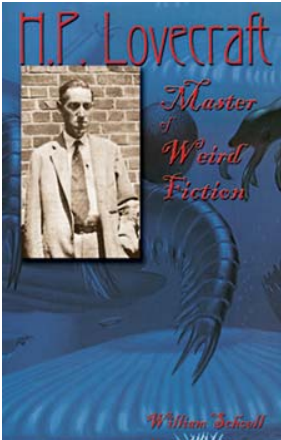


Writers of Imagination



Booklist—September 15 2003

Schoell, William. *H. P. Lovecraft: Master of Weird Fiction*. 2003. 128p, illus. Morgan Reynolds, lib. ed., \$21.95 (1-931798-15-X).

Gr. 5-8. Lovecraft cemented his reputation as the master of the macabre with such adult works as *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Cats of Ulthar*. Now comes a volume for young readers that examines the quirky life of the writer himself, and many of the people and events that influenced his dark, surreal tales. Schoell traces Lovecraft's path from the life of privilege he led as a youngster through the deaths of his father and grandparents, which plunged Lovecraft into poverty. He then follows Lovecraft's erratic lifestyle—his numerous attempts at literary acclaim, the generosity of friends and family who periodically housed and sustained him, his brief marriage of convenience to a woman of means, and, finally, the inferior film adaptations of his stories, and resurgent interest in his work during the late 1970s. Concise and well researched, the book also provides a glimpse at the sometimes-torturous creative process and drives home the literal meaning of suffering for one's art.

—Terry Glover



Booklist, April 1 2004

Leslie, Roger. *Isak Dinesen: Gothic Storyteller*, 2004. 128p. illus. index. Morgan Reynolds, lib. ed., \$21.95 (1-931798-17-6). 839.8.

Gr. 8-12. Creator of the eerie adult best-seller *Seven Gothic Tales* and a popular memoir, *Out of Africa*, Danish author Dinesen, born in 1885, was a strong-willed spirit who sought independence and adventure. With her long battle with syphilis figuring prominently in this accounting, Leslie traces the path the writer followed, which led her away from her bourgeois upbringing in Denmark to the unfettered life she enjoyed on her coffee farm at the foot of the Ngong Hills of Nairobi. Familiar for his how-to books, most recently *Success Express for Teens* (2003), Leslie has used many secondary sources as well as Dinesen's collected letters to construct his affectionate and admiring recounting of the writer's remarkable life. An array of black-and-white photos lends a good sense of the tiny woman who had an enormous destiny.

—Terry Glover



VOYA

December 2004

Writers of Imagination. Morgan Reynolds, 2004. 128 p. PLB \$21.95. Illus. Photos. Biblio. Source Notes. Chronology.

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Schoell, William. *Mystery and Terror: The Story of Edgar Allan Poe*. 1-931978-39-7.

Schoell, William. *H. P. Lovecraft: Master of Weird Fiction*. 1-931798-15-X. Websites.

These comprehensive books about single authors are biographies in the strict sense that they do not pretend to be critical or evaluative sources. They provide a broad yet insightful look at each author's life and how it relates to his or her writing. Among the writers included in the series are Bram Stoker, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Isaac Asimov, and Jules Verne. The Poe and Lovecraft books appear to be factually sound and are easily accessible to young readers. Both contain interesting personal as well as professional information about the authors, and teen readers will find themselves engaged with the style as well as the content. Unlike many biographies about writers, these texts are not so focused on the body of work produced by each writer as to overshadow the writers as unique individuals. Instead the texts have a

more personal quality, drawing amply on author correspondences and anecdotal information. Students will take to the almost casual approach of presentation and will enjoy the ease with which each biography is written.

Both books contain a brief time line of the author's life, a list of published works, and a compact bibliography for further reading and research. It seems clear that the intended audience of these texts was well considered. The books are accessible enough for junior high school students, yet not in the least condescending in tone for older students who might just want a general overview of a particular author's life. *Poe* is especially good at describing the complicated youth of the writer, whereas the *Lovecraft* text gives interesting insight into what some writers are willing to do and not do for their craft. Both books reveal their subjects' darker sides, and there is no attempt to

sugarcoat their extreme, and some might even think deplorable, characters. Teens will find these men believable and might even be intrigued to read more of their work through the perspective of their troubled lives. These biographies are solid texts with no pretense. This series is worth having on the shelf for readers who need to do some limited biographical research but who would be put off by more heavily footnoted, dense text. ---Elaine J. O'Quinn.