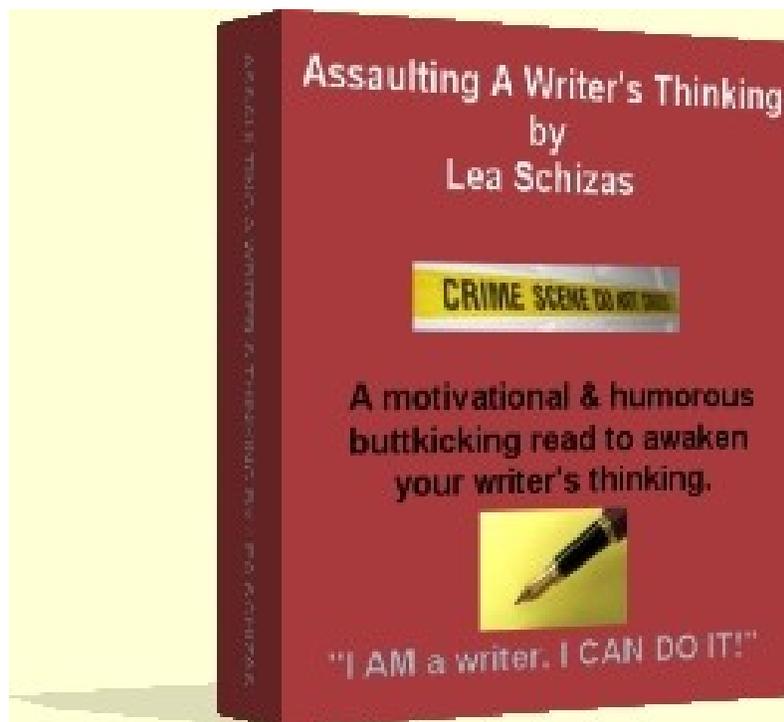


Assaulting A Writer's Thinking by Lea Schizas



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By

Lea Schizas©2006

The MuseItUp Club

<http://museitupclub.tripod.com>

"To be a writer means to know the hard road you face before you"

-Lea Schizas

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DEDICATION

I want to thank every single person in my family who tries to tiptoe around me when I'm typing away like a madwoman, answering emails, setting up websites, writing my own stuff. I know it's hard to be quiet and I greatly appreciate it.

Now close the door behind you and leave me alone. Mom's busy.

Lea Schizas



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Note: *This ebook is not intended to offend anyone but to actually wake up some writers who feel there is no one out there to listen to them or help them. I'm here...now...and until my email box disappears.* – Lea Schizas

FOREWORD

One thing I hate is when I'm sitting by my laptop...

staring at my screen...

...hoping words will jump into my blocked writing brain...

...wishing everyone around me talking can be muted out.

Well, perfect settings to write are not always there so you need to deal with it, period!

This ebook is a motivational butt kicking adventure where I will add humor to realistic situations you, as a writer, may find yourself in. Along the way, I am sure you'll learn a thing or two to help tighten your writing and your career. If not, then I'll refund your money. Oh wait...this is a FREE ebook.

Lea Schizas

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Introduction

Who Is Lea? Who Cares?

Before you begin reading I think it's fair to give you a bit of info on who I am and my goal with this ebook.

My name is Lea Schizas, mommy of five children and I began writing when I was still in my own mommy's womb, mistaking the umbilical cord as a neat writing instrument.

My 'real' writing career came about one day while in a bookstore. I picked up a Writer's Digest magazine, entered one of their contests, didn't win but something more important happened. I finally woke up from my 23-year self-induced coma of taking care of everyone else and began to write once again. Within two months I wrote my first screenplay followed with several writing goals I wanted to accomplish since my Muse juices were all blended into my system now.

This happened in 2000. The reason I am telling you this is to allow you a moment to reflect back when your own calling to write came about. Hold on to that feeling because throughout your writing career you will experience a rollercoaster of ups and downs, perhaps causing you at one point or another to feel the necessity to quit. It will be this reflection of the past that may help you continue as a writer.

Unless you are making money from your writing, don't quit your day job. Many do, unfortunately, believing once the book is over and done with the green dough will begin floating in. But how are you going to write that book if you're tossed out of your home, when the electricity is shut off, when your fingers near the frostbite stage after the heating has been switched off...okay, I'm a writer and love to embellish.

But I've moved away from the subject of this section...me! It's not as much as 'who' I am but more importantly why I am writing this ebook- because I care. When I first started my career I came along such writers who didn't share information, who looked at you as though you were going to steal their ideas, who were too afraid to offer you links they possessed in case you got the writing gig over them. I vowed I would never ever be like them. This ebook is offered out of love for the craft and for your writing career. I want to make sure you fully understand what it means to be a writer, to help exorcize some of the negative forces you will encounter.

My name is Lea Schizas, and I'd like to be one of the writers who will help you through your writing career.

CHAPTER ONE

I Am Who I Am - A Writer

Let's begin with a simple question: Why do you write?

Knowing the answer to this will help you fight the negative forces that are surely to come, such as:

“Oh, you're a writer? Like, are you famous? You get a lot of money for writing? Where can I buy your book? Oh, you're self-published. POD? Is that like a book club or a big publishing house? No? Oh, I get it. You're *trying* to be a writer.”

Sound aggravatingly familiar? If not, soon enough you will get one of these comments pop at you at any time so knowing why you write will ease your response...and your nerves.

“I write because I love to write and would love to earn my living as a writer. I do not have high hopes of becoming the next Stephen King or Nora Roberts but the possibility of making it is there and I will try my hardest to achieve it.” *This* is the response I give. It tells the curious person in-between the lines that when I *do* make it I *will* remember your sarcasm and doubt in me and won't answer the door when you 'come knocking' disguised as my best friend.

Do you write thinking your first novel being penned right now will make you rich? Oh my! You do, don't you! Look at me, well, pretend, now shake your head left and right when I ask this again: Do you write thinking your first novel penned right now will make you filthy rich? That's what I thought.

Having high expectations is grand, we all have them. These are called dreams and dreams are meant to be achieved with hard work. BUT, being realistic will help you detour the disappointments with each rejection letter coming in, with each critique suggesting more and more changes to your manuscript, with reviews going to the opposite side of 'good'.

Perhaps you just may be one of the lucky ones who *will* make it big with your first novel, and it's happened to a few select writers. However, truly believing it and wishing it are two different things. Believing it will cause you heartache in the end if it doesn't happen. Wishing it will cause you to work a bit harder. That is the difference between believing and wishing.

