

# The Write Life

Volume 1, Issue 11

November 25th, 2009

## NaNo—Week 4

Welcome, ladies and menfolk to the middle of Week 4 in NaNoWriMo. We're reaching the end of a month long journey. Whether you've written 5,000 words, 50,000 words, or even 100,000 words, you're a winner. By trying, and writing something, you've done what few others have. For every writer who actually writes, there's probably ten "writers" who would like to write, "someday". Well you've just shown all of those people up, and then some.

Give yourselves a pat on the back, have a drink, and crank those words out. I'll see you in December when it's time for National Novel Finishing Month.

## This Week's Events

We have another action packed week for you. Tonight, we have an online write-in in our regional chat room, from 7 PM - 9 PM EST. Log in at [www.fcwriters.com](http://www.fcwriters.com) and join us for some word wars.

We also have a Write-A-Thon on November 27th. Yes Black Friday. If you don't want to face the horde of shoppers, come to our chat room for a 12 hour writing marathon. 10 AM - 10 PM.

On Saturday, November 28th, we have a Write-In at the Fairfield Borders from 1 PM - 4 PM. Another Write-In on the 29th at the Wilton Borders from 1 PM - 4 PM

November 30th has a Last Chance Write-A-Thon, again in our online chat room, from 10 AM - 10 PM.

## Group News:

In the interests of "corporate" transparency, I'll be displaying our monthly financials, to help viewers better understand what goes into managing and maintaining our writing group.

Annual Donations to Date:	\$175
Annual Expenses to Date:	\$470
Total Annual Funds to Date:	-\$295

## What's New:

- More Local Events

## Up and Coming:

- Contests
- Branded Swag
- Whitepapers

## Inside This Issue:

Muse Food	2
Writer's Sphere	3
The Writer's Life	5
Literary Latte	6
Contact Info	8

Is your muse burnt out, or overweight? too tired to go chase shiny objects? Try some of our new muse food, patent pending.

## Pilgrimage

Once upon a time, in a galaxy far far away, in an alternate dimension, people use to travel without the use of petrol fueled machines. They went so far as to even use their own two feet. Relatively unheard of now a days. But there is still something magical about being able to take a step back from things and take a walk.

I've heard that getting some fresh air, and natural sunlight can do all sorts of good thing for muses. Perhaps muses are part Kryptonian, as Superman is solar powered. Regard-

less, if your writing is feeling a bit stale, then go out and get reacquainted with mr. sunshine. It doesn't burn that much, really, unless you're a vampire, then wait for some moonlight instead.

When you get back from your walk, jot down what you saw, what you experienced, what you felt. See what bits you've jotted down that can be applied and implemented in your current work in progress. Or start an entirely new piece off of something you saw during your walk.

## One Worders

Try starting a story utilizing one of the below words:

Irrevocable  
Grocery  
Caterpillar  
Identity  
Tinny  
Overbearing  
Shaft  
Cavern  
Undercarriage  
Silence

## One Liners

Try starting a story with one of the below sentences:

I'm just your dime-store hero.  
How do you tackle glomp someone?  
This is all just a dream.  
If you see a ninja, then it isn't a ninja.  
Can I get a do over?  
Don't believe, prove.  
How will I ever escape this room made out of rice paper?  
Around here, extraordinary is the ordinary.  
I want me mum.  
You shot a planet at me!

## Photographic Inspiration



Use the image on the left or right as a starting point for a new story or to help jumpstart a sluggish scene.

Have a photo you'd like to have seen in our newsletter? Email it to [WriteLife@FCWriters.com](mailto:WriteLife@FCWriters.com)



## The Writer's Sphere - Combating Writer's Block

Every writer has at one point or another come into contact with the dreaded writer's block. A large monolithic creature that has the ability to separate you from your muse. Block are, due to the laws of physics, very hard to move, tip over, or otherwise manipulate until you can get around it.

