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THE MUSE ON WRITING

Edited by Lea Schizas



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SEGMENT ONE INTRODUCTION

What you will gain from this book:

The *Muse On Writing* is divided into two segments and several chapters, each with its own unique flavoring to inspire you. The first segment contains chapters that will help you hone your manuscript. The second segment contains various chapters with specific genres and information to guide you in your writing career.

As in any undertaking of consequences, a plan of action is needed. These chapters will guide you in various aspects of writing to stimulate your dormant muse and to awe your brain cells in areas of writing you may never have known to incorporate into your writing.

An idea penned to paper is just the beginning, a Genesis to a bigger story to follow. But in order for thoughts, plots, characters and settings to take shape, a writer needs to know some basics. We, *The Muse On Writing* writers, will unravel some writing aspects in a way not presented in other writing books.

This is what the *MuseltUp* Club members will deliver to you, the writer. And what Chapter One is all about.

Lea

CHAPTER ONE

In The Beginning...A Blank Sheet

by Lea Schizas

Everywhere you go, packages of lined paper are sold. These are the toys writers buy. In these modern times, computer papers in various weights have come to the forefront equally important as the stature of paper. So regardless if you use writing paper, computer paper, or a tape recorder, without a storyline, these 'toys' are useless.

As with all stories, we need to start from the beginning. For a compelling pull to your story, the following should be included in the story structure:

- 1-the overall hook
- 2-a few scattered complications/obstacles
- 3-climax
- 4-the final resolution

In *The Muse On Writing*, you will find various chapters to help you hone, perfect, and master your craft using all four points above. The Muse writers will guide you in areas such as:

- Setting and moving your plot forward
- Your writing voice
- Hearing and improving your character's dialogue
- Using outside elements (other cultures, myths, and worlds) to enhance your story
- Using psychological profiles to build around your character
- How the Gaming Industry can help a writer
- The art and descriptive details to form Poetry
- A personal and informative account on Self-Publication and writing Flash Fiction.
- That almighty 'sweat' road of Promotion and Marketing
- The art of Non-fiction writing and areas of submissions.

However, all of the above cannot be utilized unless a writer has something to write about. This is where Chapter one, *In the Beginning*, comes to your aid.

Let's Begin Our Thinking Process

There is no book without a story idea. A story needs a plot, or a hook to captivate your target audience. But more than that, it needs to pass the acceptance test of a publishing house. A writer needs to sit down and contemplate more than an idea for a story. There are several aspects to a book that need tending:

- Who will be your protagonist and antagonist
- Where will the setting be placed
- What will be their storyline and plot
- What genre will it be written in

What I'll do throughout this chapter is offer ideas on each point above to start you writing.

Who Will Be the Protagonist and Antagonist?

Your characters are crucial to your book. Although the plot can sustain itself at times, it is through your characters the reader will be able to experience your story. Why? Because readers can relate to characters, whether human or animal, better than a circumstance, such as a high chasing, horn-tooting car chase thrill. It's the driver's adrenaline behind the wheel that allows readers to connect, not the event. The more a writer can connect a reader to his protagonist, the more interest in what happens to that character develops in the reader.

But how do you develop a character realistically enough to build a bond with a reader? Some writers allow their character to grow as the story develops and others make up a character profile before they begin writing. Some of the things on a character profile can be:

- Male or Female?
- Where was he born?
- Who were his parents? Rich/Poor/Divorced/Abusive/Loving?
- What color are his eyes/hair? Wears glasses? Contact lenses? Bleaches his hair? Wears it military short/hippy long?
- Does he have any siblings? Hate relationship? Bickering? Close bond?
- Is he educated? Smart? Mr. Know-It-All? Athletic? Army specialist? A collector of a sort?
- Does he have a nervous twitch? Any visible scars/characteristics which separates him from the other characters?
- Is he mute or physically handicapped in any way? Short tempered? Gay? Sensitive? Mean spirited? Loves to live dangerously?
- Has he been married? Divorced? Have a girlfriend? Hates women? Is a bumbling fool in front of women? Vendetta against men who abuse women? Vendetta against women who are divorced? Prefers prostitutes?

Here are some ideas to help you further build your character.

