A fresh, inspiring guide to writing fiction. Method and Madness takes its title from Hamlet: “Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t.” Comprehensive and accessible, it provides guidelines to all aspects of fiction writing, from generating ideas to getting published. With a wealth of imaginative yet practical exercises and 39 stories—the most in any guide to fiction writing—Method and Madness offers friendly, down-to-earth instruction in the art and craft of fiction.
I had to buy this book for a short story workshop I enrolled in. I wasn't expecting much, having had lots of creative writing textbooks assigned by a lot of teachers, and frankly found them all to be boring and not-very-helpful. This one just blew me away. I thought I "knew it all" -- but LaPlante keeps challenging conventional wisdom. She gives you the deepest, most masterful explanations of craft I've ever encountered -- and then encourages you to make up your mind about how to use these tools. No imposing of narrow-minded rules that you all too often get in workshops. I have to admit, it made me want to go back and tell former colleagues in workshops...wait! I was wrong about that! The readings are great, but what I find especially useful are the examples. LaPlante doesn't ever tell you anything without fully illustrating it with an excerpt -- whether from a published masterpiece or from a student's work. So you're always grounded. Get this book. You'll be as grateful as I am to the teacher who assigned it.

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