

**COMPULSIVELY WRITING MORE FICTION 2012:**

**MY EXPERIENCES AFTER THE FIRST BOOK**

A compilation of blog posts about my journey through the Indie book universe

**By Kate Policani**

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Thank you for your support.

This book is dedicated to all of my lovely “blog friends” who made my self-publishing journey infinitely sweeter! You guys rock!

## CONTENTS

Foreword

Don't be afraid!

You Might be a Writer If...

~PROMOTION~

Promoting Do's and Don'ts

What Worked

I'm Beginning to See a Pattern Here

Deep Breath

Things That Are Missing

Goodreads Giveaways

Put Your Best Foot Forward

Kickstarter

The Fabulous Freebie

The Mystery Win

Bad Reviews are Good

Promotion Links

~SELF-PUBLISHING: SHOULD I?~

Looking Back

Things You Should Not Expect When Self-Publishing

How Not to Publish a Novel Yourself

Self-Publishing Timelines

Going Traditional?

[Are Self-published Books a Good Choice for Readers?](#)

[Self-publishing Links](#)

[~IDEAS FOR AUTHORS~](#)

[Book Title Contest](#)

[Short Story Success](#)

[Places to Post a Free Ebook](#)

[Kickstarter for Authors](#)

[Risking Some Green](#)

[Fun With Wattpad!](#)

[A Tale of Three Covers](#)

[Interesting, Exciting contest, and my doubts...](#)

[Wah Wah Wah](#)

[Shameless Begging](#)

[My New Favorite Earrings!](#)

[Why An American Novelist Reads Manga...](#)

[How Did I Get That Book On The Shelf?](#)

[Pricing a Book](#)

[~WRITING~](#)

[How Do You Choose What to Write?](#)

[Motivated Beginnings](#)

[Worn Out Themes](#)

[Never Do This](#)

["I'm Confused," She Said.](#)

[Readability](#)

[The Churn: Emotional things that affect me physically](#)

[Fantastic Names](#)

[Serious Humor](#)

Things That Make a Book Hard to Read

Public Apology for Overuse of the Word "Was"

The "ly" Check

More Things to Check

Beta Reader Critique Form

Problems...

When I Just Can't Write

When You're Stuck: How to Beat Writer's Block

Analysis: Get more out of your reading

Evernote

Writing links

~THE INTERWEBS~

The Internet is Forever

Flood of Information

River of Emails

Social Media for Bloggers

The Benefits of Blog Awards

Sunday Blogging

Writing Effective Posts

Library Thing

Links on the Web

~VIRTUAL LAUNCH PARTIES~

Some 'Splainin To Do

Researching My Book Launch: The Lustre

The Lustre Virtual Launch Party

The Virtual Launch Party Analysis

Thank You!

[The Virtual Release Party for Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic](#)

[Book Parties: A post-party analysis](#)

[Rafflecopter](#)

[What Now? What to do after release](#)

[~MAKING COOL STUFF~](#)

[The Making of The Lustre trailer](#)

[How To Make a Video Trailer II: Video Clips](#)

[Free Video Clips](#)

[Creating Magic](#)

[~JUST FOR FUN~](#)

[Quotes From Books](#)

[One-upping Fortune](#)

[Tips for Writers: Getting good sleep](#)

[Me, Sleep, Caffeine, and Writing](#)

[What I want out of my tech: an author's perspective](#)

[For the love of the story: Why I just can't get enough](#)

[Seattle + Coffee = Love](#)

[Things That Upset Authors](#)

[15 Reasons Tablet Reading is Better](#)

[Finding Your Calling](#)

[Fun Links](#)

[More Books By Kate Policani](#)

[About the Author](#)

## FOREWORD

This book is a compilation and reorganization of all my most useful blog posts in 2012. I write the blog to promote my books, but also to journal my path through Self-publishing my books. I hope my experiences help you to achieve your dream of publishing your book, whether you choose to self-publish, publish traditionally, or just write for your own enjoyment.

The more authors I meet the more people I admire. I would love to connect with you through [my blog](#), on [Twitter](#), or on [Facebook](#).

## DON'T BE AFRAID!

*Don't be afraid! Come along with me through my story. Suspend your disbelief and open your heart. Wrap yourself in beautiful words.*

*Don't be afraid! Immerse yourself in the emotions of another. Make them your own, just for a little while. I promise they won't take you over.*

*Don't be afraid!*

*Nobody will judge you here in these pages for being too susceptible, too emotional, too gullible. If you can't feel it, you can't be swept up in the magic. You can't become someone else.*

*Don't be afraid!*

*When it's over, you can go back to your life, your limits, your reality. But for now, let go. Let me take you on a journey of amazement using only letters and punctuation. I'll bring you back safe, and if you want, nobody has to know you were ever between these pages.*

*Don't be afraid!*

This is a compilation and re-organization of my blog posts from 2012 (and a few from 2011 that didn't make it into the 2011 CWF ebook). My intent for this book is to consolidate all the things I learned this year to pass on to those who might get some use out of it. See what I did. Judge the soundness of my mind. Enjoy!

## YOU MIGHT BE A WRITER IF...



### **Is it possible for you to be an author?**

That is a question most people think they know. I know I did for fifteen years, and my answer was "no". But I was **WRONG!** I had been an author all along but had dismissed that idea because I couldn't see it. It would have been helpful for someone to ask me a few questions. One of my policies is, if I see a need for it but don't see it online, I make it. So here you go!

**Do you write?** This also seems like a dumb question. Of course you write. You write grocery lists, notes, emails, maybe even blog posts. But do you write for your own entertainment? When an idea hits you, are you compelled to write it down? Do you like to research things that won't increase your paycheck? Then you just might be an author!

**What do you write?** You may write lots of different things, or only one kind. Is there something that dominates your writing? That just might be what your book will be about one day. Yes! Your book! 'Cause you just might be an author!

**Can you imagine writing a book?** Face it. If you can't imagine ever doing it, you probably won't. But maybe you should. What does that look like in your head? This is an important question to ask before moving forward, because you just might be an author.

**Can you finish a book?** Do you have the time and determination, not to mention organization, to finish a book? I'm not talking a 500,000 word novel here, but a complete work. If you don't, could you figure out how and work toward that goal?

**Are you confident that you can write something worth reading?** You don't have to change the world, but you do have to create something you value in order for you to finish it. What will your writing do for your readers?

OK! You've asked yourself those questions. What did you arrive at? If you're still not sure, imagine your answer was "Yes" and answer these questions. Psst! You can also answer them if your answer really is "Yes".

**What genre would you write in?** There are several pretty well-defined categories. What group you pick of these two "opposites" determines how you'll proceed with your publishing plan. The jury is still out on choosing more than one genre to write in, but everyone agrees they should correlate so readers aren't confused. The sub-categories of these are enormous, but all writing falls into:

Fiction/Nonfiction

Children's/Adults'

**What kind of writer would you be?** You have choices now! I know! It's so awesome! You can choose the "traditional publishing" path, or you can choose the new and exciting independent publishing world. Here are some sub-questions to ask yourself to determine which you will choose.

**What kind of time do you want to spend making your manuscript into a published book?** I don't mean how much. They're both equal but different. Do you want to invest your time at the beginning, courting agents and publishers, or do you want to spend it after the book is out, promoting the book on your own? (Note: with some traditional publishers, you will have to do both because they don't promote their authors.)

**Do you know how to work a computer well?** (or have someone who will help you A LOT) If you want to go indie, you'll need to know how to format your manuscript, create a cover photo, upload it to vendor websites, tweet, make Facebook pages, find promotional sites online, and work every day to push your book upward in the sea of books. If you don't know how to do all this, you'll need to learn, pay someone to do it, or you'll want to go traditional.

**How long do you want to wait to see your book on the real and virtual shelves?** Some authors wait years to be accepted by a publisher. Independently published books can be posted online within 24 hours. The results are completely different afterward, but if you're someone who doesn't want to hide for 2 years before your book becomes a book, you want to go indie. Conversely, if you don't feel that it's really published if you do it yourself, you probably want to hold out for a traditional publisher.

**How much money do you want to spend on all of this?** This question is more up to you than others. You can spend a lot of money seeking either route. The question is, how much do you want to pull out of your own bank account to start? With traditional publishing, authors are frequently counseled by experts to pay someone to edit your manuscript before you submit it to publishers, so there's that. Self-publishing can be done with any amount of money up front, from nearly nothing to thousands of dollars. There are literally endless possibilities to spend your money on your book. Nice. If you don't want to spend anything, ever, then you probably want to just write for fun and give your work for free. The freebie authors don't usually sell to anyone but their friends and family. As they say, it takes money to make money.

**How much control do you want over your books?** If you publish traditionally, the answer should be "very little". You will sell all rights to the publisher and then it will be their baby, with you as the backup promotional agent for yourself. They will say how and to who you distribute books, how much they will cost, and how long to keep you in print. If you go indie, you decide all that, plus you can decide whether you want print-on-demand, where you store and keep no books, or whether you want some other volume of books on your hands. The combinations are endless and depend entirely on what kind of money you want to spend, what you want to charge for them, and what kind of money you want to make off them.

How does this list make you feel? Are you pee-your-pants excited? Are you scared to death? Does it bore you?

Does this seem like an amazing adventure to you or a big hassle? If it's the former, you're definitely an author! Congratulations!

If it's the latter, don't worry about it. Write for fun and be happy! If you decide you want more later, that's fine. There's always time! Because you still might be an author.



[Return to Contents](#)

## **PROMOTION**

Promotion was a big part of this year. I figured out the ins and outs of getting my book out there, but how was I supposed to get anyone to see it? (Pssst! Read the big letters.)

## PROMOTING DO'S AND DON'TS

If you're a self-published author, you have to promote your work. If you can't pay someone else to do it, you have to do it yourself.



There are some things that are great, some things that are a waste of time, and some you just shouldn't do. Here are some of each from my experience. A lot of it is about etiquette, because there are a lot of rude writers out there. Unfortunately, the people making the rude mistakes probably aren't reading books like this.

**Don't consider other writers as your opponents.** Readers aren't going to choose just one book. They'll read what they see. If they see your book on seven other sites because you've promoted those seven other writers' books, they're seven times more likely to buy your book. We're all in this together.

**Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.** If you want people to review your book, review theirs. If you want people to tweet about your book release, tweet theirs. Until you are a bestselling author, people probably won't promote you if they get no value out of it.

**Don't keep all your promotions to yourself.** Trading promos is an awesome way to spread your influence. Also, people like you better if you aren't all about yourself.

**Do provide people with other value besides what you're selling.** Free, interesting content is like a sample of what they'll get if they buy your work. The more variety you provide, the more variety you'll get in your attention.

**Don't tweet or post on Facebook like a maniac every 30 seconds to advertise your work.** Nobody likes that and you'll lose all your followers, plus you'll gain a ton of maniacs like yourself who only want to broadcast like a crazy person. If what you are saying is valuable, people will notice.

**Do rotate your promotions between your groups.** Poll your Facebook friends, run a contest on your blog, tweet your reviews on Twitter, but Don't broadcast everything to everyone every time.

**Don't promote as if people already want what you have and were just waiting to hear about it.** They don't care and they aren't impressed. Hubris is ugly. You'll set people up against you instead of drawing them in.

**Do focus on the people who are interested.** Give them a little extra, like a beta-reader position or a review copy. They aren't interested because you are hot stuff and you deserve followers. They like what you do and should be appreciated.

**Don't give your beta-readers your manuscript chapter-by-chapter as you write it.** They will get sick of your book right away. You may want to read through your work again and again, but most other people won't. Keep your work like a secret before you finish and people will want to know more about it.

**Do promote in ways you enjoy and understand.** You'll be more natural and likable if you enjoy what you're doing. If you hate it all, maybe you should save up and hire someone else to do that part.



## WHAT WORKED

So some things are working for me as an author, and some aren't. Here they are:

**My short story** - I have thousands of downloads of [The Silver Collar](#) on Smashwords. A surprising number of people have bought it for kindle too, even though it is free on Smashwords and I put a link as a comment. I wonder when Amazon will get around to fixing that....

<https://www.facebook.com/weloveebooks> - This one worked for me and got me 10 sales in one day. The problem is, that is all I got and I'm not sure if I can put more books on there or what.

**Lots of Connections** - I made a serious push to put [The Lustre](#) out where as many people could see it as possible. Also, I put my free short story everywhere I could find to put it. That seems to have upped my visibility a little and I get a few sales here and there where [The Disenchanted](#) Pet has gotten none.

**Having more books out there** - It seems that the more books I have available, the more people are reading.

**Time** - Yes, the time I have been online and the time my books have been available has worked in my favor. This is another plug for starting your platform early. If I had 140 blog followers and 432 twitter followers before I first published, I think things would have been easier for me.

### Things I figured out:

**Kickstarter** – My first campaign didn't earn even a fraction of its amount. Maybe I tried too soon or asked too much. I noticed the ones with lots of support had some kind of perk outside of the book itself - a contribution to a charity or something. I put more in a later chapter just on Kickstarter.

### Things that didn't work/aren't working:

**The 99 cent Network** - My book was up initially, but now I can't find my book on the site at all, even though I paid for four months. I emailed them about this and have heard zip-o in return. Boo! I also have no way of knowing if I got any sales through them.

**Selling my books at places other than the biggies** - I found a lot of little side ebook sellers and posted there. I didn't see any extra sales, though. No one has sent me big checks because my book is a bigger fish in a smaller pond. I don't think I am hurt by it, but I don't know if I will spend the time and effort to put future books out there if I get no return.

**Kindle Select** - I had hoped that putting the zero-sales Disenchanted Pet up as a Kindle Select title would give me a little boost, but I've seen no new sales. The sales for Kindle Select also depend on author promotion. Signing up won't get you any bump by itself.

### **A little about book reviews and getting them:**

I sent out requests for review of [The Lustre](#) to 11 different bloggers in March and received 2 replies, one a yes and one a no. It isn't easy to even get a reply, let alone a review. (Don't feel bad if you email 3 and don't get any response.)

As a book reviewer, I am getting lots and lots of requests, even though my list is so long. I've amended my review policy and have said "no" to some books I didn't think I could enjoy enough to give a good review. I still have enough time to reply to everyone, but I can see where an established reviewer would have a hard time.

## I'M BEGINNING TO SEE A PATTERN HERE

I think I am seeing a pattern with the self-publishing process. It could also be true for the traditional publishing process--dunno.

### **Here it is:**

1. Work, Work, Work
2. Excitement: I'm almost finished with a book/promotion/project that I will soon unleash on the world.
3. Euphoria: It's out there! People are looking at it and seeing what I did! Some people may even be giving me money! (!!!)
4. Expectation: Now, how is this going to work itself out.
5. Disappointment: Oh crud. That was over quickly and it didn't make me rich and famous.
6. Depression: Wah, wah, boo hoo. Nobody loves my book/promotion/project and it has only 10 views on my blog when I have 300 Facebook followers. I got 400 views on my blog but only sold five. Nobody wants to review my work. Nobody wants to post their reviews. Nobody wants to read the posts people made about my work. Nobody cares about my book/promotion/project and I spent all that money for nothing. Snivel snivel. (This is where I am right now and I'm disgusted with myself. This is the point where I need to push for #7)
7. Determination: I'm going to make this work. All I need to do is learn some miraculous new thing that will correct the flop I just had. Somewhere online is the answer to my problems.

Then back to 1. Work, Work, Work.

Is this how it is for you?

### **This is how I want it to work:**

1. Work, work, work (Yes, I am adult enough to know I will still need to do this.)
2. Victory: It's done, it's out there and it will be glorious!
3. Domination: Everybody loves it! I'm selling like hotcakes and everybody thinks I'm a genius. They're starting a religion based on my work. (Well maybe not that far....)
4. Relaxation: This is going so well that I get some nice time off to bask while my product sells itself. Go me!

Does this even exist? Probably not, but I'm a fiction writer so whaddya gonna do?

## DEEP BREATH

Ok! I'm working on focusing. Deep breath! Aaah...Whoooo. Maybe I had too much coffee. (Kidding! There's no such thing.)

I have to remind myself not to become anxious or insane about my writing success. My inner Cuckoo wants to SEE some RESULTS NOW!!!! But that isn't how it works. This is a slow process, gradual.

This is, I think, a thing with authors. We begin to obsess about the mechanics of it, how many books we sell, how many people follow our blog.... It's maddening, how slow everything is, especially in self-publishing.

### **My neuroses:**

Am I doing it wrong?

Am I missing something?

Am I failing and don't know it?

Why don't people want to buy my book?

### **The truth:**

This is a new frontier--online self-publishing. We are in the new Gold Rush.

It takes more than 9 months to "build a platform" and establish oneself online.

I am NOT writing for the money. I am selling to pay for editing so I can create something beautiful.

Just because I feel like having stuff happen, doesn't mean it will.

Just because I'm too busy to deal with things doesn't mean things won't happen.

I can't make this happen with my mental powers. (ESP and Telekinesis is very weak in my family. I can only move individual molecules with my mind. I can only read 1/2 second of people's thoughts. It sounds like "Urpl!" "Buh!" "Gek" :P)

What I am doing, when I have time to do it, is enough for now.

Breathe in, Aaaahhh. Breathe out, Whooo.

## THINGS THAT ARE MISSING

While searching your blogs and reading all the great stuff you post, I find that some very, very important things are missing. I thought I'd list them here so you can be sure everyone sees what you want them to see. (Some of this information may only apply to Wordpress blogs.)

**Your link on your Gravatar:** This link is important, but it takes a bit of clicking to find where to put it. I'm surprised how few people have their blog site linked back to their Gravatar image. When you comment and when you are listed under "followers", it posts your Gravatar and not your blog link UNLESS you put that link in there.

Here's how you do it: Click the image at the top right corner of your page next to the little magnifying glass to open your Public Profile. In the second sentence below "My Public Profile" you'll find a link to [gravatar.com](http://gravatar.com). Click that link. You'll bring up [gravatar.com](http://gravatar.com)'s profile of you. If you haven't signed up yet, you can do that now. Be sure you have the picture you want and be sure to add your blog address to "My Links", found on the left.

**Your personalized Tag Line:** I see a whole lot of blogs with the default tag line, "Just another Wordpress.com site." If you want to appear to be a blogger who knows their stuff, this is the first thing you have to fix. You have to either have no tagline, or write something in there. Really, you do.

To change your tagline: Go to the "Dashboard" and under the "Settings" option, click "General". The second line under your Site Title is your Tagline. I think some people haven't changed it because they have changed Themes and the previous theme didn't show a tagline. I have had to delete mine with certain themes because they weren't placed right and covered over other elements of the blog.

**A contact email:** I can't think of any reason why you would not have a contact email posted where people could find it. You can set up a separate email address for free on numerous sites to use just for your blog. That way if some weirdo comes along wanting to sell you foreign medications, they don't have your personal email. If you don't have your email up there, how can someone contact you to ask to represent your book to publishers, or recruit you to write professionally for their company? I'm not promising that will happen, but if it does, you really want to have that email easy to find. Put it wherever you want, just so we can find it if we want to. Some people recommend posting it as a .jpg instead of text so that spammers can't copy and paste your email address. I haven't seen any spam email originating from my Wordpress site, so I don't know if this is necessary.

**A way to follow your site if you aren't on the same blog server:** When I like a site, I want to follow it. If it isn't on Wordpress, though, and the author hasn't put up a way to follow the blog, then I can't. I might never see your blog again! You may never know that I was there or that I appreciated your site. There are lots of great ways to connect to blogs not on your blog network. One I use is Networked Blogs. (I noticed when I posted this that my Networked Blogs buttons seem to have been bumped off, probably when I last changed themes. Oops!) On Networked Blogs, you can connect to Facebook too. Pretty neat-o!

Those are the biggest offenders. Wordpress can be complicated and I really hate all those blank pages in the Dashboard with just a link to a completely different page, or an obscure window to add something unexplained. I'm assuming it is how they transition to a new format, but I never saw the old one so it's just baffling to me.

## GOODREADS GIVEAWAYS



Hooray!

The Goodreads giveaway was a VERY good idea! I sold 603 copies of [The Disenchanted Pet](#) for Kindle in November!!! All I can think that I did to earn my success was to give it some free days with Select and then give it away on Goodreads for free. Did I miss something? Oh yes, promoting it for more than a year ;) . That puts me at an impressive Amazon bestseller ranking of 99,629. Heheh.

On the flip side, not everyone's reaction was positive: <http://www.nathanshumate.com/?p=7550> If you read this, Nathan, I do plan to re-do this cover. It was my very first book, after all.

## PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD



What impression are you leaving?

I have to tell you something you've probably already heard before, but if you haven't it could save your writing career. As an author, you need to put your best foot forward. This sounds simple and even trite, but it isn't always easy to do.

I get lots of review requests, which I love! In one author's review request, the synopsis was disjointed. There was no flow to the description of the book. Unfortunately it was also filled with grammar errors and even included a mistake by the author in pasting the synopsis in the email. Needless to say, I was not eager to read the book. The subject sounded interesting, but the mistakes scared me away.

Authors rely on those short pieces of our work to open the door to new readers. If the only chance we might have to gain a reader scares them away instead of drawing them in, we aren't going to enjoy much success.

When you send your book to your editor, include a page or two with your synopsis, acknowledgments, author bio, and any other advertising info that goes along with your book. These are just as important as the body of the writing. Most editors will gladly include these in your editing, because their reputation is invested in your book almost as much as yours is.