Where was your character born:

- At home
- In a cab
- In a small/big city
- On a farm
- In a military base
- In jail

Background:

- Came from a broken home
- Came from a loving home
- Parents were abusive
- Raised by his grandparents/family
- Only child
- Large family

- A happy childhood
- Attended boarding school
- Hates school
- Went to war
- Was a problem in elementary
- Is a loner
- Loves to dance
- High School dropout
- Has a special trade
- High IQ

Bad and Good Characteristics to give him/her:

- Rude
- No regard for peoples' property
- Drug Addict
- Loves to crack his knuckles
- Smokes
- Whines a lot
- Loves to start fires
- Ambitious
- Business Oriented
- Loves to spend money
- Snobby
- Greedy
- A geek
- Romantic type
- Very sick/dying
- Asthmatic
- ESP qualities
- Swears a lot
- Alcoholic
- No Patience
- Loves to argue
- Burps in public
- Suspicious of everyone
- Thief
- Athletic
- Very cheap
- Classy
- A dreamer
- Show off
- Shrewd
- A quitter
- Jealous type
- Has some sort of a phobia
- Pessimist/Optimist

Some Physical Characteristics to give him/her:

- Tall
- Athletic
- Flat/big chested
- Long-legged/short-legged
- Wimpy
- Old/Young looking
- Beady eyes
- Dimples
- Square jaw
- Laugh lines
- Thin/Thick browed
- Wrinkles
- Fat
- Short
- Anorexic
- Lots of hair/bald
- Muscular
- Wide-hipped
- Scarred features
- Beard/Moustache/Clean Shaven
- Full/Thin lips
- High cheekbones
- Crow's feet
- Wide/slanted eyes
- Smooth silky skin
- Lazy

To further add to your character profile, you'll need to know:

- where does he/she live:
mansion/apartment/farm/boat/nursing home/condo/basement/on the street

- does he/she drive:

a car/truck/race car/expensive car/bicycle/motorcycle/sports car/yacht/scooter/an antique car/a jalopy/

- does he/she have a career:

senator/lawyer/accountant/criminal/spy/musician/mechanic/army specialist/magician/pilot/cook/farmer/fireman/pimp/teacher/editor/priest/nun/a writer/social worker/fortune teller/reporter/psychiatrist/warden

After you build a solid profile, you need to name your protagonist. Give him a name suitable for his/her character. A tough, macho man shouldn't be named Sally unless your purpose is to show him bullied in youth and transformed into the Hulk later on in life.

Here's a link to help you generate names for your characters:

<http://www.seventhsanctum.com/index-name.php>

How Dare You!!

How dare I? No, how dare you!! Now I'm at conflict. A character needs a reason to pull the reader into the story. What's his conflict about? Who will play what parts in the book? This is the stage in the game you begin to get a multiple personality and act out all the roles within your book. After all, these are your creative beings, to do what you want with them. They are your puppets on a string.

Let's go back one step to remind you what each of your characters will need in order to stand on their own two feet; to give the illusion of fully-fleshed out human beings. They need their own profiles to distinguish them apart from each other. Having several characters relating in an almost identical manner to each other will only confuse and bore your reader.

Now let me offer you some suggestions for a purpose your protagonist may be searching for:

Protagonist's Goal:

- Wants to vindicate his or someone else's innocence
- In search of a find/treasure/map
- To win a loved one back
- To protect a witness/solve a crime
- To overcome a tragedy
- To reunite his family
- Wants to commit the biggest robbery of the century
- To change the course of history
- To bring down a government
- Seeks revenge
- Needs to pay back a good/bad deed
- To find out who he is/the truth

- He's stuck in a cave and has run out of food. Now what?
- He's barricaded in a hut during a shootout and down to his last bullet.
- All evidence pointing to the killer is destroyed/vanishes.
- Your star witness disappears/dies/changes her story.
- At the point of asking her to marry him, an old flame shows up and causes a stir.
- Your protagonist suddenly realizes one of his friends is ratting him out.

Build your suspense, making sure to overcome each obstacle with a satisfying conclusion. Don't cheat your reader with a simple solution like he takes another route when they (the reader) just read a massive earthquake took place crumbling the whole city like dominoes. Your character will need to foot it from now on and find other ways of making his way through the city. More on moving your plot in Chapter Six by Pamela A. Shirkey, *The Rhinoceros Theory of Plotting*.