A writer's sphere is the opposite of this. Not just in shape, but in personality and usability. The writer's sphere is similar to the bubble that Glenda the witch from the Wizard of Oz used to get around. The writer's sphere is capable of reuniting a writer with his or her muse(s) It can also envelop a stubborn writer's block, and transport it to somewhere less intrusive,

like Pluto.

How do you find your writer's sphere? And what do you do with one after you find it? Both are good questions, and require a bit of ingenuity to answer. In truth, a writer's sphere is a method of transportation a muse uses to travel around Muse Land, and to visit writers.

As writer's it is usually difficult to access a writer's sphere alone. But, with a muse's help, you can utilize this magical contraption, escape the doldrums of procrastination, and thwart any writer's block that dares stand in your way.

## Back Story

Just as having a fully fleshed plot is integral to a story, having a history to the plot, or a pre-plot is equally important. Sometimes the back story doesn't appear until far into the plot. Sometimes your plot starts with the actual back story before ramping things up. Whatever method you choose, it helps to know where your characters came from, what caused all the effects your plot is reacting to. Having no back story is the equivalent of having a painting half done, the bottom half not even lightly sketched.

But how do you find the back story? How do you learn of your characters' life histories? Sometimes, simply asking them is enough. But usually being a writer is not that easy. You have to trick your characters into revealing their past. Dream sequences, monologues, and flashbacks help in getting your characters to open up. But just like normal humans, your characters can lie, deceive, and outright distract you from the truth. So you'll have to be on your toes when cross-examining your characters.

I've had characters surprise me mid-story with an odd pet-peeve they forgot to mention to me earlier on. Be prepared for unexpected changes as your characters are forced to show their true selves, and eventually explain themselves. I may not learn why the main character is afraid of curtains until they have a flashback to an awkwardly tragic middle school memory involving curtains.

As for those characters who are a bit more stubborn, shy, or just mute, getting a back story is considerably trickier. Adding a clueless character to force others into talking can sometimes work. Or, my favorite method is turning off the sun. Encase your stubborn character in complete darkness. Whether it's literally putting them in a room without light, or figuratively putting them in a situation they know nothing about. Make your characters uncomfortable enough, and they'll eventually give in to your demands. Or go crazy and start ranting. Either way, you get back story and plot progression at the same time. Win/win.

As far as your overall back story to your plot, that requires understanding the universe your characters are interacting with. What are the various laws of reality. How easy is it to bend or break those rules? What are the consequences of breaking those rules? Understanding the limits of the world your characters live in allows for understanding the history of the world your characters live in.

If your world runs around the confines of magic, then technology tends to be sparse. That means your world's history is centered around the arts of magic and sorcery. Technology above steam power tends to either be non-existent or incredibly rare. On the flip side, if your world has anti-gravity powered cars, finding a character who can cast magical spells would be somewhat out of place. If both technology and magic co-exist, then the history of your world is most likely mixed with confrontations between the two, eventually striking some balance.

These are all the average situations in the back story of a world. More guidelines than rules really. Poke around in the world you're writing, see what makes it tick, and more importantly why it makes the world tick. The more you understand about your world, the better you'll be able to create a believable story. And the better armed your characters will be. Having a character fall through an unforeseen plot hole tends to derail story progression. The more you know, the more you'll be able to keep things together.

Whatever you don't figure out on the first write through, can be filled in during the revision process. I constantly realize while writing a plot that certain bits and pieces would work more effectively were I to switch something up in chapter 1. Rather than start back at the beginning, I note it, and continue on with the first draft. Never go back to the beginning of your story to "fix that one little thing" while writing the first draft. Back story is important, but getting the story written down on paper is even more important.

By Charles J. Muir

## The Writer's Life - A Day In The Life

Every writer has his or her quirks. Special pens, lucky objects that must be nearby while writing, sacrificial totems to appease the Gods of literature, and so on and so forth.

Each writer is unique, although certain habits may overlap, at least in general. A majority of writers have an addiction to caffeine, sugar, or just plain unhealthy foods.

Each issue features an article or two on the various eccentricities and excitements of the writer's life.

