

Broad Editing and Services

Writers' Corner Solving Writers' Block Character Development through Emotion

By M Broadhurst © 2007

- Create a fictional character describing the physical features, personality and mannerisms
- Make a list of unusual objects
- Pick one object, which the character will spend time with it
- Question how the character comes into contact with the object
- Question why the character is drawn to this object
- Create new story ideas that may not have been considered before

We're going to try a similar writing exercise as last month's task when we gave our character an insignificant object. The first step is to grab a piece of paper and write a list of 'weird' things, go ahead – be creative.

Here's our example list of unusual items:

A porcelain cow
Whiteboard
Suit of armour
Wheelbarrow
Scarecrow
Jigsaw box in pristine condition and without the pieces

Now let's go back to the initial paragraph that we wrote when we first created our character, this is to remind us who he/she is. Because you would have been able to create at least one story from each of our exercises and the chances are each story might have moved away from the character we started with, it's important to refresh our memory to the initial stage. So once again, in Molly's case:

Molly's her name, mopping is her trade and has been for more than forty-two years. Actually, it was difficult to tell the difference between her hair and her mop. Every morning she shuffled up the street and cleaned houses, and every afternoon she would shuffle home again, indulge her weakness for chocolate while watching the early quiz shows, and head off to bed before the late news started. A sweet old lady that would cross the road to the other footpath just to avoid disturbing a bird that was on the ground. Her once beautiful blue eyes had become dull, and a white cloud crept over the pupil of her right eye. Her unwrinkled mouth told the story of a life without laughter. Not that anyone heard her complain, in fact she said very little. She nodded to the postie each morning and to anyone who happened to pass by. Her shapely legs looked as though they belonged on a younger woman, someone who never wore the frumpish dresses she bought from the bargain box at the local shop.

Pick an item from your unusual list; don't pick something that is too easy, for instance a ripped teddy bear. Ask yourself why would your character be drawn to this item? How does your character come upon the item? Now start writing ...

Molly travelled the same streets every day to clean houses, and every day she passed Mrs Lynn's home, a nice lady with a big heart and an even bigger vegetable garden in front of the house. There wasn't a blade of grass out of place or any space wasted on the beautiful flowers or shrubs. But she did have healthy looking tomato bushes, cucumbers as big as footballs, and other various vegetables well on the way to beating the *Guinness Book of Records*. And smack bang in the middle was a scarecrow. Its clothes hung

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From page 1: Character Development through Emotion

from the crossed wood as if the fabric was desperate to free itself from the wooden supports and touch the soft earth. Hay poked out around the cuffs and collar, and from under the weather beaten hat.

Every day Molly stopped in front of the house and stared into its soulless button-eyes. Every day she felt more warmth and understand for that scarecrow than for any person she had ever met. It was as if it understood her loneliness, at least, that's what Molly believed.

Poor Molly, you want to give the woman a hug and make her a cup of tea, right? That's what we were aiming for, to use an object to play on the reader's sympathy and help the reader to understand Molly's misery. It's easy enough to say Molly was lonely, but now we can feel her loneliness. A scarecrow is the perfect comparison. Other items in the list could have been used equally as well. A suit of armour could emphasise the wall she enforces around herself to keep others out. A jigsaw box without the pieces could indicate the hollow feeling inside. Try different ones and pick out the ones you like best to help enhance your story.

Use your character to unleash the desired emotions from the reader.

Views on Writing

Don't Give Up on Writing that Novel

(Reprint Article)

By Jill Smolinski ©

Think it's hard to get a novel published? For most writers, it is – but it's certainly not impossible. I've had two hit the shelves in 10 countries, and with book club and movie rights picked up. People often ask me how I did it, and the truth is simple. All it takes is (1) talent, and (2) actually writing the thing.

As much as I hate to admit it, the second is the more important factor.

Fact is, plenty of great novels go unfinished. The statistics are staggering: of those who start writing a novel, only about 3% will finish. And unless you're the child of a rock star or Shakespeare's long-lost descendent, no agent or publisher will look at your novel unless it's complete. Only in rare instances will a publisher make an offer to a newbie novelist based on a partial manuscript.