Situations and Terminologies To Use

We're not all doctors/lawyers/spies/policemen/athletes to know the lingo that goes with each job description. So to facilitate this area, I've researched several areas and their 'lingo' for you to use in your stories.

Crime Does Pay In Writing

In a lot of books, we have stories involved in robbery, rapes, murders, abductions, and this means some detective/police force will be used along with their slang terminology.

Some characters you may find in crime books are:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| -the coroner (medical examiner) | -the jury |
| -a mole | -the prosecutor |
| -the defense attorney | -accomplices |
| -the judge | -the victim |
| -a psychic | -the criminal |
| -the investigative reporter | -snitches |
| -prison guards | -the witnesses |
| -a warden | -a sketch artist |
| -and the good old boys | -mafia members |

Some interesting activities within crime books may be:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| -Blackmail | -Kidnapping |
| -Rape | -Pornography |
| -Prostitution | -Drug Trafficking |
| -Smuggling | -Terrorism |
| -Sabotage | -and the good old murder theme |

Other helpful Crime Info:

- M.O.=modus operandi—meaning in plain English ‘motive’.
- Drug Enforcement Agency
- Private Investigator
- Highway Patrol
- The Secret Service
- U.S. Coast Guard
- Department of Justice
- Department of Defense
- Antiterrorist Unit
- Internal Affairs
- Special Weapons Assault Team=SWAT (a favorite to use when you have a hostage situation).
- Safe House= an unknown location to many in the department where witnesses and prisoners are kept under security for their own protection
- A sleeper is a spy who goes about his normal everyday routine until he is summoned to duty.

Some interesting scenarios as ideas are:

- A worldwide spy organization is after one particular retired agent for information he doesn't even know he possesses.
- A family's life is turned upside down when an escaped convict invades their home.
- A police officer is under investigation for something he knows his superiors have pointed the finger at him to take the heat off of them.
- An overly ambitious person climbing the corporate ladder takes on some drastic measures to get a new position. Could be murder/blackmail.
- A trip to the grocery store turns into a nightmare for one housewife when she discovers a man in her backseat.

Don't be afraid to use your imagination. Some wonderful ideas can be had from your local newspaper, as well. Scan the news, jot down some info interesting enough to use for a future book, then wield that creative mind into building it into something larger than life. In the newspaper, information as to particular organizations, court cases, crimes of passion/kidnappings/ransom can be quite useful to use. You will pick up terminology used in certain circumstances to help you authenticate your story in whatever genre you are writing.

Your World Is Under Attack!

This can only mean the sci-fi genre, naturally. Some helpful items and terms to use in your story are:

- | | | |
|-------------|----------------|---------------------|
| -aliens | -asteroids | -holographic images |
| -time warps | -energy fields | -black holes |

- scanners
- shuttle craft
- force fields
- capsules
- clones/androids
- holographs

Don't forget about the gravity force in your world.

-Are there new forms of computers? Do they provide a new type of service to your worldly citizens? Are your citizens humanlike? More on this will be covered in Chapter Nine: World Building by Charles Mossop.

-What sort of crafts are they flying? Are they flying at all?

Your plot can be:

- Discovering a new hidden world
- need to locate to another planet before the present one explodes
- an attack from another species or opposing government

Sci-fi themes can also be in the present and now world.

-doctors experimenting on human subjects then murdering them for body parts.

Think of movies such as:

-The Hulk - experiment gone array

-Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde- another experiment plotline mingled with some horror.

Sci-fi books need not be only about other worlds as the two above examples show.

I Can't Watch!

Ever get those goosebumps that not only stand your hair right up but also go deep into the pit of your stomach, clenching your insides so tight you can actually feel your heart beating? That's what a good horror/suspense book/movie can do for you.

In a good horror book, there are so many elements you can incorporate into your story:

- elements of terror
- suspense
- devil worshipping
- occult dealings
- violence/killings
- dream states

Some past characters that have been used in horror stories have been:

- Dracula/vampires
- Bigfoot
- Monsters/werewolf/swamp monster
- Aliens
- Birds/Hitchcock's The Birds
- Zombies -witches and warlocks

just to name a few of several characters used throughout time, several times over.

