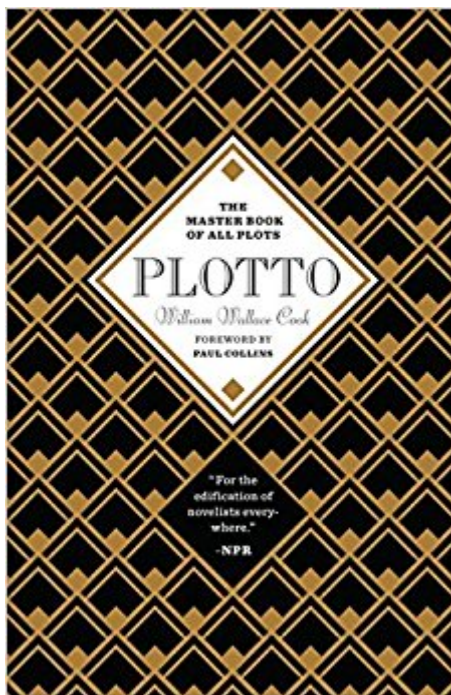


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Plotto: The Master Book Of All Plots



Synopsis

A classic how-to manual, William Wallace Cook's *Plotto* is one writer's personal theory--"Purpose, opposed by Obstacle, yields Conflict"--painstakingly diagrammed through hundreds of situations and scenarios. In the 1920s, dime store novelist William Wallace Cook painstakingly diagrammed and cataloged his personal writing method--"Purpose, opposed by Obstacle, yields Conflict"--for the instruction and illumination of his fellow authors. His effort resulted in an astonishing 1,462 plot scenarios, and *Plotto: The Master Book of All Plots* was born. A how-to manual for plot, hailed by the *Boston Globe* as "First aid to troubled writers," *Plotto* influenced Erle Stanley Gardner, author of the Perry Mason books, and a young Alfred Hitchcock. At first glance, *Plotto* operates with a machinelike logic, but from its endless amalgamations writers will find inspiration for narratives with limitless possibility. Open the book to any page to find plots you may never have known existed--from morose cannibals to gun-wielding preachers to phantom automobiles. Equal parts reference guide and historical oddity, *Plotto* is sure to amaze and delight writers for another hundred years.

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Customer Reviews

"*Plotto* has just been reissued for the edification of novelists everywhere." - NPR
"*Plotto* is a reference guide that is at once dense, artful, and hilarious." - Brainpickings
"A freaky plot museum containing every twist under the sun." - Chris Baty, Founder of NanoWriMo and author of NO PLOT? NO PROBLEM

William Wallace Cook was born in Marshall, Michigan, in 1867. He was the author of a memoir, *The Fiction Factory*, as well as dozens of Westerns and science-fiction novels, many of which were adapted into films. He was nicknamed "the man who deforested Canada" for the volume of stories he fed into the pulp-magazine mill. He spent five years composing *Plotto* before finally publishing it in 1928. Cook died in his hometown of Marshall in 1933. Paul Collins is a writer specializing in history, memoir, and unusual antiquarian literature. His nine books have been translated into eleven languages, and include *Sixpence House: Lost in a Town of Books* (2003) and *The Murder of the Century: The Gilded Age Crime That Scandalized a City & Sparked the Tabloid Wars* (2011). Collins lives in Oregon, where he is chair and professor of English at Portland State University.

There has probably never been a better book on plots than *Plotto* written back before the crust of the earth hardened, but never done any better. A writer can find endless combinations of plot development, but this is far from easy. The manner of presentation requires full concentration and an aptitude for math is helpful. You will simply not pick up this book and come up with the plot for the next great American novel. However, if one is willing to study the method and understand the flow of development, it is a most valuable tool.

If you want to know how Alfred Hitchcock or the author of Perry Mason came up with those great stories... this is what they used. This is a very complex, geeky book. Some of the suggested story lines are amazingly dated, especially regarding the roles of women. However, if you need to weave a unique, complex plot and do it efficiently... this is probably the book you want. Don't waste your time with the Kindle version. You need the printed edition -- and possibly a bunch of post-it type notes -- to weave your way through the hundreds (thousands? tens of thousands?) of options. I consider it a must-own book for prolific novelists. It's almost certain to overwhelm most beginners, so if you're new to writing, put this on your wishlist for later. It's also designed for people accustomed to working with mindmaps and LOTS of data. If you're just not a researcher, this book could be a snooze. Stick to simpler plotting guides and dice. However, if you want to write a complex story, or build a multi-generational series of books... this is the plotting guide you need.

The master book of all plots? I'm pretty sure I can think of one (or maybe 100) that aren't in here, but I'll blame it on the ancient original date of publication. Is this book a masterful collection of lots of standard plots? Hell yes. Is this book great to have handy when you're stuck for an idea?

Definitely. Will this book help you pen your latest masterpiece? Maybe. Will this book help you write a "plot a day" tweet on Twitter? Surely! Example plot: "1266: A's enemy, A-3, is a connoisseur of wines. A, by working on A-3's pride as a connoisseur of wines, lures him into a wine vault where he is faced with death." Why, that's classic Poe -- "The Cask of Amontillado"! Though I found the coding system a bit odd (why "A" for a male protagonist and "B" for a female, instead of "M" and "F"?), I enjoyed the way Cook boiled down all plots to a logical syllogism. If you want to completely categorize all possible plots, I'm sure that time and technology will eventually produce others not listed here, but it sure is fun trying to figure out which sub-plot they might fit into. Highly recommended as a source of entertainment at literati parties, if not a daily reference manual.

This is a fun book if for narrative nerds, but it's also fun just to see how relationships are structured in stories. I'd say it's a go-to for writer's block. It's not so much a how-to as it is a reference book.

This book gives me a headache because its author was a genius and I'm not. It's the real deal. I love reading books on writing by prolific authors.

I can really see the use of this book in teaching analysis of narrative. It would be great in literature courses to get discussions raging around a template. I can also see the use of it in the preparation to write. Although its motifs are a bit old for writing a good contemporary novel, they would hold up very well where movies are concerned, in cinematic appreciation and in their creation. Most movies are still operating at this level.

I couldn't really get into it. To me it was too formulaic. I don't have a mathematical-type mind and just scanning it gives me the same feeling as I prepare to do my income tax return. However, my views shouldn't turn off another who is mathematically inclined and enjoys solving math problems. I feel that such an individual who was stuck could use one of the formulas to get rid of his or her writer's block.

Incredibly difficult to master -- but worth it.

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