We also give tips and tricks of how to survive the dangers involved with being a writer, from dealing with lack of sleep, how to handle distractions, getting past the First Draft, and more.

## Writer-Gifts: Hints and Tips for the Non-Writers Who Love Us

A zombie dog is easier to find than the perfect writer-gift, and sewer-dwelling clowns are less dangerous than getting it wrong.

When you love a writer, gift-giving can be a horror story. If you've ever tried to find just the right pen, or to locate a form of notebook they'll use, but don't already have fifty of, you know I speak the truth. A zombie dog is easier to find than the perfect writer-gift, and sewer-dwelling clowns are less dangerous than getting it wrong.

Fear not. Your wise and inscrutable mentor is here to help.

The first option is, of course, the easy solution: give a gift card. Bookstores and office supply stores hold an irresistible allure for most writers, and it's hard for you to go wrong here. Just think--with a few minutes' effort, you become the hero. Not only that, but you get to sit safely at home while your writer dares the store of his/her dreams, and when they come home happy, mussed, and flushed, you can smile knowing you did that.

If, however, you are one of those who believes gift cards are for wimps, read on.

Maybe your writer goes a little too crazy in office supply stores, and you'd like to minimize the madness. The gift of organizational materials is never wrong. Pretty file folders, post-it notes in every size, index cards in many colors, a whiteboard big enough to plot an entire trilogy... As with other non-gift-card items, it's good to know their tastes. Giving bunny-stamps when your writer loves kitties is Not Good.

Here's an idea--a stapler, pair of scissors, ruler, drawing pencils, graph paper--buy anything in the store they don't already have, individually wrap, place in pretty basket, and set it on their desk. That's a sight to make a writer smile!

Next up, a worthy cause--is your writer a NaNoer? Then the

place to shop is the NaNoWriMo store (<https://store.lettersandlight.org/merchandise>.) With a selection ranging from hoodies to coffee mugs to a poster of happy woodland animals frantically writing, the NaNoWriMo store supplies the needs of many a writer's helper, and your purchase helps keep the dream alive. Win/win and more win, here.

Of course, the NaNo store is not all that's out there. Does your writer make a soundtrack of appropriate music for his/her project? An iTunes card may be just the thing.

Books are always a good choice, for what writer wasn't a reader first? An e-reader can satisfy your writer's love for both reading and gadgets. Do your research! They are not all created equal, and some have unsavory strings attached.

Non-electronic book choices might include an excellent dictionary, a fat thesaurus, books on writing...and if you really know their taste, you might even dare fiction.

Candles usually go well. Soft flickering light can help to set a mood for writing romance or fantasy or both. Also, fire. Writers like fire. It's...not something we talk about, but it's there.

Tea is a civilized drink often enjoyed by writers. A cup of tea can soothe the savage muse, and bring us back to our work refreshed and strengthened. Seriously. Never underestimate the power of tea. Gift packages are easy to locate, and a tea set is an elegant gift. You can even find an individual tea pot such as Tea For One, and hand-decorate a cup or mug.

Snacks. Know your writer, here! As with books, it is easy to go wrong. Is your writer a lover of smooth creamy milk chocolate? Or do they have a fascination for the dark depths of bittersweet? Are they one of the brash souls combining passions in a chocolate-covered espresso bean? Gummy candy is a favorite among those who do not worship the great god Chocolate. Whatever their preference, a plastic bag of candy uncer-

Never underestimate the power of tea.

## Writers Gifts

moniously handed over will not impress. Get creative here. Put it in a pretty box. Hide it in a pretty tin. This will also help keep your beloved's bottom from expanding, if the candy is not in immediate sight. (Not replenishing the supply quickly will also help prevent bottom-spread, but this could be a dangerous move.)

Are you short on cash? You're fortunate to love a writer, then! We are a sentimental lot, even the most hardened among us, and the thought counts for a lot. Some ideas: create a coupon book of household chores you'll complete when your writer is engulfed in wrestling a difficult scene. Take them on an Inspiration Day--museum, hiking, zoo--it depends on what they are trying to write. I tend to do a lot of world-building at the zoo, looking at the animals and the habitats made for them.

