



# Psycho

*Robert Bloch*

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## **Psycho** Robert Bloch

The story was all too real-indeed this classic was inspired by the real-life story of Ed Gein, a psychotic murderer who led a dual life. Alfred Hitchcock too was captivated, and turned the book into one of the most-loved classic films of all time the year after it was released.

Norman Bates loves his Mother. She has been dead for the past twenty years, or so people think. Norman knows better though. He has lived with Mother ever since leaving the hospital in the old house up on the hill above the Bates motel. One night Norman spies on a beautiful woman that checks into the hotel as she undresses. Norman can't help but spy on her. Mother is there though. She is there to protect Norman from his filthy thoughts. She is there to protect him with her butcher knife.

## **Psycho Details**

Date : Published May 4th 2010 by Overlook Press (first published 1959)

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Author : Robert Bloch

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Genre : Horror, Fiction, Classics, Thriller, Mystery, Crime

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## From Reader Review Psycho for online ebook

### Wayne Barrett says

What a great classic to read leading up to Halloween. And what better costume could you come up with than that of, my man, Norman Bates. Just put on dead mom's dress, smear on some make-up and let's get crazy.

I think the book is very close to the movie version. Obviously you get a greater visual of the shower scene in the movie, but the book really put me more in the head of Norman and I could see the psycho in him much deeper than is revealed in the movie.

Psycho is well written, short, and gives a perfect excuse to avoid seedy hotels along deserted highways.

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### Kemper says

Nowadays, it seems like every horror movie is either a remake, a sequel or the kind of vile torture porn that makes you want to puke in your bag of popcorn. Filming one of these flicks requires tens of millions of dollars for a platoon of pretty actors, gallons of fake blood, special effects and a marketing campaign. Oddly, they don't seem to spend any money on scripts for these things.

But Alfred Hitchcock only needed about nine grand to buy the rights to this book. Then it only took a blonde, a shower, and a butcher knife to create one of the defining scenes in horror history. There might be a lesson in that story somewhere, Hollywood.

Legend has it that Hitchcock had all the available copies of the book bought up after he obtained the rights so that he could keep the story secret for his version. If that isn't true, it should be. I've often wished that I had a way to temporarily blank out my memory of certain stories so that I could read or see them for the first time all over again and be completely surprised. Unfortunately, alcoholic blackouts are extremely unreliable at this so I just have to try and imagine what it would have been like to read this book before the story became a classic. I bet it was a complete mind fuck for those poor bastards who did read it back in 1959.

It holds up remarkably well despite knowing the story and it being over 50 years old. Shifting narration to the inner dialogues of different characters was very effective, especially with Norman himself. My only real complaint is that I wished it would have been the sister Lila and not Mary who took the infamous shower because Lila is a shrill nagging harpy that annoyed the hell out of me.

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### Jaidee says

2.5 "sensationalistic, dated, a tad ridiculous, entertaining" stars !!

Ok...yes...I was mildly entertained while I mostly cringed

-characters....not well formed....1950s stereotypes  
-writing....written at a grade four level but for adults  
-knowledge of psychopathology....amateurish, outlandish, unbelievable  
-plausibility.....low no make that very low

despite this I was entertained, mildly entertained but it would have sufficed to have just seen the movie and I have seen it several times

I will not move to Psycho (the sequel)....No Jaidee you will not....but I want to....No Jaidee...Noo nooo nooooo

Omg hes here.....Norman Bates is here...he is here...and so is his mother....o no so is his grandmother....o noooo his great grandmother toooo

Bye everyone .....aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa !!

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### **Zoeytron says**

Horror is my "go to" genre, my bread and butter. Although more than 50 years have passed since the movie was made, *Psycho* remains at the top of the tree on my list of best horror flicks. It's dated, certainly. Filmed in black and white, complete with melodramatic music and exaggerated close-ups, but it works beautifully by leaving something to the imagination.

The book, written in 1959, stands the proverbial test of time, as well. 'You do not want Mother using her keys.' Quite right. The pounding comes, then the roaring, followed by blessed silence. For a little while, at least. What a trip it would have been to have read the book before seeing the movie. But even with that ship having sailed decades ago, reading the novel was pure pleasure.

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### **Kelly (and the Book Boar) says**

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

4.5 Stars

That's what I tell my boys **all** the time. I hope they turn out just as friendly and loyal to their momma as Norman did.

