

The Write Life

Volume 1, Issue 9

November 13th, 2009

NaNo - Week 2

Good morning ladies and menfolk. We've made it through most of week two. Congratulations. The initial high was worn off, that ability to power through all nighters on several pots of coffee is getting hard and harder, and your characters are meeting ninjas and breaking out into synchronized dancing a lot more often. But fear not. The week 3 rally is just cresting over the hills. If you feel like you couldn't even look at another word ever again, take an hour off to do something else. Let yourself enjoy an hour of non-literaryness...then get your butt in your chair, and your fingers on the keyboard and get back to it. Your award-winning novel won't write its first draft on its own.

This Week's Events

We have an Ides of NaNo Cool-Down event tomorrow. On Saturday, November 14th, at the Blue-Z Café in Newtown. It'll be from 6 PM - 9 PM. This is a chance to rest your weary hands, let your computer cool off for a for hours, and grab a drink with your fellow writers.

We'll also be having a write-in at the Sycamore Drive-In Diner, in Bethel. That's on Sunday, November 15th, at 1 PM. And we'll also be meeting up in the Norwalk Barnes & Nobles, also on Sunday, November 15th. That's right, two events at once. You're welcome to come to whichever location is more convenient for you.

And on Wednesday, November 18th, we'll be having another online write-in in our regional chat room, from 7 PM - 9 PM.

All address and contact info is in our events calendar on our website. Hope to see you there!

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.

Musical Machinations

There is a hypnotic power behind the lyrical combinations of the written word and musical instruments. Listening to a few choice songs can completely alter your mood and energy levels. I'm a fan of metal music for writing fight scenes. Jpop is effective for lulling scenes while characters respond to the aftermath of drama and plot progression. Classic rock is just good all around in my opinion. But, each writer has their own preferences and musical tastes.

Select a few songs that are in the same genre or style and see what sort of writing you come up with while listening to your musical playlist. Try a different musical genre to see how your writing changes. Are there certain musical genres that are more effective for you than others? Keep track of what songs work for what scenes. After a while you'll have entire playlists for love scenes, or fight scenes, or for just a particular character.

One Worders

Try starting a story utilizing one of the below words:

Matador
Olive
Stanza
Reality
Squid
Calendar
Spooky
Liberty
Slander
Kablaam

One Liners

Try starting a story with one of the below sentences:

Stand by me.
I will never understand why you insist on meeting here.
Quick, think of something cool to say.
I don't like you.
Never trust a man in a pretty dress.
I dare to wear white after Labor Day.
I earn more in a year than some small countries.
Rock climbing without gear is never a smart decision, but when has that ever stopped me?
I recommend you try the nuclear waste; it tastes like butterscotch pudding.
What could go wrong?

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 Writers Block - Part 3 of 3

Writer's block. Are you sick of it? Good. Let's take it down.

Is your butt in the chair? Well done.

Now. The middle of the story. Often called the muddle, with good reason. People get stuck just because they can't see the end. They've been in there so long they've forgotten a time before the story and can't imagine a time after. If you know the next step, this is an easy answer--just push on.

Maybe you don't know where to take your plot next. So stop looking at your plot. Look at your characters, your setting, or your idea. These concepts are cornerstones of your story, and while your talent--and thus their strength--may not be equally distributed, at least three of them need to be there. Your story can thrive despite being triangular. It can't survive being flat.

So ask questions. What would your character do now? Well, what wouldn't he do? Why? What happens if he takes the gun/the pill/the train? What if it snows? What if a rogue wave hits? What if another character illustrates your lead's misanthropy?

Freewriting can help. Sitting around thinking may soon lead to sitting thinking of something else, so use a freewrite to keep on track. Or get up and role-play the scene. Go for a walk with a notebook. Take a shower with bath-crayons (made of colored soap) nearby lest inspiration strike.

Have you fought your way to the middle only to discover you hate your story? Ouch. That's a harsh one. But don't give up. You loved it once. You can again.

You might hate your story because you wandered too far from your inspiration. Finding your source can get you back on track.

You've got to find your writing method, and you can't do that stuck inside an incomplete story.

Maybe you're sick of it. When's the last time you took a break? Take a night off--or more--once in a while. Read a book. Write something else. (Smutty fanfics are fun. >_>)

Go back to the beginning. Not that beginning--the very beginning. The inspiration for your story, the reason you first fell in love with it. Your story came from somewhere. Go remember where. You might hate your story because you wandered too far from your inspiration. Finding your source can get you back on track.

This leads to another problem--how do you know you've gone wrong? I know, I hear you--Demmit, KD, for three segments you said "just write, you can't get it wrong--"

Well, yes. But there are two kinds of wrong. The goof is easy. Just make a note and fix it later. Then there's the other kind--faking it. Being untrue to what you've built.

In one of my novels, slavers kidnapped a friend of my main character to see what she'd do. Since it was just a test, the slavers didn't hurt him.

Right.

I got stuck and I couldn't see why, until I realized slavers would plan for their profit margin in case she didn't take him back. So better get him ready for market...

Why yes. I did cry while I wrote that.

Should you hit a wall, especially if you were madly typing before it, look for this issue. Did you go easy on your characters because you love them? Send them around the battle so no

Smashing Writers Block

one would die in it? Dodge a romance to avoid blushing while you wrote? You can't do that. There are ways around such things. Arbitrarily "making it so" is not one of them.

You're a writer. You know this.

If you're good and stuck and nothing helps, set it aside for a while and take up another project. Many of my stories have been set aside for months, even years. Picking it back up is hard, yes, but it's still better than grinding the joy out of writing. I find this especially helpful when the end will not let me write it. This has happened twice--I knew exactly what I wanted to have happen, and I couldn't do it. So I jotted down my plans and I moved on. When I came back around during editing, I wrote those chapters and they were marvelous. In both cases, it turns out, I had grandiose "give them all medals in front of the entire Rebel Alliance" endings planned, and they just didn't work. Given a bit of distance, I was able to pare down my melodramatic impulses.

