



Live Your Writing Dream

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2011

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I hope the new year has started off with a bang for you and your writing.

I look forward to an exciting year of learning, meeting new writers, and trying out new ventures.

During the coming year, I will be sharing some thoughts about what makes a story great from some different perspectives... The first article is on page 2, **The BIG PICTURE—Moving Toward STORY.**

I have a newly added workshop coming up in May 2011 (see page 3), and working on my workshop and class schedules for 2012.

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Visit my website for information about upcoming workshops and classes (link on page 3).

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Please feel free to forward this newsletter in its entirety to others.

Best wishes!

June

Starting with Character Introduction

Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed.

—James Joyce, *Ulysses*

You can choose to begin your story with a unique character that will engage the reader. If possible have the character involved in some type of activity or make some statement that will draw in your reader.

Dr. Weiss, at forty, knew that her life had been ruined by literature.

—Anita Brookneck, *The Debut*

It was the day my grandmother exploded.

—Iain M. Banks, *The Crow Road*

If you use a character analysis or characterization that is more telling than showing, move quickly to something that is more

active or you may lose the interest of the reader.

When using a character opening, the opening sentence must perform double duty: introduce that character, but in such a way that the reader is intrigued.

I was born twice; first, as a baby girl, on a remarkable smogless Detroit day in January of 1960, and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974.

—Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*

Granted: I am an inmate of a mental hospital; my keeper is watching me, he never lets me out of his sight; there's a peephole in the door, and my keeper's eye is the shade of brown that can never see through a blue-eyed type like me.

—Gunter Grass, *The Tin Drum* (translated by Ralph Manheim)

Think about what's unusual about your character or about something related to that character.

She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in, but he kept her unconscionably, and there were moments at which she showed herself, in the glass over the mantel, a face positively pain with the irritation that had brought her to the point of going away without sight of him.

—Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove*

Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that.

—Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

Story Ideas - Where Do They Come From?

The answer is: anywhere and everywhere.

Q: Now, wait a minute, if story ideas are everywhere, how can I recognize one? I've looked and looked, but I don't see them.

Simple: The idea will be something that catches your interest.

Be open to possibilities. Ask yourself: What if?

Remember that new item about people stuck on the highway for nine hours during a ice storm? Let's see.... What if a trapped driver is eight and half months pregnant? What if a person just picked up a pizza to take home to

his children? What if a teenager with a dead cell phone is going to lose his privilege to drive if he doesn't get home by 11 pm?

Photos, artwork, music, dialog heard while walking in the mall...anything might lead to the story idea, if you're listening and watching.

The BIG PICTURE—Moving Toward STORY

I've been working to wrap my brain around how all the craft elements—dialog, setting, description, point of view, character, plot—work with story structure to make for a great story.

When the emotional aspects of the story reach out and touch the reader, the writer connects the character with the reader in a way that speaks to the reader through the experiences of that character.

All of this helps to create STORY. The other element is story structure. This is, basically, the foundation on which the craft elements and the emotional content of the story is built.

The image that came to me was the tree.

Imagine that a single craft element is a lone tree standing in the middle of a meadow. What happens with a mighty wind sweeps over the meadow? The tree might be dam-

“The image that came to me was the tree.”

aged or falls down. None of the craft elements, working as stand-alone trees, are strong enough to carry off a story.

What if we move all the lone craft element trees into a forest? Here, they have the support of all the surrounding trees. These trees are better equipped to handle that mighty wind.

But that's not the end of the story, so to speak. What's the foundation upon which the craft element trees are based? The earth is that foundation for the trees, much like story structure is the foundation on which the individual craft elements thrive.

Do we now have a story that will stand the waves of time? No, not yet. Besides the individual craft element trees and the earth foundation of the story structure, we need to notice that the branches of

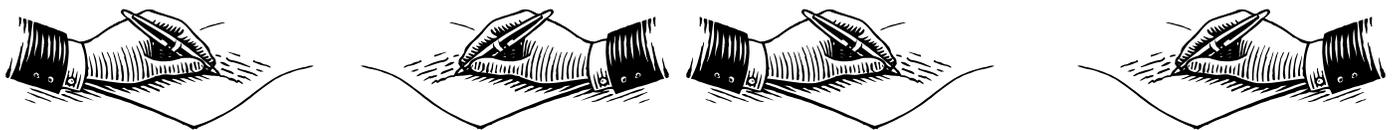
the craft element trees mingle with each other. They weave above the ground, branches and leaves dancing in the breeze around and through each other.

