

BOOK REVIEWS

Writing Your First Novel John Reynolds

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Reviewed by Dr. Cathie Dunsford

Writing Your First Novel

John Reynolds

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It is appropriate to review these two books together because John Reynolds has used extracts and experiences from writing his first novel, *Uncommon Enemy*, in his accessible and useful guide *Writing Your First Novel*, alongside international authors and writing from a wide variety of sources. Many new authors will learn a great deal from this original combination that John and his publisher have invented.

I have been teaching writing and publishing courses at Auckland University and globally for over thirty years and have not yet come across a manual devised in this way that is so accessible for new writers. So many writing and publishing manuals are like clones of each other world wide and very few are really accessible for first time novel writers.

So many point out the pitfalls of the publishing world and lack the energy and accessibility of this manual for the first time novelist. Many assume the writers know more than they might at this stage of their work. I thus welcome this new edition to the writing and publishing scene as it is full of useful tips and can be picked up by those contemplating writing or with a few scenes in mind to help them through the stages of writing the novel.

The kaupapa or reason for John Reynold's using the writing of his own novel, still fresh in his mind, for compiling this manual is clearly articulated by the author in his first chapter: "I've deliberately chosen excerpts from my first novel, *Uncommon Enemy*, as this enables me to directly share, first hand, my writing experiences with you – from the concept through to the final product."

Writing Your First Novel is a clearly written, practical and highly readable text covering technical aspects like plot, characters, dialogue, description, grammar, structure, resources and sources of support and even how to market and sell your work. A unique aspect of this text is the chapter on "Love and Sex", not often in such manuals and one which I will guarantee will amuse and be of benefit to many writers.

John Reynolds has a knack for being able to deconstruct the difficult aspects of writing and make the main issues simple and clear for the aspiring novelist. Authors of many other genres could well benefit from this work as well.

I highly recommend this book for all aspiring writers, wherever you are writing from. There is something for all new authors to get their teeth into here and it is a terrific text for the beginner. A useful sequel once you have finished the novel is another manual, *Getting Published*, Global Dialogues Press, which also draws on experiences of first time writers and shows all the avenues of support for writers once the text is completed www.libertas.co.uk