

The Write Life

Volume 1, Issue 8

November 7th, 2009

NaNo - Week 1

Good morning ladies and menfolk. We've all made it through week 1 of NaNoWriMo. If you've been writing the average necessary word count, you should have a solid 11,669 words. For those of you that have been powering through the week 1 high, you're probably much higher in your word count. Congratulations. Keep writing. The week 1 high gets most of us gliding through the first week. It offsets the week 2 brick wall a majority of us smack into. Just keep writing, drink lots of caffeine, and join us in some of our events and you'll do just fine.

This Week's Events

We have a few events, handpicked, just for you this week. We'll be starting off with an online write-in on Wednesday, November 11th, at 7 PM - 9 PM in our regional chat room. We'll be having word wars, writing prompts, and general craziness that is inevitable with having multiple writers interacting all at once.

We'll also have an Ides of NaNo Cooldown event on the Saturday, November 14th. I set it for the 14th, rather than the 15th due to that it'll be at a bar. This'll be a non-writing event. More of a chance to take an evening off and get a drink or three with your new writing friends.

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.

Monthly Expenses to Date:	\$0
Annual Donations to Date:	\$170
Annual Expenses to Date:	\$470
Total Annual Funds to Date:	-\$300

What's New:

- Local Events
- Weekly Online Write-Ins

Up and Coming:

- Contests
- Branded Swag
- Whitepapers

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

The Power of “3”

There's something magical about the number “3”. Not 2, or 4, although 3.14 has it's uses. The power of three spans every genre, and even into real life. From parent and child, to the length of time it takes for my microwave to pop a bag of popcorn. What scenarios of 3 have you experienced or encountered?

I happen to commute 3 hours a day after paying \$3 in parking per day. I have 3 hours a day where I'm not working or commuting and am awake. I spend an average of 3 hours a week on YouTube.com alone. I would like to some

day be able to work only 3 hours a day while writing 3 more hours per day. Those days are a long way away though, perhaps even 3 lifetimes away considering the way my paycheck is compared to the national economy.

Write about some of your 3's, and what 3's you'd like to experience in the future.

One Worders

Try starting a story utilizing one of the below words:

Alien
 Birthday
 Duo
 Offering
 Synchronize
 Predetermined
 Betrothal
 Brothel
 Column
 Alleviate

One Liners

Try starting a story with one of the below sentences:

Everybody dance!
 Why am I on a plane?
 I will avenge you.
 What are we going to do tonight?
 I get turned into a muppet, I'm so telling mom it's your fault.
 Finders keepers.
 Avalanche!
 You see one bald head, you've seen them all.
 Never take cab 73B.
 I'm going skydiving, with or without you.

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



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.

Smashing Writer's Block - Part 2 of 3

Writer's block. It's pernicious. Its sources are many, as are its manifestations. It may drive you to head deskling, to obsessively playing videogames, to cleaning things that have not seen a dust cloth in decades. But the defining characteristic is this--you want to write, you try to write, and you can't.

Remember rule number one: is your behind firmly planted before your work? Yes? Then let's move on.

In the last segment I mentioned that a frequent source of block is fear, and I tried to reassure. Try these methods if the frontal attack didn't work.

First, if you're thinking about publishing, stop it. That's for later. The first draft is yours. This is your chance to, as Ms. Frizzle says, "Take chances, make mistakes, get messy!"

Easy for me to say? Yes. But here's how to do it.

Try a new font. Or a new color. Some writers type white on white. Can't fix it if you can't see it. I don't like that one--I make more typos when I can't see them. Or I think I do--and I can't ignore the fear that my hard-won words will be incoherent. So I use a different, but legible, font. Comic Sans, usually. Yes, some hate it--for exactly the reasons I use it. The font is cutesy, it's sloppy, and it's impossible to take seriously. This first draft is for me--it's my time to take chances with plot and character, to wander off on tangents to see what's there, to write a messy scene that says vaguely what I need it to and then move on.

Try your hand at handwriting. What I can't bring myself to

I use a different, but legible, font. Comic Sans, usually. Yes, some hate it--for exactly the reasons I use it. The font is cutesy, it's sloppy, and it's impossible to take seriously.