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Some writers write for personal therapeutic reasons. They have no grandeur of being published. Are they considered writers?

Some writers write for their immediate family, concocting chapbooks filled with recipes or poetry. Are they considered writers?

What defines a writer? I am sure many of you have your own opinion but seeing how this is my ebook I will give you my opinion for you to agree or disagree with me. Either way, I welcome your input by emailing me at: museitupeditor@yahoo.ca and I'll make sure to include your comments in one of my future ebooks.

To me there are only two types of writers:

The above I mentioned and the ones who seek publication along with the fame and wealth are 'true writers'. (Note: wealth and fame are the toppings to the cake. They don't always come but if you do your homework and promote and market yourself you will be surprised one day with a nice big fat royalty check.)

The ones who write, shove their manuscript in their desk drawer, complain they are not cut out to be a writer, find every excuse in the book not to write, brag and brag yet never produce anything...these are 'wannabe writers'. To be honest, perhaps they should be considered writers with the creative excuses they come up with.

Two simple classifications in my book.

Getting published is not the only factor to brand you a 'writer'. If you have the passion and the strive to get that manuscript finished and subbed to the hundreds and hundreds of publishing houses out there, then you are a writer and achieving publication is simply an added award to your name.

This whole book will contain two important words every writer MUST possess:

DETERMINATION & PERSEVERANCE

So be warned, they'll be popping out at you when you least expect them.

"Asking questions helps you in the long run. Shying away from questions stagnates your process." - Lea Schizas

CHAPTER TWO

I've Searched But I Can't Find Ideas

Were you looking in any particular drawer for a story idea? No? Hmmm...

The funny thing is you're probably waiting for me to crack a joke right now but that won't happen because ideas can be found anywhere and everywhere, even in drawers.

Don't believe me? Well, here goes:

- 1- What's in that drawer? Have you been watching someone at work, at home, at your friend's home, unlocking and placing something inside then immediately locking it again? Why? Do they have a drawer disorder?
- 2- Who does the drawer belong to? Did you discover a locked drawer in the attic of the new house you just bought? Curious as to what's inside? Scared to find out?
- 3- Are you searching for something in particular? Was there rumor floating around that grandma has taken you off the will? Hmm...curious to find out if that's true or not?
- 4- What if you opened up the drawer and there was a note addressed to your spouse? Would you open it? What would it contain?
- 5- What if you opened up the drawer and there was a tiny person in there, and I mean REAL tiny. Where did they come from? What do they want? Why the heck is he/she in your drawer to begin with? Who put them there?

As you can see, from one simple drawer you can allow your imagination to go overboard and have fun with it. You need to open up to new possible and far out story situations at times to find one on a more serious note. For example:

Number 1-3 above each can have an element of mystery to them. That drawer could hold the key to an investigation. Or perhaps the detective is the one hiding some evidence in there to protect someone. What about poor old grandma? Did you discover a plot that someone was preparing to off grandma and point the finger at you?

Don't be lazy. Use that awesome writer's imaginative brain of yours and toy around with questions, silly as they may be, something will strike your fancy sooner or later.

Stuck again? Go back to your childhood and answer some of these questions:

- 1- What was I most afraid of as a child?
- 2- What stories did I like to read?
- 3- Who were my friends back then?
- 4- What was my experience at school?
- 5- What did I want to be when I grew up?
- 6- Who were my favorite and worse teachers?
- 7- Who did I hate and why?
- 8- Did I have any idols?
- 9- Did I fantasize about my future? What did I foresee?
- 10- How has my childhood neighborhood changed?

Bringing back fond, or perhaps not so fond, memories of your childhood will spark a story or at least a memoir/essay to write and submit somewhere.

Again? Okay...go outside and sit at the park or in the front of your house and do nothing but observe your surroundings. Oh yeah, make sure to have a pen and notebook for this exercise:

- 1- What color is the sky?
- 2- How do the clouds appear to you? Do they have any shapes? Are they dark? Light?
- 3- Is there a wind? Does the wind have a particular sound as it whizzes by you? Do you get goose-bumps when it touches you? What is the wind forecasting?
- 4- Are there any animals around you? Are they making any noises? Where are they? What are they doing?
- 5- Are there people nearby? How are they standing? What is their body language telling you? Are their arms flinging around in the air giving you the impression they are angry? Do any of them have accents? Do they speak with a shrill, high-pitched voice? Baritone? Describe their physical appearances.

Now, I won't do all of your homework for you so you can forget about that, but these are just some things to jot down and remember so when you *are* writing about the outdoors one day you will have on hand something to bring back that day's memories on your surroundings and the descriptive details you noted.

Okay, okay, just one more then I need to go on to Chapter 3.

The old and trusted 'What if' factor:

Look straight ahead...yes, now...what do you see? Now ask yourself three questions on this object. For example, I see a vase with flowers in it, so my three questions would be:

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- 1- What if these flowers were meant for someone else?
- 2- What if I returned them and realized they were meant for my roommate but it was my boyfriend who sent them to her...anonymously.
- 3- What if my girlfriend went missing?

From a simple vase we now have created a multitude of scenarios to enhance and embellish some more.

With DETERMINATION and PERSEVERANCE you will find a storyline to work with. Give up and you risk losing an opportunity to gain new characters, new worlds, new situations for your readers to enjoy. After all, there are so many readers out there with different tastes you need to add spice and toppings every so often and offer them something unique and totally in your own writing voice.

Now go open up that drawer and find your storyline.

“There are as many stories as there are ideas in your head. You just need to put them down on paper.” - Lea Schizas

CHAPTER THREE

Heck NO! I'm Not Changing a Thing!

So I was helpful and you found a storyline. Great! What? You're finished? You wrote the whole thing? Well kudos to you. That's more than some wannabe writers ever accomplish in their writing 'careers'.

What's the next step before you consider this a 'finished' product, besides your own editing? Get a few extra eyes who know what they're looking for and have them critique it. Yes, mom and dad love you and probably would love your story but the question is: do they have the writer's edge knowing what to look for? I didn't think so. Excuse me? Sure, ask your best friend to read it since he's been your 'best' friend since elementary school and he supports you in everything you do. But is that what you want? Someone to support you and offer praise? If so, you're doomed... doomed I say.

This is the area all writers must develop a thick skin: to be totally open to critiques and not be offended. I have seen and witnessed many writers who either dropped out of a critique session because of one bad critique, who defended their piece to death, or came back and wrote, "Heck no! I'm not changing a thing!" Um...why did you join a critique group then?

