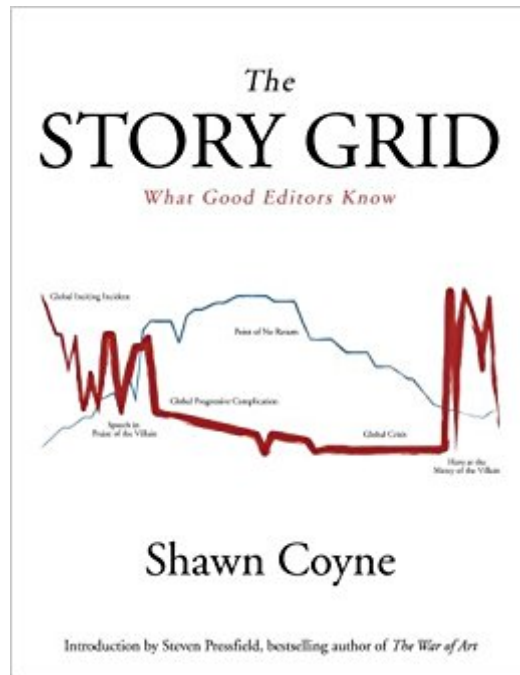


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# The Story Grid: What Good Editors Know



## Synopsis

WHAT IS THE STORY GRID?The Story Grid is a tool developed by editor Shawn Coyne to analyze stories and provide helpful editorial comments. It's like a CT Scan that takes a photo of the global story and tells the editor or writer what is working, what is not, and what must be done to make what works better and fix what's not.The Story Grid breaks down the component parts of stories to identify the problems. And finding the problems in a story is almost as difficult as the writing of the story itself (maybe even more difficult.)The Story Grid is a tool with many applications:1. It will tell a writer if a Story "works" or "doesn't work."2. It pinpoints story problems but does not emotionally abuse the writer, revealing exactly where a Story (not the person creating the Story...the Story) has failed.3. It will tell the writer the specific work necessary to fix that Story's problems.4. It is a tool to re-envision and resuscitate a seemingly irredeemable pile of paper stuck in an attic drawer.5. It is a tool that can inspire an original creation.

## Book Information

Paperback: 344 pages

Publisher: Black Irish Entertainment LLC (April 28, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1936891352

ISBN-13: 978-1936891351

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.8 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 137 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #66,272 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in [Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Publishing & Books > Book Industry](#) #39 in [Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Editing](#) #205 in [Books > Textbooks > Reference > Writing Skills](#)

## Customer Reviews

Shawn Coyne is a twenty-five year book-publishing veteran. He's edited, published or represented works from James Bamford, John Brenkus, James Lee Burke, Barbara Bush, Dick Butkus, Harlan Coben, Nellie Connally, Michael Connelly, Robert Crais, Ben Crenshaw, Catherine Crier, Brett Favre, David Feherty, John Feinstein, Tyler Florence, Jim Gant, Col. David H. Hackworth, Jamie Harrison, Mo Hayder, William Hjortsberg, Stephen Graham Jones, Jon Krakauer, David Leadbetter, Alan Lomax, David Mamet, Troon McAllister, Robert McKee, Matthew Modine, Bill Murray, Joe

Namath, John J. Nance, Jack Olsen, Scott Patterson, Steven Pressfield, Matthew Quirk, Anita Raghavan, Ian Rankin, Ruth Rendell, Jerry Rice, Giora Romm, Tim Rosaforte, William Safire, Dava Sobel, Michael Thomas, Nick Tosches, Ann Scott Tyson, Minette Walters, Betty White, Randy Wayne White, Steven White, and Don Winslow among many others. During his years as an editor at the Big Five publishing houses, as an independent publisher, as a literary agent both at a major Hollywood talent agency and as head of Genre Management Inc., and as a bestselling co-writer (The Ones Who Hit The Hardest with Chad Millman) and ghostwriter, Coyne created a methodology called The Story Grid to teach the editing craft. With his friend, business partner and client Steven Pressfield, author of The War of Art, Coyne also runs the independent publishing company Black Irish Books and writes for [www.stevenpressfield.com](http://www.stevenpressfield.com) and [www.storygrid.com](http://www.storygrid.com).

