

# DEAD TO WRITES

A Malice in Memphis Newsletter # January 2017

Letter from Prez...

Happy 2017! I'm excited for another year of Malice in Memphis as we join together with the common goal of educating ourselves on the craft of writing and work toward the goal of publication for all. Our members range from poets, journalists, teachers, technical writers, to housewives and retiree's - all who are creators of great fiction. We have all levels of writers with an assortment of interests with no limits!

Join us in 2017 for the following programming:

January 14 - Brainstorming Session

Written yourself into a corner? Plot problems? Characters misbehaving?

Come loaded with your questions or problems and the group will help sort them out.

February 11 - Web Design for Writers

Join Marketing Specialist and Malice Member Lynn Maples as he walks us through the process of building a website, provides examples of what works/what doesn't and resources that will come in handy once the Under Construction sign goes up.

March 11 - Formatting 101

Come learn how to format your shorts or novels for submission from creating headers to fonts, margins, spacing, indention and much more.

April 8 - Special Guest Tony Kail

Malice will host special guest, **Tony Kail**, author of *A Secret History of Memphis, Hoodoo: Rootworkers, Conjurers & Spirituals* to be released February 20, 2017.

Please check out our website at: <http://www.maliceinmemphis.com/>

Also go give our Facebook page a LIKE as well at:

<https://www.facebook.com/MaliceinMemphis/>

I look forward to seeing everyone Saturday, January 14 at 10 am as we kick off the new year!

**Kristi Bradley, President**

**Malice in Memphis Writer's Group**

***Don't forget to pay your dues this month. \$24.00 for the year.***

**PAY NO ATTENTION  
TO  
My Browsing History**

***I'm A Writer  
Not a Serial Killer***

## WRITING TIP:

Have you ever been writing along and can't remember if your character had blue eyes or brown, or was your character's hair short and brown or long and blond. It happens to the best. As a writer you need to be consistent. Having to go back to check on descriptions is time consuming. That's where a characterization sheet or book comes in handy. For those writing series a book that lists the characters by story is best. You can have the main characters in a section, with story characters listed separately in order of when they entered the "picture". You can use the first page as an index page that lists the titles for easy reference. Leave a blank between each story and after you've written the story list the characters in that story. It makes finding a character's description a lot easier.

Happy Writing

Barbara Christopher

Hello,

What are your goals for your writing in 2017? Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Try something new. You could try writing in a different genre (e.g., fantasy, mystery, romance, memoir, poetry), or writing about a very different kind of character or topic. Come up with a challenge that excites you.
- 2) Read for inspiration. Read the kind of thing you want to write, novels or poetry or short stories. Read books that will remind you of the magic of wonderful writing, how it can create new worlds and new ways of seeing. Read books that make you want to write something just as wonderful. And then write it.
- 3) Be fearless. Be bold. Allow yourself to experiment, to make mistakes. That's how you'll grow as a writer. Remember that you don't have to show what you write to anyone else until and unless you're ready. Take advantage of that privacy, and write what you truly want to write.
- 4) Call yourself a writer. You don't have to tell other people you're a writer if you don't want to, but say it to yourself. Remember that you don't need anyone's permission to write. There's no test you have to pass. You become a writer by writing.
- 5) Treat your writing as important. Is writing your dream, your passion? Then give it the priority in your life that it deserves. Organize other things around your writing, instead of vice-versa.

6) Have fun. Let yourself get absorbed by the words, by the world you're creating on the page. Let writing be an escape, a pleasure. Play. If you enjoy writing something, others are likely to enjoy reading it.

7) Live the life you want. The only way to achieve your dreams is through action. The longer you wait, the more time slips away from you. Take small steps, one at a time, but in the direction of where you want to go. This is your life. Decide how you want to spend it, and start now.

All the best,

Nancy

Creative Writing Now

<http://www.creative-writing-now.com>

### **UPCOMING BOOK SIGNINGS:**

#### **STEVE BRADSHAW**

Jan 10 @ 6:30 pm Booksellers of Laurelwood,

Feb 24 @ 5:30 pm The Book Juggler downtown.

I'm a member of many different writing lists and online writing groups. I receive a lot of emails about writing. Some for writing novels, short stories or screenplays. I will include some in the newsletters. I will always put a link to the list or website to give the originator credit so that others can go check it out and maybe sign up for it. I am putting this in as a disclaimer so that I don't get in trouble with the creators of said lists, groups or websites. I only do this to share the wisdom of other writers so that we can all benefit. Also so I don't get into any legal trouble. If any of the people request that I cease and desist, please understand I will comply with their request. Thank you. Juanita Houston

# The Three Habits of Successful Writers

Written by Caitlin Jans | December 19, 2016

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Many writers have one or two of the following habits, but it is very rare to find writers that do all three of these things regularly, unless you are looking at a shelf at a bookstore or library. Almost all of the authors whose work is on that shelf, at some point in their life did all three of these things habitually. Once you are established as a writer the third habit becomes less important, but until then it is the most vital habit and the one most commonly overlooked.

