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How Plays Work (Nick Hern Books)



Synopsis

How Plays Work has grown out of David Edgar's teaching in the University of Birmingham's MA course in playwriting studies, which he founded twenty years ago. Through historical and modern examples, the book analyzes the basic elements of dramatic structure, action, plot, character, dialogue, and genre.

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Customer Reviews

David Edgar is best known for his adaptation of "Nicholas Nickleby" for the RSC (revived in West End, Xmas 2007, Following UK tour), for whom he wrote "Destiny", "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", "Pentecost" and "The Prisoner's Dilemma". His plays at the National include "The Shape of the Table", "Entertaining Strangers" with Judi Dench, and "Albert Speer".

David Edgar knows his subject. A fourth-generation theater professional and social critic, he's rooted in the world of theater and the world as theater. This little book draws upon his considerable knowledge of ancient and contemporary western plays and his every-day work as a professional playwright. The result isn't a typical "how to write a play" text, but a stimulating presentation of the creative elements available to anyone when "wrighting" a play. Don't be surprised to find yourself thinking of past and anticipated projects with a growing desire to play out the possibilities Edgar brings forward. (David A. Elliott)

I spent a large part of my life in the theatre, acting and writing and I enjoyed this book a great deal. Mr. Edgar has many interesting things to say and he packs many thoughts into each chapter which make it difficult to follow for those who are not already well versed in Shakespeare, Ibsen and the like. I do not think this is a guide to writing a play so much as a very good analysis of how plays, often times, work. Without a doubt this is a good addition to the literature. My only criticism is that Edgar sometimes reaches too far to prove his points with examples which do not always fit the point he is trying to prove. Some of his other examples are quite obscure, by playwrights most people have never heard of. That being said I think this is a fine book that treats plays with the respect and the depth they deserve. I learned a great deal. Thank you, Dave Edgar.

A very dense and over-written book. Some valuable information, but there are MUCH better books out there on the subject of you to write a play. Edgar gives way too many examples (some of them of obscure British plays) when he needs to get to the point. You'd be better off reading a book by David Mamet.

Very good book, although sometimes he overdoes the points he makes. This was an assigned text along with Egri's older book, and the Edgar one is a much better read, although with different ideas. Edgar writes clearly and well.

I was looking for a book to assign to my class, but this book is based on the idea that plays can be written by formulas, which reduces meaning instead of expanding it. The writing jumps around and the ideas are hard to follow.

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