On my first novel, Flip-Flopped, I actually did have interest from an editor at a major publishing house before I was finished. I'd been taking a writing class, and the teacher passed along a short description of my book to an editor acquaintance of hers, who professed interest. I'd written about 100 pages at the time and was elated – that is, until my teacher added, "Of course, she doesn't want to see it until it's done."

It may seem unfair. If your novel starts with a bang, why can't you just give a few chapters and an outline? Surely that's enough to prove your mettle. But publishers want evidence of more than writing skills. They need to see you can go the distance. In the world of writing, a novel is the marathon. A finished manuscript is the only way to show you can cross the finish line in the same sort of shape you started.

It took me two years to write my first novel. Even with an editor waiting – and knowing she wouldn't wait forever – I nearly gave up many times along the way. A single mom with a full-time job, my only writing time was in the early hours before work and during my son's naptime on weekends. I not only had to learn novel basics like how to plot and create strong characters, I had to learn how to stick with it.

'In the world of writing, a novel is the marathon. A finished manuscript is the only way to show you can cross the finish line in the same sort of shape you started.'

From page 2: Don't Give Up on Writing that Novel

If you're struggling with finishing your novel, these tips may help:

1. Tell yourself a little white lie: that you have a real deadline. One of the main reasons writers give up is because they begin to question whether anyone really cares. Pretend there's an editor or agent waiting, drumming his or her fingers, eager for that completed manuscript to arrive.
2. Set a daily goal. I set a minimum of two hours a day, every day. You may prefer to designate a certain number of pages, such as three to five. Writing is a lot like dieting: people who approach it reasonably on a daily basis are more likely to meet with success than those who try a crash program.
3. Don't write a novel – write a first draft. A first draft can be imperfect - and in fact, it will be. That's okay. Just get the pages down. You can fix it on the second draft.
4. Be careful to whom you show it to. It can be helpful to get feedback as you go, but choose your readers carefully. Giving your precious pages to someone who is frustrated at their own inability to write a novel is like handing them a gun ... pointed right at you.
5. Spend more time writing than you spend planning. It can be helpful to have an outline and some basic research, but typically writers who mire themselves in creating lengthy drafts of what they're going to write rarely get around to actually writing.
6. Feel the joy. Remind yourself why you're writing a novel. Few people if any set out to write a first novel because they have to. They do it because they have something to say ... a passion for the written word ... a dream of seeing their name on a shelf next to writers they admire. Hard work may be the backbone of a writing career, but it's the joy of creating something amazing that keeps us going.

So keep going!

About the author: Jill Smolinski is the author of the novels *THE NEXT THING ON MY LIST* and *FLIP-FLOPPED*. Find out more about her books and get tips for writers at her daily blog at <http://jillsmolinski.com> Article Source: <http://www.reprint-content.com>

'Don't write a novel — write a first draft.'

Target Setting at Writers' Workshop

Set your weekly targets at Writers' Workshop to help you achieve your goals. It's easy!

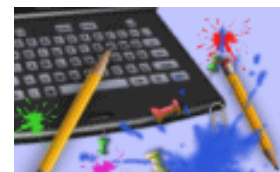
Step 1: Log on to, or join, the forum

Step 2: Post your target for that week

Step 3: Achieve your target with the encouragement of other writers

Step 4: Post your outcome and get ready to set new targets for yourself

Watch how quickly your dreams turn into reality through target setting and following through. You'll be amazed at what you can accomplish.



Word Finder

Words can be found horizontally, vertically and back to front.

