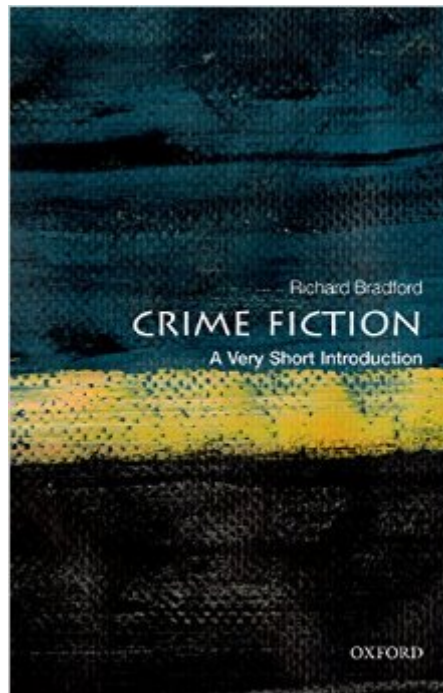


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Crime Fiction: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

Crime fiction has been one of the most popular genres since the 19th century, but has roots in works as varied as Sophocles, Herodotus, and Shakespeare. In this Very Short Introduction Richard Bradford explores the history of the genre, by considering the various definitions of 'crime fiction' and looking at how it has developed over time. Discussing the popularity of crime fiction worldwide and its various styles; the role that gender plays within the genre; spy fiction, and legal dramas and thrillers; he explores how the crime novel was shaped by the work of British and American authors in the 18th and 19th centuries. Highlighting the works of notorious authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, and Raymond Chandler "to name but a few" he considers the role of the crime novel in modern popular culture and asks whether we can, and whether we should, consider crime fiction serious 'literature'. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In seven short chapters the author covers the origins of the crime story and through to the twenty-first century, attributing the origins of modern crime writing to Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, and a bit later, William Godwin (erroneously spelled Goodwin in the index), which is in line with other scholars of crime fiction. Edgar Allen Poe is considered by many to be the primary mover and shaker in crime fiction, but Bradford discounts Poe's work, despite the popularity of Poe's crime-solving protagonist C. Auguste Dupin. Instead, Bradford points out that Poe's three stories featuring Dupin were what Poe himself referred to as tales of ratiocination, and at the time they failed to inspire other authors to write crime or detective fiction. The Victorian Era is my historical area of interest, so I was most interested by Bradford's interpretations on nineteenth-century detective and crime fiction. However, the chapters on the golden age and hard-boiled stories, as well as later chapters on spy fiction, are not to be missed. And the chapter on gender introduces a few female Victorian writers and male writers who used female protagonists in their works. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes so overshadows other writers of that era that many readers might be unfamiliar with some other Victorian writers, such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Anna Katherine Green, and Wilkie Collins. The book was well organized and each chapter presented a concise but readable introduction and overview of the various areas of crime fiction, which covers mysteries (cozies and hard-boiled), spy and thrillers, police procedurals, and more. The genre is broad and it's not always a clear-cut division between styles: how would you catalogue historical mysteries, for instance?

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