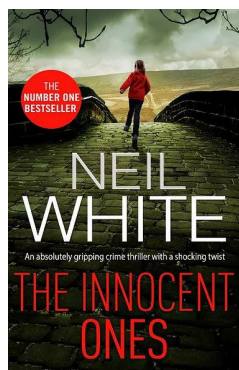


# MEET THE AUTHOR

Best selling crime writer **Neil White** on reading and writing books and what inspires him



**If there was one book you would recommend to a friend what would it be and why?** My usual type of reading is crime fiction, which is why I write crime fiction, so the book that comes straight to mind is *The Force* by Don Winslow. It is a police-led novel set in New York, about a police unit that operates very much on the fringes of what is allowed and what isn't. I've chosen that one as I went on holiday a couple of years ago (I think holidays for most people now are things they did a couple of years ago) with a pile of books. I left most behind in the accommodation I was in, as is often the case in self-catering places, but that was the one book I thought, "I need to take this book back to give to someone else", so it went back in my case.

**What was the last book that made you laugh?** That's a tricky one, as I tend to read thrillers. I can't remember laughing at a book for a long time, and now I've been reminded of the pleasure I must do something about that. I'm going to say that it will have been a *Viz Annual*, if that counts. I'm English so I'm fond of a cleverly-crafted double-entendre or jokes straight from the gutter.

**Which was your favourite book as a child?** I didn't so much have a favourite book but rather I followed a number of books series. I did the whole Enid Blyton thing, as most children did in the seventies, so the Famous Five was always a must-have. I used to buy up all the Doctor Who novels as well, which were a book-version of the TV series. If I'm honest, I wasn't a huge fan of the TV series, but I did love the books, especially the ones involving the earlier Doctors, like William Hartnell and Patrick Houghton. I used to enjoy the Three Investigator Series by Alfred Hitchcock, and they led me to discover the joy of being scared when reading.

**What book are you reading now?** *The Holdout* by Graham Moore. It's a legal thriller, jury-based. Imagine *Twelve Angry Men* with Henry Fonda, but with Henry wondering later on whether he got it right, when more murders happen. I've only just started it so I might have it completely wrong, but that's what I'm guessing it will be like.

**Which book have you read that surprised you, and why?** *To Kill A Mockingbird*. I'd always dismissed it as a bit of an A Level text, something to be studied. I read it out of mere curiosity, and it's still the only book I've read that I wanted to start reading again as soon as I'd finished it.



# MEET THE AUTHOR

**Whose biography would you like to write?** Son House. He's a blues singer/songwriter from the Mississippi Delta, and he was there when blues started to develop into what it became, and eventually led to rock and roll, and knew all the legendary performers. He was still playing in the seventies, after the blues had been discovered, forgotten, and then rediscovered. It would be an atmospheric tale, all humid back-yards and dusty back-roads, with famous faces emerging and then disappearing again, as Son House knew them all.

**What inspired you to want to write?** I don't mean this to sound crass, but I wanted to write because I always felt like it was something I could do, so I wanted to prove that I could. At school, I always did well in English composition, and if I had one skill, it was always that I thought I could put words on the page. When I finished my law degree and had more time to kill, I decided to give it a go. I decided that I would write three stories, and if I didn't get a book deal, I'd take the hint and realise that it wasn't for me. I got an agent after I'd written two, and she got me my first book deal with HarperCollins. Thirteen novels later, I'm just getting to the end of the next one. I'm not someone who particularly enjoys the creative process, if I'm honest, as I don't think ideas are my strong point. I prefer it when I've finished the first draft, so I can shape and perfect it. I think that's because I am always fearful that I'll somehow get lost on the way, so getting everything down means that I've fluked it again and can breathe another sigh of relief.

**What are your top tips for people wanting to write a book?** Start it. Finish it. The first twenty thousand words will always be the worst part of any book you'll write, the part you amend the most. Push on through that, keep going, because it will get easier, because you'll find your style, your voice, and the story will start to appear. The last twenty thousand will just flow onto the screen. And make sure you finish it. Don't be forever tweaking it. All you are doing is putting off the time when someone will reject it, and you'll get rejections, but there isn't an editor in the world who will say, "this book is perfect, there is nothing I can do with it". Finish it and, if you want a publishing deal, send it off.

**Do you have a message for our NHS front line staff?** The NHS has always been loved. The pandemic has reminded everyone how loved it is and, when we look back on these times, we'll know who the heroes were.

Copyright © Neil White 2021