When people point out errors in your book, your blurb, your website, or wherever, LISTEN. Of course, you should check on their accuracy. But they may be helping you. Never mistake a technical correction for a personal attack. Unless you are writing about grammar, a criticism of your grammar can only help you.

If you laugh off someone's criticism and feel like it's no big deal, then you are also laughing off your own success. Take them seriously, even if they are wrong. If you don't take their advice, it's appropriate to tell them why.

I have received criticism for my writing as well, and some helped me to fix major mistakes in my work. Others were a matter of preference rather than correctness, and others still were items that I had discussed with my editor and deferred to her judgment. Still, I explained these to the person kind enough to point them out.

Everyone makes mistakes. Sometimes Microsoft Word seems possessed, deleting important bits and allowing strange mistakes to remain after I thought I deleted them. We understand that. Just know that a stranger will view their first glimpse at your writing as your best.

If you treat your writing like an unimportant hobby, that's how it will stay. Nobody is interested in rocketing you to fame when you don't really care. To succeed as a writer you have to approach it as a business with all the professionalism required by a job. Even more, it's a sales job, so your audience's first look might be your only shot. Make that shot a bulls-eye!

## KICKSTARTER

This time I worked my project as more of a pre-order program with some extras included. If you wanted to buy my book, this is a fun way to get it, with extras available if you want more than just what you can get on Amazon.

I learned more about how to better run the Kickstarter project.

1. Make your low earnings goal as your project goal, not your maximum amount. You can earn and keep money above your goal amount, but you lose it all if you don't reach your goal.
2. Don't run the project too early before rewards will be available. I'm closer to the time when I can give buyers their rewards for contributing.
3. Provide plenty of inexpensive rewards. If I were thinking of contributing, it wouldn't be \$20 to some stranger's book.

I went live with my second Kickstarter campaign for [Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic](#). This one was more chill than my previous campaign, and more of a pre-order platform than anything else. There were several ways to get your hands on my digital pre-release copy without committing to a pre-review. I had Day-of-release paperback options as well as some fancy stuff.

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/523666041/dont-judge-a-book-by-its-magic-book-launch>



If you wanted to buy my book, you could get things earlier and get a discount. If you wanted more swag, had it there too. (I do still believe firmly in the 99 cent ebook, but I started my book at \$2.99 so I could discount it later and boost sales.)

Aaannndd....

My kickstarter project was funded! It just goes to show you that there are some awesome people out there. It was saved at the last minute by a few kind folks.

The screenshot shows a Kickstarter campaign page for a book launch. The project title is "Don't Judge A Book By Its Magic: Book Launch" by Kate Policani. The page includes a green banner at the top stating "Funded! This project successfully raised its funding goal about 23 hours ago." Below the banner, there is a thumbnail image of the book cover, which features a girl with red hair and the title "Don't Judge a Book". To the right of the book image, there are statistics: 11 backers, \$516 pledged of \$500 goal, and 0 seconds to go. The page also includes a navigation bar with links to Dashboard, Backer report, Post update, Home, Updates, Backers, Comments, and a location indicator for Seattle, WA.

I learned a bit about Kickstarter and how it works, and I think that a hallmark to success is selling your vision with the audience in a compelling way. It isn't enough to just state your objectives and offer nice incentives. That is good, but what sells people is your own passion for what you want to accomplish. I'm going to focus on this next time I do a Kickstarter campaign.

## THE FABULOUS FREEBIE



I've said it before and I felt it deserved its own post: The free sample is the best free advertising an author can get!

Since posting it, I've given away 376 download copies of my fantasy short story, [The Silver Collar](#) on Smashwords, and had 692 reads on Wattpad. This doesn't include all the other places I've posted it. I haven't been able to make it free on Amazon yet, partially because people are still buying it! I don't understand that, but OK.

I'm also currently working on Horarium, a sci-fi short story, and posting on Wattpad as I go. I'm enjoying this kind of work and reaching readers along the way.

My hubby had a fabulous idea about the freebie, too. (He has lots of those) After my free story, I include information for the reader to find my other works. I even included an excerpt from my upcoming book at the end of the story.

Here is my list of places I've posted [The Silver Collar](#):

[http://www.getfreebooks.com/?page\\_id=81](http://www.getfreebooks.com/?page_id=81)

<http://www.scribd.com/>

[http://www.globusz.com/aut\\_reg.php](http://www.globusz.com/aut_reg.php)

<http://www.bookyards.com/>

<http://www.free-ebooks.net/submitForm.php>

[http://www.getfreebooks.com/?page\\_id=81](http://www.getfreebooks.com/?page_id=81)

<http://www.feedbooks.com/help/self-pub-howto>

<http://ebookdirectory.com/cgi-bin/addurl.cgi>

Do you have a freebie? How has it worked out for you?

## THE MYSTERY WIN



Starting August 1st, my downloads on Smashwords of my free ebook, [The Silver Collar](#) have shot up by over 1,000 downloads! This means that somewhere, my book was listed in a spot that people saw and clicked. But where?

I posted it on four different book-posting sites in July:

<http://www.free-ebooks.net>

<http://www.getfreebooks.com>

<http://www.feedbooks.com>

<http://ebookdirectory.com>

Visiting each of these sites, I discovered that getfreebooks.com posted my book on August 2 as a new title!

<http://www.getfreebooks.com/?p=8525>

As a side note, posting the date I submitted and the link on my OneNote Notepad is the only reason I was able to discover this link. It was a simple date, 7/8, but I was able to figure out which might have been my big win because of the note!

Big enormous thanks to getfreebooks.com for the boost!

## BAD REVIEWS ARE GOOD



Yes, I got a bad review. It was my first book blogger review and the link is here:

<http://entertheportal.wordpress.com/2012/06/13/the-lustre>

Yes, I want you to read it because it was really awesome! She dug in and highlighted all the weak points of my book, which I really needed to hear. Her statements go right along with a lot of my struggles as an author.

Her opinions of my genre weren't really something I worry about, being an independent author and unconcerned about fitting in to slots. The analysis of the plot weaknesses and downsides of the style of writing made a lot of sense, and if I plunge back into the story to give it a face-lift, I'm revisiting this critique first!

## PROMOTION LINKS

I signed up for a listing on <http://ereadernewstoday.com/category/free-kindle-books/> in exchange for 10% of sales. It netted me 142+ sales for [The Disenchanted Pet](#) in November.

<http://addictivestory.wordpress.com/2012/08/29/calling-all-indie-authors-who-wants-book-promotion-prompt-16/> This looks like a great opportunity to promote! I'm totally signed up!

<http://smartamarketing2.wordpress.com/2012/08/28/persuasion/> Here is a blog on marketing discussing the AIDA method of promotion.

<http://anovelperspective.wordpress.com/2012/08/27/book-wars-the-pr-offices-of-my-book-is-better-than-yours/> Here is a cool article on a particular etiquette problem for promoting authors.

A great link about book promotion from an author who feels pretty much the same way I do about book promotion. <http://dreamnotion.zhollis.com/2011/10/25/how-to-find-readers-for-your-novel-actual-steps-honest-answer> She has a timeline of her book there that I really appreciate seeing. She also found the best promotion was the free material she offered!

Use Flickr.com to post book covers with descriptions for visibility  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/katepolicani/>

<http://rebeccaberto.com/2012/05/09/i-want-to-buy-your-book-but-part-1-covers/>

<http://catherineryanhoward.com/2012/05/05/how-to-sell-self-published-books-read-this-first/>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/suwcharmananderson/2012/03/28/where-do-kickstarter-supporters-come-from/>

<http://bookmarketingbuzzblog.blogspot.com/2012/04/news-media-hates-these-15-things.html> This is a good one about things not to do when approaching, well, anybody.

<http://www.jogena.com/ebookdir/ebookfaq.html> This is an ebook directory.

70% of Nothing... (The difficulty of being seen) <http://christinerose.wordpress.com/2011/06/27/4755/>

<http://janefriedman.com/2011/12/06/what-good-salespeople-know/> Is a great rundown of the writer/salesperson connection

Two interesting tools I signed up for but haven't gotten the hang of yet.

<http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/there-are-no-rules/cool-tools-to-track-author-platform-growth>

Why Google Books is probably not a sales avenue (other than that my uploads don't work)  
[http://support.google.com/books/partner/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=40288&topic=2376976&ctx=top\\_ic](http://support.google.com/books/partner/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=40288&topic=2376976&ctx=top_ic)

Something interesting I need to contemplate first: <http://ezinearticles.com/?No-Cost-Ebook-Sales-Using-RapidShare-Ebook-Storage&id=5121876>

**An awesome all-around website, followed by a ton of articles thereon that I loved:**

<http://www.lindsayburoker.com/>

<http://www.lindsayburoker.com/book-marketing/how-to-improve-your-ebook-sales-at-barnes-noble-smashwords-and-itunes/>

<http://www.lindsayburoker.com/e-publishing/ebook-pricing-why-99-cents-might-be-a-mistake-for-you/>

<http://www.lindsayburoker.com/book-marketing/reasons-youre-not-selling-many-ebooks/>

**Some links to free book promotion sites:**

<http://www.published.com/> (I signed up with 2 accounts, one for my author stuff and one for my blog reviews using 2 different email addresses)

<http://www.bibliocracy.com/> They did a promotion using your favorite 3 paragraphs of your books. Looks awesome!

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/katepolicani/> I was reading through more book sales info from <http://TheSavvyBookMarketer.com> and they encouraged posting book covers here. This is my profile. The other stuff I read I've already mentioned here on the site.

<http://www.bibliocracy.com/> This is another book sales site with free ebook sales and a section where cover artists can post and sell art for covers. That's cool and I sent it to some of my artist friends.

[Return to Contents](#)

## **SELF-PUBLISHING: SHOULD I?**

### **LOOKING BACK**

A wonderful new author emailed me after reading Compulsively Writing Fiction, my free ebook on Smashwords, and asked me what I would recommend for a burgeoning author to read before embarking on the scary world of publishing. What would you recommend if this question were asked of you? It felt really good to go back over my research to give a good, comprehensive run-down of my recommendations. Here is my list:

**Some books I liked were:**

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/13037>

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/31138>

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/37429>

**These are all free! But the ones below aren't.**

[http://www.amazon.com/Reading-Like-Writer-Guide-People/dp/0060777052/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1332905663&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Reading-Like-Writer-Guide-People/dp/0060777052/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1332905663&sr=8-1) (I found this one in ebook form at my library website)

[http://www.amazon.com/Reasons-Your-Never-Published-Might/dp/B0048BPDRW/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1332906116&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Reasons-Your-Never-Published-Might/dp/B0048BPDRW/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1332906116&sr=1-1) (this one too)

**and these articles were good:**

<http://jaynie2000.hubpages.com/hub/Publishing-Tips-for-First-Time-Authors>

<http://morgenbailey.wordpress.com/2011/09/08/guest-blog-post-%E2%80%98how-to-write-a-killer-character%E2%80%99-by-multi-genre-author-ditrie-sanchez/>

## THINGS YOU SHOULD NOT EXPECT WHEN SELF-PUBLISHING



I'm not claiming ultimate authority, or that I can see your personal future. But there are some things you shouldn't expect to happen when you self-publish



**You shouldn't expect that anything is going to be easy.** This is going to be a lot of work. Formatting is hard work. Promotion is hard work. Social Media and building a platform is a lot of work. Everything that a publishing company does, you have to do for yourself or pay someone to do it.

**You shouldn't expect things to take off quickly.** I'm not saying they won't, but they probably won't. This isn't the cusp of the e-publishing era anymore. Just look out there and see the many, many books. It's hard to stand out among those even if you have a great book.

**You shouldn't expect to do it all for free.** You'll spend money somewhere. There's no way to escape it. If you go the super-cheap route like me, you'll still spend more money than you thought. Amazon wouldn't bother if they weren't making any money off of selling your work.

**You shouldn't expect everyone to be excited about your work.** This one was hard for me. I had really hoped that I could get at least 50 sales out of my 250 Facebook friends. Didn't happen. I don't know if it is just that they aren't readers, or that they aren't readers of Fantasy or Science Fiction, but they weren't very interested. They have been less interested in subsequent books too. It's not as if it was too expensive for them. Just because I would get excited about a friend writing a book, doesn't mean anyone else will. Also, almost a year into my journey, people are still just noticing that I wrote a book. I don't know what to say about that. I've bugged them enough about it, I'm sure.

**You shouldn't expect anyone else to do it for you.** They do, frequently. People you never expected support from just appear and do amazing things for you because they are so cool! But you can't go at it expecting it. You have to roll up your sleeves and attack it yourself. People respect that and offer to help because you are taking the initiative.



#### **The reason I still love self-publishing:**

Even though it isn't what I expected, it has brought so many unexpected, wonderful things to me! I now know and work with people around the world. The work that I slogged through myself is now knowledge that I own like treasure, saved up. I can help others with what I know. I can drop everything and make cinnamon toast for my kids, but still write things I love and share them with others. (My kids just interrupted me asking for cinnamon toast.) I can reach people all over the world with my experience, all while sitting in a chair in my living room, in my bathrobe. (Yep. I really did.)

## HOW NOT TO PUBLISH A NOVEL YOURSELF

I can't say that I know exactly how TO publish a novel but I definitely know some things you shouldn't do:

**Don't write your novel/short story/poetry collection, edit it, release it and THEN publicize** (blogging, online communities, networking). Do publicize as soon as you decide you are going to finish it and publish. If you are psychic or have been given a peek into the future and find you might want to publish someday, start promoting right away. Even if you are planning on going the "traditional publishing route", you should publicize. You will have to do it anyway.

**Don't write one book and expect it to take off on its own and make you rich within months.** That would be a Holy Miracle. Do expect to make chump change for quite a while unless you know more than me. Legend has it that authors used to make it big by self-publishing back in "the day" before everyone realized how easy it was. It isn't that way now. Sorry.

**Don't expect that you are professional enough to produce quality work** as an editor for your own work unless you are an editor, and even then, don't. Also, don't expect your Uncle Joe is either unless he is certified or has worked in that capacity for years. Do have lots of people read your book to make sure other people understand what you are saying. Do hire/employ a professional editor if you want a quality work.

**Don't try to follow every bit of marketing advice you see online.** It won't all work for you and it isn't all right for what you are promoting. Do follow the advice that works for you and focus on that so that you have time to write.

**Don't try to avoid other authors and push them aside thinking they are your competition.** Other writers are your biggest audience and resource. Do treat them as you would like to be treated.

**Don't think that self-publishing will be the easier route.** It is just a different kind of work. Do expect to learn a lot and do a ton of work.

## SELF-PUBLISHING TIMELINES

There are plenty of lists telling you how long it will take you to get your book "out there" as an indie author. There aren't many that outline how long it will take you to "Make it" in whatever way you see that. Amanda Hocking took one year. Another author mentioned that it took her 2 or 3 years before her books began to sell regularly.

Success in Self-publishing isn't all about how you get the book out there. It is a big step, but it is the first step, not the end.

I'd love to make timeline of success! I have to "Make it" first. For me that means that people buy my books without me feeling I am squeezing buyers out like juice out of a turnip. It also means that my books pay themselves off (Editing and cover art costs, promotions and fees) within maybe a year. I'd be so happy with that!

I admit that when I first put out my book in September, I started daydreaming about buying myself a new car with my book earnings. I still do that from time to time.

**Here are some timelines for the actual launch of the book:**

[http://www.spawn.org/editing/publish\\_timeline.htm](http://www.spawn.org/editing/publish_timeline.htm)

[http://media.wiley.com/product\\_data/excerpt/21/04717995/0471799521.pdf](http://media.wiley.com/product_data/excerpt/21/04717995/0471799521.pdf) Page 15

<http://catherineryanhoward.com/2010/03/27/createspacetime/>

**A timeline about Self-published books and their successes, complete with graphs and charts:**

<http://www.teleread.com/paul-biba/top-self-published-kindle-ebooks-of-2011-a-report-by-piotr-kowalczyk/>

**Here are some other cool links I found while I was looking for the others. (That always happens!)**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/28/books/28selfpub.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/28/books/28selfpub.html?_r=1&emc=eta1) The New York Times on self-publishing and the changes in the publishing industry.

<http://talkingwriting.com/?p=19426> This is a Self-publishing Timeline in that it is a history of self-publishing. It will surprise you!

<http://www.writersdigest.com/writing-articles/by-writing-goal/get-published-sell-my-work/directory-of-self-publishing-companies> A Directory of self-publishing companies.

**Here is my "Timeline of Success" so far:**

September 29, 2011: Released [The Disenchanted Pet](#)

10 sales total in the first month.

March 2012 Signed on Kindle Select: No sales AT ALL

Total sales for The Disenchanted Pet :

7 Createspace (paperback incl. Amazon)

10 Smashwords sales, 52 total downloads (including freebies)

8 Kindle sales

February 29,2012: Released [The Lustre](#)

Blog release party, 10 sales total during party

Promotion on multiple book sites

Total sales for The Lustre:

5 CreateSpace sales (paperback incl. Amazon)

10 Smashwords sales, 30 total downloads

14 Kindle sales

And [The Silver Collar](#) has sold 6 copies on Kindle even though it is free on Smashwords and I put a link to the free download as a "review". People are so weird.

What is your "Timeline"?

## GOING TRADITIONAL?

I thought a lot about my next upcoming book, How to Win Friends and Influence Magicians, and what I was going to do about publishing. It was long enough to be accepted by publishers, so should I go Traditional? I was feeling pretty bummed about my lack of success with my indie sales, and wondering what to do about it. Also, we are dipping into our personal finances to pay for editing, etc. but I'm not paying that back.

### **Pros for Traditional Publishing:**

I could conceivably put in \$0 for writing and submitting to publishers, with the right group. (no editing ahead of time, which is risky, and with one that accepts digital submissions).

I would get their expertise and possibly their sales channels.

I would get paid so I could be not sucking money out of our finances.

### **Cons for Traditional Publishing:**

I would lose all rights to my manuscript

I would have to wait until accepted, then wait until they published it--delayed gratification--possibly years.

I would have to change the book to their specifications.

I would have to accept their terms and would be limited by the deal I originally made.

My work would be priced by them, not by me, so I would have no say in how much it would cost my readers to read my work.

I might be required to do more than online promotion, which would take time away from my family.

I really want to self-publish because I enjoy it.

So after talking to my hubby, we decided to keep self-publishing for now. Money speaks loudly but not more than time and convenience.

I was feeling really moody about the decision still until I read an article by another self-published author who said that she wasn't really getting steady sales until 2 or 3 years after she started. That opened my eyes a bit. I have been "published" for only 6 months! I've been blogging for only a year, and really my whole platform is only a year old. I don't need to be fretting about low sales yet. So I'm not going to.

## ARE SELF-PUBLISHED BOOKS A GOOD CHOICE FOR READERS?



When you look for a book, do you want something popular? Do you want to read all the latest and coolest stories? Or do you want something that pushes the boundaries?

If you translated your buying experience with SP (self-published books) versus TP (traditionally-published books), you might say that TP books are like major brands purchased at a national chain store, such as Cheerios. Conversely, SP books are like a farmer's market bag of organic rolled oats. Both have their benefits and their drawbacks. Which cereal would you choose?



There are several things to consider when choosing whether to pick a TP book or go indie:

Are you a stickler for grammar, punctuation and spelling? You do have a better chance of reading correct writing in a TP book, simply because it's guaranteed professional. Publishers have editors on staff, SP authors

may or may not. If your skin crawls and you develop hives when reading incorrect writing, you may want to go TP.

Do you want to hear the [author's true voice](#)? You may get this in a TP book, but usually you get a filtered version of it. A TP work is edited for correctness, but also to adhere to goals set by the publisher for content, including length. Some authors become outraged by the changes made to their work by editors. If you care about hearing the author's true voice, you may want to read SP books.

Do you prefer the [popular genres](#) that stick to certain subjects, or do you like surprising variety? Marketing within genre guidelines is a big part of the TP industry. With a SP book you get a pure idea that hasn't been screened or adjusted to fit a certain market section. Many SP books were just too off-genre to get accepted by a TP. Are you still interested in the book if it doesn't fit the TP market?

Do you consider a popular book to be worth more money than an unknown, or are you a bargain hunter? Though you get the same volume of content, a TP book is priced based on [market standards](#) to get the most money out of your pocket possible. They are all priced that way. Conversely the SP market is full of free or nearly-free books. Some authors just want their books read and they definitely aren't trying to pay marketing departments, managers, agents, or other staff that a publishing company does.

I read it all as long as the synopsis catches my attention. I find I get just as many awesome reads with both types, as well as the same amount of stinkers. What do you choose?



Here is a quiz I created to tell you what kind of publishing you like best for the books you read:  
<http://share.snacktools.com/57E65F86AED/qzufdlfn>

## SELF-PUBLISHING LINKS

<http://awesomeindies.wordpress.com/2012/05/01/is-indie-publishing-right-for-you-7-questions-to-help-you-decide/>

<http://awesomeindies.wordpress.com/2012/04/17/the-six-kinds-of-indie-published-books/>

[Return to Contents](#)

## IDEAS FOR AUTHORS

### BOOK TITLE CONTEST!

This was the contest I did when I needed to change the title of my book. I got a great shot of interest in the book as well as lots of help on what my title should be. I was able to explore a lot of great online media for reaching people.



Help!

I need to change the title of my upcoming book, currently titled How to Win Friends and Influence Magicians, and I need your help!

