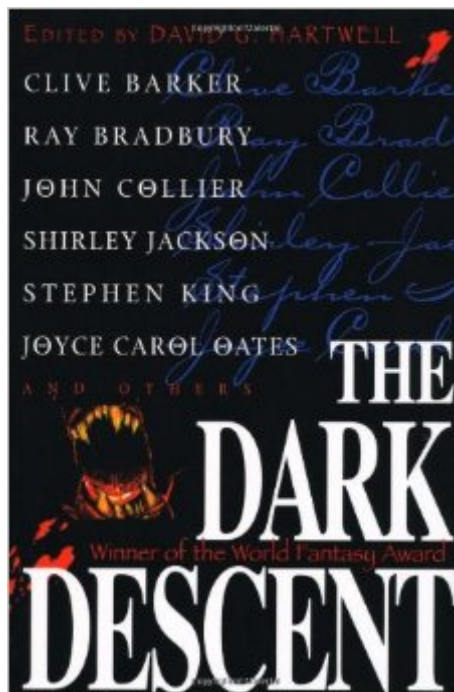


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# The Dark Descent



## Synopsis

In *The Dark Descent*, hailed as one of the most important anthologies ever to examine horror fiction, editor David G. Hartwell traces the complex history of horror in literature back to the earliest short stories. *The Dark Descent*, which won the World Fantasy Award for Best Anthology, showcases the finest of these ever written--from the time-honored classics of Edgar Allan Poe, D.H. Lawrence, and Edith Wharton to the contemporary writing of Stephen King, Clive Barker, and Ray Bradbury.

## Book Information

Series: Dark Descent (Book 1)

Paperback: 1024 pages

Publisher: Tor Books; Reprint edition (January 15, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312862172

ISBN-13: 978-0312862176

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 0.1 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 42 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #49,585 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Horror > Anthologies](#) #31 in [Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Short Stories](#) #377 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories & Anthologies > Anthologies](#)

## Customer Reviews

If you could have only one anthology of dark stories, this would be the one to have. Having observed that "fans of horror fiction most often restrict their reading to books and stories given a horror category label, thus missing some of the finest pleasures in that fictional mode," David G. Hartwell assembles here 56 important tales within an insightful critical framework; his purpose is to "clear the air and broaden future considerations of horror." Several well-known classics are included, but there are also dozens of lesser-known horror tales, including many by science fiction and literary writers. Get one copy for yourself. Get another for that friend or relative who doesn't understand why you like to read horror.

“A gigantic, superlatively edited historical overview of horror fiction.”

—Chicago Sun-Times “For a sample of the current excellence and variety of horror,

one could do no better. *New York Newsday* "An important work which belongs in every library." *The West Coast Review of Books*

At over 1000 pages, *The Dark Descent* will crush the breath out of you should you read it propped on your chest. Hartwell lovingly assembles the old and the new in defining an evolution of horror that reaches back to Poe and Hawthorne. One of this anthology's most significant contributions is the inclusion of three stories from Robert Aickman, hardly the household name of a Stephen King, but the only other author so honored. Hartwell passed away unexpectedly in 2016 and *The Dark Descent* is a living memorial to his wonders as an editor; a book is brought to life by opening its cover and reading.

I have not read this book, but I gave it to a dear friend and teaching colleague who has been a horror aficionado for years, and who once taught a class on the development of "ghost stories." Scott, however, is definitely a more "M. R. James - Lovecraft" fan, someone who really appreciates the tales and "weird fiction" of the time around the turn of the century which spawned the modern "horror" genre. So, apart from the selections of people like LeFanu and Lovecraft which he had already digested ad nauseam, I was honestly not sure he would enjoy the book since much of it is written by more modern authors. Further, he is, like all devoted readers in any genre, more than aware that anthologies can often be real disappointments. I am pleased to report that he absolutely loved the book, especially the short stories from Shirley Jackson and Clive Barker. And Scott is not a man who minces words over fiction he finds displeasing or amateurish. He was especially taken with the two little-known Jackson offerings which, he says, are as frightening as "The Lottery." I also asked him about the binding, since books of this size on glue spine tend to fall apart pretty easily, and he reports that he encountered no problems. He did note, though, that any hardback would be "well worth shelling out for," and that's about as high a compliment I suppose anyone could pay. He gave it an unequivocal "five stars." So, while I have not taken *The Dark Descent*, I thought it might be helpful for prospective purchasers to know that a true horror fan of many, many years did, and found the trip more than merely enjoyable. It is indeed rare that I would offer someone else's opinion as a review unless I had the highest regard for it. And I hope Scott's thoughts are indeed helpful. As a gift for the horror fan, I can definitely recommend it.

This is the best collection of modern & classic horror short stories available & there isn't much else that needs to be said.

I'm a life-long fan of horror and have read many anthologies since I read my first Stephen King book at the ripe old age of 10. This book is one of the truly great horror anthologies I have come upon. I have enjoyed so many stories in this book; there are only a few "duds." It contains many well-known authors and some lesser-known and I've discovered some authors that are now favorites via this book! It's a must for the fan of horror fiction.

Award-winning horror editor Jeanne Cavelos recommended this book to me as the best horror anthology available. She wasn't kidding. Dark Descent is as close to a definitive retrospective on horror from the 1800s until modern day as a single volume can get, and the anthology avoids any of the trashy "torture porn" stories that helped destroy the market in the 1980s. Most of the pieces are, in fact, quite literary. I remember studying a few of them in school. The book's three sections, The Color of Evil, The Medusa in the Shield, and A Fabulous Formless Darkness focus on moral allegorical, psychological metaphor, and fantastic stories, respectively.

This book is everything it claims to be! I had read several of the stories in this book before purchasing it in other anthologies but I am very happy that I bought the book despite that. This book is a must have for any horror anthology fan! These stories will be re-read many times over! Well worth the cost!

I use The Dark Decent as the primary text in a course I teach called "The Art of Horror." With such a wide variety of short fiction spanning several centuries in the Horror genre, I find it to be a comprehensive literary resource. (I also secretly love the gore, suspense, mystery, and supernatural occurrences). Whether as a textbook or simply a good read, The Dark Descent will take readers on a journey, and may keep more than a couple awake at night!

I originally ordered this book thinking it was just a small collection of short stories. However, the total in this book is a whopping 56 stories, and only a couple under 10 pages. Keep in mind though, this is no small book. It's more on the size of a dictionary than a novel, weighing in at almost 3 pounds and clocking over 1000 pages. The book contains a massive collection of stories by about 50 authors, everyone from Dickens, Poe, Lovecraft, to King. Very few authors have more than one story in the book, with the exception being Stephen King who has three (one I've never read before [The Reach], the others have been released in his other collections of short stories [The Monkey, from Skeleton

Crew, and Crouch's End from Nightmares and Dreamscapes, i believe]], and h.p. lovecraft with two stories. It also contains a rather interesting introduction to the whole anthology that sheds a bit of light on not only the book, but the history and importance of short stories; as well as very short, interesting and informative introductions to the stories themselves and the authors. If you're a fan of horror stories, and enjoy the oddities that come from the short stories then this book is highly recommended. The stories range from everything horror and spread almost the entire history of the genre.

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