BAD CRITIQUES:

Yes, I'll be the first to admit there are writers out there who are takers and not sharers. They take your critique but don't fully share one with you. Then you have those who are smart-alecks and want to show off their knowledge and do nothing more than a line by line edit on missing commas. Gee, thanks.

But by far the critique writers I have come across have a slight sarcastic undertone, who pick at every little thing, who question you on every single passage, who force you to take a look at your character because they feel there's something missing, who hate your setting, who make a point to highlight in red all the show and tell areas in your story. And you know what? THESE are the ones I welcome to take a look at my piece any time. Why? Because they take the time to offer you their opinion on what they feel are areas that could be honed from a reader's and a writer's point of view.

One thing you must understand and acknowledge is that you join a critique community or ask for a critique for a reason, to better your manuscript to up its chance of publication.

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What you take from a critique is up to you but you MUST have an open mind and not be offended by what you read (unless of course you are dealing with a complete moron who has no manners and writes things like "You sure you want to be a writer?", "This totally sucks", "I don't get this. What the hell was this all about? This is garbage"). These writers do not deserve your aggravation. These writers don't deserve to be yelled at. What these writers need is a diplomatic writer to turn around, thank them for their critique and move on. If the moderator does their job like they're supposed to, these types of writers will soon enough find their membership deleted...unless they own the site then run...Run...RUN...RUN!!!

Another smart move on your part would be to make sure you get someone who has an idea about the genre you're writing in. Now picture this:

You ask your best friend who is an amazing writer to take a look at your manuscript. You've explained to them you write erotic romance and they're all excited to read something out of their own genre. Hip Hip Wrong!!

"So, Stacy, what do you think?"

"Um..."(note the hesitation in their voice- not a good sign)

"It's okay, I'm a big girl, just let me have it."

"I found you used way too much sex and romance."

"Stacy, it's an erotic romance book."

"Yeah, I know, but did you have to use those words? Couldn't you use 'his thing' or just have them get to know one another first before they jumped right into bed?"

You see, folks, Stacy is a children's writer and was very eager to help out her friend but had no clue what elements are contained in such a genre. Therefore, this type of a critique partner does you absolutely no good. You need to find a person or group who writes in your genre or even a reader who reads in that genre to give you their honest impression on your book. They may not be able to help edit it for you but their honest opinions do count for something because they are 'knowledgeable' in that genre.

Do a Google search for 'writers critique groups' then go over each one until you connect with one you believe you'd like to try. Anyway, it's not as if you're signing a contract to commit to them for the rest of your life. You can divorce them if they don't meet your expectations. One great critique community I highly recommend is the MuseItUp Club. <http://museitupclub.tripod.com> Okay, okay, so I own the site, so? It still makes it a great community of writers and if you don't believe me, just hop on over to the site and have a look.

Phew! Chapter three is done.

"I've never come across a critique I hated. Perhaps I've raised an eyebrow or two but hated? Never. I simply ignored the ones not to my liking." - Lea Schizas

CHAPTER FOUR

I Sub Once A Year!

So you sub once a year. Well congrats. By the time you're a hundred and one some editor out there may actually respond to you and accept something. Now by then, they may have come up with some sort of new technology that will allow you to actually read as you did in your younger days, say like when you were fifty?

I can hear a few of you saying, "But I write novels and that takes time." This I totally understand, however, taking a break here and there to write shorter pieces of work to begin branding yourself as a writer is a smart move. Don't place all your pens in the same pen holder. You know what I mean.

What do I mean? Okay, let's say:

Your book is an historical fiction based in a specific country. To have written such a novel means you must have done some sort of research either for a certain time period, a historical character/architecture, or on that particular country itself. Dish that info out from that second desk drawer, in that blue duo-tang right under the heavy dictionary above it. Right in that folder you have a short non-fiction piece to write and submit to various online or print magazines. Perhaps one aimed at a travel magazine to showcase a country's historical past and accompany an article they may have on the present state of affairs there.

Now let's assume you're writing a children's book, a middle grader to be precise. Look at the underlying theme you are trying to tell the child. Is it about fear? Is it about making friends? Watching out for bullies? What? Turn around now and write either a nonfiction article on this topic or write another shorter fiction piece highlighting only this topic. If you've got more than one subject in your book, hey, that's great. That means you'll have a busload of articles and new shorter stories to write.

Why the big deal in subbing? You want to build your media kit, you want to have credits to show when you finally *do* submit that one book you've been writing all these years. Editors nowadays will take you more seriously if you show them you've been actively writing and submitting. Don't ask me why, it just impresses them. It's similar to getting a loan from a bank: you need to have money for them to give you money. Go figure.

From these articles and shorter stories, you begin to gather a readership, those who will recognize your name and be in the front line to buy your book when it comes out.

This is why it's important to begin churning those extras, besides your novel, to begin the promotional part in your career.

There are hundreds if not thousands of online ezines and newsletters to submit to along with the print magazines. Again, do a Google search for 'writers newsletters/ezines' and you'll be amazed at what comes up.

“My mom once told me I am the person I am because of who I am. Now, I still don't get it but I am developing the person I want to be and that's what I learned from my dear mom.” - Lea Schizas

CHAPTER FIVE

“Hello? Hi, my na...sure, I'll hold.”

Ah, technology, ya gotta love it. We now have the option of pressing anywhere from one to a zillion buttons before, and *if*, we get to speak to a ‘real’ person. And just when you thought you had their exclusive and undying attention, they place you on hold. Oh well, no one said advancing in this century was going to be easy, just the way no one said being a writer was a breeze.

So let's break down our telephone dialogue in the title:

“Hello?”

What a simple greeting yet one so many writers are afraid of. It's called ‘cold calling’ bookstores to try and place your book on their bookshelves, or editors to find updates on your sub from ten years ago, or to arrange a meeting with an agent who promised to call you right back...a year ago.

I have to admit I used to be afraid of the ‘Hello?’ scenario, too, until last year. Don't ask me why last year and not two or three years ago. I believe last year is when I finally sat myself down and had a talk with ‘me’, mind you, making sure at all times the curtains were closed so the neighbors wouldn't call the loony bin and lock me up.

Last year was my euphoria, my writing ‘climax’ where I finally took my whole being as a writer and *felt* like a ‘writer’, from head to toe. How does this feel? Confidant, sure of what I want, wanting to succeed, wanting to get my good name out there, realizing that editors and agents are people just like me, not any better just people I need...

