



Penwheels Newsletter

Winter Issue 2019

For Escapees Writers, Published or Not

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TIPS FROM JAIMIE

Jaimie Bruzenak

"How-to" articles have been my forte and the RV lifestyle lends itself to this type of article, both for RV and general magazines. "Six Steps to Writing 'How-to' Articles for Profit" by John Riddle in the 9/12/2019 *Writers Weekly* issue provides good guidance.

<https://writersweekly.com/this-weeks-article/writing-how-to-articles-for-profit-john-riddle>

Also in this issue is "How I Became a Successful Freelance Editor" by Rickey Pittman. While a potential money-maker idea, if you are thinking of writing a book or in process, you'll find things that need to be considered in writing a book that you should know about and may help you hire an editor. As you'll see, there are many types of editing feedback and it helps if you are specific in what you want.

<https://writersweekly.com/success-stories/how-i-became-a-successful-freelance-editor-by-rickey-pittman>

Sell Your Photos

Penwheelers: if you enjoy taking photos, you might look into *Dream-times* to generate some income by selling them as stock photos.

<https://www.dreamstime.com/uploadfile>

Another Free Library Spotted



Kingsport, NY

Little Free Library in Kingsport, NY spotted along the shores of Rondout Creek that flows into the Hudson. Another woman and I drove down to take the solar-powered boat tour to the Rondout Lighthouse. This is one of 7 remaining Lights along the Hudson River.



Solar-powered Tour Boat



Rondout Lighthouse

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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](#)



FROM JOANNE

Joanne Alexakis

HAIKU, ANYONE?

A cute Haiku about getting out of bed: (from *Woman's World magazine*)

No no no no no

No no no no no no no

No no no no no

If you have a fun haiku to contribute, send them to joalexakis@earthlink.net. Keep it clean and respectful, please.

Look for them in future newsletter issues (with your name attached).



ABOUT "THE ROW" AT ESCAPEE ESCAPADES

Q: What is the Row?

A: The Row began in the early years of Escapade when some enterprising members of Escapees chapters and BoFs (Birds of a Feather) placed tables outside of their rows of RVs to tell others about their groups.

Today's Row is held inside and includes all the chapters, BoFs, SKP parks and coops that gathers for four days of Escapade to share all the greatness of their groups.

Q: Is there a discount for Escapade for being a Row Rep?

A: No, there is not.

Q: What are the hours of Row?

A: Row Reps arrive on the Saturday before Escapade begins to get set up. The Row runs Sunday through Wednesday from 10am to 2pm each day.

Q: Can a table be set up and left unattended?

A: No. The table should be manned by at least one knowledgeable adult at all times that the Row is open.

Q: Are we allowed to sell or raffle anything on the Row for donations to CARE?

A: Per the Escapees legal department, there is no selling allowed on the Row for any reason due to the varying laws from state to state.

Q: What do we need the most on the Row?

A: Smiling faces. This is not an exaggeration, because people are naturally attracted to friendliness.

Q: Is there electricity available?

A: This varies from location to location, so therefore prepare as if there is no electricity available at your table. If you wish to use a computer at your table, recharge the batteries prior to each day.

Q: Do the Row Reps have to come to the Row Social Hour on Saturday prior to Escapade?

A: We won't make you come, but we'll certainly miss you. And the food is free!

Q: How do we sign up as Row Reps?

A: When you register with National, you will let them know that you must arrive on Saturday. Then you will notify the Chapter Directors at chapterdirectors@escapees.com to be placed on the rep list.

Q: Will we get more information as Escapade nears?

A: You'll get tired of hearing from us, but you'll not be short on information. And you're always welcome to send an email to ask anything you wish.





MAKE IT WORSE!

