

Bibliography of Books on Writing

Here are some helpful books, in order of significance (my opinion) on writing fiction:

1) The Elements of Style (“Strunk and White”) – William Strunk Jr. and E.B.White; Allyn and Bacon, 2000

This classic little book on good writing is probably *the* source for many of the other writers in this bibliography. A must have for every writer’s library.

2) On Writing: Memoirs of a Craft – Stephen King;

This is a good book to start learning about what it’s like to be a writer and how Stephen King perceives writing. King can be crass and offensive in his language, which he explains in the book. It is entertaining and informational with a good view of a modern popular fiction writer. A must read for any serious modern fiction writer.

3) The Art of Fiction – John Gardner; Vintage Books (Random House) 1985

The ultimate contrast view of fiction writing, Gardner enters the arena with a classic writing style that wants to write the great American novel. It is the total antithesis of Stephen King’s approach with a very structured approach to writing.

4) The Art of Fiction – Ayn Rand; Plume Books, 2000

A third view on fiction writing, focusing on the ability of fiction to influence people’s thinking with a very pointed view on the precise use of words and structure to make bold and effective writing. Rand is provocative and arrogant, but this is a must read for any writer who is using as writing a vehicle for ideas and social statements.

5) Spunk and Bite – Arthur Plotnik, Random House Reference, 2005

This is a serious tongue-in-cheek rebuttal to the venerable “Strunk and White”, a guide to staying in the lines while adding color and flair to your writing.

6) Writing Down the Bones – Natalie Goldberg; Shambala, 1986

This is a good book about the essence of writing as a process and as a practice and drawing out the writer within and getting down the ideas and thoughts that words convey.

7) Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life – Anne Lamotte, First Anchor Books edition, 1995

Similar to *Writing Down the Bones*, but much more anecdotal and entertaining, revealing in comic relief the angst of trying to succeed as a writer in a world plagued by better writers than you and ornery publishers and friends.

8) Writing the Breakout Novel – Donald Maass; Writer's Digest Books, 2001

Donald Maass is a literary agent from New York, with years of experience reviewing books for publishing. In this book, he marches through the characteristics of books that turn starving writers into overnight successes: the breakout novel. It is a wonderful snapshot of the outstanding characteristics of best seller books. Maybe you are not interested in writing a bestseller, but it will improve your understanding of the elements of good popular writing.

9) Dynamic Characters – Nancy Kress; Writer's Digest Books; 1998

This book focuses exclusively on the development of character and personalities for the ornery denizens of your books. Everything you wanted to know about how to develop and put skin on the bones of heroes, villains and ordinary people in your book.

10) Self-Editing for Fiction Writers – Renni Browne & Dave King; Harper Resource, 2004

So you have written the whole book. What now? How do you go back and turn your great story into equally great writing. A must have for any serious fiction author. Don't even think about turning in a manuscript that has not been run over by this book.

11) Be your own Literary Agent – Martin P. Levin; Ten Speed Press, 1996

A brief overview of what you face in trying to get your book published. There are a number of books on this subject, but this is a good one to start with. Don't embarrass yourself by going to a publisher before knowing what you are doing; this is a good place to start your education.