“Hello?...Hi, my name is Lea Schizas and I'm an award-winning author and editor.”

“Hi, my na...”

Do you feel as though you're being bounced left and right and not heading anywhere? Ever wonder why that's so? Could it be something you're *not* doing? Maybe it's something you *are* doing?

NOT DOING:

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Maybe you're not being really clear to everyone that between so and so a time you are writing and will not pick up the phone.

Maybe you're not understanding the above rule yourself and find yourself spending more time in the laundry room or with the vacuum in tow.

Maybe you haven't read all that there is on the various ways to get published nowadays and that's why you're not subbing. You may be confused.

Maybe you're listening to too many 'experts', like me. Think for yourself. You know what you want to achieve and that's to get published. So start thinking for yourself and stop listening to others. In the same breath, however, just to play devil's advocate here, listening to sound advice and making up your own mind is what you should be doing to enhance your career. Confused yet?

WHAT YOU'RE DOING:

Maybe you're just worried about rejections. Rejections are a part of a writer's life and the sooner you realize this the quicker this fear will leave you. Think of rejections as a good thing as hard or as silly as this may sound. Having a rejection come in means you are a **determined** writer who is diligently sending out subs. So take a minute right now and totally congratulate yourself for this accomplishment. It's more than what wannabe writers do.

Read those rejections carefully. Are there personal notes from the Editor in charge? I can tell you that personal notes aren't usually had, so for this Editor to have taken his/her time and jot something down to you means a lot. You just have to decipher what that 'lot' is.

Maybe you are just being too hard on yourself. Some writers don't get published as quickly as others. Keep plugging away. Your time will come but in the meantime, go over your manuscript to see if you've missed some points to strengthen and give it more oomph.

Maybe you're just not writing often enough. Although it's been said a schedule is good to keep to, perhaps you're just one of those writers who works better without a schedule. Make sure to jot something down everyday. Whether it's a word, a paragraph or a whole chapter, that's not as important as having written something down each day and make yourself feel accomplished. The more accomplished you feel the more words will flow out of you. Be confident. You can do it.

Maybe you're just stuck because you're always wearing your editor's hat and not allowing the writer in you to finish that story. Get it down, typos and all, and then worry about editing once the whole thing has 'The End' in place.

“Sure, I'll hold.”

Let me ask you...what are you holding back for? For whom are you holding back from? Is your conscious telling you you're moving too fast in your career? Is this a race? No! Move as quickly or as slowly as you feel necessary. Don't push yourself to exhaustion. Just have realistic goals. And every writer should have goals.

My goals when I first started writing again was to get my name out there, to have a book published, to start my own newsletter and website, all within five years. I achieved this within four years and that just boosted my ego to get more things done. I realized I could do it.

But each goal was realistic. I did not say five books within a year, get a Pulitzer, nor was I pushing myself. I worked constantly at promoting myself by writing articles and short stories and subbing them. Yes, most were to free ezines but that didn't matter, not to me at least. I would rather have readers reading my stuff in the beginning and getting to know me than having them collect dust. Once my career was off and running, I began to pick and choose where I sent my stuff. And all of those published articles were sent to Article Banks to be picked up by other ezines and used.

Why you ask? Because they contain my bio and my links and this brings me extra traffic and readers to my sites. And what's the name of the game? Promotion and marketing of oneself as a writer. DETERMINATION!

So don't hold back. Get your writing name out there. Start today.

“If I listened to others in the beginning on how I wasn't going to cut it as a writer, then I would have been giving up something that is very dear to me – my own self-worth and what I believe and feel I can or cannot do.” - Lea Schizas

CHAPTER SIX

Oops. I did it again

No, this chapter has nothing to do with Brittany Spears' song. Mistakes are a part of life and we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves. But when you continuously make the same mistake, well, there's something wrong there.

GOALS:

I spoke to you about the importance of setting goals. So what's keeping you from jotting down your goals? It's not a New Year's resolution to go to the gym and lose weight. This is your career we're talking about. Start thinking of writing as your business. If you don't take care of your business don't expect the neighbor to do it for you.

Start branding yourself like my dear friend Carolyn Howard-Johnson keeps preaching. *You* are the only one who knows who you are so make sure others, like your present and future readers, know all about you.

How? Have you written a book? Do you have a website? Do you send out a newsletter? Then place these links and info in your email signature. I can't believe how many writers out there don't take advantage of this FREE promotional and marketing element.

Get yourself business cards with your name, email address, and a link back to your site or book's website. Promote yourself. Don't be shy.

REJECTIONS:

Get over it and move on.

CONTRACTS:

Got stuck with a publishing contract you hate? Were you so excited that someone was eager to give you a contract you just signed it without having a second pair of eyes, like a contract lawyer, look it over? Bad, real bad. First rule of thumb for writers, make sure to read every single word in a contract before you sign on that dotted line. Last thing you need is to sign away your life's work without realizing it.

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CRITIQUES:

Are you bouncing back and forth from one critique group to another? Why? Take a minute and honestly answer if it's because you simply haven't found the right group for you or perhaps you are too close to your writing and not looking at the comments objectively. No one says you need to take every criticism that comes your way, but if more than one person pinpoints a certain passage, then look at their comments and critiques and try to figure out what they are trying to tell you.

As the writer you have the choice to choose what you want changed in your manuscript but fail to honestly listen to others and your chances of publication may get thinner...and thinner. Most of them are there to help you so honor them for their time and effort by listening but most importantly, thanking them.

THANK YOU'S:

Two simple words to express to someone who has placed your bragging rites in their newsletter; sent you a note with good wishes; expressed how much they liked your book/story. Two simple words that fail to appear to the rightful person most of the time. Why? These two words are a form of networking. Thank the person for their kind words toward you and they will remember you if ever you email them for something in the future.

GUIDELINES:

Boy do I have a pet peeve and that's when writers don't follow guidelines. As an Editor of several websites, each one has a guideline. These guidelines are there for a reason. It's to make my life a bit easier. When I ask you to send me a short paragraph on what your story is all about, that's what I want. I don't want the encyclopedia of queries in my email box. I don't have time to read these hundred pages.

When I ask you to place your name and email address within the email followed by your story, then the bio, that's what I want. I don't have time to track you down to ask you to send me your bio. I'll print the story and then place the bio after the fact since you didn't bother to read the guidelines carefully.