This is the BIG PICTURE: Story is the weaving of the various craft elements together, supported by a story structure, and emotional content that moves from writer, to character, to the reader.

The study of the individual craft elements WILL help a writer improve, but don't fool yourself into thinking that the information will push you over the top in terms of creating a great story and getting it published. This is but one tree, a small corner of the picture.

Keep learning. Study craft elements, wrap your mind around story structure, and work to provide your readers the emotional experiences that make STORY come alive.

“Story is the weaving of various craft elements together, supported by a story structure, and emotional content that moves from writer, to character, to the reader.”



Right Brain, Left Brain?

Typically we think of right brain activities as being creative and intuitive in nature and left brain activities as the logical, rational side of our brains. Which half is the writer more likely to use? And when?

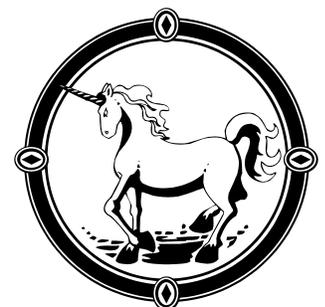
When I'm writing a draft of a short story or novel, I use my right brain and when I'm working on revision,

I use more of my left brain to analyze what I need to fix.

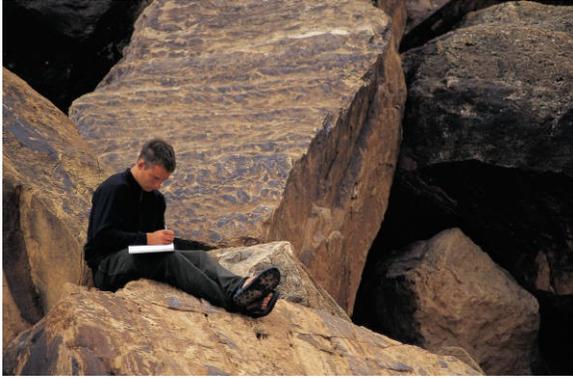
When writing fiction I don't plan the events in a story or sketch out characters. I don't outline. I write. Then I write some more. I do all this with the intuitive right side of my brain. Writers who do plan a story are also using the left brain in their process.

However, when I write nonfiction I usually start out with a table of contents and sketch topics for each chapter or section of the book. After I feel comfortable with the table of contents, I begin writing.

So the answer: Make use of both your creative and logical abilities in your writing.



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**Supporting fiction writers past
obstacles on the way to
publication**

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Upcoming Workshops and Classes

January 24, 2011—Your Fantasy
Novel—Start to Finish in One
Year with P June Diehl

February 2011—Generating
Story Ideas & Choosing the
Best

March 2011—Discovering
Your Writing Process

April 2011—The Truth Be-
yond Writers Block

May 2011—Make It Horror!

June 2011—Building a Success-
ful Submission Package

July 2011—Nonverbal Com-
munication for Writers

For information on workshops
that I'm teaching at Savvy Au-
thors and other workshops,
go to:

[http://www.savvyauthors.com/
vb/workshoplist.php](http://www.savvyauthors.com/vb/workshoplist.php)

For the class I'm teaching be-
ginning January 24, go to:

[http://www.savvyauthors.com/
vb/content.php?342-Your-
Fantasy-Novel-Start-to-Finish-
in-One-Year-with-P-June-Diehl](http://www.savvyauthors.com/vb/content.php?342-Your-Fantasy-Novel-Start-to-Finish-in-One-Year-with-P-June-Diehl)



I also post a craft-related blog,
A Novel Approach with P June
Diehl, at Savvy Authors once a
month. You can find it here:

[http://www.savvyauthors.com/
vb/content.php?144-A-Novel-
Approach-with-June-Diehl](http://www.savvyauthors.com/vb/content.php?144-A-Novel-Approach-with-June-Diehl)

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