

THE SAVVY SCRIBBLER

A WORTHWHILE READ FOR WORLDLY WORDSMITHS OF HITHER & THITHER

WRITERS REVEAL STUPENDOUS COMPENDIUM OF TELLTALE TIPS

WRITER'S BLOCK, AN OFFENDER STILL AT LARGE! HOW TO PROTECT AGAINST THIS FATAL PHANTASM AFFECTING WRITERS OF PAST & PRESENT!!!

By GENEVIEVE SMITH

Special to THE SAVVY SCRIBBLER

SAULT STE MARIE, MI — Upon the publication of her 1967 best-selling debut novel *The Outsiders*, author S.E. Hinton found herself within the treacherous grasps of Writer's Block. The result was an involuntary three-year sabbatical from her craft. However did she combat this frightful 1,095-day hiatus?

Simple. It was through the enforcement of a strict two pages per day policy — before going out to do anything, she was determined to write a full two pages of fiction. In time, it was these daily two-page installments which amounted to her subsequent novel *That Was Then, This is Now*. Jack London (author of *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*) advised a similar approach, remarking that inspiration

was an item to be sought out “with a club.”

The gist? Writing is much like any other talent, and must be honed the same way that we play sports or instruments — that is, with tenacity and dedicated practice.

Establish a set schedule:

Even if you're feeling more inclined to loaf and lounge in place of writing, the only way to be a writer is, well, to write. While it can be daunting, having a daily writing time or a word/page quota can help manage writer's block and prevent a relapse. It may not always sound like pure nectar of the imagination,

but the most important thing is to get the story out on paper. Remember that writing is a process (no published story was ever a first draft), and all the blunders and uncertainties can be worked out in later revisions.

Begin to carry a journal:

Some days, inspiration is plentiful, and some days it just plays hard to get. Be prepared for its every whim by carrying a journal and writing utensil so you can capture your creative bursts and breakthroughs, as well as record tidbits of your day that have story potential. ★

KNOWING YOUR CHARACTERS *The Importance of a Colorful Cast*

Without a strong set of characterizations, a story is essentially as flat as the two-dimensional page it's written on. A strong narrator can of course help to temper this tragedy; however, even a world-class poker player is at the mercy of the hand they are dealt. Voice, thoughts, hobbies, and personal histories are all details that enliven characters and make them more real to the readers. Here are a few prompts to help you explore your cast:

Garbology: List the things you'd find in your main character's

garbage can at the end of the night and say *why* these items are there.

Personal Correspondence:

Write letters from one character to another to define relationships, and journal entries to solidify character voice, traits, and plot events.

Character Descriptions:

At the start of plays, there is often a brief description listing key features of the cast. Write descriptions of your characters including appearance, occupations, hobbies, musical preferences, interests, family ties, and so on, to figure everybody out. ★

Lake Superior State University
Short Story Prize
for High School Students
COMING SOON!!!

Lake Superior State University's fourth annual “High School Short Story Prize” is opening on December 1st, 2017. This year's theme is historical fiction, and we're looking for your best work of 5,000 words or less! For further information, and guidelines for submission, visit our website at bcrossing.org/lssu-short-story-prize/! ★

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DICTION & FICTION

"Diction" is a craft term used to describe the writer's choice of words. In addition to actually telling the story, words have a nuanced power to both convey character and evoke feeling. To be specific is very important for a writer, as it allows readers to experience a more vivid picture of the story as they read. Consider the many variants of the word "happy," for example, each with their subtle differences: "joyful," "euphoric," "content," "blissful," and "tickled." Although their dictionary definitions may be the same, these words have subtle differences in meaning (associations with certain situations, feelings, etc.) that color the way they're interpreted. Taking the time to choose precise words not only enhances the sound of your story with sharp specifics, but also helps the reader to get a more accurate image in their mind as well.

Your diction can also help to create a strong setting for your story, especially if it takes place in another time. See the segment below for a smattering of slang past to inspire historical pieces.

Them's Writin' Words! A Little Look at the Absurd Words of Bygone Decades

1920s/1930s: **Sheikh:** an incredibly attractive man. **Ish Kabibble:** Who cares? **Jazz baby:** a chic, young woman keen on jazz and dancing. **Zozzled:** utterly drunk. **Hotsy-Totsy:** perfect, wonderful. **The fuzz:** the cops. **Speakeasy:** a place where liquor is illegally sold. **Go chase yourself:** Get out of here! **Now you're on the trolley!** Now you've got it right!

HEAD-ON REVISIONS: PREPARE FOR IMPACT!!!

Since it's called "writing," it's easy to overlook just how crucial the revision process is to the very act of writing a story. There's a tremendous amount of satisfaction in completing a new story, and after spending many gruelling hours at work, it's hard to think of going through the whole thing again with a critical eye to seek out flaws. However, many professional writers will concur that this very process is a crucial factor in writing a good story. Here's a few expert tips from Michael Kardos to help even the most renegade of revisers:

1. Take some time away from your story. When you've spent so much time with one story, you can become almost immune to it -- so familiar that you miss even the small errors of missing articles and those pesky spell check-approved mishaps. When you finish a story, give yourself a break and put it away for a time, giving your mind a chance to work out lingering questions. When you revisit your story after a few days (or weeks), you'll be pleasantly surprised at the fresh perspective that is provided

1940s: **Fuddy-Duddy:** someone who's old-fashioned. **Ducky Shincracker:** exceptional dancer. **Khaki Wacky:** a woman fond of men in uniform. **Bupkis:** nothing. **Sitting in the hot seat:** in a very awkward situation. **Victory gardens:** small economy herb and vegetable gardens kept in WWII.

1950s: **Ginchy:** really good. **Grody:** gross, messy. **Hep:** "with it", cool. **Like Wow:** Like crazy. **And How!** added for emphasis. **Flick:** movie. **Sock Hop:** a dance. **-ville:** added to words to describe places/situations (i.e. "coolsville"). **On Cloud 9:** really happy.

by a little time off.

2. Workshop. There's a reason the famed "writing workshop" is critical to collegiate writing programs. Having your peers and colleagues look at your writing helps you to see your story from another's perspective and gives you a front row seat as to how your story is received and understood by a broad audience. It's important to be open during workshop. Although you obviously can't write everyone's favorite story, if people are coming to you with questions on your work, it's a good idea to value their feedback in revisions.

3. Save each draft. Each time you make major adjustments to a story, save it as a new file. This way, you still have an original copy if you decide to reintroduce some former excerpts, and the idea of revision is likely to be less daunting when you don't feel that grave sense of loss.

4. Read it aloud. It's easy for our minds to fill in little gaps when we're reading to ourselves. Reading a story aloud can help us catch little details and fix rhythmical kerfuffles. ★

1960s: **Groovy:** cool/excellent. **'Nam:** abbreviation for Vietnam. **A drag:** a very boring something or someone. **A gas:** something that is very fun/exciting. **Flower child:** a hippie. **Blitzed:** drunk. **Scene:** an event/thing ("Not my scene"). **Fab:** fabulous. **Grotty:** grotesque. **Far out:** wonderful/cool.

1970s: **Jinkies:** "Oh my goodness!" **Catch ya on the flipside!** See ya later! **Psyched:** excited. **Right on:** I agree. **Mellow out:** to chill out. **Psychedelic:** Awesome. **Radical:** neat. **Stone Fox:** attractive guy. **Can you dig it?** Do you understand? **Get down/Boogie:** dance. ★