



Penwheels Newsletter

Fall Issue 2019

For Escapees Writers, Published or Not

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The PENWHEELS FICTION CONTEST is Back!

Time to draft that story you've been thinking about, revise the old one you've neglected, and let your talent shine!

Image by Dianne Hoge

Send us your short story of 2000 words or less before OCTOBER 15, 2019 to join the fun!

Image by Dianne Hoge

All fiction genres are welcome and each story will receive a free critique/review.

The winning story will be published in an upcoming issue of the Penwheels newsletter and the winning writer will also receive a special, handmade SKP bracelet (for women) or a wrist cuff (for men).

The winner will be announced in the Winter Newsletter.

Please send your Word-formatted, previously unpublished short stories to: **ellenbehr@aol.com**--the sooner, the better!

You can send more than one story, but only one will receive a critique/review.

You will retain all rights to your story – you've got nothing to lose.



Jaimie's Tips

Jaimie Bruzenak

➤ This article in *Writer's Weekly* should make you stop and think and do some investigating before choosing a publisher for your self-published books.

Titled "[What is a Publishing Ponzi Scheme? And, How Can You Avoid Becoming a Victim?](#)", Angela shows how a publisher can get in over their head and stop paying your royalties. It's likely, she says, they charged way too much to begin with. Nice to see your book in print, but do your research.

➤ This Little Free Library is located at the front of the Hudson, NY Presbyterian Church.

See Jaimie checking out books.



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Penwheels is a private group of Escapees members who enjoy writing and discussing the writing adventure.

The Penwheels Newsletter is digitally published quarterly.

[Archives Available](#)



Ellen
Behrens

We recently stayed in a remote section of the Montana mountains where we didn't get TV, and wi-fi reception was wonky at best. Our evening entertainment was an HBO series we'd bought on DVD.

A few episodes in, I realized there wasn't an admirable character in the bunch, although four had potential (out of a cast of a few dozen).

So why keep watching instead of putting something else in the DVD player? Because I cared about what happened to those four. They were flawed, to be sure, but aren't we all? And the more I watched the series, the more invested I became in those characters and in new ones that were introduced. I even started jeering at the meanies instead of trying so hard to like them.

New York Times best-selling author Hallie Ephron tells us our characters shouldn't be perfect: "Readers are far more taken with a character who is flawed in interesting ways."

Betty Rollin, the narrator of my own *Rollin RV Mysteries*, is far from perfect. She's judgmental, impetuous, and more nosey than curious.

All those qualities lead her smack into the middle of less than ideal situations. Her husband Walt would do anything for her but is no push-over, an edgy temper lingering just beneath the surface.

Human beings are flawed—your characters should be, too.

Our flaws come from personality quirks and from experiences we've had. Someone who's lost a parent at a young age might be reluctant to trust loved ones won't suddenly disappear; someone who endured a violent past might be more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs. Someone who's been spoiled is often greedy, selfish.

What in your character's life might lead to a particular way of dealing with the world (or avoiding it)? Be careful not to wade enthusiastically into stereotypes (drunk cops come to mind).

Instead, think of ways your character uniquely deals with life. What flaws result? For example, maybe a woman whose mother was an addict has sworn off all alcohol, all drugs—has become a vegan and drinks only water because she's determined not to let anything become her addiction (the irony, of course, is that she's addicted to avoiding potentially addictive behaviors).

Not only are flawed characters more identifiable, they offer terrific plot opportunities: when Betty's curiosity gets the best of her, it leads her into sometimes dangerous situations. Hopefully the reader worries about her because they, too, have been curious about something and pushed their luck because of it.

Strong characters are at the heart of all good fiction whether you're writing a literary masterpiece or a page-turning, blood-curdling horror story. And strength comes from having weathered life's challenges. What challenges has your character overcome? How is he or she now flawed because of it? How does that drive your novel?

Ellen Behrens' short stories, articles, essays, and reviews have been widely published. Her *Rollin RV Mysteries* feature full-time RVers. Learn more about her books at www.ellenbooks.wordpress.com or e-mail her directly at ellen-behr@aol.com.



From the Editor

Promoting Your Book

In the last Penwheels Newsletter, I wrote a short article about how the book promotion market has changed in the last couple of years. The large publishing houses are no longer in control, the Internet rules!

So...it seems to me that 2015 was a pivotal year for the online experience that propelled us into today.

The major players (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, to name a few) began pushing their audiences toward a pay wall. The billion dollar quarter financial goals became the bottom line.

