

Bram Stoker Award™ Rules for 2012 – Summary of Major Changes

The Board of the Horror Writers Association voted unanimously on 18 December 2011 to approve the Bram Stoker Award Rules for 2012, as authorised by ByLaw X:2.

Note: These Rules apply to works published in the calendar year 2012, for the Awards year 2012. The Awards for 2012 will be presented in the first half of 2013. They also apply to subsequent years unless further amended by authority of the Board.

The following is a summary of the notable changes from the Rules that prevailed for the 2011 calendar year Awards season.

First Novels

There has been much confusion as to whether a First Novel should be Recommended as a Novel, First Novel or both. On occasion we believe this may have resulted in some worthy works not ending up on either ballot. Effective 2012, First Novels will only appear on the First Novel ballot, thus eliminating any confusion.

Rule IVr: “First Novels as defined in Rule IVf may only be Recommended; or chosen by a Jury for the First Novel category. They may not be Recommended; or chosen by a Jury for the Novel or Young Adult Novel category. If Members Recommend a work that is identified as a First Novel by the Compiler or Verifier that Recommendation will be transferred to the First Novel category without need for further reference to the Member so Recommending. The Verifier will make every effort to ensure that works Recommended or presented by the Jury for the Novel and Young Adult Novel Awards are checked to ensure that First Novels are correctly categorized. If the fact that the work is a First Novel comes to the attention of the Awards Committee at any point prior to the announcement of the Preliminary Ballot it will be categorized as a First Novel; but if that information comes to light after the Preliminary Ballot is sent to Voting Members the work *will not be recategorized*, this is to maintain the integrity of ballots that have been released.”

‘First Novel’ is more clearly defined:

Rule IVf: “First Novel: A first novel is hereby defined as a novel, as defined above in Rule IVd (“Novel”); or a Young Adult Novel, as defined below in Rule IVh (“Young Adult Novel”), written by an author who has never before published any novel in any literary genre (to be clear, if an author has published any novel before, whether or not that novel meets the definition of horror, dark fiction or the occult in these Rules, their work does not qualify for an Award in this category). Any previous work meeting the definition of “novel” in Rule IVd will disqualify an author's second or subsequent novel from this category regardless of whether the previous work met any other eligibility requirements. This includes previous novels written under other names, or as work-for-hire. “Author” is defined as the natural person who created a novel, regardless of who owns the copyright or what name or names may appear on the published work. In the case of collaborative works, a novel must be the first novel by each of the participating authors -- a previous novel by any of the authors disqualifies

the work from this category. Equally, no previous work that fails to meet the definition of "novel" in Rule IVd or "young adult novel" in Rule IVh will disqualify a work from participating in this category. "

Multiple Categories

Rule IVq: "Multiple Categories: Works may be eligible in both the "Novel" and "Young Adult Novel" categories and may receive Member Recommendations, Jury Recommendations or Awards simultaneously. No other multiple eligibility is permitted - see Rule IVr in the case of First Novels."

Removing Film Festivals from Screenplay Definition – replaced by Commercial Release Definition

There has been concern that the previous Rule defined 'first release' of a film as including film festivals, taking a film out of proper contention if it is released more widely later. The Board has determined that the date of first *commercial* release is the most appropriate definition of 'first' release. Therefore release at a film festival or on a free website no longer qualifies the film for Bram Stoker Award eligibility.

Rule IIIh. "Screenplays: The date a film is first commercially released, or a television episode is first screened publicly, will determine eligibility of the individual works therein. Important note: a film that is not released commercially (e.g., shown only at a film festival or on a free website) is not eligible until it is commercially released. Therefore, solely showing a film at a film festival or on a free website does not make that film eligible for Award consideration; also the release of a film at a film festival in a prior year does not preclude the film from Award consideration at a later date. In the case of direct to DVD films the release date will apply. If no date of release is listed, the Verifier of Eligibility will make his best effort to determine the date on which the film, television episode, or DVD became commercially available."

Elimination of Doubt about what Qualifies as Non-Fiction

The intent of this Rule is to confine non-fiction to traditional forms of non-fiction writing – i.e., books or a series of articles on the same subject. In the past the category has been the focus of catch-all attempts to expand it, leading to controversy and a need for constant internal review of what qualified, as exemplified in a recent proposal to nominate an entire website as a 'non-fiction work'.

Rule IVp. "Qualifying non-fiction works must be published (in physical print or electronically) as a book, or in a series of magazines, chapbooks, or similar publications. Not eligible for this Award: members and Jurors may not Recommend or nominate a website, an issue or a series of issues of a magazine, an issue or series of newsletters, or a blog, for this Award (past practice notwithstanding). As a result there are no circumstances under which the Non-Fiction Award may be given to websites, magazines, newsletters or blogs (prior practice notwithstanding)."