M	A	L	L	A	R	D	R	I	B	E	L	T	T	A	W
N	O	E	G	I	P	T	H	E	D	V	Y	R	H	E	O
B	E	L	L	B	I	R	D	A	E	O	R	F	O	W	L
R	S	F	O	I	D	U	C	K	I	D	E	A	R	A	L
E	L	I	R	S	D	E	D	R	P	E	B	L	N	R	A
H	W	N	I	S	H	E	N	A	G	L	I	C	B	R	W
C	O	C	K	A	T	I	E	L	A	T	R	O	I	U	S
T	N	H	E	L	U	A	N	Y	M	R	D	N	L	B	D
A	I	S	E	S	T	O	R	K	H	U	L	P	L	A	O
C	B	I	T	L	A	E	S	S	P	T	I	E	L	K	O
R	O	S	E	L	L	A	L	S	S	P	A	R	R	O	W
E	R	D	O	O	L	T	E	R	G	E	U	U	M	O	O
T	N	A	S	A	E	H	P	F	O	A	Q	M	R	K	R
S	M	I	N	E	R	W	L	L	U	G	A	E	S	C	C
Y	R	I	S	S	O	R	T	A	B	L	A	T	E	U	R
O	S	T	R	I	C	H	I	C	K	E	N	A	R	C	S



Word List:

albatross	fowl	pheasant
bellbird	hen	pigeon
chicken	ibis	quail
cockatiel	kookaburra	robin
corella	lorikeet	rosella
crane	lyrebird	seagull
crow	magpie	skylark
cuckoo	mallard	sparrow
duck	miner	stork
eagle	myna	thornbill
egret	ostrich	turtle dove
emu	owls	wattlebird
falcon	oystercatcher	woodswallow
finch		

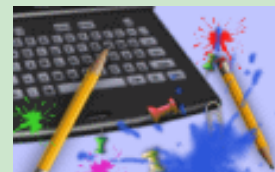
Turn to page 8 for the answers to the Word Finder and the hidden message.

What is the hidden message?

The remaining letters will spell out a message. Can you work it out?

Having trouble with your story or article?

Why not post the problem to our Writers' Workshop forum and gain help from other writers. It's free!



Sentence Starter ...

Many writers suffer the 'blank page' complex; therefore, each month we will supply you with a first sentence. Now your page isn't blank any more. Let your imagination take you on a journey.

This issue's sentence starter:

Reckless perhaps, but it was a case of necessity, a case of life and death ...



Résumé Builder

Guidelines to Submitting Stories

By Mary Broadhurst

You've written the next best seller and want to submit it anywhere and everywhere. Suddenly you're faced with questions:

- Can I send it to more than one publisher at a time?
- How should I format the document?
- Do I just send it out or should I contact the publisher first?
- Can I include the artwork for my front cover?
- What should I include with my manuscript?
- What do I say in my preliminary letter?

While certain aspects can change depending on whether your story is a short story, a novel or an article, one thing is set in concrete – follow the publisher's guidelines no matter what. A publisher's individual likes or dislikes for accepting manuscripts will always override the general guidelines so check with them. Most publishers will state their preferences on their web sites or in the Australian Writer's Marketplace. Let's go through some of the general guidelines for submitting, which many publishers accept.

Can I send it to more than one publisher at a time?

You can submit your work to more than one publisher at a time, but you must inform the publisher that you have done this. A simple sentence in the preliminary letter can solve this problem. A little flattery never hurt anyone so make them feel important like in our example:

While I have submitted this novel/short story/article to other publishers, I am interested in your response.

How should I format the document?

The standard formatting rules are set out below:

- Font size set at 12 pt
- Times New Roman font
- Have the line spacing set at 1½ lines or double
- Indent 0.5 cm for paragraphs and direct speech
- Don't indent the first paragraph
- Include your name and/or title of the story on each page in the header *
- Include a cover sheet
- Number each page (except the cover sheet) in the header or footer
- Do not bind your manuscript with staples or other binding methods, this can make it harder to read and/or turn pages. You don't want to annoy the publisher or your manuscript may be returned unread. Wrap an elastic band around the entire manuscript to keep it secure.

Make sure the intended publisher you wish to submit to accepts unsolicited manuscripts.



From page 5 : Guidelines to Submitting Stories

* If submitting to competitions then the publisher may want your name to appear on the cover page only and not in the header – check before sending it off.

Do I just send it out or should I call the publisher first?

