

Writer's Quest

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In This Issue

[Writers' Corner: Creating Conflict](#)

[Sentence Starter](#)

[Views on Writing: Horror Writing - Ten Clichés to Avoid](#)

[Résumé Builder: Chasing Too Many Thoughts](#)

Quick Links

[Broad Editing & Services](#)

[Writers' Workshop](#)

[Our Services](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Archives](#)

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Dear Writer,

Experiment with creating conflict and solving pov problems in your stories. Is writing horror tales your thing? Make sure you're not producing tired old plots. It's all here in this issue so check out the articles.

Want to tell the world about your up-and-coming release date for your book? Subscribers get boasting rights here, so send us an email to mystory@broaeditingandservices.com.au and don't forget: writers are readers too.

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Happy writing!

From the Writer's Quest team

Writers' Corner Solving Writers' Block: Creating Conflict

by Mary Broadhurst © 2007

Conflict can move a story forward, hinder a main character, and add intrigue. It has been used countless times to entice readers to read another chapter before they put their book down, or lure an audience to tune in for the next episode of a television series. That's why cliffhangers have viewers hanging on for months just to see what happens.

There are different levels of conflict; there is verbal conflict, which results in heated difference of opinion and arguments, and there is conflict created through action, which may be a character doing (or not doing) something or it may even be a disaster - natural or otherwise.

Tell the world about your work. [Send us](#) the release date and/or a review. It's free.

Let's focus on verbal conflict for this exercise. Create a scene with two characters experiencing a difference of opinion; allow your dialogue to flow. Here are some scenarios to help get you started:

- A married couple having an argument
- Two supporters, who barrack for different teams, have a dispute over their favourite sport
- Work colleges trying to blame each other for an action that has cost the company thousands of dollars.

If you discover your characters seemed to be almost writing the dialogue for you, that you are having trouble to write the words down because the characters are throwing out the words faster than you can type or write then you have reached the ultimate goal in writing. Your characters are living and driving your story along while you feel more like a passenger.



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:

The portrait's eyes felt like they were following me around the room ...

Views on Writing

Horror Writing - Ten Clichés to Avoid

(Reprint article)

By William Meikle

For anyone thinking about writing in the horror genre, there are certain situations that, over the years, have been done so often that the audience knows exactly what to expect. Using any of these is fine if you're being post-

to expect. Using any of these is fine if you're being post-modern and ironic as in the *Scream* series, because you can get the audience laughing as they jump. But if you're trying for the big scare, here are some situations to avoid, and alternative scenarios to consider.

The woman alone in the old dark house

She's usually blonde, big breasted and not very bright. She shouts things like 'Who's there?' or 'Is that you Joe?' Then she goes into dark rooms to see what's in them. Tippi Hedren plays a fine example in *The Birds*, as does Jamie Lee Curtis in *Halloween*. This scene has been so successfully lampooned by the *Scream* series that it's going to be hard for anyone to do it again; but if you must, you'll need to find a new way of raising the tension. Making the woman blind has been done, as has having a man being stalked by a woman. But how about having the stalker existing inside mirrors, and only able to reach out at arms length. What happens if he gets a knife?

The kid whose mom isn't mom any more

The kid says, 'That isn't my mom'. A smug doctor says, 'It's all in your mind kid'. The mom leads the kid off, and the next day both the mom and the kid give the doctor far-away stares. This was a staple in 1950s paranoia flicks like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Invaders from Mars*, and was given a new lease of life in *Dark Skies*. Serious thought is needed to give a new slant. How about if it's the pets that are getting taken over, and only the kids notice?

The experiment gone wrong

They say things like 'Morals are for lesser mortals' and 'The ends justify the means'. Then their creation jumps up and bites them. Think of all the movie versions of *Frankenstein* or *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and you can't go far wrong. A more recent example was Beau Bridges in *Sandkings*, the pilot for the modern *Outer Limits*. Anyone planning on using this scenario should really meet some scientists. Many of them are weirder than their fictional equivalents, and they provide great material for stories.