Is this harsh? Perhaps but most Editors may simply reject your manuscript on the grounds you didn't follow protocol. This is called respecting the wishes of the Editor you are subbing to. It shows them you took the time to read what they want carefully and followed it to the 'T'. Omit this part of the game and you are risking a trip to the slushpile.

WRITING TIME:

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No time to write? Okay, you're not a writer.

Only have time for a few words at a time. At least you're still plugging away and a big pat on the back is needed right now. I do understand outside commitments make it hard to write at times but if you truly desire to get published, then you *will* find the time when you can.

I have many who cheer me on with everything that I do. But how do I do it? Why do I do it? Simple. I love what I do and yes, I'm overworked and underpaid but if you don't have a passion for what you are doing, whether it's writing or not, it will begin to eat away at you until the flame is all burned out, and so will you.

What has "Oops, I did it again" have to do with anything? Nothing really. I just liked that title. And I'm pretty sure you continued reading to see where I was going with this. Well, there is a madness to my methods. I wanted to point out to you the importance of grabbing your reader's attention.

Many writers omit this intrigue in the beginning of their stories and without a strong punch in the beginning, do you believe your reader will sit through a few chapters before the story picks up? Perhaps, but then, maybe not. Don't chance it. Grab their attention right off.

"On a dark and stormy night...yeah right...more like 'On a dark gloomy day while the kids yelled and the dog barked and the spouse asked where his coffee was...there I sat with the Advil in hand.'" - Lea Schizas

CHAPTER SEVEN

Finally...The End

Well, we've come to the end of this ebook. But before we go let me drill into you a few more motivational aspects and then I'll bid you goodbye.

I want you to sit back for a second and reflect on why you began writing. At times a quiet moment to remember the thrill you felt when you penned your first story/article will spark that same enthusiasm in you again.

We are called 'starving writers' for a reason: long hours, loads of sweat and heartache, tons of rejections, low or non-existent monetary satisfaction. So why do we continue?

Because we love what we do, we have a story to tell, that's why. It's the creative side in us that motivates us to pick up that pen, type away on that computer, and form words that begin to form sentences which begin to form a story we want to tell.

You have it in you and don't ever allow any naysayer to say anything different. Keep away from these negative people or learn how to turn a deaf ear, like a mom. "Uh, yeah, really? If you say so. Yep, you're right. I understand. Nope, you're right."

Statements like:

"You're not making any money. Why bother?"

"Oh, an ebook?"

"Can I buy it at the bookstore?"

"Never heard of you."

"You write for free?"

"Why did you self-publish? No one liked your book?"

All of these are just words, remember that. They may come out of ignorant people who have no idea the passion a writer feels when they see their characters come to life, when they see them take their own lives into their own hands (I'm referring to the character's life), the joy a writer feels when an acceptance comes along, the encouraging words from other writers...these are all things nonwriters will never understand so don't allow them to take away from you the thing you love to do.

Assaulting A Writer's Thinking by Lea Schizas

Keep writing!

Keep subbing!

Believe in yourself!

And if ever you need a good kick butting sermon, you can ALWAYS find me at:

museitupeditor@yahoo.ca

I hope you enjoyed this FREE ebook. Feel free to use it in its entirety on your own website to help you boost traffic or sell your own stuff by offering it as a freebie to whomever buys your book or service.

Networking, that's the name of the game and the more writers who join in this free and fascinating aspect in writing, the more all of our names will be traipsing through those intricate internet lines.

Thank you.

Lea Schizas

CHAPTER EIGHT FOOLED YA!

Hehehehe. Fooled ya. I hate leaving a chapter with an odd number.

This chapter is a simple one. One which I offer to help you out in subbing. Below you will find many links I have come across while researching for my MuseltUp Club members. I just want to warn you to double-check with warning sites such as Preditors and Editors to make sure no warning has been placed with any of these links below. At the time of placement, no warning was had but things change as often as we change our underwear (and I do hope we change often) that it's a necessary step for you to research them on your own before submitting anything to them.

Enjoy.

ASSOCIATIONS:

American Society of Journalists and Authors

<http://www.asja.org/>

American Christian Fiction Writers

<http://www.acrw.net/>

Association of Christian Writers

<http://www.christianwriters.org.uk/>

Australian Publishers Association

<http://www.publishers.asn.au/>

Horror Writers Association

<http://www.horror.org/>

Humor Writers

<http://www.humorwriters.org/>

Mystery Writers Organization

<http://www.mysterywriters.org/>

National Association of Women Writers

<http://naww.org/>

Poets and Writers Organization

<http://www.pw.org/>

Romance Writers Organization

<http://www.rwanational.org/>

Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators

<http://www.scbwi.org/>

Society of Travel Writers

<http://www.satw.org/satw/index.asp>

MISC.

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Agent info link

<http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/NCW/litag.htm>

Agent Query Search Site

<http://www.agentquery.com/>

AutoCrit

<http://www.autocrit.com/index.cfm>

Evil Editor Blog –interesting read

<http://www.evileditor.blogspot.com/>

American Fact Finder

http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

Bartleby Quotations

<http://www.bartleby.com/>

Discovery School

<http://school.discovery.com/>

Rhyme Zone

<http://www.rhymezone.com/>

The World Fact Book

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

LITERARY AGENTS

THE ABACUS GROUP

the abacus group—literary agency

<http://www.ridgenet.net/~gtd007/>

Email full manuscripts preferred

AMANDA HOWARD & ASSOCIATES

–interesting read on agents who's who/where/what

<http://www.amandahowardassociates.co.uk/>

Snail mail queries only

ANNE MCDERMID & ASSOCIATES LTD.

92 Willcocks Street

Toronto, Ontario M5S 1C8

<http://www.mcdermidagency.com>

anne@mcdermidagency.com

Lise Henderson, Anne McDermid's associate on the West Coast, represents children's and young adult writing, as well as literary fiction and non-fiction, and graphic novels. She can be contacted at lise.henderson@mcdermidagency.com

No unsolicited manuscript accepted

Email/snail query

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The Bukowski Agency
14 Prince Arthur Avenue, Suite 202
Toronto, Ontario M5R 1A9
<http://www.thebukowskiagency.com>
Denise Bukowski
denise@thebukowskiagency.com
For Canadians only

Cambridge Literary Associates
<http://www.cambridgeliterary.com/submissions.html>
E-mail: MrMV@aol.com
Contact: Michael R. Valentino
No fees
Accepts basically any 'selling' genre
Snail mail queries only

The Cooke Agency Inc.
278 Bloor Street East, Suite 305
Toronto, ON M4W 3M4
<http://www.cookeagency.ca>
Literary fiction and also non-fiction

Creative Media Agency
<http://www.foliolit.com/>
fiction and nonfiction. Areas of interest within the realm of fiction include:
commercial fiction, women's fiction, mysteries, thrillers, and romances. Nonfiction
interests include: popular reference, self-help, how-to, pop culture, and women's
issues.
Snail mail

Harris, Harris & Donahue, Ltd.
<http://harris-donahue.tripod.com/> agency
accepts both fiction (several genres) and non-fiction
email query

NELA – New Elite Literary Agency
<http://www.members.aol.com/neweliteliterary/NELA/NELA.html>
Serving for Acquisitions: T. Harris, literary agent fiction and nonfiction; novelists,
biographers, short stories authors for story collections, and screenwriters for
feature screenplays.