Enter your best suggestion for my book title as a comment on this blog post, or tweet it to me @KPtwhtrnove and I'll enter your suggestion.

Tweet: @KPtwhtrnove should call her new book "[your title]" <http://katepolicani.com/2012/06/08/book-title-contest/>

The winner of the contest will get a signed paperback and/or ebook copy of The Book, a mention in the book Acknowledgments, and a blog post about you in the subject of your choice (within reason) during my Virtual Release Party in August!



**Here is how the contest will go:**

Round 1:

I'll choose the titles I like out of your suggestions today and Saturday

Round 2:

I'll post a poll for you to vote on your top 5 titles, Monday-Wednesday

Round 3:

My Think Tank will vote for the top 2 titles Thursday

Round 4:

I'll pick my favorite of the 2 on Friday, email the winner, and post the winner on my blog.

Synopsis, trailer video, and excerpt is here: <http://katepolicani.com/works-in-progress/how-to-win-friends-and-influence-magicians/>

Here is a glossary of terms from the book you are welcome to use to craft your title:

Convergence = the united global nation of Teimnyddus

Skupdyn = a regular person, nonmagical

Sproo = a nickname for SPRU, the Seattle Pacific Regional University

Teimnyddus = People and a people group who are able to manipulate Tximar and use it to manipulate Txen

Teimnydd = The Txen of a Teimnyddus, used to manipulate the world around them. (it's also the name of a neighborhood in denver)

Txenarjuma = tapestry of energy

Txenar = energy thread

Tximarshu = river of life power

Tximar = free-flowing life power

Tximonni = life power fortune

Vrevzirma = Time Sight

Vrevzirmaocht = time seer

Vyxheus = pocket dimension

Vyxhepiocht = user of pocket dimension

Ysizao = controlling spirit

## SHORT STORY SUCCESS!

I had to just drop a few lines to say that I am having amazing success with my free short story! (Thanks for reading if you did!) I just went over the 200 downloads mark in 3 weeks! It has surpassed my other free ebook already that has been out since November.

Also, I've gotten some feedback from friends who hadn't gotten around to reading any of my work. I think I'm getting a chance because of the quick read. I'm always so happy when someone likes my writing--like I get when I buy someone the perfect gift.

I would definitely recommend the free short story as a promotion! I've gotten some sales since releasing my "free sample"!

## PLACES TO POST A FREE EBOOK!

I looked around and found several places to post my free ebook! Here they are:

<http://www.freebookspot.es/> This one I had trouble figuring out just how to get my book up. I skipped it to move to easier uploads.

<http://www.getfreebooks.com/>

<http://www.scribd.com/>

<http://www.globusz.com/>

<http://www.bookyards.com/>

So call me a dunce, but I didn't know you could upload books on Goodreads. Derp!

I also learned where to post videos on Smashwords. There is a link on your book page on the right side underneath the "total downloads".

## KICKSTARTER FOR AUTHORS

My hubby suggested a site called Kickstarter to help me raise money for my upcoming book launch. It sounded like a great idea, but also scary. I found it hard to picture how an author would accomplish a successful project asking for other people's money on this site.

Then, [Rosa Sophia](#) gave me a great link to an author's site who had posted a project for funding on Kickstarter:

<http://kayelynnebooth.wordpress.com/2012/04/15/author-tim-baker-tells-how-to-kickstart-your-writing-project/>

There are a lot of people that this filtered through!

This article gave me the information connection I needed to start my own project! I really needed some concrete examples of how this site was used specifically for books. I think the site felt a little overwhelming to me because there is SO MUCH there. This post gave me the boost I needed!

I launched a Kickstarter project and made only 19% of the goal. I did aim high and provide some fantastic prizes. So I tried a second time, this time making it more of a pre-order for my finished book.

## RISKING SOME GREEN

I tried something new and risked a little bit of money. I read Molly Greene's article here <http://www.molly-greene.com/how-to-sell-100-books-a-day/> and liked the first step in the 100 books a day story. (Hint: it was the cheapest)

So I went here: <http://www.99-cent-network.com/www.99-cent-Network.com/Home.html> and signed up at the link on the bottom. It says "Authors Join the 99cent Network". There is a special on now but it is not as cheap as the interviewee Terri Long paid, but that was a while ago, I guess.

*But you shouldn't click there, because I didn't have a good experience with 99 Cent Network.*

This was a lesson in getting fleeced. I saw no benefit from my \$45, couldn't find the listing for the book after the first week, and got no response to my email inquiry about what the heck was going on. Some advice is not the best, or was the best for someone else but not you, or was the best back then but not now. You have to make your own decision and then live with the consequences. Like life!

## FUN WITH WATTPAD!

Before I ever started to turn my extensive collection of writing into actual books, I was reading books on Wattpad. Wattpad is a free book site specifically for electronic devices. It is in a simple enough format for phones.

So I thought for a long time about putting up a free Wattpad short story, and I did. It's called "[The Silver Collar](#)" and you can find it here: <http://www.wattpad.com/3660393-the-silver-collar-part-1/intro>

It's a common practice to put things up as you go on Wattpad, so I did it that way. You should check out Wattpad if you like to read on electronic devices! (I have a second story up called Horarium!)

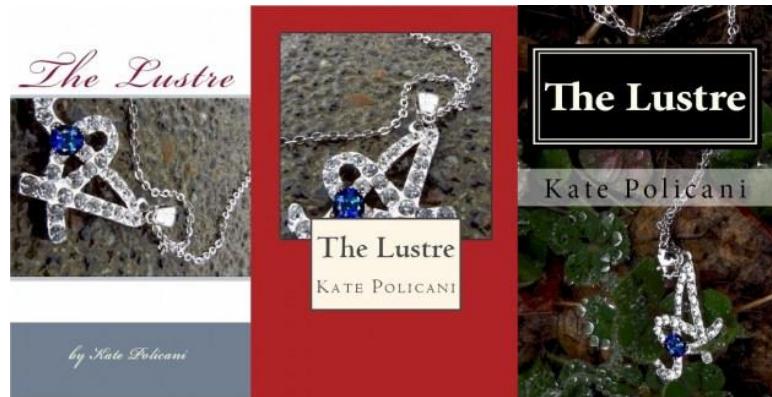
## A TALE OF THREE COVERS

My darling hubby had yet another fabulous idea for my cover for [The Lustre](#): don't choose which cover I like best. Do them all! Because I can! As a self-published author, I'm in charge.

My Facebook Peeps all voted for multiple covers, but liked the cream and black one best. On Facebook, my blog, and friends in person preferred the blue cover. Most authors chose the red. I wonder what that says about the different people groups. Nobody really spoke up for the one with the dark blue cover I made, and I was able to combine the red lettering that some people liked with the design on the blue-gray one.

I added a blue jewel to the necklace partly because that is how I envisioned the jewelry Angelina would wear, and partly because I wanted to avoid any copyright issues with the original necklace.

So here are the three covers for The Lustre!



## INTERESTING, EXCITING CONTEST, AND MY DOUBTS...

I discovered an exciting contest from Amazon here: <https://www.createspace.com/abna> Amazon accepts book pitches every year and chooses six to be published by Penguin! This sounded wonderful and I immediately read up on it linked everything, and put some important excerpts into a notebook in OneNote. I set up a reminder for when to submit because submission opened toward the end of the month.

When all that was done and I had time to mull it over, the doubts set in. Maybe I should wait until next year because...I may not be ready for the work of traditional publishing. I may not want to be published traditionally yet anyway because I love the autonomy of being Indie. My writing may benefit more from a year of waiting. It looks like a lot of work and do I have the time to make it work? Do I want the work that comes from success?

Don't get me wrong. I still planned to submit something. But it wasn't a snap decision, partly because I had time to think about it.

Those doubts blossomed....

WAH WAH WAH :(

I didn't submit [The Lustre](#) or [The Disenchanted Pet](#) to the Amazon Breakthrough Award, because they only accept manuscripts of 50,000 words or more. Neither one has this many, so neither will qualify. Oh well! I guess this is why I self-published!

If you were thinking of submitting and your novel is more than 150,000 words, you're out of luck too. What is this magical number and where did they get it? Why are books that aren't in that window not even worth their notice? And where is the beef?

Something I am not going to cry about--the prize is a \$15,000 advance and by submitting your entry you are agreeing to accept that as your payment. They will negotiate your other payments later and will not promise anything. I wasn't too in love with that one, not because I hate the idea of \$15,000 but that it seems limiting. Call it my indie 'tude, but should we settle for that much for all the rights to our books? Because that is all they are promising, and if you submit--just submit--you aren't allowed to benefit from your book in any way until they "release" you by disqualifying you for the next round.

I was still bummed I couldn't enter because I think it is a great opportunity, but on the bright side, I got some great ideas for "pitching" my book! They have a bunch of articles on writing your book pitch and I wrote one for TDP and The Lustre before I found the word count thing.

\*\*\*Note! I did submit [Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic](#) to ABA in 2013 and it made it through the first round of cuts!!! The prizes were much sweeter in 2013 too.\*\*\*

## SHAMELESS BEGGING

“Please, oh please would you review my book? If you don't have a review page, that's OK! There is still no review for [TheDisenchanted Pet](#) on Smashwords. Amazon can't have too many reviews.

If you want, I will squeeze your book into my review list in exchange for a review of mine. I am happy to send you a free e-copy coupon code if you will review it after you read.

Email me and we'll talk turkey!”

*I got a great response from this post. I guess people like honesty!*

## MY NEW FAVORITE EARRINGS!

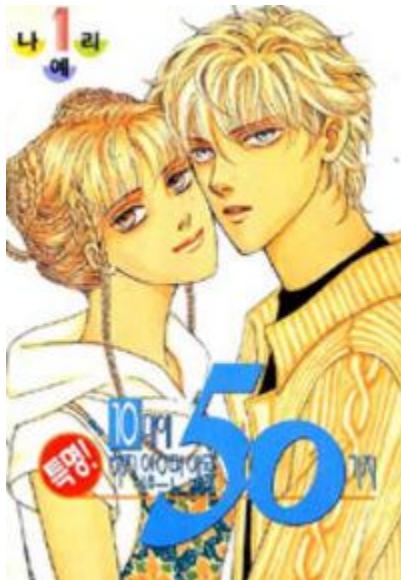
I'm not saying you need to make earrings for your books, but have fun with it!

I had one of those ideas that hit you right while you are trying to go to sleep, only this time it wasn't for writing. It was for promotion! What do you think? I hope they'll be conversation-starters. I may try making them with some other media too because it was so much fun making them!





## WHY AN AMERICAN NOVELIST READS MANGA



I mentioned in my chart on “Me, Sleep, Caffeine, and Writing” that I read Manga, and that I'd write more about that later. Well here it is!

Yes, I confess, I read manga. If you don't know what that is, they are comics from Japan and sometimes Korea. They are posted on lots of sites online and also are the basis for Anime. These comics are not all written for children. A great number of them are written for teens and adults, and there are even labels for the age/sex group they are written for. (Shoujou = girls, Shounen = boys, Josei = women, and Seinen = men)

No, I'm not a high-schooler dressing up in bizarre outfits in public. I am a boring, slightly odd homemaker reading Manga in my spare (hehe) time.

**I think it has been a big boost for my writing and here is why:**

**It is free.** (Yep. Cheap-o alert!) Surprisingly, I don't have wads of money to spend on books and the library, though it is free, often has a waitlist for ebooks. Yeah. Cause that makes sense... Anyway, many Manga are free because they are scanned and translated in the US by people who love them and want them to be available here. Many aren't yet (or ever) licensed here in the US, so this is 100% legal. There are scads of websites and apps devoted to reading these free "scanlations" (scan + translation).

**Quality varies.** All the work is done by amateurs and often people for whom English is not their first language. This is actually good because it sharpens my skills regarding what is wrong and why. If grammar is bad, or sentences don't make sense, I can correct them in my own mind to cement what not to do myself. If they are too indecipherable, I skip them, but overall they are mostly readable.

**The format of Manga consolidates a single or very few ideas in the story.** These aren't classic novels here. They are cranked out by the thousands and usually center around a single concept. Often these concepts are bizarre and seem mismatched, but that adds to the interest and creativity in connecting them. Seeing these ideas highlighted is a great way to learn more about them.

**The ideas are universal.** Marc (my hubby) and I talk a lot about universal themes. Most writing employs them and Manga are no exception. The fact that they come from an entirely different culture emphasizes that fact. Japan is a nation based on very different foundations from the Western world and yet many of the human struggles in the writing are basically the same.

**I'm learning a new culture.** I suppose that I might not get an accurate view of American culture by reading comic books, but I do get some idea. The same goes for Manga. Also, Manga are more widely-read there than they are here and so they can write to a broader audience than we do. I absorb so much insight from their different attitude towards daily life as seen in their light literature.

**The light reading of simple stories fits with my busy life.** I can read a manga chapter in 5 minutes and it is often just what my sleep-deprived and exhausted brain needs. I love stories--wild and imaginative stories. I can't get them from magazines (ugh). Novels are often too much for my weakened mind to tackle, but I still hunger for the story. This is where Manga fit in perfectly.

So that's why I read Manga, and why I think it enhances my writing!

If you're interested in trying some Manga reading, there are tons of places online you can go to for them. There are also lots of apps for Android and iPhone that connect you directly to them! I'm using one called Pocket Manga right now.

Here are some Manga websites to be read online or downloaded:

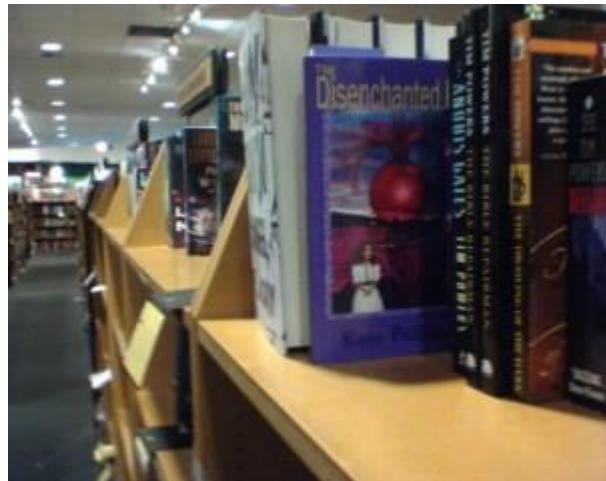
<http://www.mangafox.com/>

<http://www.mangatraders.com/>

<http://www.mangareader.net/>

## HOW DID I GET THAT BOOK ON THE SHELF?

Here is MY BOOK on the shelves at a BOOK STORE! I called my local Third Place Books and after some email juggling, found out how to consign my print books on their shelves. Now, if people will buy them, I have an additional outlet for my work. If you live in the Seattle area, check out Third Place Books on Lake City Way to buy [The Disenchanted Pet](#) in paperback from an actual shelf.



How did I get my book on that bookstore shelf?

First, I had to identify where my book might be purchased. [Third Place Books](#) was ideal because I already knew that they consigned used books. I had done it before through them, so I knew they were all set up to put books on their shelves that weren't ordered from a proprietary catalog.

Places like Barnes and Noble and big chains probably do not take books that are not on their special program. You can, however, look to see if they have an ebook publishing site!

Places that are tiny and have limited shelf-space will only sell the type of books you see on their shelves. If they are selling mostly classics or a certain type of book that isn't like yours, don't bother. Example: I looked at the independent bookstores at [Pike Place Market](#) and they all were tiny and sold mostly easy sellers and a few novelty books. Didn't even try those.

Your best bet is at places that have a variety of books and are not affiliated with a larger parent company. Stores that advertise consigning your used books are ideal. My next endeavor will be Half Price Books because they also consign used books and that is a good indicator they may be receptive to consigning new books. The only reason we may not work out together is my second point.

Second, I had to count the cost of selling your book through a third party. (hehe) If you buy your own books at \$5.26 apiece and pay \$4.77 shipping and \$1.50 in tax, those 3 books will cost you \$22.05. If your reseller takes 40% of that and sells your book at \$9.99 then you make \$17.82 back and that means you are paying \$4.23 to have your book available on the shelves.

This is actually my rundown of the three books on that shelf right now, and it's worth it to me right now. This was an experiment and it was partially successful. I'll only lose \$4.23 if my books all sell, and nothing if they don't. My plight is not hopeless because there is a "Pro Plan" program through [Createspace](#) (where I obtain my print books) that I can pay an extra \$39 to upgrade with a \$5 annual renewal. Then I would pay only \$9.30 for the books, making my cost \$15.57(ish) instead and I'd make a \$2.25 profit selling them. It's worth it to leave it right now because I'm not sure my books will sell and the extra \$44 for the Pro Plan is only worth it if I can manage to sell more than 22 books this year. Not so sure about that.

There are also other places I can publish my book that would charge me less. But it has to sell. I actually reversed the second and the third steps because I didn't know how much Third Place would sell them for when I submitted, but it was worth it to pay extra to have them in the store. I had the books already, saved for just such an occasion, so I didn't have to order them, just drive them over after I dropped the kids off at school.

Third, I had to contact the right people. There was a specific person who was in charge of the Indie Author Consignment program at Third Place. That person wasn't the first or second person I contacted though. I called up the store and got a name and email of the person to contact. This person forwarded my email to the correct person, who gave me all the terms and such. Then I had to bring in a book to her for her to inspect, which I would not get back afterward. That was intimidating, but this is the beginning, right? But there my book sits, ON THE SHELF!!!! YAAAAAYYYY!

Now, I have to wait and scheme. Mwahahaha! Actually I also have to pester everyone I know about my book for sale so that they will know that I have one and where to get it. If the books don't sell in six months, they are returned to me in shame, never to grace the shelves again (I think).

Remember, a published book is FOREVER. It may go in and out of print, but it is yours and you can sell it, and your children can sell it, and generations thereafter for as long as it isn't public domain. Ooooooh! Cooooool!

That is how I did it! I bet you can do that too if you want. Go on!

## PRICING A BOOK



OK! Some of you who have been reading my posts might say, "Kate! You hypocrite! You said you loved the 99 cent ebook and then you priced your book at \$2.99! What's wrong with you?"

Yes, I did say I believed in the 99 cent ebook and I still do. But there is a reason I've done such a crazy thing as price my book higher. Discounts.

If I price my book at 99 cents, there is no way for me to get the attention that comes from discounting my books. I'm at the bottom and the last step is free. SO! I'm pricing at \$2.99 now and then discounting a few times until it goes to 99 cents. Unless it sells like crazy and then we'll see. I'm not going to mess with something that's working. Do you get my plan though?



[Return to Contents](#)

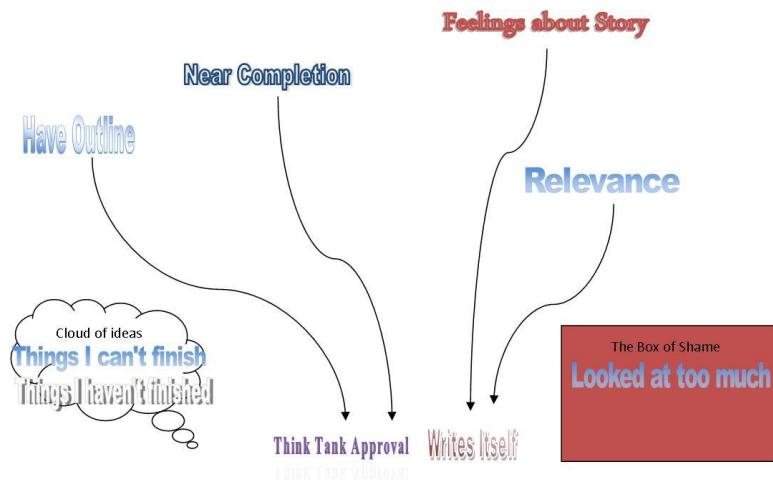
## WRITING

### HOW DO YOU CHOOSE WHAT TO WRITE?

This cool blog post came from an idea to ask my readers if they have any questions! That was a fun way to pick a subject.

How does an author choose what stories to devote their energy and time to finish? Most of us have many ideas floating around based on what interests us from the world around us. But how do you choose what to work on next?

Here is how it works for me. I made a pretty picture!



The books that I've devised an outline for, in my head or in writing, get chosen and filtered through the Think Tank for the order I choose them. Things that have progressed naturally to near-completion also get chosen this way. Some subjects that "write themselves" are stories I have intense feelings for, or things that are really relevant to me at the time. These ideas erupt out on their own and I find time to write them because I HAVE TO! These get published too and sometimes without choice from the Think Tank. [The Lustre](#) was one of those "feeling" stories.

A story doesn't get written because it is in the Box of Shame, which means I've overdone it for myself and dislike the story because it is Abodid (this is a very appropriate baby word for "hateful" coined by my son Corbin the Philosopher at age 18 months). The rest of the unfinished rabble exist in the idea cloud, which means they have at least a few sentences to remind me of the concept. These could be one of the four completion categories some day if they eat their Wheaties.

Ross Gale has this interesting take on the books writers choose to write:

<http://rcgale.com/2012/04/18/writing-what-you-ought-to/>

## MOTIVATED BEGINNINGS



What makes a good beginning for a book? This is undeniably the crucial part of the book where the author's talent needs to shine and he or she needs to draw you in so that you'll bother reading the rest of the book. I usually know whether or not I want to read the rest of the book by the end of the first chapter. So what makes a good beginning?

