



The Nighttime Novelist: Finish Your Novel in Your Spare Time

Joseph Bates

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Make Every Creative Moment Count Franz Kafka was an insurance agent. William Faulkner was a postmaster. Stephen King taught high school English, John Grisham was an attorney, and Toni Morrison worked in publishing. Though romantic fantasies of the writing life don't often include a day job, the fact is that most writers have one.

If you find yourself among them, stealing moments late at night, early in the morning, or on your lunch break to write, "The Nighttime Novelist" is your guide--on call any hour to help. Divided into quick mini lessons to make the most of your precious writing time, this book offers: Technique instruction that breaks down the elements of the novel--from crafting your protagonist to successful plotting and pacing Hurdle lessons that help you anticipate and overcome roadblocks, so you can keep your productivity and your story on track Going Deeper explorations that provide guidance on the more nuanced aspects of storytelling, so you can take your work to the next level Try It Out assignments and more than 25 interactive worksheets that help you apply the lessons to your own project Whether you're just beginning your novel, wondering how to navigate its middle, or bringing it to a close, you'll find the instruction, exercises, and support you need to keep your story moving forward every time you sit down to write.

The Nighttime Novelist: Finish Your Novel in Your Spare Time Details

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From Reader Review *The Nighttime Novelist*: Finish Your Novel in Your Spare Time for online ebook

Serena says

The Nighttime Novelist by Joseph Bates is an excellent resource for aspiring novelists, especially those that have full time jobs and are writing in their spare time. Housed in a hard bound, spiral notebook format, the book makes it easy to find the best advice for the crisis of the moment for beginnings, middles, or ends of novels with its outlined table of contents. Most writers are fond of taking notes or using sticky papers to highlight gems of information . . . what's even better is that we color-code that information to keep it all fresh.

Some of the ideas in the book are those writers have heard a number of times, such as keeping a small notebook handy at all times when dialogue is too juicy to pass up or someone's style catches the eye. Story ideas always come from experiences and what writers see in other art or in other books. What's unique about this reference book is that it counters advice given to many writers that they should write what they know or write about things that have never been done before.

Read the full review: <http://savvyverseandwit.com/2010/12/t...>

Laura says

Many writers have full-time jobs, take care of a household and children, and usually write in their spare time—such as early in the morning or late at night. I have done both. When I had the chance to review *The Nighttime Novelist*, I was curious if it would be different from the slew of writing resource books I've read in the past two years since I've published my first book.

The first thing I noticed was the gorgeous layout. This book has a spiral-bound binder format and contains colourful pages, charts, and worksheets. It's divided into three parts, Beginnings, Middles, and Endings, with a Coffee Break section after each part (which I thought cute and practical) that helps you to check how you're doing thus far. It's a book that covers all the basics—developing ideas, character development, plot planning, narration, description and setting, pacing, building suspense, climax and good endings.

All the chapters focus on the “technique”, “hurdle”, and “going deeper” of each topic introduced. And it's all colour-coded. Some may find this distracting but I liked it. Most of the content was not new to me. However, I liked the author's voice and his explanations: simple, to the point, told with good and appropriate humour. Whether we are new or more experienced writers, reminders of the basics and their deeper points is never a bad idea. All writers have their strengths and weaknesses. But for some it may still be too basic.

Bates makes good use of questions to get the writer thinking. Whatever the topic, these questions had me thinking about my current novel in progress. This was good. I learned a few things I could work on. I particularly appreciated the chapter on Narration where the author explains well the various POV options and how to find one's voice. This is by far one of the most confusing things for new writers and I get asked about this constantly when I give workshops. Bates' experience as an editor shines through in this book, although he himself has not written a novel.

If you dream of writing a novel or are struggling with the one in process, know that you can do it even if your time is limited. Bates keeps with the theme of the nighttime novelist, who steals time to write, by offering a book that is easy and quick to read, to reference, and from which to learn.

Rob Secundus says

I don't write a lot of reviews, but I really feel the need to attach one to my rating here, because it's misleading.

I was absolutely disappointed with this book. Because it's not for nighttime novelists, and it has almost zero advice for finishing your novel in your spare time.

I expected this book to address all the problems the people named in the title might have. Figuring out how to manage your time. How to write in short bursts when you never have enough time to get into a zone. How to connect snippets and look at big picture stuff. Etc etc. It does none of those things.

So why the rating?

It's still a great book. It's quite possibly the best Intro to Creative Writing I've come across. The advice is all standard but incredibly clear, extremely well organized, etc. The presentation is gorgeous. The exercises and worksheets are valuable. I would recommend this to any beginner writer.