Okay, first off, I did purchase the book, however, I'd already read most of it beforehand because much of the book is on his blog (available for free of course, something Shawn Coyne mentions in the preface). The physical book is amazingly well done and huge, it's well worth the price (and I'm a huge Kindle fan, but some things need to be written in and marked up and highlighted). So, why do you need this if you're a writer or trying to be one? Shawn teaches a way of understanding good story form and function from an editor's perspective, and he does it very well. By the time you've re-read something (and if you're smart, gone to his blog and read through the comments/questions and follow up) you'll have a deeper understanding of WHY good writing works. And by good writing, I'm talking about good story, commercial and popular fiction. Genre fiction. Stuff that sells. I've been studying this story grid stuff for months now, and while I'm still a beginner, I can say, I've not only learned a lot, I've learned what it is I need to learn. What I didn't know I didn't know is now becoming apparent to me. Okay, so let's say you haven't yet become a writer. Well, you might need this book first (or at least in conjunction with The Story Grid): *Story Engineering* as in this book, Brooks explains how to outline BEFORE you start writing. Shawn's book here explains how to take that rough draft and figure out what's wrong and what's right. "Working/not working" is an important thing to know. You need to be able to answer: "Do I have the proper conventions and devices in this story to fit into the genre I'm trying to write for?" And you need to be able to answer questions about scenes turning properly (having a purpose) and many other things (problems/mistakes) that aren't always apparent and that this "story grid" model is designed to help you find and fix. This book helps a TON with figuring all that out. While it's not exactly a "planning" book, I still suggest using it for that. Case in point: for me, I'd started a lot of stories before, without good planning and without understanding exactly what I needed to do. I did read the book I

mentioned above (actually 3 times) but I was still stuck. I got into this material and in a three week period I cranked out a eighty thousand word rough draft. I felt like I'd climbed Mount Everest. To be fair, I give a lot of credit to other writers and books like this: *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles* so I'm not saying Shawn Coyne is a magical fairy, BUT I am saying he explains things in such a way that you "get it", and I "got it". Getting it allows you to be creative. I can't emphasize that enough. This book is not about some formula that will make you a creative genius, this book is an explanation on how to take your genius and funnel and channel it properly into a book people will enjoy, read and buy and recommend to others. Okay, so what next? I finished my rough draft and then went to work on it trying to figure out how to edit (and just for the record, this is NOT a primer on line editing). Editing is very very hard. I mean, it's the real deal. I could crank out a full length novel in rough draft every two weeks if I didn't have to worry about editing, oh and my day job. Editing is tough, and mysterious and crazy and hard. Did I mention editing is hard? If you want to write a book people want to read (and buy) then you have to edit well. And, again, I don't mean that you use proper English grammar and not overuse semicolons. I mean that you have to have a good story structure that follows the genre requirements and conventions (or breaks the rules that you understand and because you have mastered them, etc.). I'm far from being good at this. I've tried to "story grid" my rough draft and it's hard. It's hard to know if you are seeing it "correctly" and it's not always objective either, it's a subjective art. But I feel like I've received a college education from working through this material and I highly recommend it. I think you'll feel the same. Again, I did buy this, I do review a lot and get free stuff, but this is the real deal and I'm not writing this for any other reason than it's a great book and very, extremely in fact, helpful. If you're a serious writer or want to be one, there is no excuse not to add this book to your library.

Although the book is well written and could probably help me, the graphics were too small to see. While I could read the Foolscap and the Spreadsheet from visiting the author's website (not in the kindle reader or kindle cloud), I could not read the example grid. The grid cannot be enlarged in Kindle nor in the Kindle Cloud, nor did it appear on the author's website in PDF or other readable format so that I could SEE what he wrote. That's very frustrating. So, while the information is good, unless the author posts the grid where I can access it, then that part of the book is useless to me.

This has been the most helpful book I have ever read on editing. Get your first draft completed and buy this book. It's a cheat sheet of sorts that will save you months, if not years, of trial and error in

the editing process. Do you have a story and you just can't figure out what's wrong with it? Do the Story Grid and the answer will be glaringly obvious. I can't recommend this book enough. My suggestion is that you purchase the physical book as the graphs and charts are impossible to see in the Kindle edition. Also, the book is a solid reference tool which you can paw through faster than trying to track subsections on the Kindle. And you really will be using this as a reference. If you haven't finished a first draft of a manuscript, this may still be of great use to you in designing your story structure. It is a good supplement to Shawn's Story Grid Podcast. The Story Grid editor has an advantage over other editors. This should be required reading for all editors in training.

I think I read more books on writing craft than anyone I know. Each time I set out to write a book I usually get about half-way before I turn to a craft book to make sure I'm "doing it right". I think I do it right most of the time. But honestly, it's so easy to get lost in the middle. So for this Wasted Lust book I stumbled across The Story Grid: What Good Editors Know by Shawn Coyne. And a lot of it is about writing thrillers, which I do, and a lot of it is very technical when it comes to plotting, which I do not do, so I picked out the parts that I found helpful and left the rest to other people. Anyway, to you aspiring authors out there who want to know how to add suspense to your romances, I found this book very helpful. The author devotes an entire section of the book to deconstructing The Silence of the Lambs. I found that to be one of the most helpful critiques of plot and characterization I've ever come across. (And I've read a lot of them)

Just this past winter, I asked a top NY editor for titles of the editing books she used while learning her craft. She said she had none, that she learned through apprenticeship and on the job experience. As a writer who was desperate to "figure" out the editing component, her answer could not have been more disheartening. Then, I found The Story Grid and finally had the process to understand how to helpfully critique my writing buddies' work as well as my own. By the time I had finished The Story Grid, I had recommended it to twelve people. I have no doubt I will continue to recommend it for years to come.

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