Last, but certainly not least--when inspiration and skill and everything else fail your writer, as they will do sometimes, comfort will be needed. You have a choice--provide a woobie, or be a woobie. Inanimate woobies are comfort items--think Linus (from Peanuts--oh come on, everyone knows Peanuts!) and his blanket. This is never a bad plan. However, being a woobie--though hard (frustrated writers are notoriously unpredictable, and can be vicious when cornered) can be extremely rewarding. Your job would be to provide aid, comfort, tissues, chocolate--pretty much anything mentioned above, but as needed instead of on a certain day.

And if you do it well, you'll be the best gift a writer could ask for. After a great agent or a fantastic book contract or an interview on Oprah, anyway.

By KD Crotwell

(Writers, leave this article lying around in a few unobtrusive places, such as the magazine rack, the car visor, superglued to the TV screen...get creative. But you should probably black out these instructions--and anything in my list you don't want--before you do so. Highlight your favored choices.)

## Shutting off Your Imagination

Is it physically possible for a writer, or any artist for that matter, to actually turn off their imagination? I don't believe so, and I honestly don't see why they'd want to. I mean sure, I've had my muse clinging to my brain, gnawing on the lazy parts, forcing me to write when I'd rather be sleeping or watching a movie. And when I'm in "the zone" and someone tosses a ridiculously absurd combination of plot bits at me like: an insane yellow imp with a Yoda speech impediment and weird fixation on pigturducken. Yes such a character does exist in my motley menagerie. Chartep is definitely on the weirder side of the spectrum though.

A writer's imagination can be annoying at times, as they never do seem to shut off. It can take me an extra hour to fall asleep at night if my imagination is working on something new. I appreciate the ideas that form, or at least I appreciate them once I've gotten some sleep. But there are admittedly times that I wish my imagination were a bit better at imagining up some more sellable ideas.

I don't mind having odd creatures like butter flies (little pats of butter with wings), but they're not exactly easy to sell. Then again, sparkling vampires are selling, so I guess anything is possible if you find the right market. Anyway, through various highly scientific (it's an aptly appropriate word) experiments, I have determined the only way to shut off a writer's imagination is to either drop the writer in a black hole (no black holes were harmed during experimentation), or feed the writer's muse liver and onions. For some reason liver and onions are a muse's kryptonite. They'll shrivel up and go into indefinite hibernation. So be very careful when handling liver and onions, your muse may run away in terror.

Short of those incredibly drastic measures, a writer's imagination is invincible. That's not to say it can't get out of shape and lazy though, so keep your imagination running to maintain peak creative performance.

The more in shape your imagination is, the better it'll be able to battle any writer's blocks that attempt to pounce you. Be wary of writer's blocks as they've evolved to become more sneaky and devious. I've found sound hiding in the tree tops, trying to blend in, but those beady eyes always stick out. An active imagination can outrun them any day, so stay in shape.

By Charles J. Muir

The Fairfield County Writers Group of Connecticut was originally created in the lost age of November, 2008. Founded as a regional chapter of National Novel Writing Month, FCWG grew into a local community of writers who are committed to writing not just in one month of the year, but every month of the year.

Whether a full-time, part-time, or hobby writer, we accept any and all who enjoy crafting words.

Come register for free. and learn more about our group. We offer a forum, chat room, local events, and even writing gear.

Website:

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Fairfield County Writers Group

Fairfield County  
Connecticut



## Brought To You By:

The FCWG is currently managed and maintained by [Charles J. Muir](#) of New Canaan, CT. As the Literary Director for FCWG he oversees the day to day operations of the writing group and act as Regional Municipal Liaison for the Fairfield County chapter of National Novel Writing Month.

All of the back-end and behind the scenes work is done by our incredible Technical Director, [Calvin Williams](#) of Brooklyn, NY. Calvin single-handedly ensures that the website and all its components work as smoothly as possible.