NELSON AGENCY
<http://www.nelsonagency.com/>

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Nelson Literary Agency mainly represents fiction for both adult and young adult books. We work with literary and commercial fiction. For nonfiction, we are only interested in memoir and narrative nonfiction.

email query

MAGAZINES (PRINT AND ONLINE)

5 Trope

http://www.webdelsol.com/5_trope/

http://webdelsol.com/5_trope/sub.htm

Email subs

THE AMERICAN DRIVEL REVIEW

<http://www.americandrivelreview.com/about.php>

email subs

non paying

ANDWERVE

<http://www.andwerve.com/>

<http://www.andwerve.com/submit>

online submission form

ASCENT ASPIRATIONS MAGAZINE

<http://www.ascentaspirations.ca/>

<http://www.ascentaspirations.ca/guidelines.htm>

email subs

THE BARCELONA REVIEW

<http://www.barcelonareview.com/>

Accepting submissions for previously unpublished short fiction, articles and essays.

No pay at the time

Email subs

BARFING FROG

<http://www.barfingfrog.com/>

No pay at the time

Different genres, fiction and nonfiction

Email subs

BEWILDERING STORIES

<http://www.bewilderingstories.com/>

several genres

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interviews and reviews accepted
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DAGGER CITY.COM

<http://www.daggerscity.com/gates/>

Prose and Poetry
Token payment
Email subs

DANGER MAGAZINE

<http://www.geocities.com/dangermagazine/>

Danger Magazine is the magazine of short action, adventure, thriller fiction.
No pay but contributor copy
Email subs

RIGHTHAND POINTING.COM

<http://www.righthandpointing.com/>

Short work. Poems under 20 lines. We really like poems 12 lines and under.
Fiction and other prose under 500 words.
No pay at the time
Email subs

PUBLISHERS

ADAMS MEDIA CORPORATION

<http://www.adamsmedia.com/Default.aspx?tabid=496>

Mostly nonfiction topics
Snail mail queries

All About Kids Publishing

<http://www.aakp.com/website/html/guidelines.html>

snail mail

AARDWOLF PRESS

<http://www.aardwolfpress.com/>

Publish only one book a year
Query by email accepted

ABSEY & CO.

<http://www.absey.com/catalog.html>

Snail mail only

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ADVENTURE BOOKS OF SEATTLE

<http://www.discountebooks.net/>

Payscale for Novels/Collections: Pays no advance & negotiable royalties.

"WHAT WE LIKE IN FICTION: Hard science fiction (no fantasy), romance with an adventure slant, (especially with a regular main character in a series of books) True-life adventure books, fictional crime novels, and How-To books. Remember...this is Adventure Books, and we are open to submissions that have this general theme. If you are not sure whether your book is within these genres, just send us a query by email and we will be happy to answer any questions."

Email subs accepted but query first

ANANSI PRESS

Pays unknown advance & unknown royalties.

"Anansi publishes Canadian and international writers of literary fiction, poetry, and serious nonfiction. We do not publish genre fiction (eg, mysteries, thrillers, science fiction, or romance novels), nor do we publish self-help nonfiction."

Snail mail only

<http://www.anansi.ca/submissions.cfm>

APHRODITE UNLACED

Non-paying Plus Royalties. Pays no advance - 15% royalties.

"Aphrodite Unlaced is now accepting exclusive submissions for publication of sophisticated, romantic erotica. We seek contemporary, historical, mystery and paranormal genres. We do not seek works dealing with aliens, sci-fi, horror (vampires, werewolves) or futuristic fantasy. Selected works will be offered as ebooks for individual online purchase and download. We're seeking writers, experienced and new, who can supply some serious HEAT, but within a selective romantic framework. We're looking for provocative tales that are sensual, smart, and above all, sexy."

Email only

<http://www.aphroditeunlaced.com/guidelines.htm>

ATLANTIC BRIDGE PUBLISHING

<http://www.atlanticbridge.net/>

Pays no advance - 15% royalties.

"Atlantic Bridge is a full service, royalty paying e-publisher. Our doors have been open since February 2000 and through these past years, our focus has remained the same. That focus is to publish the highest quality books from the most outstanding authors we discover. We are looking for manuscripts from creative writers of fiction genres such as Sci-Fi/Fantasy, Romance, Paranormal, along with Celtic stories of myth and legend. We are looking for that "something different", that "something unique" which doesn't fit into the mold or stands just outside the box. We are looking for those works which create a paradigm shift

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within a genre or sub genre. Those stories where the reader doesn't know what will happen in the next chapter or can guess the outcome ten pages into the book!"

Email query and subs only

August House Publishing

http://www.augusthouse.com/authors_artists/submission_guidelines

For children writers

Publisher of children's books, folktale anthologies for all ages and stories for classroom use.

Snail mail

BLACK DEATH BOOKS

<http://www.khpindustries.com/>

Pays no advance -15% royalties.

"For our main Black Death imprint, we publish books in the following genres: gothic, urban and historical horror, soft SF and dark fantasy. At this time, we do not publish mainstream, traditional romance, westerns, suspense, mystery, high fantasy, young adult, children's books, experimental fiction or poetry. We do not publish short story collections. We do not publish nonfiction of any kind. For our main Black Death imprint, works should be approximately 70,000-100,000.

Demonic Clown Books is dedicated to works that are "short and tasteless".

Pulpish horror, noir, weird and humorous books ONLY. Works of approximately 25,000-50,000 words accepted. Pop Pulp is dedicated to works in the vein of pulp fiction. Think The Shadow, Doc Savage and The Avengers, but we'd like to see authors put a new spin on things--a modern interpretation of pulp fiction.