The mob of villagers

Sometimes there's a ringleader, such as an old woman whose grandchild has been killed. Other times there's just an angry mob shouting 'Rhubarb' and waving torches. Perhaps the best example is actually in a spoof, *Young Frankenstein*. How about trying a calm mob? I can't think of a new way of doing this that would be scary, but maybe you can do better?

The priest who's lost his faith

There are two ways this can go. The creature says, 'Your feeble god means nothing to me', and kills the priest in

feeble god means nothing to me', and kills the priest in particularly gory fashion. Or the creature says, 'Your feeble god means nothing to me', and the priest steps up to the base and drives the creature away. There are fine examples of the first in Stephen King's *Salem's Lot*, and John Carpenter's *The Fog*. You could try having the creature banishing the priest to hell? I haven't seen that one ... yet.

Running through woods in the dark

People run around in the dark, shouting things like, 'Mulder, where are you?' and waving flashlights, followed all the time by a malevolent presence in the trees. This is otherwise known as *The Blair Witch Project*. The idea was taken to extremes in *Pitch Black* where there wasn't even hope of daybreak to come. A variation would be to do it in daylight, but Big Arnie covered that in *Predator*. How about having the monster as an urban creature that is actually afraid of the woods when chased into them? Time for that angry mob again perhaps?

Playing with dark forces

Somebody says, 'Let's play with Grannie's Ouija board'. The next thing you know a planchette is flying around the room on its own. This idea has turned up a lot on TV recently, and usually involves scantily clad girls, in shows like *Charmed* and *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*. The way to use this scenario without looking tired is to find a new way of calling up the evil. How about a character who mouths the words as he reads them, thus calling up the beast by accident?

The love of a good woman

The monster dies an inglorious death and somebody says, 'T'was beauty that killed the beast'. Our cavemen ancestors probably told this one round the campfires. On film it dates back to at least 1933 and *King Kong*. More recently there was a variation in the *Beauty and The Beast* TV series and even the Disney movie of the same name. Why not try having the beauty fall in love first while the beast never succumbs? You'd need to find a neat resolution to the story, but then again, you're a writer, so that'll be easy.

Let's split up

Everybody knows that the monster is around somewhere, but someone says, 'We're off to explore that dark place. You go the other way and we'll meet up later.' Why does everybody always think this is a great idea? Just watch *Buffy TVS* and count how often the gang lose each other. Or go back to the original Scooby gang and watch Shaggy and Scooby get split up in every episode. Why not have them stay together for a change? Or maybe they keep in contact via cell phones to foil the bad guys. Or, better still, what about a monster that can

bad guys. Or, better still, what about a monster that can split up and be in two places at once?

I'm free

The monster has been vanquished, the victor turns back to the other survivors to take the acclaim, and the suddenly resurgent monster chomps him to pieces. There are nice examples in *Starship Troopers* and *Deep Rising*. One way to subvert this would be to have another monster save your victim? Or how about doing something brave and have your monster die first time?

Conclusion

I'm off to write my new script 'Chomp!' It starts as a mob of angry villagers storm the lab of a mad scientist, who has been dabbling in powers man is not meant to understand. The priest with the mob is killed by a 'creature' that escapes into the forest.

A year later, 10 nubile teens are shipwrecked on the island. They split up to search the area and find themselves being chased by a mutated man-beast, half-man, half Komodo Dragon. Soon there's a lot of running through forests at night, and a tense scene where a blonde is trapped in the ruins of the lab.

The big climax comes when the last two of the teens confront the monster. The boy thinks he's killed it, and turns back in triumph, only for the beast to rear up and dismember him.

In a poignant final scene the last girl cradles the monster's head in her lap and weeps as it dies.

Do you think it will sell? If your answer is 'No', what would you do to make it work?