Ellen Behrens

I learned to write fiction from three resources: reading, writing, and completing a Masters of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing. But the MFA workshops focused on literary fiction rather than popular/genre fiction. You might think of the division this way: literary novels are the sorts we read in English class (Charles Dickens, F. Scott Fitzgerald...) while popular novels are those we tucked inside the classics because they were more fun to read (Stephen King, J.K. Rowling...).

Some see literary fiction as character-driven while popular fiction is plot-driven. But you need only imagine the Harry Potter novels without their well-developed characters to begin to see how thin this distinction proves to be.

And plot? Well, I was taught, write about a troubled character faced with choices. That's the plot in literary fiction: how the character resolves those choices (or doesn't). Of course (I was reminded) it has to mean something, so tie it to a theme.

I did that in *None But the Dead and Dying*. Worried I'd bore readers with just one troubled character, I created a small town filled with them and told the stories of six of them. Since my own hometown always threatened to choke the life out of me, I used images of things closing in to pull the novel together. Critics saw the book as a success, and I breathed a sigh of relief.

When I switched to writing popular fiction, I worried about plotting murder mysteries. I struggled with my draft and, along the way, read plotting is simply this:

Get your character into trouble. Then make it worse.
Oh, I could imagine plenty of ways to make things worse!

In *Pea Body*, Walt and Betty are caught up in the investigation of a woman's murder, placing them squarely in the sights of a few locals who don't appreciate their interest. In *Yuma Baby*, Betty complicates an already tense road rage incident by trying to apologize, plunging them into the thick of a tangled mess involving lost children and a vulnerable young woman.

As I struggled with my third Rollin RV Mystery, I told myself to push on, to keep making things worse. I ended up with a more complex plot, a wider array of characters than in the previous books. It's true: the worse things got for my characters, the better they were for me!

But here's the catch. The more intricate the plot, the more subplots and intrigue, the more diligent you must be during your revision. If you don't tie up all the threads, your story will unravel, leaving your readers disappointed. And nobody wants that!

*Ellen Behrens' short stories, articles, essays, and reviews have been widely published. Her third in the Rollin RV Mystery series, *Superstition Victim*, will be available by the end of the year. If you'd like a free copy for review purposes, please e-mail ellenbehr@aol.com with your request. Learn more about her books at www.ellenbooks.wordpress.com.*

Note from Ellen: The Fiction Contest was cancelled due to lack of interest. No entries were received.

WRITING EXERCISE: CREATING CHARACTERS

- ◆ Write a thumbnail sketch for a story you wish to develop.
- ◆ List the explicitly described characters.
- ◆ Come up with some additional supporting "usual" characters.
- ◆ Be a bit creative and propose some unusual characters.
- ◆ Let yourself loose and devise some outlandish characters.
- ◆ Imagine each of the characters interacting with each of the others and determine which characters to employ in your story.
- ◆ Use the scenarios created by your character interactions to expand your story's plot.

[More Details . . .](#)

From the Editor

4 WRITING TIPS

1. Novels Aren't Stories

A novel can be extremely free form. Some are simply narratives about a fictional experience. Others are a collection of several stories that may or may not be intertwined.

Jerzy N. Kosinski (the author of "Being There") wrote another novel called "Steps." It contains a series of story fragments. Sometimes you get the middle of a short story, but no middle or end. Sometimes, just the end, and sometimes just the middle.

Each fragment is wholly involving, and leaves you wanting to know the rest of the tale, but they are not to be found. In fact, there is not (that I could find) any connection among the stories, nor any reason they are in that particular order. And yet, they are so passionately told that it was one of the best reads I ever enjoyed.

The point is, don't feel confined to tell a single story, straight through, beginning to end.

2. Get Into Your Characters' Heads

One of the most powerful opportunities of the novel format is the ability to describe what a character is thinking. In movies or stage plays (with exceptions) you must show what the character is thinking through action and/or dialog. But in a novel, you can just come out and say it.

For example, in a movie, you might say:

John walks slowly to the window and looks out at the park bench where he last saw Sally. His eyes fill with tears. He bows his head and slowly closes the blinds.