Is there anyone even on the planet who hasn't at least heard of *Psycho* before? What can I say that you don't already know? Well, I can confirm that this book is **short** at roughly 200 pages. Due to its brevity, I can also say not a paragraph is wasted on filler. Every scene that occurs does so for a reason. What else? Ah yes, the writing. If I hadn't already been privy to the fact this was an oldie by a goodie, I would have never guess this story to be 50+ years old. The subject matter as well as use of graphic language is not something I'm

accustomed to when reading books that are a bit long in the tooth. Bloch had **zero** fear when tackling the taboo, that's for sure. If you're someone with a bit of a . . . dark sense of humor like me, you might even find yourself getting a morbid chuckle or two . . .

***“No sense crying over spilt milk, though. Even if it hadn’t been milk.”***

As is the case with me and most things dubbed “horror” I wouldn’t put *Psycho* in that category. Instead I’d call it a riveting page-turner of a suspense. One that I’d highly recommend to all.

If you’re not interested in the book, but rather the film I ask you – **WHAT THE F\*&^ ARE YOU DOING ON A BOOKNERD SITE?!?!?!** Nah, just kidding. The differences in the translation from page to screen lie almost exclusively in the casting. As my friend Ed called out in his review, the book version Norman Bates was a fella who was a bit festively plump – proving that the casting of this guy . . .

was spot on if the remake had been done a few years later. Poor Vince. Remember when he was a real looker????

(Well, not compared to Jeff Goldblum, but he wasn’t anything to chuck a rock at)

The only other Hitchcockian magic? Tweaking the following line into one of the most quotable of all times . . .

***“I think perhaps all of us go a little crazy at times.”***

and creating another use for chocolate syrup ; )

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### **Raeleen Lemay says**

ugh this was just so good.

I really love how short this was, so there was never a dull moment. I still haven't seen any of the movie adaptations but I can only imagine how fast paced they must be.

I will say, I binge watched Bates Motel not too long ago and that's the main reason I picked this up, but I loved how different this was (in a way). Bates Motel took a little nugget from this book and turned it into a much more broad-scope world and story (which was awesome) and this story is just a tiny piece. That being said, it seems unfair to judge this book against the show because it's just such a different experience. I loved them both for different reasons though so it worked out for me!

Anyway, this was awesome and spooky and just what I was in the mood for!

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## **Bradley says**

I've been meaning to get around to reading this defining work of horror for quite some time. In fact, SK recommended it to me within Danse Macabre, and I just knew that someday, somehow, I'd come back around to it.

Of course, this book was already old when I read that SK book back in '89 and now I feel kinda foolish for putting off this classic so damn long.

What's my excuse? I thought the story would be kinda... you know... old. Out of date. Without tension.

I really shouldn't listen to myself.

This was a pretty damn tight thriller with very well drawn characters and all the proper reveals to love and enjoy. We all know the shower scene and we all know the BIG surprise of Norman and his mother's secret relationship. :)

Classic. Good. Scary. Creepy. All told, perfect for October. :) Anyone have any popcorn for the movie?

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## **R.K. Gold says**

Very creepy. I have never seen the movie but when I saw the book was available for free I had to read it. Bloch really included a lot of small hints to keep the reader engaged, and even though I knew what the big reveal at the end would be he still kept it suspenseful and kept me on my toes.

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## **Susanne says**

What strikes me most about this book is: the things for which its movie is known are ABSENT from these pages.

The movie *Psycho* gave us that bedrock upon which all future slasher films were built - sex = death. The 'bad girl' - bad because she had premarital sex - will die. The virgin will live. (If you don't know these rules, you need to watch *Scream*.)

*Psycho* the film actually **opens** in the bedroom, where our heroine is in her bra having just had sex with a man to whom she's not married.

Norman Bates never sees any of this, by the way. He operates under his own set of rules. But the *viewer* knows what all she's done.

In the book - and this isn't important in the book, so I don't think it's a spoiler - our heroine has **NOT** slept with her boyfriend. Wait for that to sink in.

The whole kill-women-who-enjoy-their-sexuality thing is **NOT** in this book.

Norman is still operating under his set of rules, but the VIEWER'S opinion of the girl doesn't matter.

In fact, the reader is treated to a very sympathetic look inside our heroine's brain. She's a nice girl who sacrificed her whole life for her family, is put in a difficult situation, and ends up in the wrong place at the wrong time.

There isn't much gore in this book either.

The movie may have ushered in "violence-porn" as a category, but the book is more about edge-of-your-seat thrills than blood.

One last note - the most competent character, when it comes to solving the crime, is a woman.

I am forced to wonder what the film world would be like if the movie had stuck to the book in these respects.