About the Author: William Meikle is a Scottish writer, with seven novels published in the States. He is available for all freelance writing work. Contact him and read some free fiction at his web site:

<http://www.williammeikle.com> Article Source:
<http://www.free-articles-zone.com> Writing- Ten Cliches to Avoid:
<http://www.free-articles-zone.com/article/88389/Horror>

Résumé Builder:

Chasing Too Many Thoughts

by M Broadhurst © 2007

You have an idea for a story, you're excited about it and start writing, but have you tried to control every aspect of your story? Believe it or not, this can kill your story

of your story? Believe it or not, this can kill your story and your chances of having your story published. Hopefully this article will help you to eliminate this problem and enhance your chances of being published. Have a look at the beginning of our story:

Lacy turned slowly, as the tone of his voice rose. What did he expect her to say? How many ways could she say it? It was over! Tony couldn't believe his ears, how could she say such a thing? Had she found someone else? Had she been unfaithful? Lacy simply didn't love him any more. And at this point in time, she wondered if she ever had.

Can you see what the major problem is? It's the point of view. This sort of error happens when we attempt to paint an intricate story, or when we forget who the main character is.

Many authors have had someone say something about their writing having POV problems, but it amazes me how often this isn't explained clearly. 'POV problems' has almost become a cliché and once that happens there seems to be a lack of taking the trouble to explain the problem, identifying it, and ultimately fixing it. Well, if you have such a problem then this may be the best article you have read this year. While the actual concept of point of views is an extensive topic, we'll keep things basic here and cover the more common mistakes.

What is a POV error?

If you switch from one character's thoughts or impressions to another character then chances are you might be breaching a POV rule. When we try to 'jump into the heads' of too many characters we risk confusing the reader, as well as making it hard for the reader to bond with the main character.

How to rectify POV errors

The first thing you need to do is establish who your main character is. This is the most important character, the one that you want your readers to bond with, and the one that takes precedence over all other characters in a scene. This means that if your character is in a room or place where other characters are then the POV must remain with your focal character. You can relay your other characters' emotions from what your main character witnesses, but don't have your character 'knowing' things that turns him or her into a mind-reader unless that is what your character can do.

For example:

I know he hates me, I know he's thinking I'm cruel.

Instead, try changing a couple of the words:

I'm sure he hates, and probably thinks I'm cruel.

This would be ideal if we were in the main character's thoughts. Or change it so it's a physical detection:

His jaw set in that particular way it does when he's angry, and there was little chance of Lacy misreading his eyes, the usual warmth had disappeared and, if it was possible, he would have shot death rays from them.

So let's have another look at that beginning story and rewrite it:

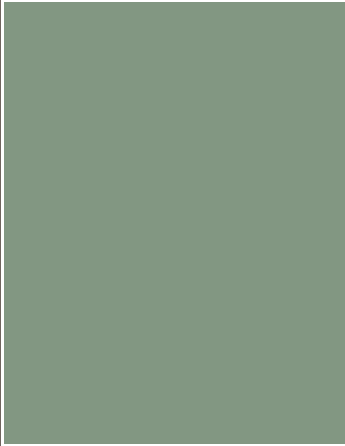
Lacy turned slowly as his tone of voice rose. What did he expect her to say? How many ways could she say it? It was over! Obviously it had come as a shock, he probably thought we'd be together forever, after all, hadn't they said that very thing each year on their anniversary? Ten years!

He had been staring at her for a couple of minutes, although it felt like an eternity. What was going through his mind? She didn't have to wonder about that for long, as he blurted out one accusation after another, his words running into each other in his haste to spit them out as if they tasted bad.

'Is there someone else? Have you been cheating on me all this time?'

She shook her head, but she didn't say what she was thinking: she simply didn't love him any more. Now she wondered if she ever had.

Now the writing flows and the reader deals with the emotions of the scene rather than trying to work out what is happening.



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