### **Here's what I like:**

**A problem** - You'd think I have enough of those in my life, but for me to become interested in a book, I have to discover why the author wrote it and darn quick. If the first five chapters of a book give no hint as to why the characters do what they do, I lose interest. It can even be a hint of a problem and it will draw me in.

**A character to care about** - If your book is about a crack team of accountants on their journey through the 2010 tax season, but you have a great character whose story interests me, I might not put the book down. I have to care about the character too. Is she lonely? Is he in love? The character is tied in very closely with the problem. A character with no problems is not very interesting.

**An interesting setting** - It's possible to have a character with a problem who starts out the book in a concrete cell. The setting isn't just the location, but the situation. Why is your character in a cell? What does he or she feel about being in a cell? What are they going to do about it? An accountant at a desk with a suburban couple's tax return to finish isn't very exciting. An accountant at a desk in the bowels of hell with a couple's tax return to finish might be pretty fantastic. If your character is boring and your problem is uninspiring, but your setting is a surprise, the book just might be awesome. If you have all three, you have a party!

**Great writing** - OK, duh. But seriously, the best writing goes at the beginning. Often writers make a Prologue, taking a little snippet of the book out of the middle and putting it at the beginning so that you can see the great writing. Showing us the most awesomeness at the beginning makes us want to see more.

### Things I don't like:

Note: There are always exceptions to these. If done right, any beginning can be great.

**Extensive Histories** - I read fiction mostly and knowing that I am plowing through 5,000 years of history for a culture that is imaginary makes me quickly shut the book (or click the back button in the Kindle app). I firmly believe that imaginary history should be meted out on a need-to-know basis and for short periods. Starting a book or a movie this way is a snooze-fest. Occasionally I have been drawn in this way when there is a character to care about or a problem to solve, but I'd rather start with those and hear the history in brief later. I have even begun a book with a great character, intriguing problem, and cool setting, but shut the book later because of a full chapter of the character's boring family history.

**Meandering** - I love settings! I do! But that isn't the reason I picked up the book. When your first through fifth chapter is all setting, character description, and casual dialogue with no problem, I want to stop reading. My favorite kind of setting description is the kind that gives me a framework to build my own imagination of the setting. Sometimes I don't even need that! Meandering doesn't belong anywhere in a book, as far as I'm concerned. If you can't bear to delete your favorite scene descriptions, save them and pepper them through the book, and maybe the next book, or the series, please.

**TMI** - Imagine that your character is a new acquaintance. I as the reader may be headed into an intimate knowledge of the character's personal life, but that doesn't mean you blurt it all out at the beginning. Give me a chapter before you talk about a character's naughty bits or their disgusting medical issues. I'm not unwilling, but please let our relationship start slowly without intimate knowledge about what's happening in their pants.

**Sudden Arrival** - If the only way to make your story exciting and interesting is to plop the poor reader down in the middle of the action, unprepared for what is happening, who these people are, or what is going on, you're doing it wrong. No, I don't want an extensive history or long scene description, but I do need some basic info. When a book starts as if a large chunk was randomly chopped out at the beginning, I want to stop. Occasionally it's done this way properly, but more often it is flubbed.

**Depressing/boring/miserable** - I'm a pretty positive person. I recognize that the world is a harsh place and not everybody else can see the bright side. But beginning a book in utter misery just isn't a good selling point. Hardship is fine, apocalypse is fascinating, but going on and on about how miserable everyone is repels me. Also, most stories start out with a problem to be solved, and then bring on a setback that pushes the main character to achieve something. When we start out at utter misery, where can the setback occur?

What are some other good or bad beginnings of books that you have encountered? What do they do to your reading experience?

## WORN OUT THEMES



Some themes, in my opinion, have been completely worn out. They have been used so much lately that reading/watching them has lost its original thrill for me. Here they are:

**The Cinderella story** - Rags to riches is everyone's dream, but this one has had too much screen time lately. From maids turning millionaire to Slum dog millionaires, this one needs a time out.

**Vampires** - I think we can agree that every level of evil from pure good vegetarian vampires to horrible soulless monsters is explored. Every variation on the "original" myth has been explored. The erotic nature of sucking blood from someone has been well-explored, as well as the horror of it. I challenge anyone to make something really new out of vampires. That said, I still like a good vampire story now and then. It isn't the vampires that draw me in, though, but the characters and their story.



**Variations on other, more obscure myths, made "fresh"** - I'm betrayed the legend of the wildly successful self-published author here, but I think that we've played out all the monster myths. Sssh! Trolls re-thought seemed really dumb to me. Sorry Amanda! You're my hero, but I didn't like Trylles. Some things just can't be re-cast. I couldn't stop thinking, "Fe, Fi, Fo, Fum!" I haven't seen any new ones that weren't a little goofy.

**Retellings of fairy tales.** Make up some new stuff, people. Really! "There is nothing new under the sun." BUT you at least have to try. It's especially excruciating when more than one blockbuster movie comes out at the same time with the same fairy tale. The movie may be awesome, but I've lost respect already.

### **Genres that are getting old, but not worn out.**

**Apocalypse** - This is a genre that is so popular now, but I think they are pretty close to exploring it all out. How many versions of fighting the aliens with a decimated population of rag-tag fighters can you make?

**The monster within** - I've seen enough angst-ridden characters moping over how monstrous they are. This one still can interest me, but only if it is really new, fresh, and well done.

What themes do you think are worn out? Why? Am I wrong? What fabulous story have I missed that will change my opinion? You will be graded on a curve.

Some more links about themes:

<http://www.write-brained.com/2011/01/over-used-themes-in-ya-part-i.html>

<http://www.wattpad.com/541937-a-guide-for-wattpad-writers-what-makes-a-story>

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2193512\\_avoid-clichés-fantasy-writing.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2193512_avoid-clichés-fantasy-writing.html)

<http://www.how-to-write-a-book-now.com/when-writing-about-an-overused-supernatural-creature.html>

## NEVER DO THIS

I keep a running list of things that I keep to remind myself never to do them in a book. Here is the list.

### **Never:**

**Write a Fiction novel about myself disguised thinly.** Middle-aged housewives do not have romantic adventures.

**Write novel about novelists, publishers, or anyone in the writing business.** It's pandering or bragging.

**Begin with how drab people's lives are**

**Begin in an awful situation that isn't exciting and doesn't move the story along.**

**Spend too much time with discussion and explanation at the beginning.** Give them SOME action or even a little plot!

**Write a plot line where the heroine saves the hero from himself.** It's overdone, oversmug and under-realistic.

**Write people who behave outside their age.** A 30-something with a 20-something lifestyle and 20 something mindset isn't dashing. It makes them look developmentally delayed.

**Start the book with a long boring history of people who aren't real and the reader hasn't had time to care about yet**

**Make too many plot twists.** It should be exciting, not dizzying.

### **Phrases to avoid:**

Twin, dark pools

Eyes like the ocean before a storm (overused)

Being "undone" unless writing about Regency England or Hairstylists

All eloquent description of kissing, lovemaking, or intimacy. It always sounds corny and embarrassing.

Examples: "Taking his tongue and giving him hers in return", "Tender sweep of his tongue"

Absolutely anything about claiming unless it has to do with coats or dry-cleaning

*This list is by no means complete. If you have any wonderful "bad writing avoidance" suggestions, I'd love to hear them!*

"I'M CONFUSED," SHE SAID.

Because I'm confused. I am getting mixed messages about a tiny but important word: said. I even felt a little panicked about it at first.

I was taught in school to avoid too much "said". But then again it was public school in Washington State, so the relevance to current thought is questionable.

Should we writers use "he/she/they said" after dialogue exclusively or should we find more interesting words. Who is right? What do you think?

**These people think you need more interesting words:**

<http://janienne-jennrich.suite101.com/synonyms-for-said-for-writers-a31840>

<http://www.amazon.com/Writers-Guide-Sassy-Synonyms-Said/dp/0967740541>

<http://thecaveonline.com/APEH/said.html>

[http://www.writingfix.com/PDFs/Writing\\_Tools/said\\_synonyms.pdf](http://www.writingfix.com/PDFs/Writing_Tools/said_synonyms.pdf) (this is a school material)

<http://year4atbearwood.wordpress.com/2011/01/25/synonyms-for-said-can-you-add-to-the-list/> (So is this. Are we teaching our kids to be poor writers?)

**These people think that anything other than "said" or maybe "asked" detracts from the story, calling them "said bookisms,"**

<http://www.writing-world.com/fiction/said.shtml>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/feb/20/ten-rules-for-writing-fiction-part-one>

<http://tvropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php>Main/SaidBookism> (This one says it is "Purple Prose" and "Discredited Trope")

<http://fmwriters.com/Visionback/Issue%205/tags.htm>

<http://www.critters.org/turkeycity.html>

<http://dawnofme.livejournal.com/144582.html>

"James Blish told me I had the worst case of "said bookism" (that is, using every word except said to indicate dialogue). He told me to limit the verbs to said, replied, asked, and answered and only when absolutely necessary."

- Anne McCaffrey <http://www.logicalcreativity.com/jon/quotes.html>

These bloggers put it in a more comforting format, saying to limit them to 2 or 3 per page, and to use them sparingly when "said" is just not enough:

<http://www.superheronation.com/2008/10/28/dont-overuse-exotic-substitutes-for-said/>

<http://www.deepgenre.com/wordpress/craft/the-dread-said-bookism-the-uses-of-speaking-verbs/>

<http://pattyjansen.com/2009/09/17/the-90-rule/>

Sorry, but you're going to have to decide this on your own. I went with the balanced approach.

## READABILITY

I'm learning a lot more about what makes a book "readable" or not. This is completely unrelated to the plot, characters, and themes. You can excel in all of these things and still not have a readable book. What makes a book "readable" for you?

### **Here is what turns a book from a "nice read" to a "fantastic read", for me:**

The book begins by developing an emotional attachment in me to the character. Ways to do this: sympathy, mystery, thrills, a problem

The book stays on the story path of the main character and side characters without too many switch-offs and rabbit trails. Some are interesting, but too many are confusing.

There is balance between the time spent describing the inner emotions of the character and time spent on their actions. If the balance is off, you get cold, unlovable characters or you get sappy characters and a lagging story line.

There is mystery/suspense in the plot, but I am clued in subtly throughout. It is a tough balance between excitement and confusion, understanding and over-explanation.

The writing is done in uncomplicated style, but using correct grammar, punctuation, and word usage. It isn't as vital in character dialogue, but in the story body it is absolutely necessary. The wrong use of a word or an awkward sentence snags my whole attention and I lose track of all the nougat-y goodness of the book.

There is a definite conflict going on that unfolds throughout the story. A simple series of events can occasionally draw me in but it takes some pretty fantastic writing for that to happen. Excitement generated by love, danger, rivalry, and/or tragedy helps draw me through the story.

Humor doesn't work in every story, but when it does, it really enhances my enjoyment. I really enjoy "serious humor" in a story that might not have room for outright silliness. I define "serious humor" as passive humor that results from character circumstances that would otherwise not contain humor.

## THE CHURN: EMOTIONAL THINGS THAT AFFECT ME PHYSICALLY



Here and there in my reading I find emotional events or encounters that give me a physical feeling. I feel the zing of adrenaline from my neck to my fingertips at a really exciting or scary scene. I feel the clench of my abdomen with fear or surprise. I feel the hollowness in my chest from sorrow or loss. I only get these physical reactions when I'm really engaged by a good book. (I don't include erotic scenes in this category. Eroticism is an intentional pitch at a physical reaction and can be accomplished without emotion.)

I look forward to finding the churn reaction with each book I read and often start from these feelings when I write. I hope to be able to write in a way that gives the same feeling to others that I began with.

There is a fine balance, though, between good emotions in a book and sappy writing. Authors have to maintain a balance so that you don't bore your reader with too much sorrow, surprise or fury. You can wear out the emotions.

What emotions give you a physical feeling?

## FANTASTIC NAMES

I love names in books. They shape the character and how the reader feels about them. Where do you get your names for your writing?

Believe it or not, my character name searches started out with baby name searches. Our church is famous for lots of kids and big families, and so it was a challenge finding names that every other parent hadn't already used. I started combing the web and books and anything I could find to name my kids. I wanted names that meant something too, not just cool-sounding names that meant "A man" or "field of squash" or something like that. My kids names mean "One who rejoices", "Behold how beautiful" and "A gift set aside for God". That's what I mean.

Well when we decided that we shouldn't have any more kids, I had a giant list of names left over. My hubby was very picky and there were lots of names there I loved but he hated. (I also hated the names he loved so we were even.)

But he doesn't get to name characters in my books! Nyah!

My go-to site for character names is now <http://www.cool-baby-names.com/>. All the names from [The Lustre](#), I found here using the "enter a meaning" search. They have to sound like the character I am describing too, so often I spend quite a while searching.

How do you decide on your character names?

## SERIOUS HUMOR

**Wha? Serious Humor sounds like an oxymoron. Well, it is, but it's also a legitimate technique that I love to use.**

Serious humor is mostly situational. A character is engaging in activities that are not humorous, but something occurs to make them humorous, or the nature of the scene makes it funny. I used this type of humor a lot in How to Win Friends and Influence Magicians. You get all the laughs of a joke without ruining the serious messages of your book.

**Example:**

“Really?” I scolded the nearest building, showing it my most fierce expression of reproach. “Is this how you’re going to do it?” The building tried to pretend it didn’t hear me. I turned to a building on the other side that I know was in on the whole thing too. “Are you serious?” I demanded of the building. “Are you honestly going to set up some hocus-pocus barrier to keep me in like a trapped rat?” The building looked belligerent, knowing it was guilty. But it didn’t apologize. So I yelled at it for a while, though it didn’t help me get out.’

Everyone has yelled at inanimate objects. The character is serious and angry, but the situation is funny. Serious humor!

**Another example** would be a group of characters following another character in secret. The purpose is serious and the characters are serious about it, but you can make it really funny as they try not to get caught and have to react to the movements of the one they are following.

Face it, life is hilarious. If it doesn't make you laugh, it makes you crazy. So laugh! It costs less than institutional care.

## THINGS THAT MAKE A BOOK HARD TO READ

Hard to read? Uh-oh. Why would anyone say that about my book?

I am a mom. I have three kids and a husband and can count on getting interrupted every five minutes unless someone is getting in trouble. Then there is silence. Yikes! But seriously, I had to hone my powers of remembering interrupted plotlines and ignoring pointless background noises. Still, I am an excellent judge of whether a book is easy to read or not.

**Here are the things I find that make a book hard to read:**

**Lots of description.** Don't get me wrong, I love descriptions. But if your main reason for writing is that you like to describe things in writing, I am going to have a tough time with your book, or I will skim. It's an evil word, I know, but it's true.

**Grammatical errors.** I certainly wouldn't accuse any of you of making grammatical errors in a book! But for all those other writers out there, they should know that nothing destroys the flow of a book like a misspelling, or one of those insidious proper spellings of the wrong word. If you misuse your, you're or something else atrocious, which you wouldn't do, I shake my head and make a disapproving mommy noise. But it ruins the love scene or the battle scene or whatever.

**Creative word order.** If you are a poet, I expect you to invert word order like Yoda to make it rhyme or to bring out the meaning of the word. You sometimes need that. But if you are writing prose, it just confuses me. You want me to see the images without bothering with the words. I should forget they are there. If entangled in your sentence, I am, then irritated with your story will I be. Hmmmmmm. (Think of this in Yoda's voice.)

**Rabbit trails.** Really, the point of a "rabbit trail" is to go off of the subject just for fun. I get it. But if you don't get back to the actual point at the end of the trail, you are just stuck in a dirty hole. Yeah.

**Odd reactions.** Think about your character's more emphatic reactions to things before you upload the book to Smashwords or whatever. If somebody tells your character a piece of information and they suddenly hurl something breakable across the room, there darn well better be a legitimate reason for them to do that--spiders maybe, but something. That is too violent a reaction when hearing sad things about someone's past or not enough likes on a facebook post.

**Missing information.** You may not agree with me on what information needs to be added to a scene. That's fine. But if I, the reader, am left with this gaping hole in your story, is that what you want? For instance: Bob is driving to work and thinking about his ex-girlfriend Pam who crushed his heart like a ball of tinfoil, but then he drives into the parking garage--that's all. Pam is this giant thing that is mentioned but never explained. I feel like I have missed another entire book there. Maybe I have, but that has to be clear so I can go find and buy the book. See?

What else? I know I missed some. What else is there to destroy the flow of a book? Write!

## PUBLIC APOLOGY FOR OVERUSE OF THE WORD "WAS"



Yes, I'm sorry. I had no idea how extreme my overuse had become. It took me 3 days to change all my "was" from abusive to proper use in How to Win Friends and Influence Magicians. (I tried to eliminate "was" except for when the subject truly was the adjective or object.)

I'm pretty happy with the result after all my "checking" (which I've almost finished). Here is a short example in the form of my book synopsis. Do you think it's an improvement?

**Here is the original synopsis:**

*I'm a normal girl. I am. I love shoes, fragranced body care, and hair products. I love all the "chick flicks" that have come out in the theaters in the last 2 years (and a lot of the old ones) and I obsess about my wardrobe. I respond positively to most of the marketing directed at females in my age group.*

*My name is Colleen Underhill, and the only abnormal thing about me is that I just discovered I am (or I became, or I was turned into) a magician. Not the disappearing bunny kind, but the power-shooting-out-of-your-hands kind of magician.*

*My problem now is that I do NOT believe in magic. Well, I believe in it, as it I have seen it shooting out of my own hands, but I am morally against it. No hexes, no spells, no incantations, no potions, no amulets, no tomes, no casting circles, no eye of newt, none of that. I am specific because people are pushing me about it. Whatever they say about "how it's done", this is a morality issue for me and I am not going to cave in to their pressure.*

*But what do I do now?*

And here is the "checked" synopsis:

*I'm a normal girl. I am. I love shoes, fragranced body care, and hair products. I love all the chick flicks that have come out in the theaters in the last 2 years (and a lot of the old ones) and I obsess about my wardrobe. I respond positively to most of the marketing directed at females in my age group.*

*My name is Colleen Underhill, and the only abnormal thing about me is that I just discovered I am, or I transformed into, a magician; not the disappearing bunny kind, but the power-shooting-out-of-your-hands kind of magician.*

*My problem now is that I do NOT believe in magic. Well, I believe in it. I have seen it shoot out of my own hands, but I oppose it in a moral sense; no hexes, no spells, no incantations, no potions, no amulets, no tomes, no casting circles, no eye of newt, none of that. I have to be very clear because people pressure me about it. Whatever they say about "how it's done", this is a morality issue for me and I will not cave in to their pressure.*

*But what do I do now?*

## THE "LY" CHECK

Well, that's what I call it anyway. This is a technique my first editor taught me. In Word, you type "ly" in the search box and it shows you every word ending in "ly" (or with "ly" in it) throughout your document. Words like "really" and "only" are a problem for me. I use them too much. Also, there is a lot of adverb abuse out there. The best way to avoid it is to replace every "ly" word with a different phrase. It makes your writing seem more intelligent too!

Oh! It also increases word count! I added around 1000 words! It really adds up.

Here is an example. This is my original excerpt from How to Win Friends and Influence Magicians, followed by the ly-free version. I kept some of the "ly" words, but can you see a difference?