I would just warn said writer that the contents have absolutely nothing to do with the title.

Duckpondwithoutducks says

I don't know why I keep reading books about writing, when I hardly spend any time on my novel, and when one knows that the best way to learn about writing is to read, read, read and write, write, write. But there you go. This book had a lot of good information about writing, including: rounding out flat characters, shaping a novel into a three-act structure, excising poor plot points, making the right choice of pov, a checklist of cliched or ineffective openings, and much much more! At the end it also had quite a few worksheets to help you plan and revise your own novel. The design of the book is interesting as well, as it is in a coil binding, and the pages have colourful borders and designs.

Margery Bayne says

I felt the title of this book was misleading. I thought it would contain information and tips on, as the subtitle says 'finish your novel in your spare time.' However, that seems like that might just be a gimmick to sell this book, because all it really is, is a guide explaining the structure of a novel. Can that be helpful? Definitely yes. But that's not what it was selling with it's title and blurb.

William Lawrence says

Six months until my novel debuts! This book helped a lot!

Usagi says

This is a great resource for aspiring novelists-- or those wanting to make a quick check on foundational concepts that may get confused during the excitement of novel writing.

The structure, and spiral binding of the book make it very easy to use. Major sections are further broken up into short, easily digestible chunks. The example excerpts are taken from well-known books. You do not need to read from cover to cover. You can pop in and pick and choose. The worksheets in the appendix are also great for novel building (or for fun), or even for use in studying existing novels.

But the text never gets to that 'this is for serious Novelists only' one might find in other works. I found the author's tone conversational and entertaining. The stance of this book is anyone can be a novelist, and tries to make the technical aspects of creating your story on paper as entertaining--and painless-- as possible.

I can see this book as being of huge use to anyone wanting a good set of resources and ground rules for getting that story out of their head and onto paper or processor; the worksheets would make a great project for the month leading up to NaNoWrimo.

John Hedrick says

The Nighttime Novelist is attractive to look at and is filled with lots of useful information for the aspiring novelist. Beneath its hardback cover I was surprised to discover its pages are actually spiral-bound. The information inside is organized in a tabbed format. Each page is filled with colorful text, decorative sidebars, and comment-style supplemental footnotes. In essence, the book is really designed very much like a scrapbook.

And that's the problem.

No one actually "reads" a scrapbook. People flip through them. They admire the artistic way the scrapper put the pages together or they way they've arranged the various photos, captions, clippings and the like. But no one picks up a scrapbook when they want to learn or understand something.

To be fair, I tried on several occasions to just sit down and read it. I even tried picking out specific pages based on the table of contents so I could use it like a reference. Every time the "busy-ness" of its layout distracted me and I found myself absently flipping through the pages again and again. (Like a scrapbook.)

This format may be quite engaging and even useful for some, but when I want to read a book on writing craft I want a book that reads more like, well, like a book.

T Ramon says

Magnificent resource and fantastic worksheets and study guides.

L.A. Jacob says

The usual "three-act stories, and here's how you do it." Nothing spectacular. Worksheets are mediocre. Save your money and buy a Book in A Month.

Bracton says

Decent if somewhat generic advice. Nothing new here.

Emmaline MacBeath says

Although this book does not really help me in any way specifically to write my novel in my spare time, I am giving it five stars because of its usability and its comprehensiveness. This is the best book on writing fiction I have read in a very long time. Here is what makes this a superb book:

- 1) User friendly information and easy to read layout. Bates gives examples that are modern and understandable rather than relying on difficult to follow passages from classic fiction as many writers of these sorts of books do. I love the spiral book format. He provides many very usable worksheets to help with planning. He talks in a way that I can visualize in my head exactly what he wants to convey. One of my favorite quotes: "If your handsome, muscular, confident hero strides assertively and briskly into the dusty, spare, barely lamplit room, you've got a problem with excessive description..."
- 2) Bates presents some new ways of looking at writing such as the three act novel structure chart and the point of view flow chart for choosing which POV would be best for your novel.
- 3) He breaks the novel down into many pieces and parts showing you how it works in the micro (including subplot, hurdles, tension, pacing, and how to get deeper into your characters) instead of giving just the three main biggies of plot, character and setting which many books on writing concentrate on.
- 4) He provides many questions along the way to guide you to better writing. These are questions that help you look at your novel in a new and more objective way.