With the online marketplace becoming the focus for selling books, the price for participating started to climb. Selling your book now takes far more time than writing it.

Although Amazon started the online book flood, ironically it may be the last bargain in the ad race. If this avenue works for your book, make sure that you read the fine print. Changes happen fast!

Overall the best tool to increase sales, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) requires either a large promotion budget or hours of your labor. Keywords are indeed the "key" to reaching your target market.

Here are a few keyword gleaning sites to research:

[Answer the Public](#) This site is an interesting approach. Type in a keyword or phrase and a free report is generated with more than just a list. This site specializes in "natural" keywords used by real people searching.

[Publisher Rocket](#) yields real data that shows you what Amazon buyers type into its search box.

Abbreviations: How & When to Use Them

Abbreviations are common ways to shorten long words, phrases, and proper nouns. The key is to differentiate between formal and informal writing, and to understand when it's appropriate to use abbreviations for each.

For more formal writing, always write out the initial word, phrase, or proper noun and show the abbreviation in parentheses. For example: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Learn more about:

- ◆ Difference between acronyms and initialisms
- ◆ Courtesy titles and academic degrees
- ◆ Common Latin abbreviations in use today
- ◆ Time and date abbreviations

[More . . .](#)



How to Write a Synopsis

Every month, literary agents are contacted by hundreds of authors asking them to read their manuscript. Not wanting to miss out on the next J.K. Rowling, an agent can either:

Read every unedited manuscript and work themselves into an early grave; or . . .

Rely on the author's synopsis and leave the office in time for their dinner reservations.

That is exactly why every author, at some point, must become a master synopsis writer.

Here is a four-step process for writing a synopsis that agents will love. It includes guidance on:

- ◆ Word-count
- ◆ Sketching out your characters
- ◆ Describing plot points concisely
- ◆ Making agents desperate for your full manuscript.

[Read on . . .](#)



"It's none of their business that you have to learn to write. Let them think you were born that way." ~ Ernest Hemingway

Using Music to Mine Your Emotions

How to Effectively Show Emotion in Characters and Evoke Emotional Response in Readers

There is something wonderful, magical, and sublime about being made to feel deeply about something outside normal life.

Stories that remind us of what being human is all about, what love is, what loyalty is, what hope is, what being victorious looks like lift us up, confirm our humanity, bring deeper meaning to our life.

Seeing that we have readers willing to experience emotion when they turn the pages of our novels—no, not willing ... expecting, hoping, and longing for an emotional experience—we writers need to become masterful wielders of emotion.

[The rest of the story . . .](#)

First-Person Narrative

What do you think about first-person narrative? Is it the easiest to write because you can get into the character's voice and head? Or is it the most difficult because you can only see and know what the narrator does?

Amateurs and careless writers use first-person narration that sounds remarkably like themselves.

But if you're into characterization, or a character-centered story, you'll love discovering each distinct, new voice for your next work in progress.

Before committing to first person, here are some factors to consider.

- ♦ What is first person POV?
- ♦ Choosing a first-person narrator
- ♦ Having fun with first-person narrative

[Continue . . .](#)

A Complete Guide:

Writing Incredible Novel Openings

Why is it so important to get your novel opening perfect? Completing an entire novel is a great achievement.

But the sad fact is, if your first few pages and chapters aren't outstanding, the chances of anyone reading the rest of your book are slim.

It may seem unfair, but there is simply so much competition out there that you have to make readers feel compelled to choose your story over all the others, and you have to do it before they've invested too much time.

1. Prove you're worthy of the reader's time.
2. First impressions leave a mark.
3. The beginning sets up the end.

[Read on . . .](#)

Your Story as a Person

All too often, authors get mired in the details of a story, trying to cram everything in and make all the pieces fit.

Characters are then seen only as individuals, so they often unintentionally overlap each other's dramatic functions. The genre is depersonalized so that the author trying to write within a genre ends up fashioning a formula story and breaking no new ground.

The plot becomes an exercise in logistics, and the theme emerges as a black and white pontification that hits the audience like a brick.

[The rest of the story . . .](#)

Character Development Tricks!

[Here are a few tricks for creating characters](#) from scratch and for developing characters you've already created.