Restricting Revised or Expanded Works, Defining Adaptations

In recent years there have been a number of occasions where the Awards Committee and/or the Board were required to define whether a revised or expanded work (banned by the Rules from competing in the same category as it had been eligible for in previous years) was actually something wholly 'new'. Various convoluted conclusions were offered by authors and considered by the Committee, some meeting a common sense definition and others making no sense at all. The intent of this new rule is to reconfirm the original proscription with clearer wording.

Rule IIIp – “Expansions, etc.: Expansions, updates, new editions and rewrites of previously-existing works are ineligible for a Bram Stoker Award™ in categories for which they were eligible when originally published (previous practice notwithstanding and regardless of the number of words that have been added or deleted, or the amount of time that has elapsed since the original publication.) For clarity, a revised novel or non-fiction work is ineligible to compete in the same category; also, a revised first novel cannot later qualify in the novel category. The most obvious 'expansion' that does qualify under this Rule is from short or long fiction to novel, first novel or young adult novel. Simply changing the title of the work does not avoid the proscription in this Rule – the Verifier will take into account the content of the work when determining whether the republication of a work breaches this Rule. See also Rule IIIq.”

Adaptations are more clearly defined, including specifically allowing scholarly republication of classic horror fiction with notes, commentary and so on, but requiring the same minimum 40,000 words of new content that is required by the non-fiction category.

Rule IIIq: “Adaptations of previously-existing works are eligible for the following Bram Stoker Awards™ (and no others): Screenplay, Graphic Novel and Non-Fiction. In the case of Non-Fiction the only form of adaptation that qualifies is that of works which are out of copyright and are republished with scholarly commentary, notes, etc, where that additional material also meets the word count nominated in Rule IVo.”

New Form of Preliminary Ballot and Vote Tabulation

The current Preliminary Ballot for a category (eg, Novel) is made up of *two* sub-ballots – one of five works from the Jury and one of five works from the Members Recommendation process. Members were forced to choose three works from each sub-ballot, rather than say the five across both sub-ballots they'd actually prefer to vote for. From 2012 we will combine the two sub-ballots, so that there will be only one ballot per category – including the five works from the Jury and the five from the Members Recommendation Process.

We have also amended the previous complicated voting system and laborious count it required with a new simple process. Previously members were asked to choose and rank their first three choices in each sub-ballot, which were then weighted with different number of points per vote (a carryover from the voting system prior to 2010). Due to fact that we have combined the ballot and the fact that the Preliminary Ballot is designed to produce five unranked works for the Final Ballot ('nominees') we have abolished the weighting. Voting members will now have *five* votes per Preliminary Ballot category (instead of three) that they can use to vote for any of the

works (regardless of whether the works came from the Jury or the Recommendations) and these votes will not be weighted. The five works with the most votes will proceed to the Final Ballot.

For more details see Rules VIIa to o inclusive.

Simplifying 'Ties' and Voting in the Final Ballot

Previously we had a very complex method for defining ties, where works that received over 30% of the vote could 'tie' as winners of the Bram Stoker Award (and ties happened most every year). As the previous Rule only allowed two works to tie, if three works received over 30% of the vote an incredibly convoluted tie-breaker applied, using a 'second choice' vote that, in actuality, penalised works with the most 'first choice' votes. Additionally, that very tie-breaker system had been never been applied, meaning that all the work on the vote tabulation was wasted. Additionally, the Board were concerned that voters had misperceived the 'second choice' vote as having more weight in the process than it actually did.

The new Rule simplifies the entire process while still allowing for ties. If any two works receive more than 33.34% (one-third) of the vote then they 'tie'. It is not possible for three works to receive this percentage of the vote, so the tie-breaker is eliminated. As a result voters will be clear they are voting for no more than one work in each category.

New Rule IXk:

“Tabulation of Votes: The Chairman of the Awards Committee and two other members of the Awards Committee will tabulate the results and determine the winners in every category according to the following rules:

1. No person nominated on the Final Ballot for any Category Award may tabulate votes for any Category that year (even if that person is the Chairman of the Awards Committee – in that case he should nominate a replacement from the Awards Committee or another Active Member agreed by the President).
2. The work with the greatest number of votes in each category will be declared the award's recipient.
3. In the event that each of two works receives at least 33.34% of the vote in a category, both will be declared award recipients; no revelation will be made of the exact numerical count, and both recipients will be listed as if they had in fact received precisely the same number of votes.”

If you have any questions please write to hwa@horror.org . All questions and answers will be posted on our private Message Board but you may ask that your name be removed from the question.

Please note the Rules as published *cannot* be changed. Member debate on suggestions for Rule Changes occurred on the Message Board and closed on 30 November and was taken into account by the Board in making our determinations for 2012. Further suggestions for Rule Changes for future years will be entertained via a similar process in late 2012.

Signed – The Board of the Horror Writers Association