We're interested in seeing stories in the following genres: detective/mystery, adventure, noir, "superhero/supersleuth", and horror/occult. Please, no fantasy, high fantasy, science fiction, traditional westerns or romance. Works of approximately 50,000-60,000 words accepted. NecroLily Books is dedicated to horror and paranormal erotica and romance. Works of approximately 70,000-100,000 words accepted."

Email subs

Blooming Tree Press

<http://www.bloomingtreepress.com/>

Children books

Snail mail queries first

BOOKS UNBOUND E-PUBLISHING CO.

<http://www.booksunbound.com/>

"At Books Unbound, we do not limit submissions to a particular genre or list of topics. Fiction or Nonfiction. Science Fiction, Romance or Adventure. "How To"

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or Self-help. It makes no difference. If we like your book, we want to publish it. Is the book entertaining? This is the prime criterion, but it doesn't mean we publish only fiction. A good writer can make a recipe for making hors d'oeuvres out of dog biscuits interesting. The ideal submission is both compelling and engrossing. If you have a book that we can't put down, we want what you've got."

Email subs

Boyd's Mills Press

<http://www.boydsmillspress.com/subGuidelines.htm>

Boyd's Mills Press is a publisher of picture books, fiction, nonfiction, and poetry for children of all ages—toddlers to young adults.

Snail mail queries

CHIPPEWA PUBLISHING

<http://www.chippewapublishing.com/>

Pays no advance -15% royalties. "We believe the future of literature belongs in electronic format. This is why we focus primarily on ePublishing. We will be releasing novellas, anthologies, and novels in print in early 2006. Even though many of our best sellers will be available in print, we will still continue to focus on the ePublishing business."

HCI BOOKS

<http://www.hcibooks.com/submissions.asp>

snail mail

LIQUID SILVER BOOKS

<http://www.liquidsilverbooks.com/>

Pays no advance -15% royalties.

"Liquid Silver Books is an imprint of Atlantic Bridge Publishing. We are looking for titles which push the envelope in romantic writing. The sexual relationship between the characters within the book is of huge importance, but so is the basic story. We are looking for stories of a man and woman who make a commitment to each other and a "happy ever after". We are especially looking for manuscripts in the following areas: Paranormal, Fantasy, Dark Fantasy, Vampire, Science Fiction, Contemporary and Historical. We want to see strong stories, stories which could stand on their own if the sex was omitted. However, by the addition of explicit sex throughout the book, the entire work then takes on a titillating aura from beginning to end."

NEW CONCEPTS PUBLISHING

<http://www.newconceptspublishing.com/>

Pays no advance - 15% royalties.

"New Concepts Publishing, the first totally electronic romance publishing house,

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was established in the spring of 1996. NCP went on-line with their first four novels, Amber Moment, Lord of Chaos, Liar's Poker, and Shattered Dreams, in October of 1996. At first publishing only 2 to 4 novels a month, NCP is now publishing 8 to 20 novels and short stories every month. NCP paved the way for many current independent e-publishers' success with innovative author contracts, royalty percentages, and by taking chances on fresh and original books. E-publishing is now a force to be reckoned with--it has changed the way major NY publishers deal with authors--and we are proud to have been on the forefront of this burgeoning market! NCP currently receives between 25,000 and 45,000 hits to their website every day. We have numerous authors making between \$1,000 and \$10,000 in royalties every pay period, with that number growing exponentially each month. It is our goal to have all of our authors making a comfortable living exclusively by writing within the next several years if they can work full time as with any other career."

Email query/subs

PER ASPERA PRESS

<http://www.perasperapress.com/>

"We are seeking outstanding novel manuscripts for our hardcover line - novels which make a significant contribution to the speculative fiction genre. Our interpretation of 'speculative fiction' is broad; it encompasses technological and social science fiction, contemporary and historical fantasy, magic realism, science thrillers, and many other cross-genre works. Your novel does not have to fall neatly into a predefined subcategory (in fact, we encourage originality in that respect), but it must have a speculative element and appeal to readers within the science fiction and fantasy genre. Young adult (ages 14 and up) speculative fiction which appeals equally to adult readers will be considered. Regardless of subgenre, we're looking specifically for novels which are built around a big idea or develop a deep theme. Detailed, believable characterization is also critical."

Email subs

PERMANENT PRESS PUBLISHING COMPANY

<http://www.thepermanentpress.com/>

"We publish fiction primarily, and occasionally non-fiction. What we are looking for is something artfully written: the way the story is told is as important - if not more so - than the plot itself. We rarely do short stories unless they are from an author whose full-length work we've published before. No Romance novels and no poetry (though we have done two novels-in-verse), please."

Snail mail only

RSPUBLISHING

<http://www.rspublishing.com.au/>

Pays no advance - 15% royalties.

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"Genre: Open, preferred: fantasy/science fiction/mental mayhem/drama.. You know you have written something so good, so brilliant you have even astounded yourself. Metamorphoses manifests, assumptions crumble, the anarchy of the mind, the body, the soul-all awaken, divergent probabilities emerge...and more! If this is you consider RSP. If not do not panic send anyway, everything will be fine. Cross genre friendly. Just no hobbits or anti-Christ. Lucifer of course is another story... LENGTH is up to you! Your work can be flash fiction to novel length."
Email subs

SASS BOOKS

<http://www.sassbooks.com/>

Pays token advance & unknown royalties.

"Sass Books is an independent publishing company that will begin publishing in 2006. We intend to focus on works of fiction and narrative nonfiction: the books that readers take with them on vacation; the books they read when they want to escape from their own lives for a few hours. We will offer stories that capture the imagination-stories that inspire laughter and tears."

Snail mail only

SNOWBOOKS

<http://www.snowbooks.com/authors.html>

"We're always happy to take a look at excellent works of fiction. At the moment, we're particularly interested in reading thrillers. Whether it's a crime novel, sci-fi, or a murder mystery, we want to see it! Our non-fiction list is much shorter, but feel free to send along any new and interesting proposals you've got."

Email query first

WILEY

<http://ca.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-8597.html>

nonfiction

aimed for the professional business market and general interest markets

snail mail

BONUS CHAPTER

Here's the full first chapter I wrote in [THE MUSE ON WRITING](#) to give you an idea of how complete and thorough this book is to help writers. Link on the book's title above to get a glimpse of what each chapter offers then [ORDER YOUR COPY](#). Enjoy.