### Excerpt 1 (before "ly" check):

*"Well, hello!" he purred, a little half-grin breaking across his amazing face just for me. "What are you doing here?" His voice was naughty and gorgeous. It was low and enticing with a purr to it, like a tiger who wasn't going to eat me. The tiger even liked me a bit, but might choose to eat me in the future. Also, I would thoroughly enjoy it if he did.*

*Now, I was fully aware that I was sweaty, tear-stained, red-eyed, red-nosed, and totally disheveled. It was not an attractive moment. Naughty Hottie was messy in a completely planned way that was even better than being tidy and put-together. Every movement and line of him seemed naturally comfortable. And he was smiling at me as if he was the Wolf and I was Little Red Riding Hood with a giant basket of goodies for Grandmother.*

*"I...." I faltered, unable to think of any way to explain, "I can't get out!" Naughty Hottie looked at me and the path, puzzled in an attractive way. "Honest! Whenever I go that way, off-campus, I somehow end up completely turned around and going in again." Naughty Hottie gazed at me knowingly. Of course he knew all about Teimnydd restrictions and punishments, because he was so bad. He studied me in a leisurely, bold way that made me worry that some Teimnyddus might have x-ray vision. Then he turned and walked slowly down the path until he was "off campus". He held out his arms gracefully in a gesture of completion. He could get out. So I followed, and then I didn't and I was back where I started.*

*"Yep, that's a Capio spell just for you, Kitten. You know, you don't look like a bad girl." He trot back to me, languid and sleek.*

*"Um, I'm not. I'm just...new."*

*"New?"*

*"Yeah."*

*"Care to elaborate?" he coaxed, his interest piqued, but in a languid, feline way that could evaporate at any moment.*

*I shook my head. I did not want to elaborate. Though at this moment I was desperately trying to break a “stay here” spell by The Drop herself, I couldn’t bring myself to cross the line to reveal information about my unique status. I wanted to keep the secret, even though Joel had just ruined it and the whole campus probably knew about the Baby Teimnyddus Freshman by now. Naughty Hottie did not appear to know and I didn’t want him to know.*

*“OK,” he replied, as if my refusing to enlighten him didn’t bother him in the slightest. Then he held out his hand. I stared. He moved his hand in a way that beckoned. He wanted me to take his hand. I reached out toward him, mesmerized somehow to obey. But then I hesitated, looking into his face for confirmation, explanation, or assurance that my hand would be returned to me at some point, whole and uninjured in any physical or spiritual way. He pulled that little gut-melting half-grin again and his eyes softened into a catastrophic mixture of beckoning and scolding. I slid my hand into his. He led me toward the “off campus” spot. And then he was there and I was not, looking back into campus again. Our hands had slipped apart in the blink of an eye.*

*He looked at me again, communicating with his eyes. (As I was quickly learning, he was Grand Master of Eye Communication.) This time, he approved of my impressive level of badness, seeing as even he was unable to thwart the “Capio” spell that was needed to contain naughty, naughty me. He was also ready to face the challenge again, because no spell designed to prevent rule-breaking was going to stop him.*

*A moment later he had returned to my enforced position and swept me up into his long, muscular arms. I rested in the “princess carry”, heart fluttering, as he walked me toward freedom. Then we were both back on campus, turned around.*

*“Who are you?” he asked in a sexy whisper. He didn’t put me down.*

*I was breathless and my brain had completely evaporated. “...Colleen,” I whispered. His eyes reprimanded me (sexy!) and demanded more. I didn’t want to tell him, but I couldn’t help myself. “Colleen Underhill.”*

*One eyebrow lifted. In a lot of popular books I have read, people can either do this or can’t and it is a point of pride or shame for them. I have never met anyone who has any deep feelings whatsoever on the raising of eyebrows. You can or you can’t. So what?*

*Naughty Hotty could and, of course, it was dangerously sexy. Even more dangerous and sexy, he looked me over like a tiger embracing a new kind of meat he might like to devour. “You’re the new one, aren’t you?” All I could do was nod (evaporated brain, remember?). “Mmmmm,” he said, which could be interpreted as “Mmmm, I see,” or as “Mmmmm, delicious.” My knees evaporated too, which was OK because he still held me in his arms.*

*“Well, Colleen Underhill, I’m London Vadoma. Nice to meet you,” he purred. (Insert all previous sexy descriptions here.)*

*“Mmmmm,” I replied, which could be interpreted as “Mmmmm, your wish is my command,” or “Mmmmm, take me, London Vadoma, I’m yours.” That little half-smile evaporated my internal organs.*

*Then he set me down. Surprisingly I could still stand without my knees, but that must have worked because I was unburdened by the weight of my brain or internal organs.*

*“Yeah,” he decided, “I’m not really disappointed you’re stuck here. See ya!” And with that, he sauntered away.*

*When he was out of my sight, my brain was the first to return, followed by my organs. That made me tipsy because the weight of my brain overset the hollowness of missing organs and no knees. Next, my heart appeared back inside my chest carily fully chilled by the way-too-bad-for-Colleen-ness of London Vadoma. The appearance of my knees followed a little too far behind for comfort, but at least I didn’t fall down. Yes, Naughty Hottie London Vadoma was waaaaay too dangerous for a little suburbanite Skupdyn like me. He was definitely a guy to adore from afar.*

*I was late for class.*

## Excerpt 2 (after "ly" check)

*"Well, hello!" he purred, a little half-grin breaking across his amazing face just for me. "What are you doing here?" His voice was naughty and gorgeous. It was low and enticing with a purr to it, like a tiger who wasn't going to eat me. The tiger even liked me a bit, but might choose to eat me in the future. Also, I would enjoy it very much if he did.*

*I was kind of surprised that the brother alarm hadn't gone into overdrive already. I half-expected to see my burly older brother and scrappy younger brother punching their way through the magic to get to me. This was the third hot guy who had acknowledged my existence and I was unused to avoiding the bro-bomb considering the volume of flirting.*

*Now, I was hyper-aware that I was sweaty, tear-stained, red-eyed, red-nosed, and horribly disheveled. It was not an attractive moment. Naughty Hottie was messy in a planned way that was even better than being tidy and put-together. Every movement and line of him seemed natural and comfortable. And he was smiling at me as if he was the Wolf and I was Little Red Riding Hood with a giant basket of goodies for Grandmother.*

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*"Yep, that's a Capio spell just for you, Kitten. You know, you don't look like a bad girl." He trod back to me, languid and sleek.*

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*“Well, Colleen Underhill, I’m London Vadoma. Nice to meet you,” he purred. (Insert all previous sexy descriptions here.) Tracy’s high school that she went on and on about during my “orientation” was called “Vadoma High”. Weird!*

*“Mmmmm,” I replied, which could be interpreted as “Mmmmm, your wish is my command,” or “Mmmmm, take me, London Vadoma, I’m yours.” That little half-smile evaporated my internal organs.*

*Then he set me down. I was surprised I could still stand without my knees, but that must have worked because I was unburdened by the weight of my brain or internal organs.*

*“Yeah,” he decided, “I’m not really disappointed you’re stuck here. See ya!” And with that, he sauntered away.*

*When he was out of my sight, my brain was the first to return, followed by my organs. That made me tipsy because the weight of my brain overset the hollowness of missing organs and no knees. Next, my heart appeared back inside my chest cavity well-chilled by the way-too-bad-for-Colleen-ness of London Vadoma. The appearance of my knees followed a little too far behind for comfort, but at least I didn’t fall down. Yes, Naughty Hottie London Vadoma was waaaaay too dangerous for a little suburbanite Skupdyn like me. He was a guy to adore from afar. My brothers would be kicking his butt, possibly with pal backup, if not for supernatural intervention and the lie that I was in Maine. My dad would re-sharpen his knife collection if he even smelled London’s cologne near me.*

*I was late for class.*

So, I found that once I had done the “ly” check a few times, I started to avoid the adverbs in my writing, so I didn’t need to do it much after the first few checks.

## MORE THINGS TO CHECK!

Along the lines of the "Ly" check, here are some other writing exercises I am currently inflicting on my novel:

Weed out the "to-be-verbs": is, am, are, was, were, be, being, and been.

Turn 'ing' into 'eds' where possible.

Avoid starting sentences with 'as' or 'ing' words

~Thanks to [Tahlia Newland](#) for the cool new tweak!~

Whee Doggies is it taking a long time! The end of the school year rush makes for slow work, but at least I don't lose my place! (When I've changed the word, it doesn't show up in the find anymore so I know right where I left off!)

In case your clicking finger is broken and you didn't go to The "Ly" check, I use Word's "Find" tool and input each word, combing through the entire manuscript for the offenders. I found with these teeny words it helps a lot to type a space before and after the word in the "find" box. That weeds out the combination of letters in other words such as "this", "came", and others.

## BETA READER CRITIQUE FORM

This is a modified form of the critique form I read here:

<http://newenglandmuse.wordpress.com/2012/03/29/critique-form/>

**Please explain your choice and suggest where I could improve/what you'd like to see.**

### **Add/change**

I needed to hear more about certain aspects of the plot/characters/technical terms

I didn't understand some things about this story/some aspects were unclear

I hated some things about this story

I thought about something cool to add or something I'd like to see in the book

### **Plot**

Attention needs to be paid to plot development

The story lacks credibility in places

Good start/good ideas but loses direction and force

The story holds interest throughout but the ending is disappointing

Flows smoothly, well researched, almost there

This is a well-crafted story and it is clear that the author has considered all the aspects of the plot

### **Characterization**

-The characters do not always come over as real people

-Told from the viewpoint of too many characters, so that the readers learns little about them

- In general, the characters are believable , although there is room for improvement
- The characters are well drawn and true to life/does the character have an inner life
- Strong characterization means that the reader's sympathies are instantly engaged.

### **Pace**

- The story starts slowly
- The story needs a more varied pace
- Side-issues slow the story down
- In general, the story moves well, although there are times when interest wavers
- A good pace is maintained throughout
- This story's page-turning quality is excellent

### **Dialogue**

- The characters all tend to speak with the same voice
- Some attention should be given to the dialogue, which does not always ring true
- Although the dialogue is believable, there are places where it serves no obvious purpose
- In general, the dialogue sounds authentic
- the sharply written dialogue reveals much about the characters
- The dialogue is excellent, adding a sparkling dimension to the story

## PROBLEMS...

I really enjoy reading all the books I bought from my followers! I see some fantastic writing, and some really wonderful stories. There have, however, been some problems therein. I won't blab who they are or tear them down in public. I wouldn't want anyone to do that to me. The thing is that usually we can't see a problem with our writing until someone points it out. So I will! This may or may not be your problem, but regardless, you can learn from it.

### Problems:

**Explaining too much:** This is the main reason I want to stop reading a book. When you explain everything in detail, you have to be careful not to tell us too much. Telling too much can lead to boring the reader who just wants the action to move forward, leaving no mystery for the reader to discover later on, or getting lost in scenery and description that doesn't actually tell a story. I have read some published works by successful authors that begin with a protracted description of someone I don't know who isn't real and I don't really care, so I move to the next book.

**Not explaining enough:** There is a fine line between not enough and too much. You have to be really careful about that. A few things I read recently left me wondering what was going on and if I was accidentally starting with #2 in a series by accident. I really love the technique of experiencing the confusion of the protagonist as you move through your story, but don't keep us confused. Make it long enough in finding things out to be pleasurable and short enough to be gratifying. Also, adding in a character with lots of back story as if we already knew them is a mistake. You should introduce characters like you introduce people. We don't need tantalizing details about a character if you don't intend to develop them. That makes it seem like an excerpt and not a full story. Also, we don't want to hear their embarrassing private details just after we meet them. Later on, maybe we do, but we're not loose, so don't get fresh going to far too fast. I'm not that kind of girl.

**Unlovable characters:** There are personality flaws that are endearing and personality flaws that are off-putting. You need character flaws or your characters don't seem human. (Sometimes they aren't human.) To connect the reader to our characters, we have to carefully choose their flaws. If you give your character too many bad flaws, then you won't have a lovable character. Flaws that are endearing are things like clumsiness, awkwardness, chronic misfortune, and self-consciousness. They are lovable because we all have some or all of them and in a book they either harm no one or provide comic relief when they do. Flaws that nobody loves are self-pity (because if you pity yourself, we feel like your pity portion is covered), spoiled-brattiness, self-delusion, sullenness, inability to act when necessary, selfishness, and smugness. These flaws should be used on a "bad guy" or on a main character who gets spanked and changes for the better. I read one character who essentially dared the world to disapprove of her. Bad idea. Even if we don't disapprove, we might be convinced to disapprove on principle.

**Scattered story momentum:** In one story I read, the writer was trying to pepper her story with scenes where the main character and the love interest were confronted with their attraction for one another. The trouble was that these were done randomly and often in inappropriate context. The scenes didn't build in intensity toward a climax, rather the characters were flooded with a random level of attraction unconnected with the

previous or following levels, and then suddenly remembering their reasons to hold back, seemed to completely forget their attraction. It was confusing and made the two characters appear mentally unhinged. Remember the flow of your story and chop out anything that gets in its way. It's the boss, and gets to go first.

**Names that all sound the same confuse me!**: I have a character flaw myself, and that is if you name your characters Mike, Matt, and Mitch, I will confuse them and forget who I am reading about. My own technique I use in my own writing is to always name my characters with a different first letter than all the other characters. I strayed from that pattern and confused myself in [The Disenchanted Pet](#) by naming the male brother characters James and Justus. My editor and my friends found repeated instances where I was writing about one and named the other. I had to read the whole piece through a few times to correct mistakes based on their names.

**The flow of the story gets lost in dialogue**: Dialogue is vital and enhances a story, but when the characters just move from place to place and talk, it can bore you to tears. If you are reading a book that is supposed to be about people talking to one another in different places, that is one thing. If you are reading a book that claims to be a thrilling adventure, this doesn't work. Move them around and do stuff to them, and let them talk about it a little.

**Too many feelings**: I am a girl and I love hearing about people's feelings. But even I can't handle the level of feeling-sharing sometimes. Do share the feelings that are relevant to the action of the story as they happen. Do not share all the feelings of all the characters about everything. Some characters should be an enigma and not knowing what goes on in their head will be fascinating. Why did they do that? I don't know! Maybe if I read more I can find out. It's why Edward in Twilight liked Bella. It wasn't wrong.

Don't feel bad if this punches your story in the eye. I've made some of the same mistakes and a little beating does your writing technique good. If you are out to tell your story and get everyone to praise you without working at it, you had better just give your stories to your close friends who don't criticize you. If it is your art, and you strive to make it better and more beautiful, then you'll love and hate all the criticism, but you'll grow from it.

Write on!

## WHEN I JUST CAN'T WRITE

There are those times when I just can't write. I may even have great ideas in my head but they get stuck like the glue bottle with the big glue booger in it that won't come out.

### **Reasons why I can't write:**

My head is too full

My head is empty

My life is too busy to stop and write

Not enough sleep

### **Ways to get myself started again:**

Sleep (sometimes it's not going to happen)

Wait until everything calms down

Squeeze in my writing anywhere I can - Evernote app is great for this

Read books, watch inspiring movies and TV, read manga (I think of it as recharging my writing batteries)

Get some time alone

Sometimes these still don't work. What do you do?

## WHEN YOU'RE STUCK: HOW TO BEAT WRITER'S BLOCK



What do you do when that blog post or chapter or poem just won't COME OUT of your head?! Writer's block hits anyone who writes, whether for their own amusement or for more serious reasons. But what do you do?



**Talk to someone about it.** Call them up or have a meeting, whatever gets it done. You can talk to another writer, your Mom, or your favorite Sci-fi nerd. Whoever you think knows something to help get you started. There are even message boards online to talk about writing.



**Take a break.** Sometimes you just need a little time and perspective to figure out what to write next. Hopefully you don't have an immediate deadline. Don't agonize over your issue the whole time, either. Get completely away from it. You'll find that sometimes your subconscious can accomplish things your conscious mind can't manage. My breaks from my writing sometimes take weeks or months. Then suddenly I have the answer and my writing continues.



**Blow something up!** Not for real. I mean with your writing. This can mean literally including an explosion in your story or just resorting to something outrageous to spice things up in your project.



**Input.** I simply can't write anything unless I have an "input". It doesn't even have to be the same genre as what I'm writing. I just need to read what others write to fuel my own inspiration. Sometimes a really good movie, television show, or even a song will also inspire me in my writing. Try being the audience for a while so you can continue to be the storyteller.



**Clear Distractions.** Maybe your workspace is too chaotic for you to think well. I know that is frequently my problem with three active kids in the house. If you can block those out, you may be able to get the inspiration you need to go. Your computer can be a distraction, as you know. Pull out a pad and paper (old-fashioned, I know) or try a plain-text editor like JDarkRoom <http://www.codealchemists.com/jdarkroom/>



**Make it challenging.** Sometimes it's not the chaos that gets you but the tranquility. Plan some events, start another project, or something...and squeeze that writing out of yourself with pressure! That's how I usually do it, so you can tell it works.



**Set goals.** Sometimes a goal, especially one you've shared with someone else, can help you get going. You know what's reasonable! Set a goal and keep yourself accountable to reach it!

Do you have any other ideas for beating writer's block?

These bloggers do!

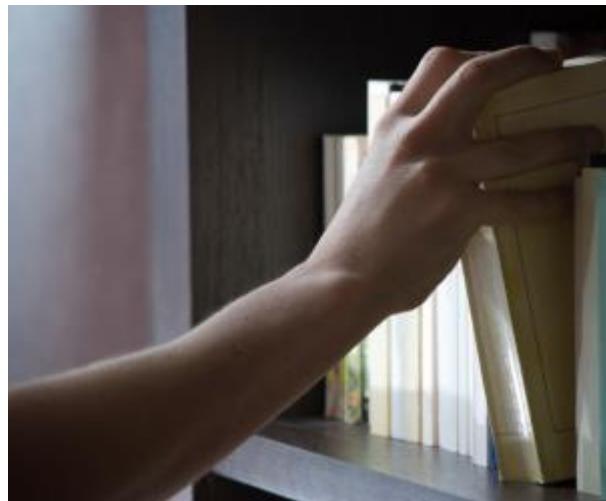
<http://fictionwriting.about.com/od/writingroadblocks/tp/block.htm>

<http://storytellingnomad.wordpress.com/2011/10/05/top-10-writing-distractions/>

<http://www.webook.com/911writersblock> A fun tool to help you get past it! Dial your solution.

## ANALYSIS: GET MORE OUT OF YOUR READING

**(Because reading helps you write.)**



Why would I want to analyze a book while I read it? *I read for fun!*

My answer: analyzing your reading gives you more fun with the next book. What is it about your book that you like? What don't you like and why? These are important questions to answer if you want to get more books you will love reading. You want that, right?

If you like to talk with others about books, this is a great way to pull out the intelligent answers to the question, "What did you like about this book?"

**Here are some easy habits to get into while reading that will help you analyze books:**

**Pay attention to the commonly-used themes.** (Example: a woman alone, man vs. the system) They are everywhere, in movies, books, even commercials. There are big themes and small themes, some encompassing the whole book and some for just one scene. They vary with culture differences around the world and even within a city. It's surprising to see that books on entirely different subjects can have similar themes. Pulling this out and poking it with a stick can be a lot of fun.

**Read a book closely.** Notice the little things about the book. This allows you to see things beyond the plot, characters, and ideas in the book. Word choice tells things about the author and shapes the tone of the story. They show why certain writers endure. Look at the really great sentences! That is what writing is about. Paragraphs are the completeness of the work and give it a musical quality, a rhythm. (From Reading Like a Writer by Francine Prose)

**Notice who is narrating and why.** Who is listening? On what occasion is the story being told and why? Is the protagonist projecting this heartfelt confession out into the ozone, and, if so, what is the proper tone to assume when the ozone is one's audience? (From Reading Like a Writer by Francine Prose)

**Who are the characters?** Characters are defined by how the author describes them, what they say, and what they do. (From Reading Like a Writer by Francine Prose) What do the other characters think about them? This makes a surprising impression on you as the reader. What colors your likes and dislikes about the character?

**How does the author describe gestures?** The description of gesture sets good writing apart from common. Common writing describes common gesture while good writing shakes things up. (From Reading Like a Writer by Francine Prose)

**After you're done, how do you feel about the book?** Was it a win or a fail? Why? Sometimes a good book leaves a sour taste in your mouth. What was that? Sometimes an awful book manages to pull through. How did it happen?

Do you have any great reading-enhancing analysis techniques that should be on this list?



## EVERNOTE

If you have any kind of Android device, I recommend you try out the Evernote app. It is also an app available on Google Chrome, and what it does is connect your PC or Mac (I think) to your Android device using a notepad-type application. You can type on your computer and stick it into a note on Evernote and then pick it back up in your Android device. You can type something up on your Android and then get it onto your computer too.

I use Ever to take notes for my book reviews while I am using the Kindle app to read books. I can jot down thoughts while I read so I can refer to them later for the review. I can also use it to jot a quick note about any writing ideas I have so that I can leave the laptop closed.

The website, where you can access any of your notes on any browser is <https://www.evernote.com/>

## WRITING LINKS

Hmm, she thought. How am I going to promote my book?

In addition to my constant perplexity about promoting my book, I came upon a writing issue that is not resolved! In writing my short story Horarium for Wattpad, I wanted to write someone's inner dialogue and realized I wasn't sure how to do that. Neither is the writing world, it seems. You can choose to put quotes in or you can write in italics. But nobody has convinced me that either way is the right way.

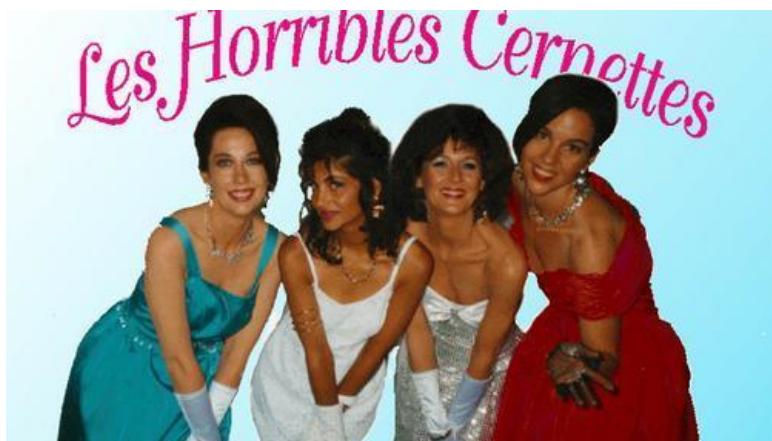
Here is a link about it: <http://theeditorsblog.net/2012/02/28/inner-dialogue-writing-character-thoughts/>  
<http://tahlianewland.com/2012/03/01/a-helpful-framework-for-plotting-novels/>

Another book/reading community more focused on.... [www.writing.com](http://www.writing.com)

[Return to Contents](#)

## THE INTERWEBS

### THE INTERNET IS FOREVER



Yes, this is the first picture ever posted online. I wonder if these ladies still hang out. They definitely don't have the same hairdos or wear the same clothes. Does this picture embarrass them or are they proud to be the first?

Our culture is focused more and more through the internet. On my Facebook today I saw a friend's current progress painting a robot figurine, the coffee another friend was drinking, and the political views of yet another friend. Will these photos and statements disappear into the cyber-world or will they live on there "forever", just waiting for someone to dig them up?