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### **Mia Nauca says**

Solo puedo decir que después de leer este libro estoy completamente obsesionada con todo lo que tenga que ver con psicosis, la película me encanta y ahora estoy viendo la serie Bates Motel que es I N C R E Í B L E

A pesar de ya saber cual era el plot twist del libro, me enganche desde el principio y lo terminé de leer en 3 horas, definitivamente la película es casi igual, excepto que en la novela podemos reconocer a Norman Bates más como psicópata debido a que tb leemos lo que está pensando todo el tiempo.

Me parece que el libro debería tener más reconocimiento

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### **Carol says**

First published in 1959, there is no doubt about it, **PSYCHO** is an absolutely **great** horror classic.

If by some freak of nature you happen to be in the dark regarding Robert Bloch's **Psycho** I will warn you **not** to go in the shower at the Bates Motel, and be green with envy that you can read the novel with no prior knowledge of the intriguing plot.

If you **are** familiar with Alfred Hitchcock's movie version (*released in 1960*) then you will notice two obvious differences when reading the book, the first one (*no biggie*) is Norman's rather large size, and the shocker, well, the shower scene is actually a bit more grotesque (view spoiler)

Overall, I actually liked the movie better than the book, and was all set to give it 4 Stars, but decided that was unfair for if I had not been familiar with the plot from seeing the movie numerous times in my youth, I would surely have given a rating of 5 Big Ones.....despite all the typos.

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## **Dan Schwent says**

When Mary Crane skips town with \$40,000 of her boss's money, she drives and drives, bedding down at the Bates Motel. She meets Norman Bates, who harbors secrets even more interesting than stolen money...

Everyone knows the basic beats of Psycho due to the iconic Alfred Hitchcock film. Woman gets knifed in the shower, psychotic mama's boy, etc. When it popped up for ninety-nine cents, I figured, what the hell? Shooting Star / Spiderweb was pretty good. Psycho was definitely worth the buck.

Inspired by real-life serial killer Ed Gein, Psycho is a tale of mental turmoil and the way it shapes the life a man dominated by his mother. And some woman gets killed and her boyfriend and sister try to figure out what the hell happened. Despite knowing quite a bit going in, Psycho was still a suspenseful read. Since stuff gets lost in translation from book to movie, a lot of it was still surprising. Of course, not having seen the movie in something like thirty years helped...

Bloch's prose is pretty tight. He doesn't waste a lot of time on flowery language, and knows how to ratchet up the suspense. I can see why Hitchcock chose to adapt it, though he chose to focus on different aspects than Bloch. The book and the movie are definitely different animals.

Psycho probably didn't have quite as much of an impact on me that it should have but that's because it's been dissected and imitated to death in the decades since it was written. It holds up really well compared to a lot of suspense novels written during the same era. Four out of five stars.

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## **Lyn says**

We all go a little crazy sometimes.

My generation and everyone since has grown up with the concept of Psycho, stemming from Sir Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 thriller, but all this began with Robert Bloch's 1959 novel.

Reading this after having seen the film and grown up with the story, I dealt with a fair amount of theatrical irony. While the film stayed mostly true to Bloch's vision, there were some departures and these were enjoyable to experience.

Bloch's prose is tight and the atmosphere developed is intense and suspenseful. I imagined the thrill of a reader in 1959 reading this narrative for the first time as it moved along in Bloch's masterful recitation and how surprising and thrilling some of the realizations must have been. This is also a seminal work for the horror genre, both in literature and in film, and some of the techniques Bloch used to such great effect more than 50 years ago are still tried and true today.

Turns out the apple did not fall far from the tree. Robert Bloch was heavily influenced by, and in fact mentored by, none other than H.P. Lovecraft himself. The young Bloch was encouraged by the older writer and Lovecraft even dedicated a story to Bloch, "The Haunter of the Dark" (1936). Both writers were frequent contributors to Weird Tales and Amazing Stories. Bloch's earliest writing was unapologetically influenced by Lovecraft and was even frequently set in the Cthulhu mythos.

Still creepy and psychologically terrifying decades later, a fan of this genre will want to discover the origin of Norman Bates and will be enthralled by Bloch's excellent work.

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### **Eve says**

#### **“We're all not quite as sane as we pretend to be.”**

I am a great fan of Alfred Hitchcock and his films, but this is the only film that I haven't watched more than once. Sure, that includes a string of other Oscar winners like *Shawshank Redemption* and *Forest Gump*; I'm just a weirdo. *Psycho* really scared me when I was young, though. There was no way to explain how the silhouette of mother's chair rocked on its own while Norman was at the hotel. I don't like unexplainable things.