~ CHAPTER ONE~

In The Beginning...A Blank Sheet

by Lea Schizas©2006

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
- *What will be their storyline and plot
- *Where will the setting be placed
- *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
- On a farm
- In a small/big city
- In a cab
- In a military base
- In jail

Background:

- Came from a broken home
- Parents were abusive
- Only child
- A happy childhood
- Attended boarding school
- Hates school
- Went to war
- Was a problem in elementary
- Came from a loving home
- Raised by his grandparents/family
- Large family
- Is a loner
- Loves to dance
- High School dropout
- Has a special trade
- High IQ

Bad and Good Characteristics to give him:

- 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:

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

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

***where does he live:**

mansion/apartment/farm/boat/nursing home/condo/basement/on the street

***does he drive:**

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

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

Throughout your protagonist's goals, you will need to place obstacles in order to add intrigue and climatic episodes for your reader. This acts like a cliffhanger, prodding them to continue reading in order to find out what happens in the end. Make sure all of the obstacles and the main goal are completely finalized at the end, lest you cheat your reader.

In order to place an obstacle in his way, you need to introduce your antagonist. Here's a surprise for some of you: your antagonist need not be human.

*The Mummy: the curse could be seen as the antagonist in this story along with the actual being of the mummy to cause havoc.

*Alien: you got it; aliens can be your antagonists

*Towering Inferno: the fire was the obstacle and main focal point.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| -an animal | -Storm |
| -Tornado (Twister) | -Flood |
| -Killer bees | -Reptile (Godzilla) |
| -Hurricane | -Volcano |
| -Monster (Dracula/Frankenstein) | -Robot (I Robot) |
| -a deadly virus | -a curse |

Human Antagonist Suggestions:

- A jilted lover
- A hounding reporter
- A relative seeking inheritance
- A crooked cop/lawyer/judge
- A rapist/robber/thief
- Someone with a vendetta
- An ex-spouse
- A crazy love-struck student

In order to heighten the read, a lot of writers include a 'clock/time' within their storyline, for example:

- the protagonist will need:
 - to find a treasure/chip/map before the bad side does and all havoc will be unleashed
 - to find the killer before he strikes again
 - to figure out the clues before the bomb is detonated
 - to arrange his affairs before death comes knocking on his door.
 - to find the real killer before the innocent one jailed is put to death.

The television series '24' is a perfect example of building tension within a storyline. Each week we are given an hour's countdown with heart-thumping suspense as we see the clock ticking down. The plot or drama for that night's episode is revealed, the characters are exploring means and methods to beat the 'villain', obstacles are thrust in their paths, and all along the reader can feel the countdown to disaster approaching. They are glued to their seat to find out if the timer will win or the heroes.

Blockage

You know the protagonist's goal now, but need to place some obstacles in his way to excite your reader.

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

Some interesting activities within crime books may be:

- Blackmail
- Pornography
- Rape
- Smuggling
- Sabotage
- Kidnapping
- Prostitution
- Drug Trafficking
- Terrorism
- 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 |
| -energy fields | -black holes |
| -force fields | -capsules |
| -clones/androids | -holographs |
| -scanners | -shuttle craft |
| -holographic images | -time warps |

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 |
| -occult dealings | -violence/killings |
| -devil worshipping | -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.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR LEA SCHIZAS

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Lea Schizas is an award-winning author/editor, a short story competition winner, living in Montreal with her husband Jimmy and their five children. She describes herself as “finally woke up after a 23-year self-induced coma taking care of the family, and rediscovered my passion for writing.”

She is the co-founder and Editor in Chief of two Writer’s Digest 101 Top Writing Sites of 2005 & 2006 and recipients of the Preditors and Editors Most Useful Writing Sites Award: Apollo’s Lyre, an online writer’s Zine: <http://www.apollos-lyre.com> and the online writing critique community The MuseItUp Club, <http://museitupclub.tripod.com>

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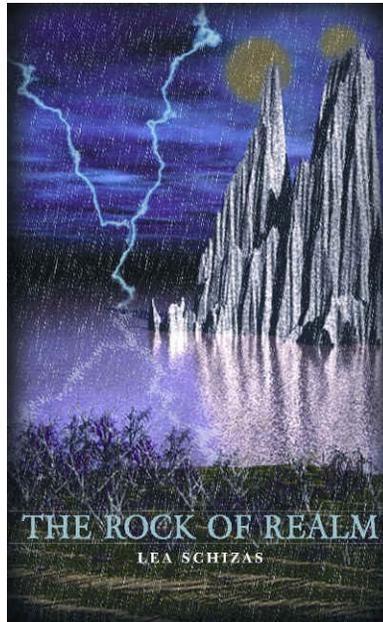
-copy editor for Double Dragon Publishing

You can read more of Lea’s bio and accomplishments at:

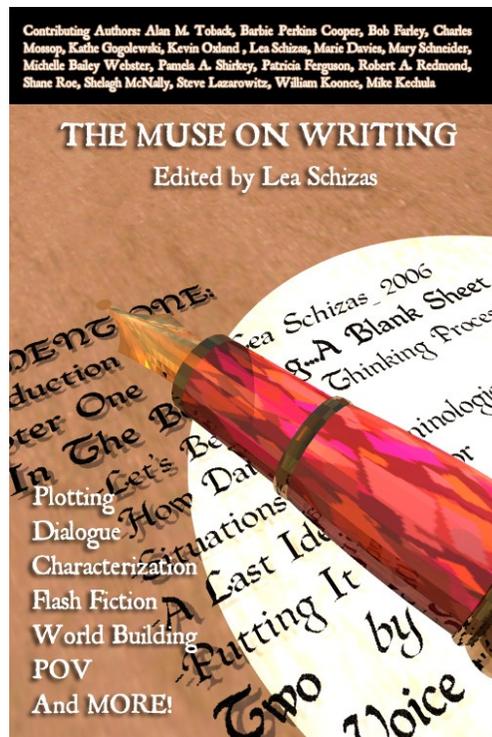
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Assaulting A Writer's Thinking by Lea Schizas

HER BOOKS



<http://rockofrealmnovel.tripod.com>



<http://www.freewebs.com/themuseonwriting/>

Lea's parting words:

There is nothing in this world that can express the emotional turbulence a writer goes through when they have to say goodbye to a character they have come to know as 'friend'.

When one 'The End' is placed, just remember this:

YOU are the creator of delight, excitement, fear, and new worlds...

YOU are in total control of the words penned...

YOU are the only one who can walk away from naysayers...

YOU are the one who will choose what to change and what not to change in your story...

YOU

ARE

A

WRITER!

Now stop reading this and go write up a storm!

Lea