## 1. Write

The way you define yourself as a writer is that you write every time you have a free minute. If you didn't behave that way you would never do anything.

—John Irving

Write a short story every week. It's not possible to write 52 bad short stories in a row.

—Ray Bradbury

Don't write to become famous or to make a lot of money. Write because you love it. Write because not writing for more than a few days feels like you have abandoned a puppy in a mineshaft. Save the puppy.

— Joe Beernink

Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working.

—Pablo Picasso

I'm writing a first draft and reminding myself that I'm simply shoveling sand into a box so that later I can build castles.

— Shannon Hale

It might seem obvious or redundant that being a writer requires one to write a lot. But many people who call themselves writers rarely write. I know one writer who spends about four hours a year writing creatively. Many of the writers I know wait for inspiration.

If you are going to become a professional writer it involves writing regularly. Even when you do not feel like writing.

When I was younger I waited for inspiration, but the more serious I got about producing work the more regularly I wrote. And the more regularly I wrote the more regularly I produced work worth reading. That is really what it comes down to. Good writers produce work worth reading. Hopefully a lot of it.

Would the Harry Potter series would have worked if J.K. Rowling waited for inspiration? No, she would probably still be on book one.

Writing, if you are serious about it, is a lot like every other job. You have to commit a lot of time to it. You sometimes have to write a lot of rubbish to get to the good stuff, but that is OK, like Shannon Hale says, sometimes early drafts are all about shoveling sand.

If you are protesting right now that you don't have time to write, I hear you. I have a baby, a full time job, and at first I really struggled to find the time to write.

But I found a way, mostly by giving up all TV and the occasional social gathering. And I am really glad I did. If you want to work on intentionally adding more writing time to your life, these three articles are really worth the read: [How to Make Time For Focused Writing](#), [How to Develop Good Writing Habits](#), and [The Six Month Novel Writing Plan](#).

## **2. Edit**

No one cares about your first draft.

– Neil Gaiman

Going back and editing is the best part of writing; it's like reading an interactive novel. 'Oh I wish the author used this word here or had this dramatic reveal there...oh that's right! I am the author!'

–Mabel E. Wetherbee

I wish I felt like Mable E. Wetherbee about editing, but frankly I (and many other authors) don't enjoy editing. I have discovered, over time, that if I type slower and copy edit a little as I go, I am left with a product that while not yet finished is awfully close. It allows me to focus

on any changes I have to make on the content itself, rather than the spelling and the grammar (although hard as I try, there are always mistakes).

I take different approaches to editing a poem, an article, or a novel. Each genre requires different editing techniques. For example, when I edit poems my focus is on concision, I try to remove any line or word or punctuation mark that is not vital, so that I am able to convey my idea without any extra words. When I edit my own articles, I focus on how clearly I am making my point.

When I edit a novel I edit for different aspects each time. For example one editing round could focus entirely on continuity, another on characters.

No matter how you do it, editing takes focused time outside of writing and it also takes perspective. I do not know any writers that can do all of the editing right away. They need to take a break of at least a week, then return to the work on it after a period of time.

The following articles are very helpful ways to get started, if you struggle making editing part of your writing practice: [Editing Exercise: Length Play](#), [Five Free and Cheap Editing Options](#), and [Three Steps to Take Before Publishing Your Manuscript](#).

### **3. Submit**

Editors never buy manuscripts that are left on the closet shelf at home.  
– John W. Campbell

I figured out that I had to write regularly when I was 18.

I figured out that I needed to spend most of my time editing when I was 19.

I was 24 when I figured out that those two steps were insufficient.

No one was going to break into my house, steal my manuscript, publish it, and send me royalty checks.

I had to start submitting for myself, and I had to be serious about it and I had to know what I was doing. This took time. I figured out how to submit my work to literary journals first.

This was good in some ways because the stakes are a lot lower. If a literary journal publishes one of your poems poorly, it is frustrating, but no great loss. It is just one small piece of writing. If a publisher takes the rights to your novel and messes up, there are much greater consequences.

Unfortunately after I had such a degree of success I didn't pursue publishing a manuscript for over four years, as if somehow now that my work was out in the world that would be enough for a publisher or an agent to track me down.

