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5 simple steps to creating flesh-and-blood characters Page 38

the **Writer**

December 2006

**YOUNG-ADULT
NOVELS**

Innovative ways
to write stories
that teens want
to read Page 42

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**5 EXERCISES to push your writing
to the next level:**

Keep your characters real • Move the story
along with dialogue • Use setting to tell part of
the story • Create compelling scenes • Establish
a strong point of view Page 30



JODI PICOULT
**On writing tough,
compelling fiction**

"I start with the 'What if?' question—what
if this were to happen? ... The idea broadens
in scope, until it's not just about one narrow,
little 'What if?' question, but a bigger, more
universal moral question." Page 20

LEARN plot
tricks from
an old master:
Shakespeare Page 24

Mystery writing
How to develop
satisfying sleuths
and villains Page 13

Freelancing
EASY MONEY
FROM REPRINTS
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more paychecks—from your
finished articles Page 46

Playwriting
HOW TO bring a historical
person to life on stage Page 26

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“It’s a crazy business, anyway, locking yourself in a room and inventing conversations, no way for a grown-up to behave.”

—John Leonard, in *Esquire* (November 1975)

30 YEARS AGO

When a story loses its spark

I AM STILL A wary initiate in the land of the novel. I have published three, written six, and had at least 15 die on me. How do I know they are dead? When they no longer engage my mind, in all its changes and turnings, over a long period. How long? Oh, about six weeks to three months. How

many pages wasted (if anything is ever wasted in this profession)? From 60 to 250 pages.

How do I know, how can I be sure I am onto a living novel? When it and its characters possess the same capabilities for growth and change as I myself. Otherwise, they

languish by the wayside, their stories cease to engage me, I no longer lie awake thinking about them in the night, imagining their lives feverishly, sometimes even with the feeling that I am completing a sacred duty.

—From an article by Gail Godwin in *The Writer*, December 1976

1854, would become one of the most influential books in American literary history. The land upon which Thoreau built his cabin was owned, not coincidentally, by his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson. All four of these Concord greats were buried in Concord’s Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

Another small town with a huge literary heritage is Oxford. Home of the University of Mississippi, Oxford was also home to one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century, William Faulkner, who based his famous, fictional Yoknapatawpha County on Oxford and its environs. Faulkner’s home, Rowan Oak, remains open as a museum run by the university. Bestselling novelist John Grisham today owns a house in Oxford, and novelists Barry Hannah and Donna Tartt also have strong connections to the town.

In a town known for its writers, it should come as no surprise that Oxford’s mayor, Richard Howorth, also owns a bookstore, Square Books, not far from Faulkner’s home.

A final literary gold mine is Iowa City, home of the nation’s oldest and most famous creative writing program, the University of Iowa Writers’ Work-

shop (established in 1936). So far, 17 Pulitzer Prize winners have either taught or studied there, including John Irving, Wallace Stegner, Jane Smiley and Michael Cunningham. Many of today’s most ambitious young novelists and poets continue to make their way through Iowa City, preparing to move up to the major leagues of contemporary literature.

Perhaps the crowded sandlots of San Pedro de Macoris aren’t so far removed from the classrooms of Iowa City or the streets of Concord and Oxford. Small places can produce big talents.

—Chuck Leddy

Five more reasons to love your iPod

IF YOU THINK an iPod is only for listening to your favorite music and watching the latest videos, then you need to read further to find out how this entertainment gadget can be a useful tool for a writer on the move.

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For Web links to instructions for many of these tips, go to *The Writer* Web site and click on Online Extra.

“The only impeccable writers are those who never wrote.”

—British essayist William Hazlitt in *Table Talk* (1821-1822)

WRITER EVENTS

Conferences

CENTRAL OHIO WRITERS OF LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN Columbus, Ohio, Jan. 27. Since 1997, the conference has invited members of the wider community to participate in quality educational programming for children's writing. **Contact:** Jim Mengel, 933 Hamlet St., Columbus, OH 43201. 614-291-8644. cowriters@mail.com. www.sjms.net.

CREATIVITY WORKSHOP NEW YORK New York City, Dec. 8-11. An excursion into the imagination, and how to keep it alive. Each day the workshop concentrates on exploring various tools to help nurture creativity and stimulate curiosity and exploration. **Contact:** Shelley Berc, 245 E. 40th St., Ste. 25H, New York, NY 10016. 866-217-1980. questions@creativityworkshop.com. www.creativityworkshop.com.

