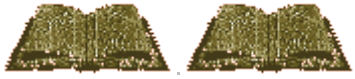
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Book Reviews: Popular Books Section



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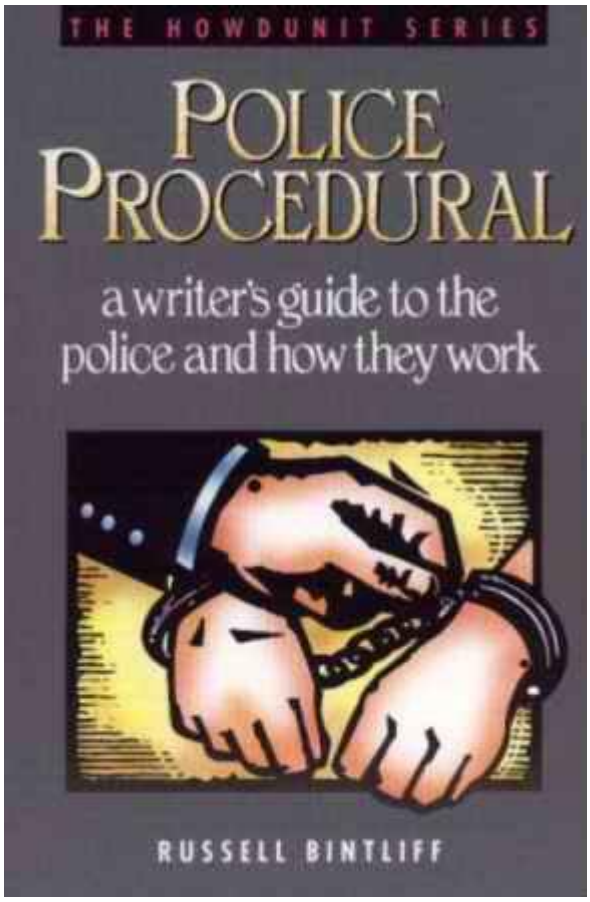
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WORKING OF THE POLICE

Police Procedural - A writer's guide to the police and how they work (THE HOWDUNIT SERIES) : *by* Russell Bintliff
First edition, 1993, Writer's Digest Books, an imprint of F&W Publications, Inc., 1507 Dana Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45207. : 261 Pages: ISBN 0-89879-596-6 (pbk): Price $16.99 (Can $25.99)

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The book under review is aimed at a crime writer. To produce an authentic crime book (or an authentic script for TV or movies for that matter), the writer must have his facts right. If the writer has not worked intimately with the police, which is most often the case, he usually has no first hand way to know how police actually works. Usually his knowledge of police working is based on other crime books he has read, or movies he has seen. Ironically the writer of this "other book" or the "other movie" has probably undergone the same exercise, and the cycle goes on endlessly! Naturally, this perpetrates (and probably magnifies) many wrong beliefs about police working. Several popular TV police shows for instance depict police doing very absurd things, such as a small army of police technicians swarming over a crime scene searching for fragments of evidence. This is usually *not* how the police works.

View this book on Amazon

To give the crime writer a proper perspective, *Writer's Digest* has come out with a set of 14 books, all written by professional people who at one time or the other have worked with the police. They know their facts right, and they impart their knowledge in these books specifically for the crime writer. The book under review is the first in this series. It is written by an author, who has worked in investigations for more than twenty years as part of the Arkansas State Police, the Criminal Investigation Division of the Army, and the CIA.

The book begins - quite rightly - with a detailed description of the police administration and patrol operations. Principles of Police Organization, their training and certification are dealt with. Then the writer goes on to give an insight on how the police detective works out cases of Larceny, Burglary, Robbery, Assault, Arson and Homicide. We are told about the procedures and laws regarding arrest, how interviews and interrogations are conducted with the criminals, how lie

detectors are used and so on. And finally there are details on how the police detective tenders his evidence in a court of law.

...if a crime writer wants to make his detective look very intelligent, he can make use of some of the tactics given in this book. Surely his book would appear much more authentic and realistic. On the contrary, if he needs a "silly" detective in his novel, he knows how to confuse him...

The main value of the book lies in the fact that it shows quite realistically how police works. So if a crime writer needs a police character in his book, conducting, say an arson investigation, he does not have to rely on previous movies or TV shows he has seen on arson investigation. He has authentic information on how arson investigation is done right from the horse's mouth! Undoubtedly this makes his work more authentic and acceptable.

A very interesting feature of this book is that it shows how lawyers confuse the detective and what the detective must do to avoid that confusion. For instance, one of the tactic that the defense lawyers employ would be to ask rapid fire questions (questions rapidly asked one after other). The aim here is to confuse the detective and to force him to come out with inconsistent answers. The writer then shows how the detective can blunt this tactic: he must take time to consider the question, be deliberate in answering, ask to have the question repeated and remain calm. Similarly many other situations are shown and proper responses to deal with that tactic given.

So, if a crime writer wants to make his detective look very intelligent, he can make use of some of these tactics given in this book. Surely his book would appear much more authentic and realistic. On the contrary, if he needs a "silly" detective in his novel, he knows how to confuse him!

Crime writers would find this book immensely valuable. Even a general reader having no aspirations in writing would find it very interesting for the sheer amount of factual information given about police work.

Order *Police Procedural* by Clicking here

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