If using any of the above examples, come up with a new twist. And one thing to remember that's been tried over again and with no real success is a vampire book where Dracula is given a transfusion and he becomes human again. Nope. Don't even try that one. Come up with something original. Ann Rice is a good author to read. Stephen King

is another horror/suspense writer. Although I find his books slow in the beginning because he goes into detail to establish a connection with his reader to his characters, by the middle, King has absorbed you into the plot, prodding you to continue to find out what's going to happen.

The previous paragraph was all about developing your own writing voice. More on this in Chapter Two: Writer's Voice – Who's Got One? By Kathe Gogolewski.

Hauntings/Cults/ESP are just three other areas for story ideas that can be used over and over again, using a different theme for each book. For example:

Hauntings:

-A lover returns from the grave to protect his one true love from the one who killed him. (GHOST) This story involves some romance, comedy relief and some suspenseful moments.

-A dead maniac rises to wreak havoc on those who visit the area he died in. (FRIDAY THE 13TH) A lot of knife wielding, shock effect scenarios.

If you're stuck for an idea, all you need to do is reread an old favorite of yours, or watch one of the old horror flicks then think how you can do it differently. What character can be altered to give them a more terrifying profile? What changes can you write to switch the ending to a more satisfying or horrific conclusion?

A Last Idea Generator

I hope some of my suggestions above have helped you to build a storyline. If not, here's one more exercise to generate story themes.

Take a look around you. It doesn't matter where you are. Look straight ahead and spot three solid things.

Let's pretend you were sitting in your backyard. Items spotted:

1-a tree

2-neighbour raking the lawn

3-a swimming pool

Now we'll use the 'what if' factor:

-what if the tree you were mowing around had a strange marking on it?

1-Where did it come from? Who placed it there? What did it mean?

2-What if the neighbor you've known for several years turned around and started to attack you with the rake? What set him off? Does he blame you for something?

3-What if your spouse was swimming in the pool, and a sudden flash of light blinded you for a second? Your spouse has disappeared, where he/she was swimming just a second ago. Where did he disappear? What and where did this flash of light come from?

As you can see, ordinary items around us can be used by implementing the ‘what if’ factor. Using this method, there should never be an absence of ideas to come your way.

Putting It All Together

Creating the perfect character is not an easy task. One thing to remember is not to give all of his descriptive details in one shot. Use your imagination. Although it is easier to say “John, with his black eyes and hair, stood amongst the rest in the group. His muscular arms flexed while his five foot ten inches height shook with anger.” In this example, I am doing a lot of telling and not enough showing. A reader needs to envision the surroundings as though he himself were standing in John’s shoes. One way of doing this is to use all five senses scattered throughout. Don’t forget, in real life we do smell our surroundings, we hear the birds chirping, we see the destruction before us, we taste the burnt food, and we can feel our lover’s embrace.

Writers have the power to cast magical embraces and imagination in their readers. Storytelling has been around as far back as the cavemen. Yes, you read right. What do you think those symbols and hieroglyphics were all about? To tell the reader some sort of a tale, a tale of their time. Nowadays, writers use their imagination and build new worlds to tell their stories from.

Read the lessons presented to you in each of the chapters that follow. Each writer has weaved his or her own magic to demonstrate how you can hone and improve your own writing.

Your story is your portrait. Brush each stroke one at a time onto your canvass until the finished painting is the one you want to project. Then stand back and allow everyone the pleasure of its meaning.

Will you be the turtle who sticks his head into his shell? Then I’m sorry. Your tales will never be read.

Will you be the turtle who sticks his head up high and slowly crawls to your destination? Then I salute you. Your stories will be enjoyed by many.

AUTHOR’S BIO: Lea Schizas is founder of The MuseItUp Club, <http://museitupclub.tripod.com/> and co-founder of Apollo’s Lyre, <http://www.apollos-lyre.com> both Writer’s Digest 101 Best Writing Sites and recipients of several Preditors and Editors Awards.

She is the author of the Young Adult Fantasy Novel [The Rock of Realm](#) published by Star Publish. The Rock of Realm will be a series of adventures and quests to entertain all ages.

