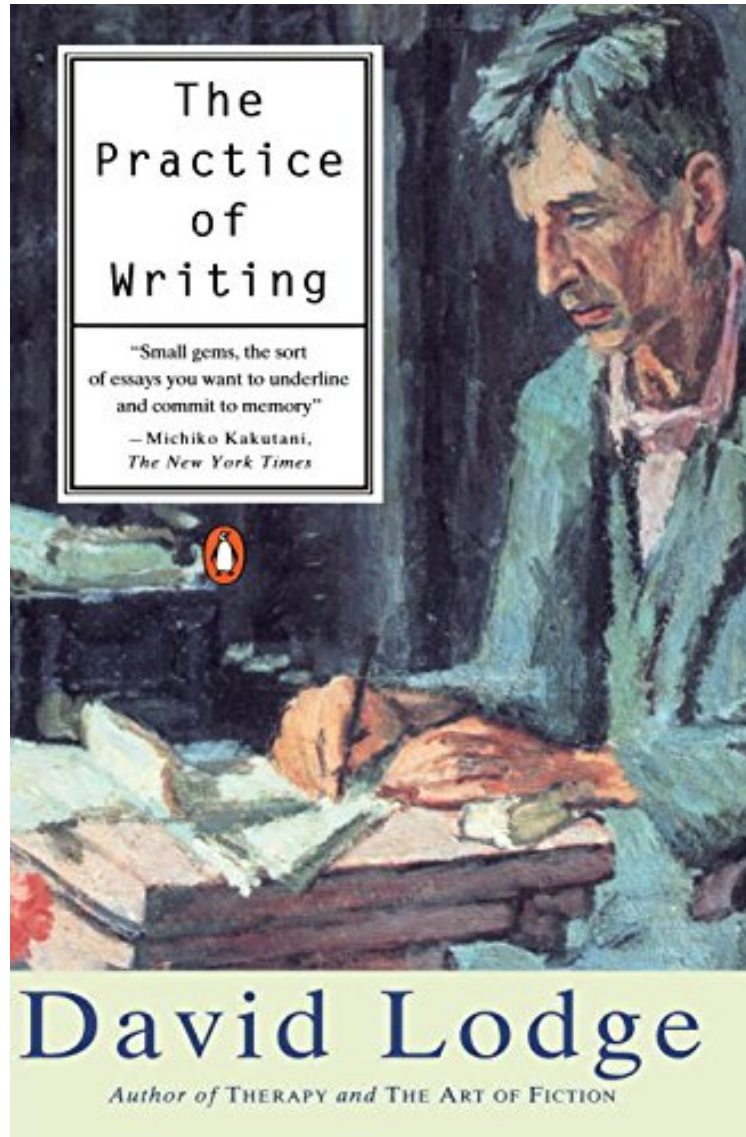


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The Practice of Writing

David Lodge

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David Lodge : The Practice of Writing before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Practice of Writing:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Did Lodge have a theme in mind when he brought this material together?By PhredDavid Lodge's book, The Practice of Writing contains much that is interesting, parts that do not fit together and little that related to the practice of writing. Because he is an interesting and intelligent writer it is easy to forgive the lack of unity across the parts of this book.The first part, Novelists, Novels and The Novel covers more than