The novel was actually really good! It was very psychological and Bloch gave the reader a copilot seat into Norman's mind. It's not until the very end of the novel that we finally learn everything there is to know about Norman, his complex relationship with his deceased mother, and his questionable choice of reading material.

For a novel written in 1959, this must have been pretty out there, but it was based on murderer Ed Gein, who was arrested in 1957. He had murdered two women and apparently exhumed grave sites regularly to showcase body parts. He was even in the process of creating a woman's skin suit to resemble his mother so that he could literally "crawl into her skin." That is some pretty twisted stuff. It makes this book and any other Gein inspired characters appear mild (nod to Buffalo Bill). And now for a break in reading material. Phew!

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### **Fabian says**

So it is that *Psycho* really IS like *The Exorcist*. Both may vie for the Scariest Film title, but apart from that: the books are stupendous. & if you like the movies, you are making yourself a disservice by not reading the literary progenitors.

*Psycho* may be perfect. Strange how little Norman Bates GETS the Oscar in the book--you actually miss him in the parts where he is not a figure. And his obsessions/psychosis/murderin' are the fault of the town, of his circumstances. And, although it IS dated (yet still retains all the Southern Gothic elements), we can all agree: mental illness is fucking terrifying.

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### **Edward Lorn says**

Other than Norman being a Tubby Trooper in the book instead of the Starved Stanchion he is in the movie and television series, I found no glaring differences between the Hitchcock film and the book. I can't even say that the book is better than the movie. They are completely equal in my eyes. Now the sequels? I haven't a clue. I have not seen the later movies, nor have I read the follow-up novels Bloch published (*Psycho 2* and *Psycho House*). Now that I've tackled the first book, I feel comfortable moving on. Just wanted to make sure

there weren't any differences.

Paul Michael Garcia does a terrific job with the Blackstone Audiobook. I don't know if there are other versions out there, but I enjoyed PMG's performance. This one comes in at 5:22 hours, so it's a little less than 3 hours if you bump up the speed. Worth a try.

In summation: A classic. The big reveal gave me chills even though I knew it was coming. Recommended whether you've seen the movie or not.

**Final Judgment: A perfect argument for poor hygiene.**

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**Amelia says**

Absolutely one of my favourite classic horror stories.

I loved Norman Bates in the tv show Bates Motel and I love him in this book!!

(I will not be posting a full review on my blog. I don't have a lot to say about it)

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**Lou says**

**A gripping story!**

If you've seen the movie this is better, you get that missing insight of being in Norman's mind. The story is a page-turner. Bloch is a good writer and has plotted the story well no sentence is wasted or boring. After reading Darkly Dreaming Dexter I thought I would try and get into rambling mind of a different kind of killer. Bates is obsessed with his mother wants to be like her And wants her to be part of him.

**Some facts**

The novel "Psycho", written by Robert Bloch, was actually part of a series of pulp novels marketed in conjunction with the popular spooky radio show "Inner Sanctum".

Alfred Hitchcock bought the rights to the novel anonymously from Robert Bloch for only US\$9,000. He then bought up as many copies of the novel as he could to keep the ending a secret.

**Spoiler! Only read below if you know the story.**

(view spoiler)

Review Also here.

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### **Simona Bartolotta says**

First, it wasn't a scary as I thought it would be (which is a very good thing for me, if you're wondering) and secondly, I had foreseen everything that was going to happen at page 10 (which, to be honest, is not as good). This is, however, not the book's fault, as I see it: I believe **this is the case of a classic that has become so classic we start to think of it as trite**, which in origin it mustn't have been at all. It saddens me, obviously, but this phenomenon often occurs with works so great, and I can't say it caught me entirely unawares. So I blame it all to the passing of time and its effects, such as the immense fame it brought to this story.

I still didn't really enjoy it.

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### **Vitor Martins says**

#### **Nota: 4,5**

Antes de ler o livro, eu nunca tinha assistido ao filme e pra falar a verdade nem sabia do que se tratava. Conhecia a famosa "cena do chuveiro" e só.

Por conta disso, esse livro me surpreendeu bastante. O clima de suspense dura por todas as páginas, e a leitura flui muito rápido porque você quer saber logo o que que tá acontecendo de verdade!

O que achei mais interessante foi essa coisa do mistério não ser "quem matou fulano?". Isso a gente já fica sabendo logo no começo e daí pra frente o livro começa a desvendar a mente insana por trás desse assassinato!

Leitura muito, muito boa! Recomendo :)

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