If I'm hesitant about where I'm going, it's a lot easier to change direction in the working file than to go back to the manuscript and try to spot where

I went wrong.

type, I can often get down on paper. I like to grab a notebook and a pen and go to a fast-food restaurant at a quiet time of day. Less expensive than a coffee place, and a greater variety of people--who come in and out faster so if someone does distract me, it doesn't last. (Also, I have a kid and McDonald's has a play place. They have also greatly improved their coffee.) Between the change in scenery and the change in method, I can nearly always get unstuck. Another advantage is that I can write spare, knowing I'll flesh it out when I type it in. Once the bones are down, I can get the rest.

Set your muse free with a free write. This is often an answer to the lack of ideas, or direction, as well. Just close your eyes and type. Or don't, but type. No censoring. No thinking. Just go. If you type "I want meatloaf" fifty times in a row before something else comes out, so what? No one ever has to see. It's a free write. No big deal. Even if you're a vegetarian.

Write in another file. Often I have a manuscript file and a working file. If I'm hesitant about where I'm going, it's a lot easier to change direction in the working file than to go back to the manuscript and try to spot where I went wrong.

As for don't know where to start block--that's the easiest one of all. Just start. You'll know later if you started in the right place, and you'll be able to fix it. What, did you think you could just get it exactly right the first time so you wouldn't have to edit?

Your inner critic is that voice that tells you that your writing

Smashing Writers Block

isn't good enough. That your plot isn't twisty enough, your characters deep enough, your idea shiny enough, your setting memorable enough.

It lies.

While you'll probably never be fully rid of it, there is a way to drive it off at times. Choose a mantra, and repeat it as necessary. Here are some good ones.

It's a first draft.

I can get messy.

Mistakes are fun!

I'll fix it later.

Write! Else the world will end!

Okay, that last line may be a bit much. The point is, fear grows when you let it win. Take it on, take it down, and get back to writing. Remember--you can go around the block if you can't get through it. Don't give up. You're a writer. By definition, your head is hard enough for the job.

In the next segment, I'll talk about middle and end writer's block and especially what to do when you're stuck in sight of the end.

By KD Crotwell

Scenery

How to write in the world.

It's not an easy ability, to write in an entire world around your characters, and the plot. I'll let you in on a secret though; you don't have to write in an entire world. You just have to write in bits and pieces of the world, and your characters will build off of that. The readers will fill in the rest. You'll be amazed what a reader's imagination is capable of when given enough description to springboard off of.

Plot-Necessary Items

An easy way to toss in some of the "bones" to the world, are adding in plot-necessary items. Do your characters need to scale the Deadly Mountains of Doom and Despair? Make sure to toss in bits of description about the harsh terrain, the difficult journey, and the inhospitable temperatures. Your characters will build off of that, and your readers will finish the job.

Blue-Sky Descriptions

The other end of the scenery spectrum are the Blue-Sky descriptions. Toss in a bit of commentary on the weather and general surroundings of your characters from time to time. Not too much, or your story will get bogged down and stumble. But too little, and you'll have nothing but a 1950's radio play, in printed form. A balance is necessary.

Night Vision

It can be difficult to describe a character's surroundings, when the power's been cut, and the moon is hidden behind those ominous thunder clouds. Of course the flashlight batteries have gone dead, no one ever remembers to change those when they should. Why do you think people still hide candles in their houses? A bit of "poetic license" can be allowed in these situations, to sneak in a bit of description on the scenery. It can be as simple as your character stumbling into various bits of furniture, or walking into a tree branch. Low visibility settings are prime fodder for awkward situations to occur.

Over all, just be sure to strike a balance between description of setting and scenery, and actual action. Too much of either will make your story all lopsided and probably tip over if poked at too much.

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.

There's a Platypus at the Door

Nano is a grueling, chaotic and fantastic time that leaves you searching for both words and ideas. In this search, uncertainty is your greatest nemesis. It will make you doubt your story, your very creativity. It will tell you some things are just too silly to write. **Don't listen! I learned an important lesson** last November: never underestimate the power of a platypus.

When a platypus comes knocking on the door of your story, let him in. He might not be a real platypus with a bill and barbs and all. Then again, he might be. Mine was. He even had a hat and a mail pouch. I write fantasy so that worked for me. Your platypus might be a clown or a technogeek. It might be the equivalent of a pie in the face or a car alarm blurting out the 1812 Overture. I consider a writing platypus to be a comic element that insists on being inserted into a story.

It's ok to give in to humor. Really it is. Even if you don't do funny or think a novel is serious business, you can use humor. Humor doesn't have to be slapstick and it doesn't have to be delivered lightning fast like the latest newsbyte or tweet. It might be a bit of banter, the t-shirt, a prank, a strained laugh, a puddle or a memory. Your story, your world might be dark as dark, even a place without hope. In such duress, there is an inclination to laugh, even if it is only to laugh at the dark.

