



by Kristopher Zgorski

*The Washington Independent Review of Books* (<https://www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com>), affectionately known as *The Independent*, is an established nonprofit website focused on spreading the love of literature through book reviews and other book-related content. They have new content every day, provided by their large contingent of creators, with various links to the world of writing. Unlike many websites, they do not specialize in one particular genre, so *The Independent* is a great way to discover what books are in the zeitgeist from disciplines one is less familiar with, while the use of linked tags does allow for drilling down into more coordinated areas based on sub-genres. Their features tab will take fans to interviews, postings about book news, or essays on timely subject matter that will appeal to anyone living a literary lifestyle.

Jeff Popple's *Murder, Mayhem, and Long Dogs* (<https://murdermayhemandlongdogs.com>) is a crime fiction focused review blog that all fans of the genre should be reading. Based in Canberra, Australia, Jeff's reviews cover a wide variety of releases within the crime genre, including many that get overlooked elsewhere. The reviews here are balanced and informed and will most definitely cause any fan's "to-be-read" pile to grow. A fun part of the blog is Jeff's analysis of what he calls "trashy book covers," which are basically vintage pulp covers that will elicit nostalgia from readers who remember their heyday. It should be mentioned that the Long Dogs of the blog's title are Jeff's beloved dachshunds, who get a page of their own, dedicated to the most adorable pictures possible. Jeff Popple is also a contributor to *Deadly Pleasures Mystery Magazine*.

Readers, especially those in book clubs, should check out *Reading Group Guides* (<https://www.readinggroupguides.com>). We have all gotten those books that have discussion questions included in the back, designed to elicit deeper contemplation of the themes and actions of a particular novel, but what about those that don't include them? It's likely you can still find questions about them before your next book club gathering. This website is the best resource for such guides and it might also help your group to decide what books are trending so that you too can be reading the book everyone is talking about. Readers can search the available guides by title, author, or genre. There are also time-tested tips on starting and running a book club, so if your journey in group reading is just beginning, you can set out with the best chance of survival—while having fun along the way.

Let's not forget the writers among us—without them we wouldn't have anything to read and discuss. *Writers Helping Writers* (<https://writershelping-writers.net>) is a website that does have workshops and software that interested parties can pay to sign up for, but there is also a wealth of free content that shouldn't be overlooked. These include things like a PDF version of a worksheet to help with internal conflict in a narrative or exercises designed to help bring your setting to life. A handy list of resources, with links to their space in the cyber realm, is also included. These too are often professional organizations with fees attached, so be sure to do your due diligence to vet out the ones that might be of use to you and your particular journey.

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