Lea lives in Canada with her husband and five children. They have been an inspiration to her, filling her imagination with stories to tell.

The Muse On Writing is a valuable addition to your writing career. Each chapter goes into great detail, as you've seen in Chapter One, to offer you a better understanding what is needed to complete a book from beginning to end.

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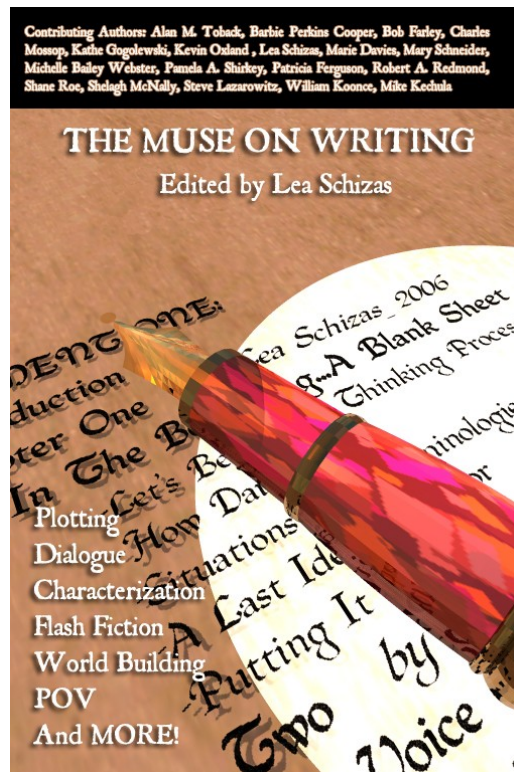
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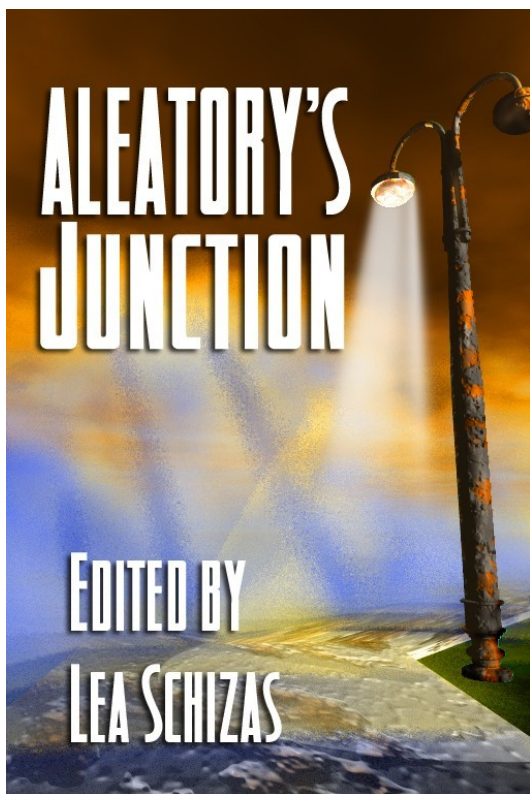
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Aleatory, a small town waiting just for you!

Seventeen stories from seventeen prolific writers waiting to entertain you.

About the Book

Aleatory, a little town resting not too far from Salem, waits for passerbys to mesmerize them with its hospitality.

Yet Aleatory holds a secret, one that will put all who traipse by at a junction...of uncertainty.

This secret is told in snippets by Jenna Josephine Aleatory throughout the book. Her tale explains the magic contained in the right fork at Aleatory's Junction.

You'll meet Margrit, a woman on a mission to rid the voice in her head...

Kevin who feels life has struck him down until he reaches that right fork...

Zach, who wishes his mother would treat him like a man...until a grave mishap occurs...

Nathan, the little boy with unusal foresight and knowledge...

Miss Peachtree, a teacher who has lost her way...

and many more stories, each with its own chilling conclusion.

In everyday life we face dilemmas, obstacles, and situations where a decision needs to be made. Whether we choose the right or wrong path, only time will tell. In Aleatory, the residents are used to strange occurrences, to newcomers traveling through but never returning. But for these newcomers, Aleatory's Junction will prove to be more than just a fork in a corner out of town. For some, it will mean an ultimate life changing euphoria. And for others...well...let's just say a mirror of who they really are.