Well, as scary as this feels, this phenomenon of media lasting virtually forever is really a bonus for me, an author. My works, nestled into their pages on the web, will live there forever. I will always be able to make money on them, or at least get the credit for them if they become free. If someone claims them as their work, I can point to multiple places where my work lives and has lived for a long time. There is no "out of print" online. There is no time limit for my work to survive other than the time limit of how long it interests people.

Yes, in case of apocalyptic failure of everything technological, I do have paper copies of all of it, including the copyright certificates. But after we've recovered and have the internet back, provided the Giant Ant Overlords allow it, I'll put them all back up.

What do you have online that will live forever? How do you feel about that?

## FLOOD OF INFORMATION



Dwain the tub! I'm dwowning! ...in information.

I love to read my followers blog posts and keep up to date on what you guys are doing! But it's gotten to be entirely too much. I tweaked my settings to get a weekly digest and I get 85+ emails. I'm bummed that it's more than I can manage.

All of this web stuff feels like more than I can manage. Wordpress, Facebook, Twitter, Triberr, StumbleUpon, Goodreads, Writing.com, Google+, Reddit, Tumblr, Klout, Linkedin, and too many others flood into my computer every day, and they all link to each other. How do I handle it all?



Somebody has a great opportunity to create a multi-site dashboard that filters this stuff for you. I think it will take a computer guru just to calibrate it, but I'm willing to try if it means I can see the stuff I want to see. But

I only want ONE. I refuse to endure five or six programs that do some of what I want. I know you can do it, hackers of the world! If it's already out there, please let me know.

Do you feel swamped too? What ways do you handle aaaaallllllll the information? (I mean other than setting your computer on fire and giving up.)

Here are a couple of people's perspectives on our Flood of Information:

<http://www.business2community.com/social-media/a-flood-of-information-do-you-remember-life-before-social-media-056696>

A phrase that made me laugh: infobesity - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information\\_overload](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_overload)

And these guys who say I'm in the minority: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information\\_overload](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_overload)

## RIVER OF EMAILS

When you embark on something like author publicity, you open yourself up to floods of emails. There isn't really any way to avoid it if you don't want to work part time unsubscribing from mailing lists. What do you do about it?

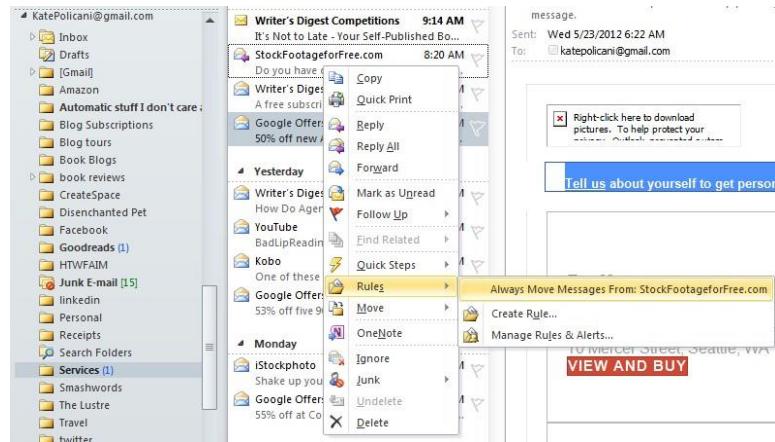
*I feel like I have a pretty good handle on it so I'll tell you what I do.*

**I have lots of separate email addresses.** This seems like it would cause more email confusion, but I use each like a separate inbox just for one kind of communication. I have an email address for personal use that I only share with family and close friends. I have a "commercial" email address for all my web commerce not connected with my author endeavors. I have a "security" email address for account alerts. I have my author email address for just author business. And I have a private notes email address that I use exclusively to send notes via text and email to myself.

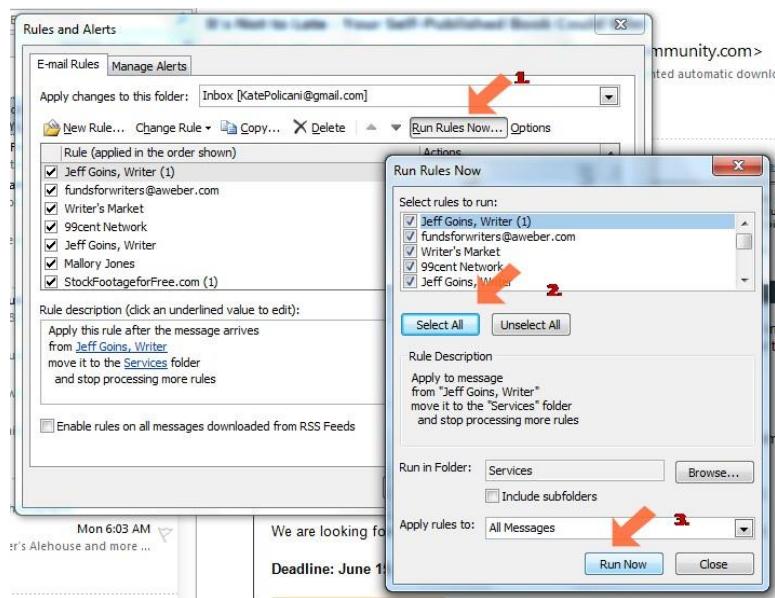
**I make lots of folders for everything so I can find things** I'm looking for right away. Each email address has its own sub-folders. The most useful is the "services" folder for all the ads everybody sends like mad. I also sometimes name it "commercial". I usually skim those for any useful stuff and then mark it all "read". Here is a picture of the folders I've created for my author email address



I use Outlook's rules to sort my mail into folders. You sort them into the folders using Outlook's rules, found by right-clicking on the email you want to sort. Outlook can then sort all the emails in the folder and each future incoming email. (I sort emails at the inbox but I showed the picture in the "Services" folder so you can't see all my secrets.)



Checking my email on my phone ruins my sorting, but I can fix this by opening the "Manage Rules & Alerts...." option and choosing the "run rules now" option and choosing the "run rules now" option.



What do you think? How do you sort all those emails?

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BLOGGERS

(Since many authors blog, I thought I'd include this one.)

On my latest foray into blogging success, I found some more social media sites that bloggers can use to promote their blog. I know. Do I really need more of this? Well I'm trying it, since promoting my blog is also promoting my books.

**Bloggers.com:** This seems like Facebook for your blog page. You discover and follow others on the site based on their blog. I'm not sure of the value of it yet. I have a lot of "followers" simply by signing up but they don't seem to have anything in common with what I blog about. I think the idea is to browse for blogs through their site and connect that way. Three blog views have come my way through Bloggers in the past month.

**StumbleUpon:** Take note of what you like on the web. That's what this is. It's a like and share generator for websites. It's simple and elegant. I haven't seen any views yet since I started it. You can plug it in to your Wordpress site.

**Tumblr:** Tumblr is similar to Stumble Upon except that you can syndicate your own blog through it. It has lots more features, too, none of which I have used yet. You can add pictures and other content to your existing posts too. Are you starting to see a pattern of replicating work? Yep, me too. You can also plug Tumblr into your Wordpress site.

**Digg:** They should call it "Ditto". Digg is all about reading blogs and letting everyone know you read them. You can mark blogs down on your "reading list". I need a nap.

**Reddit:** Reddit looks like a site made in the 1990's and never upgraded for style. You can't link to your own blog, but you can share your own posts. Manually. It's supposed to plug into Wordpress, but I haven't seen any indication it works unless someone hits the "Reddit" button about one of your posts. You can also do a "search".

Here is blogger John Rampton's suggestion on being a top blogger: <http://www.johnchow.com/how-to-become-a-top-blogger-in-social-media/>

If anyone has any awesome tips on these or any other social media sites, I'd love to hear them.



No, I don't know this girl. It's just a fun pic.

## THE BENEFITS OF BLOG AWARDS



Have you ever been included in a Blog Award? There are tons of them and you can't blog for long without seeing them everywhere. But are they anything but a shout-out to your friends?

I think the most valuable thing I've received from a Blog Award is the networking! I got new follows and views from people I might never have found online through my blog awards. Each link is a connection to innumerable others who may find your blog. Whether you're just looking for blog publicity, or whether you're trying to promote something else through your blog, this is really the reward you get with a Blog Award. Plus, you get to pass it on to others too.

Besides that, blog awards provide you with content you might not otherwise get. If you've committed to regular blogging, you know how hard it is to create content sometimes. A lot of a Blog Award is already planned for you.

So I'd like to give an extra "Thank You" to everyone who has included me in their Blog Awards, shared their networks with me, and given me content for my blog! If you've been reluctant to join in on the Blog Awards, I'd encourage you to reconsider.

## SUNDAY BLOGGING

“I've been trying to figure out what it is about Sunday that makes it such a light blogging views day. I could hope that all of you Saints are spending the whole day at church, but that probably isn't it.

Friday is by far my best views day. Whatever I post will get more views. Saturday is pretty good too. But Sunday you're all tired of being online or raiding Heroic Valonia or something.

Do you read more blogs on Friday and skip it altogether on Sunday? Why?”

*This post was funny because I published it on Sunday and got more views by far than I had ever gotten on a Sunday. Blogging is my main outlet, because I like it best. I can say everything I've got to say and add pictures.*

## WRITING EFFECTIVE POSTS



I've been learning a few things to include in posts that have really helped make my posts more interesting and get more views. They're pretty easy to do and help turn an interesting post into a big success!

**Include pictures!** I've been using <http://www.sxc.hu/> (where most of the pictures in this book come from) to find photos. I grab the url directly from the page to cut down on storage for my blog. Be sure that the pictures you use are licensed or else you might have problems. Stock.Xchng has several types of photos, and some require that you notify or ask permission from the artist for any public work.

**Add links.** Chances are that someone else has written a post about your subject or something like it. Adding links to their post (especially if you quote them) brings them in on the topic and increases your post's visibility. Everybody likes to be quoted or have their work highlighted! Here are some other posts about better blogging: <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/07/10/nine-signs-of-an-effective-blog-post/> , <http://marketing.about.com/od/marketingmethods/tp/blogmarketing.htm>

**Ask questions.** Don't you want to hear what your readers have to say about what you wrote? If your work is all info with no questions, they might not. To encourage replies and dialogue, ask some questions.

**Speak your own words.** If you read your blog post out loud, do you sound like yourself or do you sound like a weirdo? Share your personality, not your writing proficiency. We visited your post to hear what you have to say. If we wanted cold, lifeless instructions we'd go to the airport.

I know I missed some! What makes your blog posts sparkle? What about your posts reflects who you are?



## LIBRARY THING

Library Thing has been mentioned in my web readings here and there, but didn't really take the time to look. Since an author of a book I reviewed requested I put my review up there, I signed up. Here is my page: <http://www.librarything.com/author/policanikate>

Library Thing is a lot like Goodreads, but slightly less flashy with more emphasis on information. There is a lot more room for detailed information too. For example, if you write with multiple pen names, this would be a great place to clarify that. There is a forum and they have groups just like Goodreads, but no alerts or mail (that I could see).

It was pretty easy and quick to sign up as an author and it was automatically connected to all the information I input before the approval. There is no block, that I could see, from anybody out there inputting information about any author or book. This was interesting and a little scary. Aside from the author page, they have an Author Chat area and an Early Reviewer section to review books before they are available to the public.

I feel more and more like I am just repeating information on all these sites, but I figure that if I get another reader, it was worth it. Overall, I am focusing on the blogging and Goodreads because there is no great way to use them all to their fullest unless I man the sites full time and stop writing. Since I signed up because of the writing, that would be nuts. And since I don't want my kids turning feral (and mine would), I won't be doing anything else full time anytime soon.

## LINKS ON THE WEB

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/weblogs.html> is a good breakdown of how to make good blog posts especially number 3 about post titles!

<http://paulstamatiou.com/how-to-boost-your-blog-traffic> This one had lots of meaty goodness. I followed a lot of his suggestions.

And this one was just funny: [http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2012/08/the-publishing-process-in-gif-form.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+NathanBransford+%28Nathan+Bransford%2C+Author%29](http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2012/08/the-publishing-process-in-gif-form.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+NathanBransford+%28Nathan+Bransford%2C+Author%29)

technorati.com, an internet search engine for searching blogs. This was recommended to me in a post I read because my blog traffic seems to be deflating. Check it out! <http://paulstamatiou.com/how-to-boost-your-blog-traffic>

<http://janefriedman.com/2011/12/09/big-mistake-author-blog/> Don't make these mistakes!

[Return to Contents](#)

## **VIRTUAL LAUNCH PARTIES**

### **SOME 'SPLAININ TO DO**

So what is this Virtual Launch Party thing, Kate?

Why, I'm glad you asked! I'll get into detail:

If you have hosted a blog tour before, it is very similar to that only a shorter time frame and not as wide a range (because I can't afford to pay to have that done right now.)

The next chapters are about my parties.

## RESEARCHING MY BOOK LAUNCH: THE LUSTRE

This was my second time around launching an indie book, and I was an expert at getting the attention of the people I know and selling 5 copies. Check. Now I wanted to do better. I figured that all of you want to do better too, so I'm going to share my research in how to improve my launch of [The Lustre](#) over my tentative and virtually silent release of [The Disenchanted Pet](#).

My new technique for transmitting my nuggets of knowledge-y goodness to readers of my blog was to take my notes right here in an "Add New Post" form. If I didn't, I lost track of some of the nuggets and then I was sad for you, not seeing them.

### **So: Launching an Indie book:**

Mirika Cornelius (awesome name--writing it in my names collection!) has some nuggets in her article at <http://ezinearticles.com/?Top-Four-Ways-to-Sell-a-Self-Published-Book-Fast&id=2242012>

**Throw a Book Release Party.** Due to my and my friends complete inability to handle anything outside the kids and family, and the lameness of our parties to anyone but a parent, this may have to happen virtually instead of physically. I have to think about how to do this.

**Attend Book Festivals.** I didn't know those existed! I am going to have to look into this too. I don't think it will happen soon. Maybe when Corbin starts school.

**The other two were a media announcement and a speaking engagement.** I don't think either of these is going to happen. I wouldn't know where to start. This isn't Podunk, Iowa, folks. I live in Seattle, a huge city filled with talented people. I don't see myself getting past the receptionist.

Get Published TV has a five minute video at <http://www.5min.com/Video/How-to-Host-a-Virtual-Book-Launch-180050902> that suggests a webinar virtual launch through a site like gotomeetings.com. You can get all the benefit of a launch party but without the expenses. The webinar is usually recordable and with some sites they could be free. Essentially this is what he said in the video, with some elaboration about phone launches (huh?). The virtual launch is a great idea for international audiences. If you want to watch the whole video, start at 1:45 on the progress bar unless you want to hear all about the new microphone.

*Now I will rant for a moment about web videos. They are popular, I know. But I don't like them. I can learn what they say in moments by reading an article. Somehow many of the video hosts manage to talk for 10 minutes about three sentences of content. That's why I always look for the article. Frequently articles ramble too, but you can skim those more quickly than a video and not miss important content. Rant over.*

Susan C. Daffron had my favorite article on <http://www.thebookconsultant.com/LPMArticle.asp?ID=207> She was against the webinar and especially the Amazon Bestseller Campaigns, which she feels are dishonest. Her plan is this:

**Pick a date and plan some bonuses** (items to give as promotions like free copies).

**Contact people to review and endorse your book.** Free copies are the norm.

**Ask for bonuses from your reviewers/endorsers.** This publicity goes to them too.

**Create a bonus "page"** where you can direct people who buy the book to get the promotions.

**Ask endorsers to share your launch info.**

**Launch your book through your contacts, on your site, and through social media** on the launch date

After I read this article I focused on the "virtual book launch" for my search.

Of course, I found something interesting and off-topic <http://jeejeebhoy.ca/2007/11/28/how-to-autograph-your-book/>

Ok, now I'll get back to the point.

A confusing post, but with some good ideas was <http://speaking-book-marketing.chailit.com/how-to-plan-a-virtual-book-launch-party.html> I won't say anything about what was wrong. (Shaking my head.)

What I got from it was to create a party site, promote it with an evite (good idea) and launch on date in this order: Press release, Twitter, Facebook, newsletters, e-mail, ask the forum to pass it on.

"Party favors" suggested are: music, video, interview by author, book interview guests, gifts, contest for prizes, book excerpts, chats with the author, guest books, book reviews.

Author Jennifer Hudson Taylor has an exhaustive timeline for Published authors.

<http://jenniferswriting.blogspot.com/2011/08/timeline-for-book-launch-campaigns.html> I copied the last month into my One Note for future reference.

That is all for now. I have to let this simmer for a bit. I'll post my actual plan when I work it out. I was looking for a checklist of do's and don'ts, but didn't find anything like it. Any suggestions?

## THE LUSTRE VIRTUAL LAUNCH PARTY

March 15th, 16th, And 17th 2012

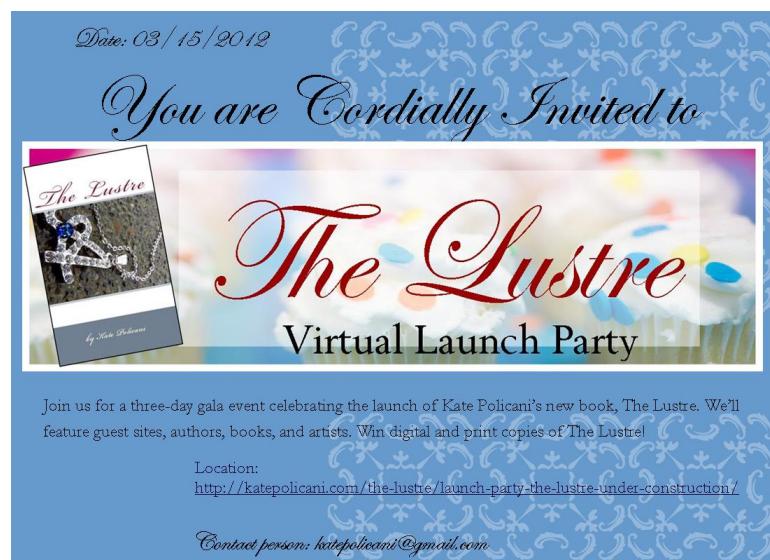
This was my first online launch party. I pulled out all the stops.



### **Virtual Launch Party for [The Lustre](#)**

A month before I started my “party” I made a Party Construction Page to alert people who might like to participate. I then replaced it with the main party page when it started.

I made a Facebook Event, I thought about an evite, but decided that my email friends who would be interested were all on Facebook too. I posted an invitation that linked to the construction site:



I made a party page under the page for the book, synopsis, trailer, and excerpt. If anyone wanted to know more about the launch party, they could see there. I posted info on all the participants and prizes, free ebooks and print book giveaways.

**I featured:**

My editor

My cover photographer

My author picture photographer

Artists from my previous book cover

My pre-reviewers' reviews on their sites

Party participants who posted "host" materials I prepared ahead of time.

My 100th follower, who followed during the party (that was a surprise)

A free coupon for my first book

Guest books of the same genre of my book

I chose winners from:

new followers

comments on my posts and host posts

Facebook likes for the page <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Lustre/178346805574332>

favorite comments

LibraryThing adds

Twitter followers

One surprise choice

Each of these 8 won a free ebook on Smashwords and of these eight, I chose three randomly to receive a free print copy!

One fortunate blogger won a copy of The Queen and the Handyman by Maria Tatham, a host blogger and guest book author. She picked that winner.

I completed and sent out tools for my blogger pals to join the party. I made a banner (above), a party badge (below), and a book cover picture. For content, I gave synopses of the book, an author bio, and some interview questions I answered. I also provided a special excerpt too.

I found people to participate who contributed to the book, people who I interacted with on my blog, and among my friends. They could sign up via email or on several party invite posts I made. I found frequent but well-spread-out posts about the party got people's attention.



## THE VIRTUAL LAUNCH PARTY ANALYSIS

I would say that this party was a great success!

The biggest success was in blog views. I received 170 the first day, 133 the second and, 127 on the third day. Normally I get between 15 and 50 views when I post something. I also got 18 spam posts! (Hehe it stinks but it also shows that even spammers were paying attention.) I had 31 total likes on posts.

### **The most popular posts were:**

The Lustre Virtual Launch Party Editor Feature: Kathleen Firstenberg 32 views

The Lustre Virtual Launch Party: First Pre-review! 18 views

How Not to Publish a Novel Yourself 18 views

Launch Party: The Lustre 13 views

My book sales were great too. I sold 4 print books and 3 Kindle books. These aren't fantastic numbers but it is way more than I sold during my diminutive release of [The Disenchanted Pet](#). The Black and White print cover won out with 2 sales versus one each of the red and slate.

I gained 4 blog followers for a total of 101 and 5 new twitter followers. I had one new Goodreads buddy (Thanks Maria!) , but nobody tried LibraryThing.

Maria Tatham was the hands-down participant winner and I need to think of a great gift for her to thank her for being so involved!

Was it worth the work? Absolutely. It was a lot of work with little return but also great to connect with so many people and try something completely new.

## THANK YOU!

Yes, you should thank everyone for participating! They are doing you a big favor, after all. And I can thank everyone again in this ebook!



Thank you for joining me in my Virtual Launch Party! Special thanks to all the awesome folks who participated! Remember to visit their sites and comment to win books.

## WHAT NOW? WHAT TO DO AFTER RELEASE



So the book is out and it succeeded/did OK/sold nothing. But now what to do next? It's really the same however the book did at release. I like lists, so here's a list:

Pat yourself on the back! Never forget that whether it did well or not, you released a book! Don't let the feelings you have about your income cloud that accomplishment.

