(1945–2011). U.S. author William (Billy) Sleator wrote novels mostly for young adults. Throughout his career he produced more than 30 books covering the fields of science fiction, horror, suspense, and fantasy.

William Warner Sleator III was born on February 13, 1945, in Havre de Grace, Maryland, but raised in a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. He grew up interested in the arts, and from an early age he played the piano and composed music. Attending Harvard University, Sleator began working toward a degree in music but then switched to English, obtaining a bachelor’s degree in 1967. After graduating, he moved to England, where he played the piano at London’s Royal Ballet School. He then returned to the United States and worked at the Boston Ballet while simultaneously writing. His first book, The Angry Moon (1970), a children’s story recounting a Tlingit Indian myth, was illustrated by Caldecott Medal winner [Blair Lent](https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Blair-Lent/314947).

When Sleator began his writing career, he often included experiences he had gone through and people he knew. For example, the cottage in Blackbriar (1972), his first full-length young adult novel involving the supernatural, was modeled on a creepy old cottage that he had visited while in England. As Sleator’s career progressed, however, he began relying more fully on his imagination and turned more toward the creative pursuit of science-fiction themes blended with horror or suspense.

Perhaps Sleator’s best-known book is House of Stairs (1974), which involves a group of teenagers caught in an unending maze of stairs and landings. A science-fiction work about mind control and conformity, House of Stairs also broaches the larger subjects of the moral and ethical aspects of science, government interference in people’s lives, and the nature of violence. Another of Sleator’s well-received novels is Interstellar Pig (1984), a science-fiction fantasy story about a teenage boy who plays a board game with his neighbors and discovers that he just may have to save the world from aliens. A sequel, Parasite Pig, was published in 2002.

Some of Sleator’s other books include The Duplicate (1988), about what goes wrong when a boy clones himself; Rewind (1999), about a boy who gets to go back in time over and over in order to prevent his death; and The Boy Who Couldn’t Die (2004), about a boy who sells his soul for immortality. His last book, The Phantom Limb, written with Ann Monticone, was published in 2011. Sleator died on August 3, 2011, in Bua Chet, Thailand.