In your quest for 50,000 words this Nano season, humor can help the words pile up because you can include your characters' reactions to attempted humor. Maybe it hurts some of them. It might make them cry or shake or crow. Let your hard-bitten detective laugh—it'll teach you more about her, even if it ends up being an outtake when you revise (which will be after November 30). Maybe she laughs when she is nervous, though that wouldn't be good for the job. Maybe she laughs when she's in pain, when anyone else would cry or in a supply closet after a hard meeting with the local authorities. You won't know until you try. Maybe it will come out stilted or only as a faint ghost of what was in your head. That's OK. It's a starting point, which is all you need.

Humor can expand the horizons of your adventure or romance. It can spawn a supervillain or birth a tender moment in the midst of a storm. It feeds plotbunnies and encourages them to multiply in unexpected ways, ways that can lift your story and remind you of the fun that is noveling. Besides, being able to laugh at your writing is a good thing. So if you spot a platypus, show him the way in to your story. I know I will.

By Sarah Wendorf

When she isn't teaching first graders or learning the inner workings of libraries, Sarah is getting ready for her fifth NaNoWriMo.

Mindset

Every profession has a different mindset. A different way of looking at the universe. And I believe writers have the best mindset of them all. Writers have the innate ability to look at the world we live in, and picture all the "What if?" scenarios. We are literary MacGyver's, pulling together plots and characters out of old shoelaces, a rubber band, and a paper clip.

We're willing to ask the "unanswerable" questions of the cosmos, and better yet, we're able to create answers for them. Why is the sky blue? Because the moon cheated on Earth with Pluto. But Earth got back at the moon by throwing Pluto out of the Planets United Organization. And that's just an answer I pulled out of the ether right here and now. Imagine the answers we could each create, given even five minutes of time.

How can we utilize this quirky power? By doing what writers do best. Well, what we do best is procrastinate. What we do second best is write! If you figure out that the cure for cancer involved a glow-in-the-dark-black squid from the Bermuda Triangle, then write it down. Detail the process for obtaining said squid and extracting the cure. You've just created a plot to a rather interesting novel. Go with it, see where it goes, and enjoy the ride.

I secretly think that the writer's brain is an amalgamation of silly putty, some coffee beans, a couple chocolate bars, and a crystal ball. This unlikely combination can fuel any plot, enliven any character, and craft any dialogue. Just be sure not to add any squirrels into the mix, as they'll derail any productivity whatsoever, no matter how much coffee you have.

Why are we forever interested in "the other" answers to all of life's various eccentricities? Because we all believe that there is more to this world, this life, than what the five classic senses give us. And it is up to us, as writers, to seek out those "other" answers to life, the universe, and everything. Are you up to the challenge?

By Charles J. Muir

Literary Latte - Submissions!

Have a short story, poem, flash fiction, or literary article you'd like to share with us? Send your submissions to WriteLife@FCWriters.com and you may see your work published here in our Literary Latte.

The Arena—Part 1

I scrunched my face up in anticipation of that first, steaming sip of scaldingly hot bitter ambrosia The Shack likes to call coffee. One could almost taste the faint hint of carefully grown beans that had been slow roasted and freshly ground and then put through a French press for the utopian pot of caffeine. But all that came across the taste buds was the sharp stabbing pain of 180 degree water seared with coffee made two hours ago and left to sit on the burner until I was brave enough to take a cup. As a connoisseur of attempts at quality java, this had always been my favorite place. It made the morning commute into The Arena worthwhile; got those synapses squirming in contempt. Finishing the rest in one gulp I let the ensuing caffeine rush smash me like a melting ice cube, surrounding an erupting volcano.

The light-train shuddered as the engines picked up speed behind the break-line. I watched a piece of fresh meat, which appeared vaguely humanoid, lean against the wall, waiting. Sitting down, I clipped myself to the wall, making sure my battered carabineer would hold tight. Waiting for the jump, I tune my mind out for the ensuing banshee shriek as twelve tons of steel are torn in every direction through four dimensions. The Universe did a small tap dance through Creation while the light-train shrugged against the laws of reality and remained still. The fresh meat got tenderized in the process, as fresh meat inevitable does.

