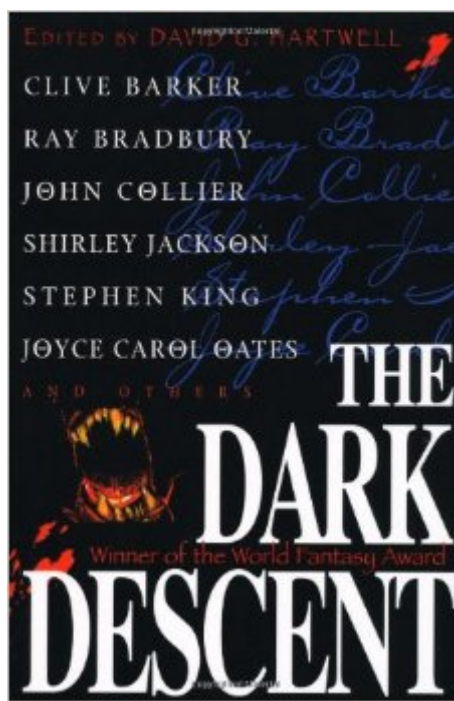


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# The Dark Descent



## 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

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (39 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

Disaster! That super-secret hush-hush Project the military was supposed to have under control has torn a rift into another dimension just ten miles from town, and maniacal flesh-hungry monsters are pouring through by the score, tearing their shrieking victims apart and turning the world as you know it into a charnel house. You've got to pack up and get outta Dodge quick---but what to take? Clothes, boots, food, hunting knife, guns and ammo, extra fuel cans, chainsaw---oh, and if you're a horror junkie like me, you've gotta have reading material during the Siege, right? And since you'll be holing up a long time---maybe forever---the tome you choose had better be a good one. Forced to haul one single volume off your horror shelf before you pack everything into the heavily armored civvie Hum-Vee, I would choose David G. Hartwell's masterful compilation "The Dark Descent." This Leviathan of a book is chock-full of more than one-thousand pages of the best horror ever written by some of the Grand-Masters of the genre (H.P. Lovecraft, Poe, Stephen King, M.R. James) and

some of their lesser known adepts and apprentices. For such a modest price, having this much shivery, ghoulish goodness stuffed between the covers is nearly an embarrassment of riches. Anthologies are often treacherous ground, and success hinges on an editor's style and judgment. Hartwell demonstrates his impeccable taste and considerable acuity in the selections he makes; best of all he begins the collection with a remarkably astute, entertaining---and mercifully concise---little essay tracing the evolution of the terror and horror tale.

This book was published in 1987 and contained 56 short stories by 47 writers. There were 30 authors from the United States, 14 from Great Britain, plus Ireland's Sheridan LeFanu and Fitz-James O'Brien and Russia's Turgenev. Of all the writers, nine were women. The pieces ranged from 1835 (Hawthorne) to the 1980s (Dennis Etchison, Michael Shea, Stephen King, Tanith Lee, Clive Barker), covering virtually each decade. Three-quarters of the stories were from the 20th century. Nearly a third were from the 1970s and 80s. From the early or mid-19th century, there were Hawthorne, Poe, LeFanu, O'Brien and Dickens. From the late 19th century up to World War II, there were Turgenev, Bierce, Gilman, Chambers, James, Wharton, Lovecraft, Faulkner, Leiber, Bloch and Bradbury, among others. And from England, M. R. James, Hichens, Blackwood, Onions, De La Mare, Lawrence and Collier. Those after World War II included Sturgeon, Shirley Jackson, O'Connor, Matheson, Dick, Ellison, Oates, Disch, Shea and King. And from England, Aickman -- called the best English writer for that period -- Campbell, Lee and Barker. For Aickman and King, three stories each were included. The editor's introduction discussed how horror fiction had been a vital element of English and American literature for at least 150 years. Three great traditional English writers -- M. R. James, Algernon Blackwood and Walter De La Mare -- plus the Anglo-Irish Lord Dunsany were cited; all but the latter were represented. In the 20th century, U.S. influences included *Weird Tales*, the magazine founded in 1923, which concentrated on the florid and antiquarian; H. P.

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