



The Stuff of Fiction: Advice on Craft

Douglas Bauer

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In this book, prizewinning novelist and popular creative writing instructor Douglas Bauer (*The Book of Famous Iowans*) shares the secrets of his trade. Talent, as Bauer acknowledges, is the most crucial element for a writer and cannot be taught. But without a regular habit of work, and a perseverance of effort, no amount of talent can come forward and be recognized. His lively and candid essays on subjects critical to the fiction writer's success demystify the essential elements of fiction writing, how they work, and work together.

Bauer's focus is on the building blocks of successful fiction: dialogue (the intimate relationship between characters talking and the eavesdropping reader), characters (the virtues of creating fictional characters that are both splendidly flawed and sympathetic), and dramatic events (ways to create moments that produce an emotional and psychological impact). There are also chapters on crafting effective openings and memorable closings of stories and on the vital presence of sentiment in fiction versus the ruinous effect of sentimentality. By assuming the point of view of someone at the task, engaged with the work, inside the effort to bring an invented world to life, *The Stuff of Fiction* speaks to writers of all ages in a pleasurable yet practical voice.

Douglas Bauer is the author of three novels, *Dexterity*, *The Very Air*, and *The Book of Famous Iowans*, and one book of nonfiction, *Prairie City, Iowa*. He is also a core faculty member with the MFA Program at Bennington College and has received a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a Massachusetts Artists Foundation grant, and two Harvard Danforth Excellence in Teaching Citations.

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