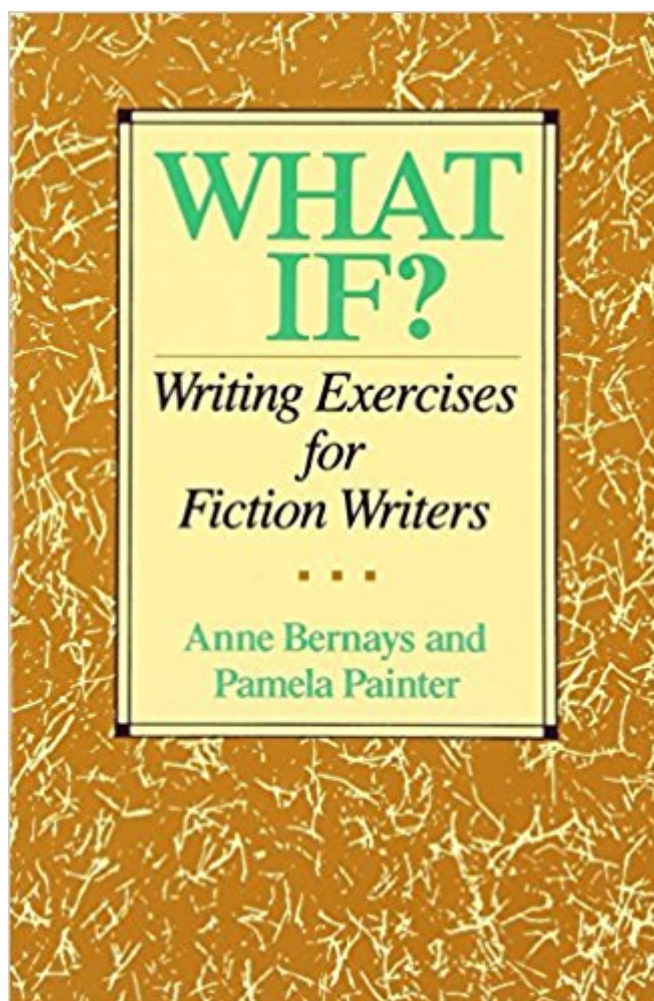


The book was found

What If? Writing Exercises For Fiction Writers



Synopsis

What If? is the first handbook for writers based on the idea that specific exercises are one of the most useful and provocative methods for mastering the art of writing fiction. With more than twenty-five years of experience teaching creative writing between them, Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter offer more than seventy-five exercises for both beginners and more experienced writers. These exercises are designed to develop and refine two basic skills: writing like a writer and, just as important, thinking like a writer. They deal with such topics as discovering where to start and end a story; learning when to use dialogue and when to use indirect discourse; transforming real events into fiction; and finding language that both sings and communicates precisely. What If? will be an essential addition to every writer's library, a welcome and much-used companion, a book that gracefully borrows a whisper from the muse.

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Customer Reviews

Anne Bernays, a novelist and writing teacher, is the author of eight novels, including *Professor Romeo* and *Growing Up Rich*, as well as two works of nonfiction, including *The Language of Names* written with Justin Kaplan and *What If?* written with Pamela Painter. Her articles and essays have appeared in numerous major publications, among them *The Nation*, the *New York Times*, *Town & Country*, and *Sports Illustrated*. She lives in Cambridge and Truro, Massachusetts with her husband, Justin Kaplan. They have three daughters and six grandchildren.

Chapter One First sentences are doors to worlds. -Ursula K. Le Guin New writers often find beginnings difficult--whether they're starting a story or a novel--because they take the word "beginning" too literally. They cast around for the "beginning" of a story--forgetting that beginnings rarely have the necessary ingredients for trouble, for conflict, or for complication. Your story can begin with dialogue, narrative summary, description, whatever, but it must begin in medias res, in the middle of things. You must resist the temptation to give the reader too lengthy an explanation as to how things got to this point. Remember, you are trying to hook the reader's attention, to pull the reader into your story so that he won't wonder, What's on television tonight? Another stumbling block to beginning a story is that new writers think they have to know where their story is going and how it will end--before they begin. Not true. Flannery O'Connor says, "If you start with a real personality, a real character, then something is bound to happen; and you don't have to know what before you begin. In fact, it may be better if you don't know what before you begin. You ought to be able to discover something from your stories. If you don't, probably nobody else will." The following exercises are designed to encourage you to think about real characters who are involved in situations that are already under way--situations that are starting to unravel because of, or in spite of, the desires and actions of their beleaguered characters. Don't worry about middles or endings yet. Just give yourself over to setting stories in motion--you will soon know which stories capture your imagination and seem unstoppable, which stories demand to be finished. Till that time, begin and begin and begin.

It's got some great content for studying. I bought this as a textbook for a Creative Writing class at a state college I attend. I was told to get the 3rd edition, but rationalized that there couldn't be that much of a difference between 2nd and 3rd edition, so I went with this cheaper route. Word to the wise: they're very, very different. A month into the semester and not one exercise number, identifier or description has lined up. I ended up renting the third edition, but will hold on to this 2nd edition for reference down the road. Again, good content, recommendable material. Don't much care for the layout and organization, but that's not a big deal.

Am only a third of the way through but the writing assignments to date have helped me improve my writing. I am really putting a lot of effort into the assignments so it's taking some time to get through the book. I recommend this book. Note - I have no financial or other connection with the authors, just an appreciative customer.

Sometimes we writers need something to kick start our creative juices. This book is crammed with self help exercises to make that happen. I highly recommend it for those of us who sometimes struggle with what to write about and just need that little hint that opens the flood gates.

This book was my required text for my creative writing class. At least, that's what I thought until after I bought it. There is another version, with the same name, by the same authors, which apparently includes stories as well as exercises. This book has only the exercises. They are good and probably the same ones as the bigger book, but now I have to buy another text. So if you are getting it for a class, check first.

A great little book for making you think. If you are a writer or aspire to write, read this. Good ideas come from thinking hard. This book helps you learn how.

Great set of writing exercises for any student, practicing, or aspiring writer. Lots of example pieces, and exercises to fit any part of your writing process. Clean, direct, doesn't overwhelm!

If people can take the time to read and do all the exercises from this book, I think it will help tremendously. I had never done creative writing even outside of high school, so when it was assigned as a class textbook, I was amazed by it. Students nowadays aren't taught to find their own voice in writing when they are in high school because all they write are essays. Writing fiction really helped me to break away from the monotony and write what I want. And this book has great tips and exercise, they also have a lot of great short story examples to go along with it. And they are all very enjoyable to read. I have not done every single exercise, but for the ones I did, I was able to get a good push-off.

I am novice writer who was in dire need of some stimulating direction. I have idea's galore and inspiration a'plenty, but moulding all my little dribs and drabs together was proving to be a larger task than I thought. If you are looking for a book to assist you with your writing, WHAT IF? will definitely help. It prop's you up when you are drooping, keeps you motivated and active - in regard to both : thinking and writing, helps you reflect on your past works and gives you the chance to re-invent them in various exercises. It's a good purchase and a worthwhile read. Certainly helped me along.

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