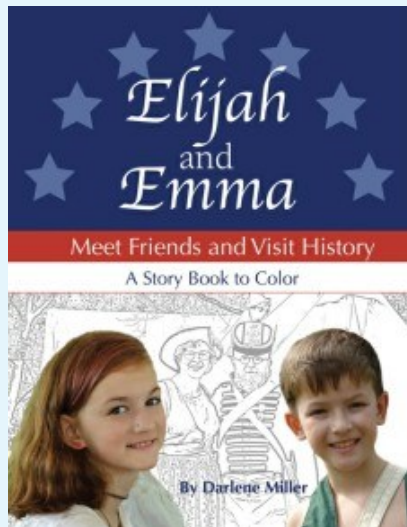
Though coming up with characters can be as simple as looking to our subject matter and asking ourselves who might be expected to be involved, that only creates the expected characters – predictable and uninteresting.

Building characters that are intriguing, unusual, and memorable is a different task altogether. Here's a method you can use to start with those standard characters and sculpt them into far more interesting ones, step by step.



Darlene Miller

SKP #50781



My latest book is a children's story/color book, "***Elijah and Emma Meet Friends and Visit History***."

The "story" part of this 40-page book is about a nine-year-old named Elijah who is getting poor grades in school because he doesn't like to read about history. He wants to "do stuff."

His grandmother takes Elijah, his parents and eleven-year-old young sister, Emma, to a weekend rendezvous where they wear period clothing and sleep in a tent. The children that they meet show them how to make sod, gather wood and make a fire to cook breakfast.

They leave the site, where the fire was covered with sod. They see how to knead bread for fry bread, sew a pillow, throw a tomahawk, use a fan instead of air conditioning as well as meet such characters as Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln.

If you Google "Elijah and Emma Meet Friends and visit History"; you will see several places you can buy it such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble as an **e-book**.

Because I want children to "do stuff," I made this a color book.

If you promise to write a review, I will send you a **free** book.

Send an email to:
rovingpenna@gmail.com

Please include your U.S. mailing address
in the email.

Post a review to Amazon and/or Barnes & Noble.
Thank you!

Note: Do not send the reviews to me as online booksellers do not allow the author to post reviews.

I am looking for reviewers who do reviews for the love of reading and not for money. Thanks.



World of Publishing

Getting a Professional Cover Design

A professional designer brings more than just Photoshop skills to the table. Book cover design is a complex balance of images, text, and information — and you need someone who understands how each of these elements interacts with the others to best sell your book.

A designer who specializes in book jackets understands how readers respond to layout and typography. They understand the current trends and can see how your cover will compete in the market. Most importantly, they will know how to communicate the right message with your cover.

- ◆ *7-Step Guide to Creating Your Own Unforgettable Cover*
- ◆ *How to Find the Right Cover Designer*

[Read on . . .](#)



Why Disclose Affiliate Links

Affiliate links and product endorsements are a great way for bloggers to earn extra income. They provide a commission on purchases made after clicking the link. Many companies offer these links to writers.

While affiliate links are commonly used online, their proper and *legal* usage is not widely understood.

- ♦ Why should I disclose affiliate links in the first place?
- ♦ What does my disclosure need to say?
- ♦ When should I make a disclosure?

[More . . .](#)

Plague of Publishing and Marketing Scams

Writer BeWare's Victoria Strauss has been expending a lot of words and time lately warning about the latest scam phenomenon to hit the writing world: fake publishing and marketing companies that, through outrageous prices and worthless services, extract enormous amounts of money from unwary writers.

The scams based in the Philippines (despite their apparent US addresses, phone numbers, and telemarketer names, focus primarily on small press and self-published authors. These companies recruit writers with relentless--and highly deceptive--phone and email solicitations.

Some do provide the services authors pay for, albeit at seriously inflated prices and often of poor quality. Others just take the money and run.

I'm hearing from a growing number of writers who've paid five figures in fees to one--or, in some cases, more than one--of these scams, with next to nothing to show for it.

Given how fast the scams are proliferating, Victoria thought it would be helpful to gather all the information in one place.

[Find out more . . .](#)

Remote Freelance Writing Jobs

Indeed

Freelance Agency-- free to job hunters

Some job samples:

- ♦ ShoutVox--Finance, Tech, Pop Culture
\$18-\$35 per hour
- ♦ GamePur Gaming Writer
- ♦ A Cloud Guru--Question Writer for Exams
- ♦ HubShot--Content
1.5 cents/word
- ♦ Wikimotive--Auto Content
\$40 per hour

Writers.work

Freelance Agency (\$47 or \$15/mo. to join) with many remote opportunities, \$20-\$45 per hour.

Blogs & Social Media Sites

[The Write Life](#)

[LinkedIn.com](#)

[Freelance Writing Gigs](#)

[Writing On The Road](#)