Don't confuse anticlimax with failure. You can't reasonably keep up a book release day excitement up indefinitely. It's a climax. Appreciate that and build slowly. That is the kind of work that builds a lasting platform.

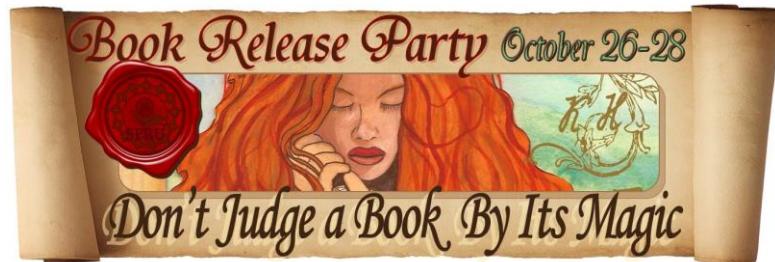
Contact more reviewers. You did this for your release, hopefully, but you can't have too few reviews. I'm going through the lists at <http://www.theindieview.com/indie-reviewers/> and <http://www.stepbystepselfpublishing.net/reviewer-list.html> .

Look into promotions. Yes they are endless, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't do them. There are ways to promote for free and there are costly ways. You just need to decide how much work you want to do versus how much you want to spend. When one goes up the other goes down. Just do it. It won't hurt that much.

Write more books! It looks more and more like what sells books is more books. That's what you were excited about in the first place, right? Writing books?

THE VIRTUAL RELEASE PARTY FOR [DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS MAGIC](#)

Here is the page for the release of my third book. I refined my posts and focused on the things that worked for [The Lustre](#) and dumped the stuff that didn't.



Welcome to the release party!

Read more about the book here:

<http://katepolicani.com/books-for-sale/dont-judge-a-book-by-its-magic/>

**Here are my VIP guests:**

Pre-reviewers:

<http://www.thebookwormextraordinare.blogspot.com/2012/09/review-dont-judge-book-by-its-magic-by.html>

<http://musingsandmarvels.com/>

<http://mainemuse.wordpress.com/2012/10/23/dont-judge-a-book-by-its-magic/>

<http://www.abookloverslibrary.com/27/post/2012/10/dont-judge-a-book-by-its-magic-a-book-review.html>

<http://quillwielder.com/2012/10/27/book-review-dont-judge-a-book-by-its-magic/>

<http://tahlianewland.com/blog/>

<http://awesomeindies.wordpress.com/>

<http://foxcutter.livejournal.com/172716.html>

<http://anovelperspective.wordpress.com/2012/10/27/new-release-review-dont-judge-a-book-by-its-magic/>

<http://bloodgifted.blogspot.com/2012/10/a-fellow-writers-release-party-kate.html>

**Hosts:**

<http://indiebookblogger.blogspot.com/> a future reviewer of the book

<http://www.thebookwormextraordinare.blogspot.com>

Special Monday interview: <http://speculativesalon.blogspot.com/>

#### **Guests:**

Superhero Kickstarter savior, Fox Cutter

Nadia Riell, winner of the Title Contest <http://nadiariell.com>

Kathleen Firstenberg, Editor of Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic and The Lustre

Heidi Barnett, cover artist of Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic and [The Disenchanted Pet](#)

Matthew Swegsda, Singer/musician/composer of "When You're Looking at Me", Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic's trailer video music.

The photographers of the beautiful chapter photos of strange landmarks around Seattle

#### **Guest Books:**

<http://the2012ebook.com>

<http://tahlianewland.com/short-stories/the-drorgon-slayers-choice/>

#### **Giveaways**

So, Kate, how can I win stuff? Why, I'm glad you asked! It's pretty easy to get in on some of these sweet giveaways.

In honor of my new release, The Disenchanted Pet ebook will be free on Kindle all weekend! Use coupon HEMNXL5Z at <https://www.createspace.com/3657962> for \$5 off the paperback.

In honor of my new release, The Lustre ebook will be free with coupon WT22J at Smashwords. Use coupon 3U5B5THD at <https://www.createspace.com/3811460> for \$5 off the paperback.

#### **How to win an ebook of Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic**

One random New Twitter follower of @KPtwhtrnove will win a free ebook.

Those who like Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic and/or Kate Policani on Facebook between Oct 26th and Oct 28th will be entered for a chance to win one of 3 free ebooks. 1 entry for each page liked!

One random re-post of any of my posts about the Release Party on Facebook will win a free ebook.

One person who "likes" Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic on Amazon will win a free ebook.

One person who "tags" Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic on Amazon will win a free ebook (Yes, you can do that without owning it.)

One person who clicks "This was Helpful" on a review of Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic on Amazon will win a free ebook.

One person who "adds" Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic on Goodreads will win a free ebook.

How to win a paperback copy of Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic

(I'll sign it if you like!)

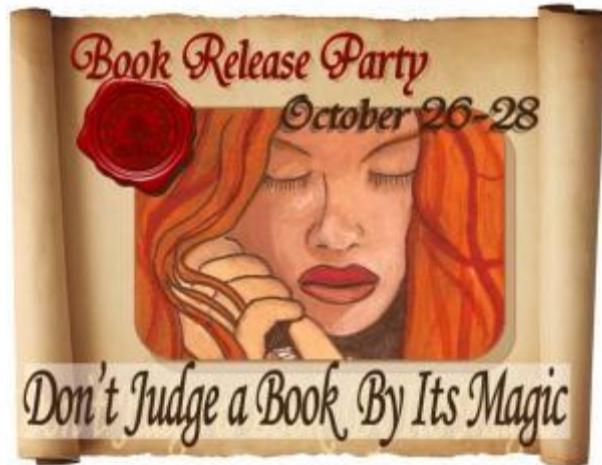
One entry at the Awesome Indies blog will win one free ebook and one free print copy.

One random Twitter follower who tweets during the Virtual Release Party will win a free print book with additional entries for each tweet. Tweets must include "@KPtwhrnovel" and the link "<http://katepolicani.com/release-party/>". Re-tweets of my tweets about the Release Party are also entries. You can just click this Tweet This link for a pre-made tweet! <Tweet This>

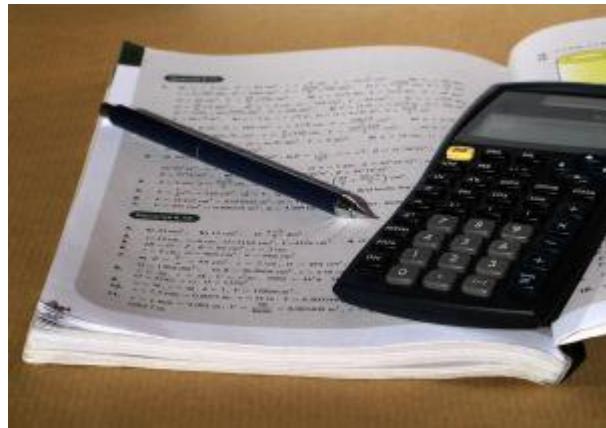
One person who completes the "Fabulous Five", five different ebook-winning activities, will win a paperback.

One person will win a paperback via my Goodreads giveaway:

**Whether you plan to join in or just visit, please post this party badge!**



## BOOK PARTIES: A POST-PARTY ANALYSIS



I have mixed feelings about my party for [Don't Judge a Book by Its Magic](#). I felt like it was already a success going in because I had so many fantastic participants and because the Kickstarter was a success, so my launch was successful before it happened. Some things didn't work so great and I know what not to do next time too. Do you have any feedback/advice for me?

### **Things that worked:**

Facebook likes

Goodreads giveaways got me an enormous amount of attention. If I'd known about that before I would have done it long ago. I'm planning a regular giveaway now because of that. 197 people added my book because of the giveaway.

Kickstarter made this a win before it happened.

Lots of great re-tweets on Twitter! Thanks everybody!

### **Things to do differently:**

I did too many posts this time. I'm sorry. I get all gushy when I'm excited and I can be too much. (You should see me hopped up on caffeine.) My plan next time is to spread them out more during the launch week. I think I'll get a lot more attention for each and lead up to the launch better with more forewarning too.

Bigger isn't better. I had more to post about this time but it didn't get me any more views. I'm going to relegate it to 6 posts per day maximum next time.

By Sunday people lost interest, so I'll probably keep the contests open but stop posting Saturday.

Nobody posted on Facebook

Only a few people liked on Amazon and nobody tagged

Nobody did the "fabulous five" and I thought that was so cool. :(

Never, ever publish and un-publish on Smashwords before release. I totally lost the "new book" listing because I did that. Big mistake.

I probably shouldn't have posted about future pricing plans just before the launch. Doh!

**Party Sales:**

A lot of my launch day sales were eaten up by pre-release sales. This was not a loss and I sold a lot more in pre-sales than I did with the previous book at the release party. I only got 2 sales of Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic during the party though - one ebook and one print book. That was disappointing.

438 people downloaded The Disenchanted Pet free on Kindle and 7 people downloaded The Lustre from Smashwords.

**Post view breakdowns:**

Release Party! 111 Views

Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic 19 Views

Virtual Release Party Begins Now!: Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic 11 Views

## RAFFLECOPTER



# Rafflecopter

That name sounds funny. Hur hur. Rafflecopter. Wafflecopter. Rafflewafflecopter. Hur hur. (There isn't really any waffles in there, but it sounds like there should be.)

<http://www.rafflecopter.com>

Well it's really a pretty cool site. You can set up a raffle and it makes it look spiffy and organized. Sign-up is easy and you can fill in your criteria, add some neat-o linking promotional thingies, like a tweet about your raffle or a Facebook post. It calculates the winner for you and everybody's happy! Good stuff! I wish this had been around for my last virtual launch. I'm definitely going to use this in my next one.

[Return to Contents](#)

## MAKING COOL STUFF

### THE MAKING OF THE LUSTRE TRAILER

I rushed to get the trailer done for [The Lustre](#) before the Launch Party. I procrastinated quite fabulously and I also waited on some people who weren't completely stoked about helping. Communication was garbled...

Anyway, I got it done! I lowered my expectations and pestered my poor Dad and got all but 2 clips filmed. Yes, I used video instead of photos and I have to say, it is just as easy to put it together as it was to do the trailer for [The Disenchanted Pet](#). [See how I did that here.](#)

I had a lot of fun burning paper on the deck to make ashes. At the end of winter, I didn't think they'd be very hard to find, but they were. Who knew? My secret ingredient for supplementing the volume of ash was baking soda. Powdered sugar wasn't as satisfying, I think. It also did not poof up into the air when I vacuumed it off the rug with my Hoover Wind Tunnel, but that is because it is HEPA filtered. We'll see if I can wash the ashes out of the shirt. No, I'm not going to tell you what I needed ashes for. You'll have to wait for the trailer and/or read the book. (My pre-reviewers will have some idea about what it is for!)

## HOW TO MAKE A VIDEO TRAILER II: VIDEO CLIPS

My first video trailer was made with photos and no video clips. You can find the steps I used here: <http://katepolicani.com/2011/10/24/making-a-trailer/>

This time I wanted to use mostly video clips rather than a series of still pictures. Once I had the right clips, filmed by myself and my dad with our cameras, it was almost the same as using pictures!

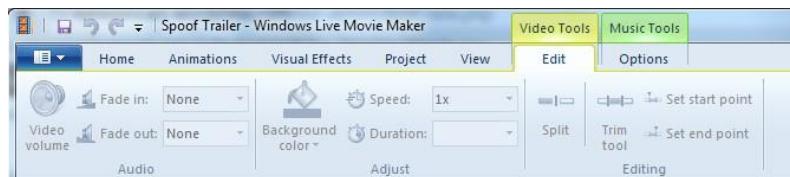
### Here is how I did it:

I used Microsoft Windows Live Movie Maker again, which you can get for FREE. It's part of Windows Live Essentials: <http://explore.live.com/windows-live-essentials?lc=1033>

It was still disgustingly easy to use and dummy-friendly. Like with photos, you just plunk everything in there with the "Add Videos and Photos" button. You can add effects and text just like with photos, and everything right there. You can export it in multiple file formats.

It took a little more creativity coming up with scenes I could capture on film. Photo is only limited to what I could find online. Video is harder. You can find royalty-free video online too, but that seemed expensive to me. I didn't even look because I found ways to take my own video with help from Dad. I used family and friends and local places or places in my home. I bought, scavenged, or borrowed props to use on film. One trick was to take closer shots with the videos. Instead of showing the whole room, I just showed a close-up of the subject with limited background.

Windows Live Movie Maker has lots of special controls just for video. I had to pay attention to the volume of each clip and I adjusted the length of the clip using the controls (they highlight as soon as you click on a loaded video clip in the top tabs.) Some videos were louder than others and some had inappropriate sounds I had to avoid by starting after them or ending before. Here is a photo:



For music, I emailed my dad, the composer with a Masters in music again. (You should do that too. It's really easy and cheap.) But if your dad isn't a composer, you can contact mine: [cdbarker@comcast.net](mailto:cdbarker@comcast.net). You can sample some of his work here: <http://home.comcast.net/~cdbarker/Music/Music.htm> Some of this music is not available for use, legally, so don't steal it unless you want to get sued by Electronic Arts or somebody like that.

If you need free music immediately, you impatient thing, go to this beautiful site: <http://www.seabreezecomputers.com/tips/freemusic.htm> . I particularly liked their link, [http://www.soundclick.com/business/license\\_list.cfm](http://www.soundclick.com/business/license_list.cfm) and found a song there in case Dad didn't have anything. (But he did. Neener.)

WARNING: there is a lot of kooky stuff on Musopen. *Don't worry, though, your music isn't one of the kooky ones, user of Musopen who is reading this book. It's all those other people's music that is kooky.*

Music controls are like the sound controls (see picture) and are pretty flexible and easy to understand. You can time your music to coincide with the video action.

To show you how you can get different effects with the same clips using the video and music controls, here is my trailer spoof:

<http://youtu.be/6yasgrhDw8I>

## FREE VIDEO CLIPS

I'm working on the trailer for How to Win Friends and Influence Magicians. Since I don't know many college students who could bend reality for me to film, I had to comb the web for clips to make you all think I do. There are lots of free ones out there, so I thought I'd give you my list of the ones where I found what I needed. There is a sort of delineation between sites that contain actors and those that don't. Any footage with actors will most likely be more expensive, but will have more specific action if you need it.

### **Free sites**

<http://xstockvideo.com/> (This has a limited number of specific free clips, No actors)

<http://archive.org/details/> stock\_footage (Lots of free clips)

<http://movietools.info/> (free video effects, but no actors)

<http://www.footagecrate.com/> (public domain video footage)

<http://www.worship-backgrounds.com/> (Religious-themed backgrounds)

<http://www.motionelements.com/> (You have to choose the "free" price option)

### **Inexpensive Paid Sites**

<http://www.pond5.com/> (Most videos \$20-\$40, with actors)

<http://videohive.net/> (Most videos are under \$10, a few with actors)

<http://www.istockphoto.com/video> (More expensive, over \$30, but with a large amount of stuff I really wanted to buy for my video)

### **Some other good lists of sites online:**

<http://www.videomaker.com/downloads/stock-video/>

<http://blog.podcastalley.com/2009/08/11/free-or-cheap-resources-for-royalty-free-stock-video/>

<http://thecliparchive.com/>

<http://movietools.info/free-web-resources.html>

<http://www.partnersinrhyme.com/blog/where-to-find-free-stock-footage/>

I also bought a video creation tool called Power Director 10. I looked all over everywhere to find a decent, free video tool that could blend my videos together. But there just weren't any that didn't want to put a watermark in my film. I ended up getting a pretty good deal at <http://store.hermanstreet.com/> . I was able to find the best-rated software on Cnet with reviews and even a free download trial. It ended up being \$50, but i know I'll use it a lot for future book trailers, and I was able to test it out to see if I could do what I wanted to do with it.

## CREATING MAGIC



A guest post on Speculative Salon

### Creating Magic

Making magic in fiction is a tricky endeavor. If you make it too real, it doesn't feel magical. If you make it too imaginative, you lose believability and you have trouble being consistent. Fortunately there are lots of ways to season your magic with enough reality to give it life. Here's how I did it.

[Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic](#) begins my first series in which Colleen Underhill has stepped outside the boundaries of normality. She is still attached to the regular life in which she grew up, but she just can't return to it. With a seemingly harmless introduction to what she thinks is an imaginary world, everything she thought she understood is turned upside-down. Before the day ends, she is dragged into SPRU, a secret university for people with powers like hers. And they won't let her leave. The magical community is called The Convergence. They are exclusive, secretive, and very protective of their privacy.

I based the supernatural actions of The Convergence series on loose interpretations of physics and String Theory. But I didn't start out that way. I'm not a big physics buff, but it's a passion of my hubby's. Combined with his adoration for comic books, I have a dependable and knowledgeable resource for what to write and what not to write about supernatural forces. In the early stages of writing the first book, I talked with him about my ideas and my concepts sparked a really cool conversation about everything he was learning about physics. With his coaching, I formulated the rules for the magic in my story.

In *Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic*, the first book in the series, Colleen plunges into a world of different perception and a hyperawareness of the connections between herself and the world around her. All of the concepts I used are really just my interpretation and then wild flight of fancy based off of what I understood from conversations with my husband and occasional episodes of NOVA.

There are two kinds of energy described in the book: The Tximar is the energy of all living things and the Teimnydd is the energy of those who can wield it, called Teimnyddus. All this energy is interconnected in a universal “tapestry” called the Txenarjuma. The Teimnyddus can perceive the energy and the Txenarjuma and then use it to affect the world around them using individual threads called Txenar. These concepts are based loosely around Quantum Field Theory.

I also included a magical river flowing through the city called the Tximarshu. This was influenced by several different stories I've read where characters use ley line energy for magic. I smushed the idea of ley lines and the concept of Tximar together and used it as an element of Colleen's transformation into a Teimnyddus.

The main character and protagonist, Colleen, reads a stray book that was left in the library and is transformed when its descriptions activate her latent Teimnydd. At a different time in her life, this wouldn't have been possible, as seen by the fact that her father, the person from whom she inherited the Teimnydd powers, cannot activate them by reading the book.

In addition to the Teimnydd and Tximarshu, Teimnyddus with special training can manipulate “pocket dimensions” which they call Vyxheploch. Using this kind of power, Convergence Agents are able to secretly transport Colleen's gear from her home to her dorm room instantly without arousing the suspicions of the neighborhood with a moving truck. “Pocket Dimensions” and other dimensional concepts come from String Theory also.

More physics-based concepts are represented in the book and I've planned more for future volumes in the series. My book isn't all about the physics, though. There is a lot more involved in changing a person's whole perception of reality than just the mechanics of the transformation. That's what I love to write about most. To see how Colleen adjusts to her “magic”, you'll have to [read the book!](#)

[Return to Contents](#)

## JUST FOR FUN

### QUOTES FROM BOOKS

While reading, sometimes I just have to write down something so I can see it often.

#### **Here are some I've saved:**

"I tucked his words away like a piece of candy into my pocket, to take out later and savor."

~Hourglass by Myra McEntire

"They held hands, soaking wet, wearing inflated innertubes around their waists like misplaced halos, leaving water droplets in their wake."

~Skinny by Diana Spelcher

"Of course you may say a few words. My colleagues would be honored. I am naturally too important to feel honored, but I would be mildly amused."

~And Another Thing... by Eoin Colfer

"I am in my own world of misreading people, reaching out to them in an awkward, overplanned way that blows up big-time, then retreating back into my just-me existence, while they go around telling anyone who will listen what a tard I am."

~The Boy Who Couldn't Sleep and Never Had To by D.C. Pierson

"You know that expression, "It hit me like a ton of bricks"? It's true. Guys don't talk about stuff like that. We just lie under the pile of bricks."

~Looking For Alaska by John Green

"Horror Movies never tell you that--about how most of the time when you're faced with the unspeakable, the biggest thing you take away from the experience is the need to find some indoor plumbing."

~Betrayals by Lili St. Crow

I think those were in kind of a reverse order of when I read them. Do you have any fun book quotes you had to keep?

## ONE-UPPING FORTUNE



Paper says: "You have a charming way with words. Tomorrow, write a letter."

I got this fortune in the cookie that came with my Chinese dinner one night. I laughed and replied, "I'll do you one better! I'll write a novel yesterday!" (Yes, I speak to little pieces of paper.) I guess this is sort of like writing a letter too. Am I caught in a reality loop now?

## TIPS FOR WRITERS: GETTING GOOD SLEEP



Sleep is vital for the writing process, but sometimes you just can't manage to drift off!

**Here are some tips by Dr. Phil LaKrahpf**

**Clear your nasal passages.** Stuffy airways can hinder the body from coming to rest. Blow thoroughly and pick out all those boogers to keep that oxygen flowing. If necessary, rub some Vicks Vapo-rub into your nostrils just a little. In a pinch, mint extract will do.

**Clip your toenails.** There are hidden pressure points in the toes that can lead to restlessness and they are activated by long, nasty toenails. Clip them to relieve the pressure.

**Tell someone off.** It's amazing how much easier sleep can be when you've gotten all those pent-up feelings off your chest! Let someone have it and sleep like a baby. If you live alone, you can call someone or even go ballistic in an internet chat room.

**Suck on a pat of butter.** Enzymes in real butter activate Phartotonin, an important sleep chemical that helps in the calming process. If the taste bothers you, try coating it in sugar or some dried Thyme. NOTE: Oleo will not work as a substitute.

