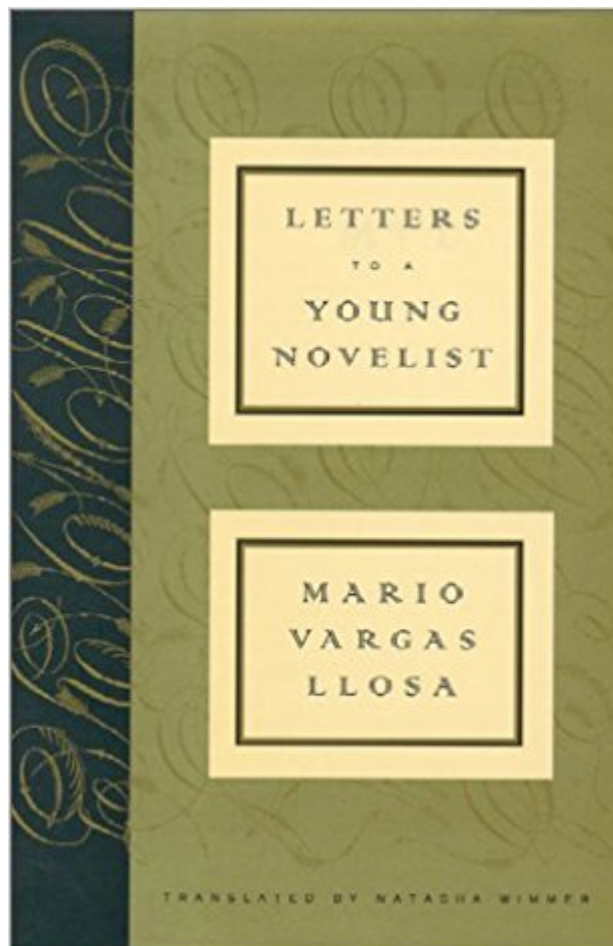


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Letters To A Young Novelist



Synopsis

A literary apprenticeship in eleven letters, by the internationally acclaimed master of the novel In the tradition of Rilke's Letters to a Young Poet, Mario Vargas Llosa condenses a lifetime of writing, reading, and thought into an essential manual for aspiring writers, revealing in the process his deepest beliefs about our common literary endeavor. A writer, in his view, is a being seized by an insatiable appetite for creation, a rebel, and a dreamer. But dreams, when set down on paper, require disciplined development, and so Vargas Llosa undertakes to supply the tools of transformation. Drawing on the stories and novels of writers from around the globe -- Borges, Bierce, CÃ©line, CortÃ¡zar, Faulkner, Kafka, Robbe-Grillet -- he lays bare the inner workings of fiction, examining time, space, style, and structure, all the while urging young novelists not to lose touch with the elemental urge to create. Conversational, eloquent, and effortlessly erudite, this little book is destined to be read and reread by young writers, old writers, would-be writers, and all those with a stake in the world of letters.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Now based in London and teaching at Georgetown University in the U.S., Peruvian novelist and erstwhile politician Vargas Llosa's novels (In Praise of the Stepmother, etc.) and essays (Making Waves). Though the "Letters to a Young " concept has recently been franchised by another publisher (applying it to everything from golf to rabble-rousing), Rilke's slender and sage Letters to a Young Poet remains the standard after 100 years. Vargas Llosa's 12 Letters to a generalized

interlocutor drift in and out of Rilke's league, rich with insight into Western literature and with commentary on the urge that overtakes its practitioners "The literary vocation is not a hobby, a sport, or a pleasant leisure-time activity. It is an all-encompassing, all-excluding occupation, an urgent priority, a freely chosen servitude that turns its victims (its lucky victims) into slaves." Yet Vargas Llosa is also somewhat wryly withholding, as if to thicken the plot: "Writing novels is the equivalent of what professional strippers do when they take off their clothes and exhibit their naked bodies on stage. The novelist performs the same acts in reverse." His examples of good and great novelists, whom he discusses while making larger philosophical points about concepts like style, time or representation, are pretty hard to take issue with: Woolf and James; Dos Passos and Hemingway; Flaubert (*Madame Bovary* is a particular favorite), de Beauvoir and Robbe-Grillet; Borges and Cervantes. Neither a survey course in what to read nor a practical guide to writing, the book finally is a meditation on writing and its proper relationship to life. "Good novels, great ones, never actually seem to tell us anything; rather, they make us live it, and share in it, by virtue of their persuasive powers." Particularly given the excellent translation here by PW contributing editor Wimmer, the same could be said for letters like these. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Imitating Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*, the famed Peruvian novelist passes out advice in the form of 11 letters. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

This is an elegant, erudite reflection on fiction writing as passion and philosophy. Like a caring, older companion, it offers the aspiring novelist much in the way of encouragement and inspiration. But be warned: it is not a how-to manual focusing on a workshop-type approach to producing fiction. Instead, it invites the reader on a journey through the often lonely and troubling pathways that all writers inevitably have to navigate. Stimulating and rewarding.

Awesome writing tips for writers pursuing a novel of their own.

"Letters" is an adroitly written instruction book for beginning writers. Incorporating an imaginary correspondent, Mario Vargas Llosa writes a series of letters to a young protege sharing his years of literary experience and outlining the principles that make a novel. It is an interesting vehicle for an instruction book and it works. Most books of how to write are overloaded with superfluous detail and have the annoying tendency to be academic in the approach to writing. This book is breezy,

conversational, loaded with brilliant insight and fun to read. Sighting loads of examples from classic and not so classic novels he brings to life essential topics of style, voice, time, point of view and other narrative tools that the masters of the novel have incorporated for hundreds of years. Many of the novelists Vargas Llosa sites for his many examples are unknown to me and he has roused my interest in reading their books. Alas, many of them are not translated into English (at least not that I can find on). But that does not diminish the satisfaction derived from reading this diminutive book. His best advice to any writer is to be a great reader. An example he has clearly followed himself.

Want to learn to write, and do so from a Noble recipient? Here it is, the answer to your questions on how to become a master.

Except for Strunk and White's The Elements of Style and Aristotle's Poetics, I have found books on writing unhelpful and mind numbing. I wouldn't put Llosa's Letters to a Young Novelist in the same category as The Element of Style or Poetics, but it is excellent, and though I'm not young, I learned a few things and reminded of many other others.

I'll never forget this book. It was only one phrase for me. Find yours.

Inspiring and excellently written. Vargas LLosa is a brilliant man and reading his narratives is always an enriching experience.

its a good teaching tool

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