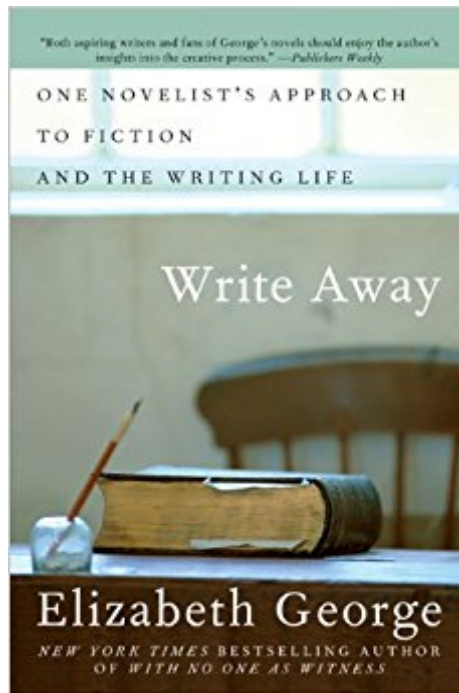




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Write Away: One Novelist's Approach To Fiction And The Writing Life



Synopsis

Bestselling author Elizabeth George has spent years teaching writing, and in *Write Away* she shares her knowledge of the creative process. George combines clear, intelligent, and functional advice on fiction writing with anecdotes from her own life, the story of her journey to publication, and inside information on how she meticulously researches and writes her novels. George's solid understanding of craft is conveyed in the enticing manner of a true storyteller, making *Write Away* not only a marvelous, interesting, and informative book but also a glimpse inside the world of a beloved writer.

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Customer Reviews

Full disclosure: Elizabeth George is one of my all-time favorite mystery writers --- actually, George, like the others on that shortlist (including P.D. James and Ruth Rendell), writes in a more specific arm of the genre, known as the "literary mystery." What this means to readers is that the books these authors produce have complex characters, beautifully constructed (sometimes intricate) plots and fine, subtle use of language that manages to simultaneously contribute to the mystery at hand and to delight on its own. What this means to writers is that Elizabeth George knows her stuff. How well she knows it is readily apparent in *WRITE AWAY: One Novelist's Approach to Fiction and the Writing Life*, because she grounds most of her instructional examples in excerpts from great literature, including classics like *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* and modern suspense/thriller novels such as *MYSTIC RIVER*. George taught English at El Toro High School in Huntington Beach,

California for over a decade before turning her back away from the lectern and towards her computer screen in the mid-1980s, and she now frequently teaches creative writing. Her pedantry is of the pleasant variety, meant not to bury potential writers but to encourage them. Still, this book does have its pedantic moments, especially as George elucidates her process. One of the most important parts of her process is creating a "character map" before she begins her first draft. As she explained why and how she does this, it made perfect sense --- for her. I love reading literary mysteries, but they are not a genre I'm likely to write myself. *WRITE AWAY*, at first, seemed to me to be an excellent way to learn about how to write an Elizabeth George novel.

OVERALL: George's fans will certainly love having some insight into her work. However, the rest of us will do better looking at Frey's book or Ben Bova's book on writing science fiction. CONS:- She takes the "show, don't tell" mantra a bit too far by having VERY long excerpts. Sometimes it goes for 2-3 pages. This felt excessively long. Be brief.- About 25-33% of the examples were from her own work. I couldn't stay awake reading her excerpts. Just too slow and long winded. She admits that her editor says that "nobody will accuse you of being fast-paced." It's true. It's S-L-O-W. So even a few paragraphs is too much. She should have used more classic examples from Tier A writers. Most of her books on hover around 3 stars - that's not good. Her highest rated book is this one!- Her organization is confusing. She has a chapter (or two) on Character and Setting near the beginning. Then, mysteriously, she addresses the issue again at the end in a few extra chapters. Sloppy organization.- Most of her lessons and tips were obvious and have been said before. It might have been better to write a "how to write a mystery book". PROS:- She rarely says anything that's wrong. The only thing I definitely disagreed with is her emphasis of going to the location. This is good, but not essential. And it's impossible (often) when you're writing Scifi. Thanks to the Net, you can do virtual tours of Mecca without going there. Finally, I'll share my key takeaways from *Write Away* by Elizabeth George:-Characters learn something from the events (and does the reader).-Characters are interesting in their conflict, misery, unhappiness, and confusion.

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