of the text and includes some of the best writing. This section opens and closes with essays about the Novel and its role in literature. There are six biographical and literary discussion of what he considers major English Novelists who presumably had the most effect on the future novelist: David Lodge, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Vladimir Nabokov and etcetra, in other words all men; nothing about Rebecca West or Virginia Wolf. It is possible that his generation did not study these women. I would like to know if he missed them or dismisses them. Was Henry Green really more important than either of these women? His essay on Kingsley Amis focuses on his first major novel, "Lucky Jim". This essay was of particular interest to me. It is routinely listed as a very funny book. I found it amusing but not great. Lodge explains much about placing the book into the context of its time and about how certain of the jokes work. I found his discussion illuminating but concluded that the book is not funny and the jokes tend to be too serious to be funny. Reading the book in the context of its time is a reminder that comedy does not always travel well. Yet writers like Wodehouse maintain a following. I enjoyed learning more about Amis, but I am still not the fan that Lodge is. The closing essay of this section is: The Novel as Communication. This like most of the book is a reprint of material from other sources. It is a lecture on the question: is the Novel a form of communication? I think he eventually concludes that most likely is, sorta. Then in the next section: Mixed Media, He describes the difference from the writer's point of view, between writing novels, screen plays and stage plays. Lodge has had experience in adopting novels for stage and screen. This is an interesting analysis, but, parenthetically, almost every paragraph states explicitly that all writers in any of these pursuits is in the business of communicating. The essay "Through the No Entry Sign: Deconstruction and Architecture" is heavily technical and laden with enough jargon and theoretical criticism as to render it almost unreadable. One wonders if Lodge would have to change more than a few words had he intended it to be comic. I like it better for the thought that he is pulling our leg rather than strutting his expertise with things architectural. To quote almost at random: "Tschumi's approach to architecture is fiercely historicist in the Popperian sense." I doubt it not and can hear the gagster Professor Irwin Cory insisting on exactly this point against the protests of Father Guido Sarducci. Meantime what does this have to do with the practice of writing? The longest single entry in the book is a selection of diary entries during the process of getting his play The Writing Game to the stage. If you intend to write for the stage, this section can be a warning or a set of instructions. Lodge does not dramatize the work of being a dramatist, but he makes very clear that the work of the writer of plays, unlike the novelist can never assume that his work is done. As long as he and his play have life, he can be expected to make changes or have changes imposed upon him. A play is far more a living thing, while a novel is almost static. If this topic is interesting I recommend Neil Simon's Rewrites: A Memoir. It is much longer and more entertaining. But I also recommend reading them both. As much as I have been critical of parts of The Practice of Writing, my reservations are not to be taken as condemnations. Lodge is a very educated and aware writer. He treats you as an educated reader. The essays about the writers were engaging and informative. He speaks not just of the writers, but points out the better biographers for each man. Other essays vary in their individual merit, but all are worth reading.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A fun, informative read for anyone interested in writing and literature. By K. Bunker. I have at times been disappointed by books like this one: collections of essays, all written at different times for different purposes and venues, and of course, all written on various topics that happen to interest the author. If your interests as a reader don't coincide with the author's, at least through a majority of the essays, or if the essays are too closely tied to the purpose for which they were originally written to be of much interest outside that context, then you're likely to have a ho-hum and disappointing book. But this book was certainly no disappointment. David Lodge is such an engaging writer, with so much to say that's fun and informative, I think pretty much anything he writes would be an enjoyable and worthwhile read. Some notes on particular essays/chapters in the book: "Fact and Fiction in the Novel: An Author's Note" is an engaging and at times very funny look at how authors may use (or not use, when you might think they are using) real-life experiences, places, and characters in their fiction. Several chapters are interesting discussions of aspects of the lives and careers of some well-known authors: Graham Greene, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Anthony Burgess, and Vladimir Nabokov. Most of these are presented as overviews of existing biographies and autobiographies of the persons in question, so you have both the sources of Lodge's information and also recommendations for further reading. And even in a chapter where Lodge discusses a lesser-known writer (Henry Green), the chapter is still thoroughly interesting for its insights on the processes and difficulties of writing. The chapter "Creative Writing: Can it/Should it be Taught?" brings not only insight, but some fascinating history to a topic that one might think has been done to death. The chapters on adapting literary works for stage and television delve into a topic that normally wouldn't interest me much at all, but these too ended up being entirely engaging. The chapter on writing a screenplay from Dickens' Martin Chuzzlewit included some interesting discussion of Dickens' writing methods. And the final chapter, a diary of Lodge's ultimately successful efforts to bring his script The Writing Game to several stage productions, was fascinating for several reasons. Particular among these was seeing the process of rewriting and tweaking that the script went through as Lodge, the director, the actors, and even the audiences all had their respective inputs on how the text "played out." All in all, this book is a great read for anyone interested in writing and literature.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars. By BookCollector. Entertaining as always.

When it comes to the craft of writing, bestselling novelist David Lodge finds much to celebrate, analyze, and confess. In this absorbing collection of seventeen essays he ponders the work of writers he particularly admires, current and past trends in literary style, and the mechanics of the craft itself. Revealing, enlightening pieces on Graham Greene, James Joyce, Kingsley Amis and Anthony Burgess are interspersed with personal reflections on Lodge's own artistic and technical struggles. His insights into the contemporary world of publishing, and mass culture in general, are both trenchant and refreshing. As entertaining as it is edifying, this collection of fine writing about writing will prove valuable to students of the art as well as to Lodge's many, loyal readers who wish to know more about his own work.

.com English author, literary critic, and Birmingham professor David Lodge has given us a thoughtful collection of essays on writing, serving as an end-of-century bookend for E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*. But given the particular century in which Lodge writes, he doesn't stop with prose but also considers stage and television work--he adapted *Martin Chuzzlewit* for the BBC-- giving the book its greatest strength. Lodge's range runs from academic musings to television scripts, a breadth worthy of any scribe here on the disparate, millennial cusp. From *Publishers Weekly* Lodge, a wry and stylish British novelist (*Changing Places*) and former university professor, has collected a fair sample of his literary criticism and re-formed it into an insightful and surprisingly unified look at the craft of writing. He says flat out that this is not a book of literary theory but an examination of the way writers go about their work. His aim, he writes, is "to demystify and shed light on the creative process, to explain how literary and dramatic works are made, and to describe the many different factors, not always under the control of the writer, that came into play in the process." The result is a book that should be required reading in any creative writing class not bogged down in dogma. Lodge reviews the work of a number of writers--Graham Greene, D.H. Lawrence, Henry Green, Kingsley Amis, Anthony Burgess, Joyce, Nabokov--but the heart of the book is a series of essays on adapting his own work, as well as Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for television, and on staging a sketch by Harold Pinter; and the diary Lodge kept while his play *The Writing Class* was in production. Although his nonfiction writing style is not as free of its academic roots as he would like to think and his outlook is not as satiric as readers of his novels might expect, here is a collection that is both engaging and useful. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Lodge (*Therapy*, LJ 3/1/95) has assembled a collection of his previously published articles about fiction, drama, and television adaptations. The author's theme is the practice of writing, specifically, how he and others go about the creative process. He divides his work into two parts. The first examines the writings of English authors who have influenced him (James Joyce, Graham Greene) and an overview of the state of the novel today. The second part covers Lodge's experiences with adapting literary works for television and an essay on how the novel, screenplay, and stage play tell stories from different perspectives. Throughout, Lodge offers keen insight into how a writer gives birth to a work and techniques necessary to create a novel and screenplay. He also discusses the value, or lack of it, depending on one's perspective, of creative-writing courses. For anyone who wants to write the next great novel, this book should provide valuable counsel. ?Ron Ratliff, Chapman H.S. Lib., Kan. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.