One of the first rules of the Arena - watch everyone and everything. Or else anyone or anything may happen behind your back, or more importantly in your back. Another basic rule

that one learns quickly - kill or be killed, or in my case kill or try to be killed. No one nor nothing has succeeded yet in that last part. I'm perfectly content to keep it that way. Although it would be nice, if for some variety if nothing else, that if I didn't have to kill everyone and everything that gets in my way, or behind my way as is more often the case than not.

All those souls give me indigestion like you wouldn't believe. I've talked to Bob about it, but there's nothing He can do about it. He just does his thing; the aftermath is for me to cover. Though to be fair, it mustn't be easy being a sentient black hole entrapped within the left arm of a mercenary. It could be worse, he could have been entrapped within my right arm, that would have been tragic.

The Universe finished with a stylish finale and the four dimensions snapped around the light-train. The fresh meat had managed to cling onto a handle near the back of the car, at least until reality had settled back in to something more accepted by the inhabitants of Creation. A thud was heard on the other end of the train car. This fresh meat would be well tenderized before entering the Arena. Such is the way of things.

Unclipping my carabineer, I it put back onto my belt loop. My belt is one of the finest in creation, at least for ones made out hair from the corporeal shells of those I defeat. To be fair they're already dead and gone when it happens, although they always have their say later on. Such is the way of souls. Always so talkative in the afterlife. You'd think that fighting in a multi

All Inner Editors and Inner Critics Must Report to Jail Immediately

The charge: Obstruction of the Writing Process with Intent to Block Distribution

The accused: Inner Editors and Inner Critics Everywhere

The verdict: Guilty!

**The sentence: 30 days of Silence at the Rock while Noveling of Literary
Abandon Ensues!**



The Arena—Part 1

-universal arena where even demonic duplicates of yourself could be battling in the ring beside you, would help you get used to ingesting the souls of those you defeat. But nope, Bob the black hole keeps things awkward, even after five years.

I stood up and waited for the light-train to dissolve, allowing us passage into The Arena. Gorgol, Kride, and Fathead remained sitting, eyeing the fresh meat. The new recruit twitched a bit, and slowly got up, eying the rest of us warily. Ah innocence, how easily that'll be stripped away in The Arena. The light-train dissolved, leaving us a good meter off above the ground. The three stooges spring out of their crouches to land gracefully. I prefer to let gravity do all the work and bring back to the ground with a solid satisfying thud. The recruit landed on its back, narrowly avoiding a space weasel. Shame, squished space weasels make for an entertaining explosions. Only explosive creature I've ever met in my travels.

I'd look behind you, right about...wait for it, wait for it...now! Ducking low, and spinning on my heel, I punch out to connect with the knee of a surprised looking Gorgol. What I wouldn't give for Bob to whisper a warning before a not so surprising attack occurs. I respect Gorgol, to the point where I don't what

to kill him. At least not outside the Arena. He bright orange face with all the little bony bumps look like it has a great story to tell Bob. But I should save that for another time. I dislike killing outside of the Arena. It doesn't count for any credits, and there's no crowd to appreciate it.

Gorgol however looked ready to fight an entire armada. Well, if you try to stab me in the back with a bone knife, I'm just gonna have to shatter your kneecap. Besides, he has three more. He dropped the bone knife, and clutched his shattered knee, falling on his side. The others ignored his moans of pain. I offered a hand to pick him up. Gorgol stared at me, and promptly brought his moans down to a soft whimper. His pain can't be too bad if he chooses that over accepting my arm with Bob in it. Pain is always better than oblivion. Or so I've been told. Never having been obliterated makes for a rather skewed perception of the matter.

A siren broke through the scene, shattering everyone's attention. As one, we turned towards the Arena. The call has been made. It's do or die time. Time to find out who we battle, and who Bob gets to eat. Let the games begin!

By Charles J. Muir

Recommended Reading

The Writer's Guide to Character Traits by Linda Edelstein

This quirky book profiles the mental, emotional and physical qualities of the stereotypical personality types. This book is great for writers who like to craft 4-dimensional characters. Characters who have a believable history, which creates believable futures. It's also entertaining just to see what sort of character profiles result from various parental, religious, and politi-

cal backgrounds. It's worth having on your bookshelf.

Writer's Complete Fantasy Reference by Writer's Digest

Not necessarily a "complete" reference, but this book covers the basics of medieval and renaissance history. From clothing, to warfare, to laying siege to a castle, it has it all. I've used this book as a reference for several stories, mainly for the illustrations of armor and castle battlements.

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The Fairfield County Writers Group of Connecticut was originally created in the last 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.