Science Fiction*, and the six-volume *The Road to Science Fiction*. He has now pulled together his experience in writing science fiction and helping others write fiction into *The Science of Science-Fiction Writing*. Gunn is the 24th writer recognized by the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America as a Grand Master.

After the glowing reviews I read online, I was disappointed in this book. It was quite obviously patched together from previously published materials that did not meld gracefully: just looking at the chapter headings, it is obvious that no one would have organized a book that way if starting from scratch. At the very least, the book should have been edited to remove the obvious repetitions. Appendices in the back are basically class notes in the form of bulleted lists and sentence fragments. The title is misleading, though probably not intentionally so. I was hoping for something more targeted toward, well, science. For example, I would have liked something about FTL travel (pro or con, possible workarounds, etc.), climatology, or any of a dozen other scientific topics of relevance to science fiction. With one whole chapter about fiction in general, and several other chapters about prominent science fiction authors, there really wasn't very much of the book that could justifiably be said to relate to the science of science fiction writing, even when you put the emphasis on the word WRITING. A better title might have been "Miscellaneous Essays on Fiction, Science Fiction, and Famous SciFi Authors." That is not to say it was worthless. Some of the information was useful and relevant, and the book overall was very well written. There were probably a total of 20 pages that, for me, made the book almost worth the price of admission. I just felt a little cheated by the feeling that this was recycled content without much effort expended to make it a cohesive or focused.

The first chapter (Why People Read Fiction) is worth the price of the book alone. Some reviewers have nitpicked a few typos and repetition. Having taught eye surgery for 45 years and having written a textbook on eye surgery - I can say with confidence that repetition lies at the heart of teaching typos notwithstanding. Be that as it may - the aspiring writer will find much of value within these pages.

This book was priced very reasonably and delivery was prompt. I really enjoyed this book as it was very useful in my research and will be sitting in the reference section for years to come.

This book a compilation of James Gunn's writings about writing science fiction. There are articles about the craft, the history of science fiction, and about the work of some famous science fiction writers. If you are looking for a basic book on how to write fiction, this is not the one to start with. I like this book because it talks about what goes into writing science fiction, both techniques and how other authors have approached it. Think of it as a more advanced writing book, though non-writers who are interested in sci fi might also find it of interest.

I bought this book due to the glowing reviews of the other reviewers, and was very disappointed. The book was sloppily edited. I wasn't looking for errors, but kept finding them - picky stuff like typos, contradictions, and word for word repetition. A writing book shouldn't contain these types of errors. Nearly half of the book was long-winded bios of SF authors which were sometimes interesting, but mostly not - and suggested nothing to improve writing. There were a few good tidbits, but they were few and far between. Do not buy. Get Damon Knight's book instead - Creating Short Fiction. Much more practical and interesting.

This is an excellent book written by a legend in the business. If you want an in-depth resource of Science Fiction writing tips and history, look no further. The book is wonderfully written, comprehensive, and organized. James Gunn uses "The Science of Science Fiction Writing" as a text book for his own creative writing courses and comments that the book is the result of roughly 40 years of writing observations. I can certainly see his vast experience played out on every page. Some of the chapters herein are articles previously published by entities such as Writer's Digest and Oxford Press. This book is a true gem for Science Fiction and Fantasy genre writers bent on perfecting their craft.

As a writer and teacher of fantasy and science fiction, I have read a =lot= of how-to books over the years. Most of them range from terrible to so-so. Many can be destructive to an inexperienced or uncertain writer. This is a wonderful exception, one of only two books I consistently recommend (the other is Orson Scott Card's CHARACTERS AND VIEWPOINT). I have been assisting at Gunn's summer workshop at the University of Kansas for years now, mostly because I think he's one of the best writers -- and teachers -- in the genre. Now he's put the wisdom of his decades in the field into a book which I think can be useful to every writer, regardless of experience. I really cannot recommend this highly enough.

After reading this book my writing was better tenfold and found myself writing longer better stories all of the time. I got my copy from the ALA convention in New Orleans from a representative of Scarecrow publishing and now think that I should have paid the full price for it. Thanks for the book, Sarah! P.S. I know this was a little later than expected, but with school and writing I just got around to... writing this... in school?! LOL Hope to see you soon.

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