

Thrillers: 100 Must Reads

David Morrell, Editor

Hank Wagner, Editor

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The recently established International Thriller Writers organization decided to compile a list of 100 thrillers that have made an impact on literature; the result is this dynamic anthology of essays by Steve Berry, Heather Graham, Jeffrey Deaver, and a multitude of other prominent thriller writers. Beginning with *Theseus and the Minotaur*, *Macbeth*, and *Frankenstein*, continuing with *The War of the Worlds*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, and rounding out with *The Hunt for Red October*, *Misery*, and *Along Came a Spider*, it offers a collective history of the thriller form. Because the group's goal was to produce a list of sustainable novels, all of the selections, with the exception of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, were published before 2000. Twelve writers, including David Baldacci, Sandra Brown, and James Grady, not only contribute essays but have a seminal novel included on this top 100 list.

Each essay, a gem in itself, comprises the essayist's personal reactions to the notable book, why it was revolutionary at the time it was written, and how it continues to resonate with modern readers. For instance, Lee Child compares *Theseus and the Minotaur* with Ian Fleming's *Dr. No*; Allison Brennan describes *Rebecca* as a Gothic Cinderella; Katherine Neville adds another dimension to Edgar Allan Poe's legacy with her look at his only novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*; and Jon Land highlights R.L. Stine's entrée into young adult thrillers with *Silent Night*.

David Morell, co-editor of the anthology and co-founder of the International Thriller Writers organization, contributes several essays. His novel, *First Blood*, in which Rambo was created, is also featured in this collection. Some of his bestselling novels include *The Brotherhood of the Rose*, *The Fifth Profession*, *Extreme Denial*, and *Creepers*. In addition to writing and reviewing for the *New York Review of Science Fiction*, *Mystery Scene*, and *Cemetery Dance*, co-editor and fellow anthology contributor Hank Wagner has co-authored *Prince of Stories: The Many Worlds of Neil Gaiman* and *The Complete Stephen King Universe*.

Bridging classic thrillers with more contemporary works and including a variety of genres from spy, action, and legal thrillers to mystery, supernatural, and romantic thrillers, the essayists consider each title as part of a developing tradition. Readers will not only receive a deeper understanding of individual titles, they will learn how each fits into a longstanding format. For casual readers, scholars, or librarians, this anthology is the best go-to source for thriller interest.

ANGELA LEEPER (July / August 2010)

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