**Fold paper cranes.** It is an ancient Japanese insomnia cure! One famous Japanese Insomniac folded 1,000 paper cranes! The act of folding is similar to the feeling of counting sheep or listening to Public Radio.

**Put a drop of Palmolive under your tongue.** Chemicals in the liquid are similar to those found in many sleep aids. Don't use too much!

**Get a spanking.** The smacking of the skin, especially on the buttocks or backs of the legs, stimulates calming hormones in the body. You can spank yourself, but having someone else do it is more effective.

**Laugh for 15 minutes or more.** Life is funny and full of hogwash just like this phony medical advice! Laugh and then fall into a peaceful sleep knowing that despite your daytime stresses, you can still enjoy a good chortle.

*April Fools! This was an April 1st post.*

## WHAT I WANT OUT OF MY TECH: AN AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE



With [Windows 8](#) soon-to-ship, a wise husband asked me what I want out of technology as an author. You know I'll tell you. That's what I do.

**Here's the breakdown of what I want from software and hardware:**

**I don't want to mess around with it. I just want to write.** I don't want to configure and optimize. That's a programmer's job. I want to turn it on and use it to rock my writing. [I don't want more login names and passwords either.](#) I have more than 50 different accounts generated in the past year. Use my Google or my Microsoft information to log me in or whatever. I don't want a newsletter unless you're giving me free stuff and I definitely do not need another web browser toolbar. I don't want to give you my credit card information and my blood type. I want to use the software to do what the software is supposed to do.

**I want touchscreen keyboards I can type on.** I don't mean hunt-and-peck either. I want to type like I do on my laptop keyboard on my tablet. I can't do that now, so I can't use my tablet for writing. If there was a device with adequate storage that I could type on and not have ridiculous miss-types and "b" instead of a space, I would trade in my laptop and tablet for one.

**I want voice-to -text that works.** I don't mean the expensive computer program either. We should be at the point technologically where we can say, "Kate's log" and then say stuff that types out the way we say it, not with embarrassing and ridiculous interpretations either. I read the first few sentences of my book on [Evernote](#) (Sorry, sweetie! I still love you!) and it interpreted it as this: *my name is Colleen Underhill I'm 18 and I have an enormous problems this isn't as it appears on the day of my date kind of problem or even if looking at a biology kind of problems this is this the limit is way bigger than that.* Not bad, but not good and useless for actually writing anything by dictating.

**I want more applications that can switch between my devices and store online.** If you haven't read it before, [I love OneNote](#). But with Microsoft a competitor of Android, I can't see any of my OneNote notes on my Android phone. I'm not going to buy a new phone just so I can use Windows 8 either. Sorry. Programs like Evernote, [My Fitness Pal](#), and other gorgeous applications that I can use on whatever device I am using are godsends. I have to be able to write wherever the spirit moves me, even if that's the bathroom at the mall. Paper and pen is fine if I can keep track of either or keep my kids from taking them. If I can't have one device to rule them all, I'll have one program to use them all.

**I want simpler programs that don't hog my hard drive.** Facebook for Android hogs my phone storage. Sometimes I can't update stuff because Facebook has eaten too much space. (Yes my phone is cheap. Shut up.) Nook ereader software is crazy huge and doesn't seem to work any better than the other ereader software. I just don't bother with it. [Google Chrome](#), on the other hand, is stripped down and darn sexy! Less is more, baby.



## FOR THE LOVE OF THE STORY: WHY I JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH



I just love the stories! I'm not too picky about genre as long as the writing is passable. But why?

**I love looking inside people's heads.** Yes, it's creepy but you know you do too. (And I don't mean the X-rated stuff. That kind of thing is so overdone.) What a person says and does reveals a lot, but what they care enough about to put on paper is something else. The ideas are refined and thought-out, and they are something important. They may not be 100% honest, but they are usually sincere. Some writers don't even write based on their [conscious thoughts!](#)

**People are unique.** Duh, Kate. Of course they are. But...it's fascinating. Nobody will do exactly the same thing as I would in a certain situation, and I want to see what they think they would do in a situation. I compare it to what I would have done and what makes a good story. (Those are often different.) I like fiction, in particular, because it is entirely from the [author's head](#) with maybe just a reference to reality. I can really see the author's point of view from that angle.

**It inspires me.** I think of it as "input" that fuels my "output" of my own writing. There is a mystery balance there that I have to maintain. Hearing others' stories, real or fiction, fuels up my writing batteries for later. I get ideas of things to do and to avoid.

Why do you love stories?

## SEATTLE + COFFEE = LOVE



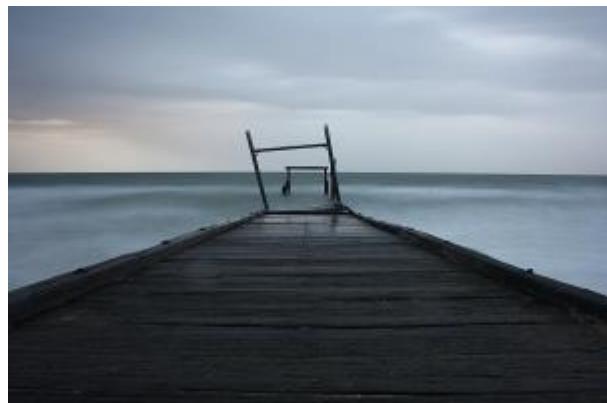
If you don't live here, you really don't get it. Sure, you need your coffee in the morning just like any other responsible adult. But in Seattle there is a special connection with our java that transcends the relationship of people in a lot of other places. We drink it hot, iced, mixed with other stuff, straight-up and super-concentrated, and even diet. Starbucks, Seattle's Best Coffee, Tully's, and lots of other less famous places got their successful start here for a reason. Here's why:



**Rain:** Yes it rains all the time here. Really! All the time. We have cool rain (Spring), warm rain with sun-breaks (Summer), more cool rain (Fall) and stinkin' freezing rain (Winter - sometimes literally freezing). It isn't like rain in other places though. You can walk around for an hour and not get soaked. None of us use umbrellas or wear raincoats unless we are dressed up particularly nicely. We just dry off when we go back inside, where we spend a lot of our time. Coffee warms us up and gives that added burst of energy we don't get from seeing the sun ever.



**Clouds:** If it isn't raining, it's probably still cloudy. But we like it that way. A few sunny days in a row makes for some really cranky Seattleites, and also a fire hazard because of all the dry trees. The clouds block out the UV rays, which makes us pale and in need of extra energy. Any Californian who moves up here suddenly faces SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder, which is depression from lack of sunlight. There are lots of light lamps for that too that sell like hotcakes. The born Seattleites, or born-to-be Seattleites (like me) don't have a problem with it. But again, our coffee supplies the pep that the sun doesn't give.



**Northern Latitude:** Compounding the natural cloudy raininess supplied by the "rainshadow effect" of mountains and ocean, we in Seattle are pretty darn far north. We are farther from the sun than a lot of the world. So, coffee. Seeing a pattern here?



**Microsoft:** OK, it's not just the big M, but that and a whole lot of other companies in Seattle are office-based, cubicle lifestyles. Nintendo, Amazon, Adobe, and many others have flourished in an environment where people would just rather stay inside and mess around with computers rather than going out and getting wet and cold. Don't even talk to me about fluorescent lighting. Ugh! Coffee is warm and comforting, helps you stay awake in front of the one-eyed monster (the PC) and gives you a great excuse to leave your desk and go bother other employees.

So that's why we love it with a special passion up here under our blanket of clouds. What makes coffee special to you?

Here are some great coffee links to waste time with:

<http://www.starbucks.com/> The big fish woman gives us our fix.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/06/worlds-largest-cappuccino\\_n\\_1860838.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/06/worlds-largest-cappuccino_n_1860838.html) I'd be awake for days. No, this wasn't in Seattle, but very little in this new-fangled town is 150 years old.

<http://coffeegeek.com/> Where you can learn how to refine your experience in many ways.

<http://www.coffeeresearch.org/> Gettin' scientific here.

<http://www.ncausa.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=68> And historical. This is really interesting!

## THINGS THAT UPSET AUTHORS

I've finally plugged into a few online author communities. It took me awhile, but I'm part of the conversation now. During my forays, I've noticed that there are some things that really infuriate authors.



**Traditional Publishing:** For some it's not just a preference, it's an ideological cause. They are convinced that traditional publishing is a rip-off, unfair to authors, biased, and illogical. They might be right...  
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidvinjamuri/2012/08/15/publishing-is-broken-were-drowning-in-indie-books-and-thats-a-good-thing/> , <http://daviddfriedman.blogspot.com/2011/11/how-to-destroy-publishing-industry-take.html>

**Self-publishing:** Other authors who have gone the traditional route feel that the flood of self-published authors are an epidemic designed to kill the book industry. You ruin your potential career if you self-publish. You self-publish because you're not good enough for the "real" way. You ruin things for the "real" authors with all your sub-par books. <http://jerrodbalzer.com/self-publishing-bad/> ,  
<http://www.thebookdesigner.com/2011/10/theres-something-odd-about-self-publishing-books/>

**Free ebooks:** Yes, there are a lot of authors out there of both persuasions who firmly believe that free ebooks are ruining their opportunity to be a raging success. I have heard them mitch and boan about free ebooks and how awful they are, and how all authors should just stop it. Y'all know how I feel about free ebooks. What about you? [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/as-demand-for-e-books-soars-libraries-struggle-to-stock-their-virtual-shelves/2012/01/13/gIQAkIOXzP\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/as-demand-for-e-books-soars-libraries-struggle-to-stock-their-virtual-shelves/2012/01/13/gIQAkIOXzP_story.html)

**Paid Book Reviews:** I have to agree with this one. There are people to whom you can pay a fee and they will write a glowing report about your book, whether or not it's any good. Now if you write utter drivel, this is good news. But it doesn't help you to become a better author. There is no shame in writing at the level you can achieve. There is shame in pretending your writing is better than it is.  
<http://www.thebookdesigner.com/2012/08/should-authors-pay-for-book-reviews/> ,

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1333885/Amazons-amateur-book-reviewing-vicious-free-readers-victims.html>

**Spamming:** Another downer I'm totally against is the author spammers. These darlings post about their book everywhere and anywhere they go, pelting you with it like monkey poo. No matter the posted question, completely disregarding the posting rules, they spammity-spam. The grim fact is that they hurt their sales this way. If you authors want to know about my books, I've made sure it's darn easy to find out. If not, then you can enjoy my enthusiastic contributions to the writers' community with no advertising included. I know some of you are going to disagree and include a mention and link to your book...

<http://warriorwriters.wordpress.com/2012/08/15/an-author-platform-built-on-spam-is-doomed-to-fall/> ,  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Long-term\\_abuse/General\\_Tojo/Books](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Long-term_abuse/General_Tojo/Books)

**Trashing Others to Boost Yourself:** Face it, people do it. The thing is that it doesn't help them at all. It's just petty. Don't, OK. Don't. Save it for reality TV. <http://mikecooleystiction.dyndns.org/?p=1264>

**Social Media and Book Sales Sites That Change the Rules:** Whether by straight policy or software changes that edge out what you want displayed, all authors can agree that having your book disappear is frustrating. Nuff said. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidvinjamuri/2012/08/29/how-amazon-quietly-subverts-bestseller-lists-with-kindles-kdp-select/>

**Adverbs:** (Stephen King hates them.) Other writing elements of all kinds get the stinkeye along with "Said bookisms", passive verbs, and all manner of other language. <http://www.screenjunkies.com/movies/actors-directors/5-stephen-king-quotes-every-writer-should-heed/> ,  
<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SaidBookism>

**Whining:** Whatever you dislike, many authors really, really hate when you whine about it.  
<http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2012/02/amazon-will-destroy-you.html>



Are there any things I forgot to list that you hate?

## 15 REASONS TABLET READING IS BETTER



Some of you will turn over in your graves, and you're not even dead yet! I think e-reading is far superior to the old ink and print, and I'm not ashamed to natter on about it.

**1. Instant Access.** I don't have to drag my kids to the bookstore or the library and try to hurry and pick out my book at 87% stress capacity. I don't have to buy one book each for them too and say "no" to the 20 toys each they somehow find even though it's a BOOK store. I don't have to buy a cookie at the Starbucks that seems like the best idea ever when you're alone but like the fourth circle of hell (the one for the greedy) when you have three sugar monsters in tow. I don't have to keep anyone quiet or return anything after a week (after finding it wedged between the couch and the wall after 3 hours of searching). Instant access is big on my list.

**2. My tablet has a clock right on the screen.** I don't have to fumble around to find out how much longer I get to read before bath time or even lift my head. It's right there.

**3. Night mode.** I pretty much use this feature all the time because I live in Seattle in a house with almost no Southern exposure. (Think cave dwelling. All my plants are yellow.) Plus, I can read at night in bed. With a print book I have to turn on a light and hubby will not endure that.

**4. Multiple e-reader platforms = freedom.** This isn't a goofy old e-reader. This is a tablet. I can put Nook, Kindle, Kobo, Aldiko, and the library's reader software on here and read it all, picking the best price online and using the reader that goes with it.

**5. Staying Connected.** Reading a book doesn't mean I go off the grid for an extended amount of time. I can see my emails there.

**6. Saving money.** Yes, I said it! E-reading saves you money. Instead of buying a paperback or driving to the library, you tap your way to another book. The library loans books for free. All the e-reader sites have plenty of free books. If you buy new release copies at \$11 apiece you only need to buy 30 books to add up to a top-of-the-line tablet. I read that many books easy in 6 months, so there you go.

**7. Games.** I have a secret. Don't tell anyone. I sometimes don't want to read. Sometimes I want to play Solitaire, or cut fruit with a sword or, do a crossword puzzle. All those things are on the tablet too. I can look all intellectual and technologically hip while playing Easy Mode Sudoku.

**8. Web Browser.** I can look up words I find curious in an instant without logging on somewhere else or finding a big dusty book (and the dusting I should have done). I can see what this slang from Australia or the Millenial Generation means. I'm getting older and more un-hip as the years past, but I don't have to look like a doofus about slang.

**9. MyFitnessPal.** This needs explanation - weight loss while reading instead of weight gain. My Fitness Pal is a calorie counting database and diary online. I am completely in love with this app and website. It's taken 12 pounds off my book-nerd butt and I can pause in my reading to enter the granola bar I just ate in my food diary whenever I want. I'm going for my goal weight!

**10. The Environment.** I know this is important to some people and some people feel like it's over-preached. Still, e-readers are friendlier to the environment. No trees have to die. No oil necessary in shipping books or driving to the store to get them. There will be no waste in eliminating the book when you're done with it.

**11. Storage.** My bookshelf is the same physical size whether I have 5 books or 50000. You can even add zeroes to that. No book bugs, no dust, no shelves that melt inside after 6 months, sag, and then fall apart when you move them. No wall-space cluttered with bookshelves. No temptation to decorate said bookshelves with cute but pointless knickknacks (ooh! double K!).

**12. Variety.** I can get books from all over the world written by countless people. I'm not limited to the book supplier's choices nestled on the shelves of the bookstore or the library. (Yes, you are limited by the book supplier.)

**13. International Versatility.** As long as I have the little plug adapter thingie and travel to a place with electricity, I can get books in my own language wherever I go. There will be no searching bookstores for a few scattered English copies. There will be no explaining to bookstore owners in my broken excuse for their language what I am looking for. That's because I don't really travel, but it could also be because I have an e-reader and downloaded the book instead.

**14. Emergency Child Distraction.** In case of emergency, my tablet can entertain one or more children. Don't even tell me your 2005 movie edition paperback copy of Pride and Prejudice can do that. While it should only be an emergency resort and under full supervision (which I recently discovered in the screen-crack incident of July 2012) it is an option.

One other reason I'm not going to say because it's a secret. Well, Ok, I just got tired of thinking of reasons, but I wanted 15 instead of 14. I thought it looked better. So this one's a secret. By the time you call me on it I'll probably have thought of number 15. But that doesn't mean I'll tell it to you.

No, your print book doesn't require electricity or crack when it is dropped, but when you spray Dr. Pepper out your nose because the book was so funny, your pages get all wrinkly and stained FOREVER. Mine won't. If my tablet gets ruined, I have a protection plan and can re-download my books instantly for free. Your book is just as sensitive to fire, water, and four-year-olds as my tablet too. In case of global electromagnetic pulse, my tablet will be a hunk of plastic, metal and glass, but I think we'll be more interested in surviving than reading if that happens.



## FINDING YOUR CALLING



What do you want to be when you grow up? How did you get to the place you are now? These are the opposite ends of one of the most important questions in our lives.

Some of us adults tell kids, "Get a good job in accounting and forget about that degree in art. It won't pay the bills." And to some extent, they're right.



Other adults gush, "Reach for your dreams, little one! There is nothing you can't do if you just believe!" And some butterflies fly out from behind their head.



I will tell you a profound truth: both of these people are right and both are also wrong. I'll explain.

You can't tell when you start if your dream of becoming a famous artist won't pay all the bills and your mom's with enough left over to sponsor fifteen children in Ecuador. The odds are against it and you can't ignore that. You also can't tell that your Accounting job will pay the bills. Maybe it won't. (Especially if you hate it and don't do it well.)

Sometimes, you think you know your calling and you really don't. That happened to me. I learned shortly after starting college that I didn't want to become a Psychologist or anything related to that profession. It was a crushing blow that I never bounced back from. I just worked jobs until the time came to stay home with my kids (which was a separate calling). But then, almost twenty years later, another calling appeared. I was unprepared to get a calling at this place in my life, but the writing bug had borrowed into my head and was now reaching maturity. Stupid late-blooming writing bug!



Let me tell you who I think has the ultimate answer. I think the people who know the right way to do it are the people who move with their passion, plunging into the thing they love wholeheartedly. They don't worry about paying the bills. (You can get a random job to pay the bills.) And if their passion doesn't pan out, they jump out of the water like a dolphin and plunge back in again at a different place. The people who live this way have amazing stories to tell. They know a lot and have enjoyed the journey as well as the transition.



Not everybody has passions about jobs. That's what those weird tests are for where they ask you if you'd rather raise chickens, calibrate nuclear machinery, or eradicate dangerous pests. But that doesn't mean you can't plunge in. It's not the love of the job that matters, but the love of the adventure and of expanding your horizons. This is your life. Don't let your bad attitude ruin it for you.

As for me, I had a passion I was completely unaware of. (For those of you who know me this isn't a surprise. Randomly Oblivious is my middle name.) Everything else had to burn off first before I could see it. Being a mom at home all day with the kids God gave me and all their laundry made it impossible for me to spend time with stained glass art, choral music, sewing, gardening, painting, and all the other art forms I loved. The thing was that I still had to read. I trained myself in the fine art of keeping a plot fresh in my head while being interrupted every five minutes in my reading. Also, fiction began to squish out of me. Journals I meant to fill with my actual life got covered in the fiction.

At last hubby bought me a laptop computer. I could pay our bills online and read emails in the same room as the kids with plenty of space to see who hit who over top of the monitor. Now instead of huddling in the back of the house hoping nobody was setting anything on fire, I could monitor my kids and let my fiction out. Did you notice how the passion had to have the right circumstances to bloom?

And now I'm a writer/housewife who does a bad job battling the laundry monster, but writes a lot of fiction, this time forming them into books fit for sale. When the kids grow up, I'll either be a full-time writer (which I prefer) or be a writer/barista or a writer/Lowes employee, or whatever. We'll see.

My advice as an adult who has (finally) found her calling: Reach for your dreams, little one! There is nothing you can't do if you just believe...and also remember to get a good job if those dreams don't pay your bills. And don't listen to those unimaginative people who say you need to have a McMansion and a boat and all that junk. Those only make you happy on the weekends and holidays you don't have to work. It's your life and you should enjoy it in whatever form it becomes.

Did butterflies fly out from behind my head?

## FUN LINKS

<http://oomscholasticblog.com/2012/01/read-fiction-to-succeed.html>

A lovely tirade from one of my favorite actors! (Don't you just think of the Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy while listening to this?) youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7E-aoXLZGY>

When I want to get serious about wasting some time, with no thought of writing or promoting, here's where I go:

[www.lolsnaps.com](http://www.lolsnaps.com)

[www.lolpics.com](http://www.lolpics.com)

[www.eatliver.com](http://www.eatliver.com)

Sometimes you just have to say it with a picture.



MORE BOOKS BY KATE POLICANI:

[Compulsively Writing Fiction: My Experiences in Self-publishing in 2011](#)

[Don't Judge a Book By Its Magic](#)

[The Lustre](#)

[The Disenchanted Pet](#)

[The Amputeddy Series](#)

[The Silver Collar](#)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Policani is a homemaker and compulsive writer from Seattle. She has a wild imagination and an addiction to reading and writing. Her hobby is to explore and analyze all kinds of stories. She uses them like a literary chemistry set to examine a variety ideas and concepts and to fuel her own works. The Science Fiction and Fantasy genres are her favorites because the exciting flights of fancy make a thrilling plot. Every day is filled with the stories of those around us, especially in this information age. It is her passion to discover what stories inspire her and others, and why they inspire. More than 80 stories wait on her hard drive, incubating and developing for future books! What will she come up with next?

Please visit her blog to read more about Kate's self-publishing journey, and find out more about Kate's other books! <http://katepolicani.com>

[Return to Contents](#)