But in a novel you might write:

John walked slowly to the window, letting his gaze drift toward the park bench where he last saw Sally. Why did I let her go, he thought. I wanted so much to ask her to stay. Saddened, he reflected on happier times with her – days of more contentment than he ever imagined he could feel.

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

ARCHETYPES VS. STEREOTYPES

Archetypes represent human qualities we all share, such as Reason, Emotion, Faith, Skepticism, Conscience, and Temptation. Stereotypes represent the different kinds of personalities we encounter in life.

In story structure, archetypes, by definition, are characters defined by their plot function, such as the protagonist, who is trying to achieve a goal. The protagonist represents our initiative—the desire to improve things by affecting change. The antagonist represents our reticence to change. The antagonist tries to stop the protagonist—to keep things as they are. These two human qualities are always at war with each other within ourselves, and by assigning those traits to characters, we can get a more objective external look at that battle and thereby better understand within ourselves when to act and when to hold back.

All of the archetypes have a counterpart whose approaches are opposite one another. For example, there is a Reason character who tries to solve plot problem with logic, while the Emotion archetype hopes to succeed through passion.

[Read on . . .](#)

HOW TO AVOID MORALIZING

Your thematic message (moral of the story) has two sides: the Issue and the Counterpoint. The Issue is the human quality under examination in your story (such as greed) and the Counterpoint is the opposite trait (such as Generosity), presented for contrast. Together, they play both sides of the moral dilemma. But how do you go about making your thematic point to your readers or audience without moralizing?

The most important key to a successful thematic argument is never, ever play the message issue and counterpoint together at the same time. Why? Because the thematic argument is an emotional one, not one of reason. You are trying to sway your reader/audience to adopt your moral view as an author. This will not happen if you keep showing one side of the argument as "good" and the other side as "bad" in direct comparison. Such a thematic argument would seem one-sided, and treat the issues as being black-and-white, rather than gray-scale.

[Read on . . .](#)

World of Publishing

WHO OWNS YOUR BOOK COVER

Many of us have had intervals working with traditional publishers, some more reputable than others. Many of us have seen those arrangements come to an end for one reason or another.

Questions about ownership are frequent from writers who have been taken in by predatory publishers and who want to cut their ties. Also from writers published by small presses that have come on hard times and shuttered their doors.

While the larger issue of what to do to get out of a bad contract or when your publisher goes belly-up would take more time to detail, let's concentrate on one part of that equation: the book cover design.

If this issue resonates for you, the first thing we would suggest—first, last, and always—is to read your contract. Only there can you discern what the original agreement was, and what you signed off on.

In 99.99 times out of a hundred, the publisher retains the rights to the cover image. What this means is that if you part company with them but still want to self-publish your book on your own, you must come up with a new cover design.

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

“MY BOOK IS ON AMAZON SO IT MUST BE SELLING, RIGHT?”

NOPE! Here's why...

If you are not actively and aggressively marketing your book on a daily basis, or almost daily, it won't sell. Period. There is simply too much competition. Amazon has millions of different books for sale on its site. In the old days, you could put a book on Amazon and it might sell a couple or a few copies with little or no promotion because there wasn't so much competition. Unfortunately, those days ended over a decade ago.

[More . . .](#)

SMASHWORDS VS. DRAFT2DIGITAL

It's been a while since we've had an article outlining the similarities and differences between Smashwords and Draft2Digital (D2D), and since both have made changes over the years, now seems like a good time.

These are both well-known publishing houses and book distributors for self-publishers. If your book content is finished and in the market for additional sales avenues besides Amazon, give this a read for more information.

[Read on . . .](#)

PAYING MARKETS

Writers and Photographers

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FROM THE PENWHEELS NEWSLETTER STAFF:

May the holiday season be merry and bright for you with the promise of success and satisfaction in the year ahead.

Remember to breathe!