Other times you've just got to push through. If you've never finished a story, I say push on no matter what. You've got to find your writing method, and you can't do that stuck inside an incomplete story. If you push too hard and go astray, you can fix it. That's why we're writers, not bomb disposal specialists. Right?

Although...being a demolitions expert would help with those really persistent blocks.

By KD Crowell

Characters

A plot will not get very far if there are no characters in it. They're like peanut butter and jelly, Oreos, or Siamese twins. I have a disturbingly large roster of characters in my brain. A compilation of every character I've ever come across, and every character I've ever created. There are dozens of similar characters. I seem to have maybe twenty or so molds which my regular cast are built from. Sure, I tweak bits and pieces for each story. But whenever I start a new plot, I have to start from the beginning.

Male, Female, or To Be Determined?

I've had Main Characters (MCs) range from male, female, animal, alien, deity, and even a very confused transgender gnome (that story didn't get very far) In each occurrence, I've found that determining the sex of the character was dependant on the supporting cast, oddly enough. Once I have a plot, I toss in a few of my standard characters: a redheaded athlete, a green-eyed nerd, and a bearded comedian. The various combinations are usually jumbled around for each story.

It's akin to lego people. You have different heads with various facial expressions, a torso with different clothing, and then different colored legs. You can mix and match an infinite variety of combinations. But in the end they all have heads, torsos, and legs. The three main parts of a character, mind, body, and...legs. That analogy started off so well. Anyway, the point is that you will have a veritable menagerie of character bits and

pieces. Just fiddle around with them until a workable character emerges.

My current Work in Progress (WiP) has a Bruce Campbell-esque Elvis, a cricket bat wielding Abe Lincoln, a bartender-ing Amelia Earhart, and a random red head with a sentient black hole (named Bob) attached to her arm. Oh and let's not forget the talking velociraptor, Fred.

Personality!

A character is no good if all it does is stand like a cardboard cutout and occasionally act like a mime. A character needs personality, life, a unique quirk that makes him/her/it stand out amongst the rabble of 2-dimensional mimes. Give 'em an accent, throw in a weird facial tic, make them afraid of cotton candy. Something offbeat, weird, quirky, or eccentric can really liven up a character, and help a plot roll along if it's getting a bit stale.

I tend to base my characters off of a similar mold: Snarky, sarcastic, and ready for a brawl. I then whittle away whatever doesn't work for the particular situation. I'll sometimes add in some seriousness if necessary. But considering my warped sense of humor, seriousness tends not to appear in my writing. But to each their own.

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.

Being Eccentric, Eclectic, and Unique

Writers are an unusual breed of humans. We tend to insert our own sense of reality into the world, not satisfied with just the here and now of what's visible to our five senses. We go the edges of the multiverse and beyond, even if we're just sitting at our desks staring out the window. This makes for some very quirky personalities. It also makes for one heck of a fun life.

Eccentricity Loves Company

I can spend my morning chatting with fellow writers in Australia and Malaysia, and slowly work my way around the globe all the way over to Arizona and California. I've tried to talk to writers from Pluto, but the cultural differences are rather tricky to get around. It takes a whole hour just to say "hello".

I also get to do what few others get to do. I get to not only live in this world, but create any other world my imagination can come up with. Sure any created universe tends to follow the same laws of physics and reality as this one. Up is up, down is down, $2 + 2 = \text{purple}$; simple truths. Granted real life tends not to have talking velociraptors, or pan galactic arenas where most of the fighters are human. But where's the fun in only accepting one reality?

Diversity Rules!

We may not be able to actually live in the worlds we create, but that doesn't mean we can't enjoy them. How many readers have become entranced with one series or another? Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, the Discworld series, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, and others. They were writers just like us. They had a vision, a plot, a character, a universe.

If we take the time, care, and devotion to craft characters we care about, our writing can become just as powerful as the best sellers. It's not easy, it's not always financially rewarding, but I wouldn't give it up for anything else in the world. Well, maybe a chance to travel to Pluto. But other than that, I'm a writer through and through and wouldn't have it any other way.

What other profession allows you to ask questions ranging from: How would the world be now if Australia was never

found? to If my character is slowly poisoned by arsenic, will the evil aunt still get the inheritance money before the local detective puts it all together? And anything in between.

I've researched creation myths, to nanite technology, to the philosophical arguments of existence, to the logistics of baking a banana cream pie. Few other professions would allow for such cross pollination of ideas and interests. Few other professions would even care for such cross pollination of ideas and interests.

We're One of a Kind

Writers have the unique ability of looking at the incredible and mind-boggling mystery that is life and think: I can work with this, and make it even more mind-boggling. Why settle with just one life when you can create hundreds, even thousands of lives with pen and paper. We become possessive, caring, and sometimes even afraid of the characters we create. I still have a few assassins I'm afraid to let out of the meat locker I've stuffed them in to. Maybe one of these days I'll let them out to play in a novel. Or maybe I'll just leave them where they are for the safety of human kind

So, whether you write business articles, poems, short stories, 500,000 word tomes of need to know information, you have the ability to create something special. Something entirely your own. We may mimic or copy another writer's style or type of character. But we are still the sole creator and builder of what we write. No one can take that away from us, alter it, or deny it.

Embrace your eccentricities, your quirks, your eclectic tastes and interests, and your inherent unique perception of the universe. We can enjoy life as few others can. So make the most of it, and then write it all down. Otherwise, all those non-writers out there will never be able to glimpse at the incredible lives we are able to live.

By Charles J. Muir

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.