If you have all your details and know the guidelines then you can send your manuscript out; however, because the publisher wasn't expecting your work it might end up in the slush pile until someone has a chance to look at it. This could be anywhere up to six months depending on the publisher, and it may even be returned to you unread. If anything is out of order such as incorrect formatting then it has a good chance of not being read. When you send a manuscript without the publisher's knowledge then it is known as unsolicited work, make sure your publisher accepts unsolicited material, as many don't.

If you want to give your work the best chance it has then call the publisher and ask to speak to the assistant editor, explain your intentions and get a contact name (usually the editor) and while you're at it you might as well ask how long is the process before you receive an answer. Don't take too much of their time, they are busy. Now when they receive it they will see that you took the trouble to find out the editor's name.

Better yet, send a preliminary letter to the editor briefly explaining the plotline, how many words, the demographic it's aimed for, and anything else you can think of to help sell your work such as marketing value. You may be knocked back, but if you receive a letter saying they would like to see it then your manuscript has moved up a step and become solicited work, and thus avoiding the dreaded slush pile. When you send your manuscript in, remind the editor that he/she requested to see the work.

Can I include the artwork for my front cover?

You may have a clear idea of how you want the cover to look, but this isn't the time or place. If your work is accepted and a contract is offered then you may discuss your front cover. Remember, just because you're in love with your artwork doesn't mean others will be, so be professional and listen to their ideas; after all, they know how to market a book.

What do I have to include with my manuscript?

A well thought out and brief preliminary letter should be included with your manuscript, take time on this document as it needs to sell your manuscript as an accomplished piece of work that an audience has been waiting for, and it has to sell you as a professional writer, who has more than one book in you to write. Publishers don't make much on an unknown author's first book. Think of it from their point of view, they are in business to make money and they're not going to publish and promote your book if you're not dedicated and show promise.

Include a cover sheet with the following guidelines:

- The title and your name centred in the middle of the page
- Your contact details (phone, email, and postal address) on the top right hand corner
- The type of story it is (such as 'Fiction') at the top left hand corner
- The total word count resides on the bottom right hand corner.

Some publishers (and definitely agents) may ask for you to include your résumé. This means they want to see all your writing accomplishments including previously published work and writing courses. They do not want to hear what job you have unless it pertains to writing or your manuscript. They don't want to know what your hobbies are, or that you were out of work for seven years while raising your children. You must show that you are a professional writer.



If you have approval to submit your manuscript to an editor than it is no longer unsolicited material.



From page 6 : Guidelines to Submitting Stories

Do I submit the whole manuscript?

Check the publisher's individual guidelines to see how much of the manuscript they want to see. Many will ask for one to three chapters, and there are some that ask for the entire manuscript. Stick to whatever they have requested, if they like what they have read then they will ask to see more.

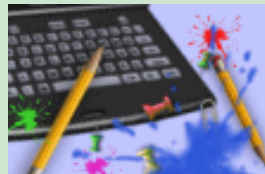
What do I say in my preliminary letter?

A preliminary letter addressed to the editor briefly outlines the plotline, the demographic you're aiming for, any reason why you believe it will appeal to an audience, and a brief bio of your accomplishments so far. I keep using the word 'brief' on purpose, remember publishers are busy people, if you send three pages explaining the plotline then chances are they won't read past the first page and will return it with a 'thanks, but no thanks' reply. They may think if you can't write a clear and concise summary then how could you write a book? You should be able to sum up the story in two to three paragraphs.

There is a lot of luck involved with getting your first story published and it may not have anything to do with your skills or the storyline. There are many reasons for why a story might be rejected such as sending it to a publisher who doesn't deal with your type of story, which is why you need to research your intended publisher. And some times it depends on one person's opinion whether to show it to the editor or return it to you with a rejection slip. The best advice I can offer is don't give up.

The preliminary letter is an opportunity for you to sell your story to the publisher.

Writers' Workshop, a free forum for writers to discuss their stories and articles. Visit today and make new friends in a supportive atmosphere!



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Services we offer:

- *Editing*
- *Proofreading*
- *Manuscript assessment*

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FIND OUT MORE ABOUT US
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Answers: Word Finder



Hidden message: The dreaded slush pile spells doom for writers.

Authors

We are currently accepting articles, short stories and poems. Emails us for more details.