That has worked for some fiction writers (Elizabeth Gilbert's agent found her after Esquire published one of her short stories), but for the majority of writers that is not how it works. So finally in the last three years I have started to submit regularly to manuscript publishers as well as literary journals.

I submit regularly. At least once a week I submit to a few literary journals and a few manuscript publishers. I have my manuscript out to four publishers at all times. I have various poems and stories out to at least 30 literary journals at once. While I have yet to publish a book, I have published a rather large amount of poems in anthologies and literary journals. So even though my whole book of poems has yet to be published you can find my poems in a number of anthologies at brick and mortar bookstores.

When you first start submitting make a clear number-based goal regarding how many submissions you want to keep out at a time, and then stick to it. When you receive a rejection, send a submission out. Make sure your work is always being considered in the world. Of course, in order for this to happen you have to be writing all the time. In order for your work to be taken seriously it has to be edited and polished.

For further reading, the following articles might be very helpful for you: [Three Things I Wish I Knew Before Submitting to Literary Journals](#), [Good Literary Journals for Unpublished Authors](#), [How to start Submitting Your Work To Literary Journals](#), and [How to Submit Your Manuscript](#).

## **In Conclusion**

Writing is all about balance, as long as you continue to do all three things, you will be published. But it is a lot of hard work, a lot of commitment, and a great deal of time. Stay focused. I know you can do this.

# Why Writing Short Stories Can Make You A Better Writer

Often people believe they should only stick to one form of writing. Simply keep to one and try to perfect their craft. If you are a novelist, then you should only write novels, a poet, only poems, a comic strip writer only comics (you get the picture).

However, a huge number of the most successful writers have achieved that success in many different areas. Playwrights become novelists; tv sitcom writers turn to fiction writing, those who have written autobiographies or academic books turn to poems and script writing.

Experimenting with different types of writing helps you to become a better writer. For aspiring novelists, I believe that none does this better than the humble short story.

Let's take a look at some of the key elements that should be included in all good novels.

A tight plot

Lots of action

Characters we care about straight away

An ending that brings resolution and evokes a strong reaction in the reader (it could be satisfaction, it could be frustration, sadness, horror, joy and so on).

How do we get good at perfecting all these elements? We practice.

As I, and no doubt many other writing advice writers have noted, time and time again, writing is a skill, it can be learned, it can be taught. It needs dedication and passion (OK and sometimes a little bit of luck) to get good at it, and to become successful.

What better way of practicing your writing skills than writing short stories?

Writing short stories demands you to really think about each and every word, that you are succinct and smart, that you write naturally, and engagingly, that every character has presence and purpose.

Short stories also help you to become a better editor too. By going over each and every short story you write, you'll soon become eagle-eyed, not just for general mistakes but plot inconsistencies, language that doesn't 'sit right' and points where your story goes awry.

Remember that writing short stories can help you in more ways than one. Besides forcing you to write neat plots, come up with engaging characters and pack tons of explosive action into a very restricted amount of words, they can also inspire you and give you ideas for your larger projects too.

There is also no reason why your short stories should only serve as a way of helping your novels and perfecting your craft. You could easily send these off to publishers and magazines to see if they would be interested in publishing them. If they do, you can build up a readership and when you come to launch your novel you'll already have an army of fans who admire your work, eager to buy whatever you come out with next!

If you find yourself always writing short stories on a similar theme, you could pull these together and make them into a book of their own.

At the very least upload your short stories to your author website and share them on your social media channels as a way of giving your readers regular content and building up an audience.

Short stories really are a brilliant, fun and useful way to help you become a better writer. So next time you want to work on your creative, writing and editing skills why not give writing a short story a try and see how you get on?

### ***Writing prompts:***

He pulled against the ropes with all his might, but they wouldn't give.

"Don't bother," a voice said.

He looked up to discover a thin girl bound with the same rope. Although it was dark, he could see her bruised eyes and bloodied wrists.

"I already tried."

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When she pulled into the driveway she noticed the door was ajar.

She wasn't scared until she saw the blood on the handle.

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"I wouldn't do that if I were you. Ghosts hate McDonald's."

## **SHOWING EMOTION**

Make body language unique to the character. Do they lift themselves up in their shoes as they stand and wait? Do they run a finger along the seamline of their jeans when deep in thought? Creative emotional mannerisms help characters leap off the page.

### **QUESTION OF THE MONTH**

It's a secret to everyone.

What is the one secret your Antagonist has been hiding? Write a scene where they discover that this secret is known by...someone close to them.

*From Pinterest.*