A MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF FICTION WRITING

by Anthony Bloor

How do novelists create their fictions? Can literary theory help us to understand practice? What sort of mental work is involved in fiction writing? This book sets out to answer such questions, and its premise is that we can learn about a complicated process by building a model of the process; its goal is a model of fiction writing. Bloor begins by discussing the concept of a model of writing; then he introduces the kinds of models that are used in teaching, research, and the design of software tools for writers. He approaches the subject in an investigative fashion, moving on to examine models of writing in detail; these include behavioral, cognitive, and linguistic varieties. He then defines a basic model, which encapsulates the findings of empirical research into writing behavior. To develop this basic model into one of fiction writing, Bloor turns to Saussure's view of language as a system of signs, and pursues the idea that semiology and literary theory can be used to develop theories of writing as well as of reading. He discusses work by theorists such as Jakobson, Genette, Todorov and Barthes, and concludes by presenting a hypothesis about the ways in which fiction writers create meanings.

"…a major contribution to the psychology of writing. It surveys and extends research from the past twenty years into how people write and the structure of written text. The book's particular contribution is to draw together literary theory, linguistics and cognitive psychology into a new and accessible account of how fiction writers think and work. The book will be of interest to students of literature and psychology as well as to practicing and aspiring writers of fiction." – Prof. Mike Sharples, Research Chair in Education Technology, University of Birmingham, England

"…as Bloor writes, models are crucial. Implicit in any conception of writing, they have serious implications both for the teaching of writing and for the design of software that might be employed in that project. Growing from this assertion is a meticulous recursive exploration of theory and literary product that incorporates the work of such theorists as Hayes and Flower, Sharples and Pemberton, Freud, Chomsky, Saussure and others, and yields a flexible, comprehensive model of the fictional text and the processes involved in its generation." – Dr. Phebe Davidson, University of South Carolina, Aiken

"This highly theoretical book is written in an accessible and clear style… Overall, this book would be excellent for teachers of writing or anyone interested in the development of fiction writing. His history and overview of fiction writing models is very informative and clearly establishes the background for his own interpretation and modeling theory. Bloor's command of the theoretical field applicable to his argument is impressive. He moves easily and smoothly between such areas as semiotics, psychology and literary theory. Overall, this is a significant study that expands the parameters of thought about fiction writing." – Gloria Clark, *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts*, Vol 5, No 1, 2004

About the author: Before moving into higher education, Anthony Bloor worked as a computer programmer in car manufacturing, then in various capacities as a freelancer in the film and TV industry. He has carried out research in artificial intelligence, and research on the use of computers for the teaching of writing. He began a BA in English, graduated with a BSc in Pure Mathematics, has an MSc in Information Technology, and a PhD for multidisciplinary research on writing.