I have been looking for a long time for a book that breaks the novel down further for me past the three basic parts and I feel this book does a very nice job at this. I am not a novice writer and I found much to inspire and help me here. I would highly recommend this book to beginning writers. You can start with the parts that you most need first and then go back and dig in deeper later. I plan on reading this book many times to absorb all of the information it offers.

Blue says

As others have noted, The Nighttime Novelist lacks a clear statement about how it will fulfill the promise to

help write a novel in one's spare time. However, it does not take a genius to figure out that each step, worksheet, and "try it out" section can be used to slowly develop one's novel without having to spend several contiguous hours each time, but rather half an hour there and an hour here. Each section is short and to the point to aid such application, each worksheet can be done in short bursts and re-visited night (or day or morning) after night.

Also as others have noted, *The Nighttime Novelist* is an excellent book on writing with chockfull of advice, tips, do's and don't's. It is probably one of the few books on writing that made me laugh out loud several times, due to some very funny examples.

No one book about writing a novel is complete or perfect for each and every person, but *The Nighttime Novelist* can be one of the few books that make up a small library for the novelist, especially the beginner. It goes well beyond the "show, don't tell" and "write what you know" kind of [useful] cliches about writing, and it even proves that some of the most prevalent advice out there is not necessarily correct in the absolute. In this sense, the book is a feel-good read for the anxious writer who is feeling worried about telling too much or not writing an entirely new novel that's never been done before. It soothes some nerves, while addressing real concerns with solid, applicable advice.

Recommended for those who like *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *The Shining*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Road*, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, and, of course, routines and superstitions.

Alyssa W says

I picked this book up at the library, and my decision was based solely on the title and the colorful, shiny layout. I need to stop doing that.

This book felt like a bait and switch to me. The title ("Finish Your Novel in Your Spare Time") and the introduction make this book seem like it's going to be incredibly helpful to me. As a wannabe novelist balancing writing with things like my other career and making sure my cat doesn't starve, I dove in hoping to feel a little less bad that sometimes I don't write at all because I have to cook dinner or go on a business trip. Imagine my surprise when the vast majority of the book just talks about how to write a good novel.

Don't get me wrong, the advice is good, but nothing life changing that I couldn't read for free on the internet. It's 3-star writing advice: what does the three act structure look like, characters need motivation, etc. I'm taking a star away, though, because I thought this book would be so much more and it really let me down. Aside from the introduction and Appendix A, there's nothing about writing-life balance, nothing to make me think that I even really have a shot at this novelist thing.

If you're a new writer, this is a great introduction to writing a novel. If you're an intermediate writer who has a novel and wants some encouragement, read the intro of this book at the bookstore or library, then put it back on the shelf and go write.

Kathleen Flynn says

My earlier review of this book got vaporized when I tried to change the edition -- thanks, Goodreads. I

haven't the patience to write it all again, but I will say I enjoyed this very much. Initially I expected it to be rather basic and obvious, the sort of writing advice found everywhere, but it grew on me as I kept reading. Basic and obvious it may be, but it also emphasizes some important truths about novel writing that can be hard to keep front and center when trying to write one.

The need for characters to have both external and internal motivations, for instance, and for them to work in concert.

That each scene needs to have an arc of its own, just as every chapter does and the book as a whole.

The suggestion to write each scene with full focus on what that particular scene needs, to write it as best you can and not worry about what comes next -- and only then, when that scene is completed to, to think about what it might suggest about the next scene needs to be -- this might seem obvious to some. But I realized it is often not what I am doing when writing a scene. I am worried about the next scene! Or I am worried about the overall book! I am thinking, I will never, never get this done and even if I do, it will suck! (Maybe that's just me.)

Some reviewers have complained that this book does not fulfill the implicit promise of its title and subtitle. Which does, in fact, suggest it might be more about time management and novel-writing than strictly about novel-writing. Although this is a valid point, it did not detract from the helpfulness of the book for me, though I can see how people might be annoyed. It seemed more like a misguided but understandable marketing effort to stand out from the mass of novel-writing advice books.

The sad reality is that time management is not going to write your novel for you. Novel-writing advice books are not going to write your novel for you. The only thing that is going to write your novel for you is you sitting down and actually doing the job. (Unless you hire a ghostwriter, but that defeats the purpose, unless you are Beyonce or something.)

Pro tip: because I read the kindle edition, I did not benefit from the book's charts and worksheets much. I might go back and seek it out in hard copy, though I am not a big worksheet fan. If you are, try to get the right version from the start.

OK back to work.