NYC '06 PITCH-AND-SHOP CONFERENCE New York City, Dec. 14-17. A unique opportunity for writers with manuscripts or works in progress to meet and pitch top acquisitions editors. **Contact:** Algonkian Writer Workshops, 2020 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Ste. 443, Washington, DC 20006. 800-250-8290. algonkian@webdelsol.com. <http://nycpitchconference.com>.

PROGROFF INTENSIVE JOURNAL PROGRAM Milwaukee, Dec. 1-2. Experience a nationally recognized process to further your writing and creativity, and learn a tool for self-development. Workshops to boost creativity and beat writer's block. **Contact:** Jonathan Progroff, 799 E. Broadway, Ste. 410, New York, NY 10003. 800-221-5844. info@intensivejournal.org. www.intensivejournal.org/index.php?refer=5148.

Contests

ANNIE DILLARD AWARD FOR NONFICTION Open to previously unpublished essays on any topic and in any style, up to 8,000 words. **Submission period:** Dec. 1-March 15. **Entry fee:** \$15 for first entry; \$10 for each additional entry. **Prizes:** \$1,000 and publication. **Contact:** *Bellingham Review*, MS-9053, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225. www.wvu.edu/~bhreview.

DAVID DORNSTEIN MEMORIAL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST FOR YOUNG WRITERS Offered annually to authors ages 18-35. Submit original, previously unpublished short stories, up to 5,000 words, on a Jewish theme or topic. **Deadline:** Dec. 31. **Prizes:** \$700, \$200, \$100 and publication. **Contact:** Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, 520 8th Ave., Fl. 2, North Tower, New York, NY 10018. 212-268-4210. cajery@caje.org. www.caje.org.

DRURY UNIVERSITY PLAYWRITING CONTEST Open to original, previously unproduced one-act plays. **Deadline:** Dec. 1. **Prizes:** \$300, \$150 honorable mentions and possible production by Open Eye Theatre. **Contact:** Mick Sokol, 900 N. Benton Ave., Springfield, MO 65802. 417-873-6821. msokol@drury.edu.

SYDNEY TAYLOR MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION Open to writers with no previously published fiction credits. Submit book-length mss of 64-200 pages. Stories must have a positive Jewish focus, universal appeal and be appropriate for readers ages 8-11. **Deadline:** Dec. 31. **Prize:** \$1,000. **Contact:** Rachel Glasser, Assn. of Jewish Libraries, 315 Maitland Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666. rkglasser@aol.com. www.jewishlibraries.org.

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—Logan Kugler

Top crime writers examine real-life crimes in new series

A NEW PRIME-TIME TV series, *America's Crime Writers: Murder They Wrote*, is showing on Court TV. Each episode features a bestselling author taking the audience through a true crime story that captivated him or her. The featured authors are Michael Connelly, James Ellroy, Faye Kellerman, Jonathan Kellerman and Lisa Scottoline. The series premiered Monday, Nov. 13.

—Beth Bakkum



Connelly



Ellroy



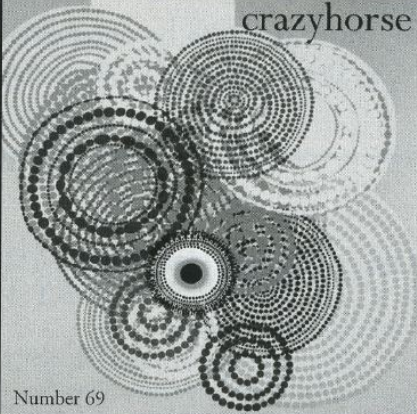
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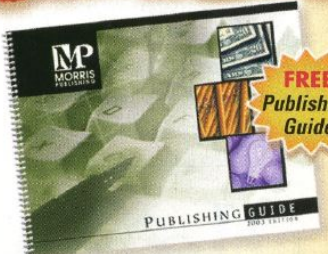
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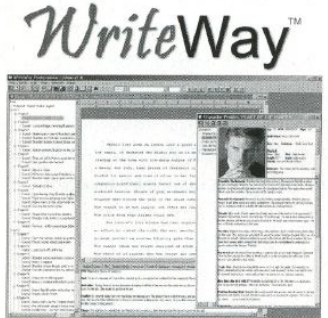


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