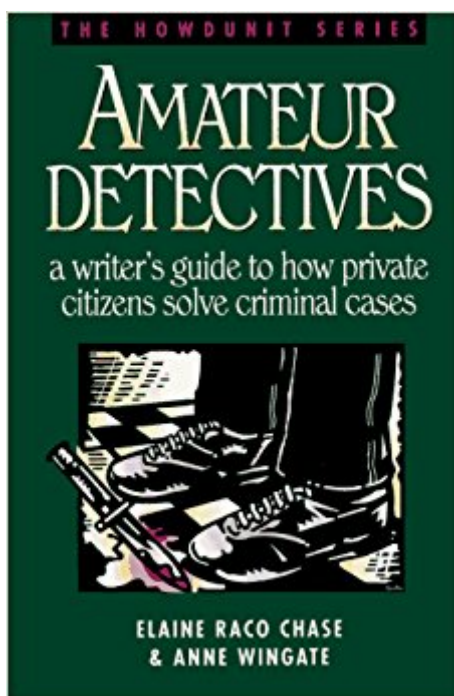


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# Amateur Detectives: A Writer's Guide To How Private Citizens Solve Criminal Cases (Howdunit Writing)



## Synopsis

Offers detective and mystery writers factual foundations for their characters' amateur sleuthing.

## Book Information

Series: Howdunit Writing

Paperback: 240 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #350,938 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Writing #1652 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Writing Skills #2535 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Fiction

## Customer Reviews

Did you ever want your protagonist to make a citizen's arrest, but you didn't know the process? If the answer is yes, then turn to this volume from the Writer's Digest Howdunit series. It has all the information your sleuth needs for busting open the big case, including an overview on Internet hacking and descriptions of how real crime victims have solved their own cases. This book is recommended for mystery fans as well as scribes. I wish I had this back when I was reading those Encyclopedia Brown stories!

Amateur Detectives is a professional writer's guide to how private citizens solve criminal cases. Amateur Detectives covers all the information needed to write an exciting chase, keep the amateur-crime-solver novels and stories factually accurate and completely convincing. Amateur Detectives investigates why high-tech policing hasn't run off the low-tech amateur; jobs that fit neatly with amateur sleuthing; intuition, gossip and other information-gathering methods; how to find out all about anyone; how the Internet can speed an amateur sleuth to answers; how today's technological wonders can help the amateur detective; the law as it applies to amateur detectives; state-by-state gun laws; state-by-state citizens' arrest powers; the Freedom of Information Act; and

how real amateurs solved real crimes. *Amateur Detectives* is a valuable reference book for any writer seeking to make their mystery fiction credible. -- Midwest Book Review

This is a great resource for mystery story writers. My only reason for rating it a little lower is the age of the book. It would be awesome to see an updated version that included current technology! (And I'd give it another half star, if that was possible.)

A comprehensive book on the writing craft, helpful if you're interested in writing mysteries with an amateur detective, often known as cozy mysteries. It's out of print, but I was able to find a copy on .

I found *Amateur Detectives* helpful in the way it laid out the development of the amateur detective per my needs. There is a lot of good info in this book and some that is definitely out of date due to the upgrades in technology. Still this book is to be recommended to any looking to write a Mystery Novel.

If your'e writing a sleuth detective novel, buy it. You won't be disappointed. I read it cover to cover, and now it's filled with dog-eared pages and highlighted passages. A definite gem in my writing toolbox.

Looks interesting.

If you're writing mysteries, you need this book. In fact, it's probably the most important of the "Howdunit" series of books. You'll get an overview of past, successful mysteries and the people who wrote them... but "just the fact, ma'am." In other words, you can skim that section and learn a LOT. My favorite? Apparently, one amateur detective solved all her mysteries without leaving home. Possibly without leaving the dinner table. (I'm going to read some of those books. This section of "Amateur Detectives" opened my eyes to many popular writers whose books sound deliciously intriguing.) Then, you'll learn which classic sleuths came from what kind of backgrounds -- from nuns to reformed criminals -- and that can open up new possibilities for your books' sleuth. Next, you'll learn what amateur detectives do in real life, and how the police regard them. (Mostly, they're treated like "busybodies.") You'll also learn how amateur sleuths shine in a field where DNA and other sciences could trump the amateurs... but often don't. Fascinating reading! This book is wall-to-wall tips for writing mysteries or anything involving an amateur detective. I'd bought several

other Howdunit Series books before this one, and wish I'd just bought this at the beginning. It tells me about 90% of what I need to know to write an intelligent "cozy" mystery.

Elaine Raco Chase and Anne Wingate base the premise of this book as helpful based on the "one-must-do-one's-own-reading" premise; of the mystery novels we like, in order to write one of our own with believable characters and an interesting plotline. Although I totally agree with this suggestion, I can say this is hardly news for any serious writer of any genre. It is so how we are presented with a very extensive list of suggested reading, where all types of amateur detectives display their wit and wisdom (Chapter 1). I have found it very helpful indeed as reference for a bibliography on mystery novels. Later on, the book explains different laws for citizen's arrest in each and every one of the States of the Union. This is unfortunate (and very long), since it will only help you if you are setting your novel in the United States of America, making the book a prejudist one. The authors argue that whenever they requested information from other governments, they were ignored. I don't quite really know what to make of them as researchers. A chapter that can summarize the first intention of the book is the one called "Resume of an amateur detective" (Chapter 3). However, it is very superficial and it won't provide any more information about creating your own amateur sleuth than you may be able to find elsewhere or come up with from your own writer's imagination, AFTER you have done the required and fruitful reading. There is also a chapter with lots of internet resources but, unless they are very general (such as the Library of Congress or the White House), it becomes invariably outdated (this also applies for the chapter on laws of the United States which change, at least, every year). I think nowadays most writers would be capable of using a search engine and find whatever it is they are looking for on the internet and more.

When I first started reading *Amateur Detectives*, I felt that it needed much more than it offered, however as I kept reading the book kept getting better and better. As the book starts off, it talks about the history of amateur detectives, which is specifically geared towards detective novelists. I found it fascinating to learn where some very established writers got their inspiration. The biggest (and best) section of this book talks about state and federal weapon regulations. It talks about concealed fire arms as well. It was very interesting to read the different laws per state, and especially interesting to read about my own state. I really have learned a lot about the gun regulations. This section really makes up for the slow beginning of the book.

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