

The MANA Sunset

June Issue, 2016

In This Issue:

This issue will celebrate and explore different aspects of the oh-so-necessary tool most writers take advantage of: The Workshop. In April, Robbie Dean Press/MarketingNewAuthors.com hosted a free Writers' Conference in Ann Arbor. Guests in attendance (all writers!) shared their own struggles with writing and took part in a writing exercise. Read on to the next page to learn more about this experience. For any of you faithful readers out there who are interested in finding your own writing community, there are several options available to you through MANA's online services. Also, I include all the usual bits of wisdom regarding writing, as well as up-and-coming opportunities provided through MANA. I conclude with my own thoughts on the notion of the writer's workshop. For now, enjoy the blossoming delights of June and Happy Workshop-ping!

Display Your Work-Be Seen!

Let your work be seen! If you are interested in having your book displayed at the National Council of Teachers of English Conference in Atlanta in November 2016, contact MANA at: info@marketingnewauthors.com. The cost will be reasonable. Generally, over 10,000 persons attend the conference each year. The event will be hosted in Atlanta this year. MANA guarantees every book will be openly displayed and readily visible.



MANA's Writers' Conference

At the writer's workshop, these writings were brief responses by two of the participants to a picture prompt that had been distributed. Workshops--particularly encouraging, positive spaces--allow people to be themselves and just share responses in any way they wish to. Just to get people started is what is important for beginning or even more experienced writers. The purpose of the workshop was to draw out people's ability to experience and respond to an image. For those of you, who are, sometimes, "stumped" as to how or where to begin, you can use a visual as a catalyst to get the creative juices to flow. Once you get started, you are on your way! The image presented:



Response #1:

When I observe this beautiful, calm scene, it relaxes my mind, body, and soul. I love water and especially calm water. Also, I see art in the rocks. I love greenery because it gives us oxygen. What a wonderful scene made by the hands of God. I adore and appreciate the glory of His creation. To God be the glory, to God be the praise!

Response #2:

She wondered, not for the first time, how she could possibly return to Michigan. She'd dipped into the cool, crisp Mediterranean Sea every morning for the past month, searching for his face under the waves, longing to feel his arms pull her under like he'd done so many times before. He'd been a varsity swim star all through high school, shaved and smooth, slipping through the water like an otter.

She'd never been a strong swimmer. She much preferred wading, only up to her chin during braver attempts.

She'd returned that summer to the island where they'd honeymooned. The bar on the corner, where they'd sipped so many glasses of sweet red wine at sunset, was now closed, a giant sign reading "For Rent." Just like their (she had to stop saying "their"), *her* two-bedroom condo back home.

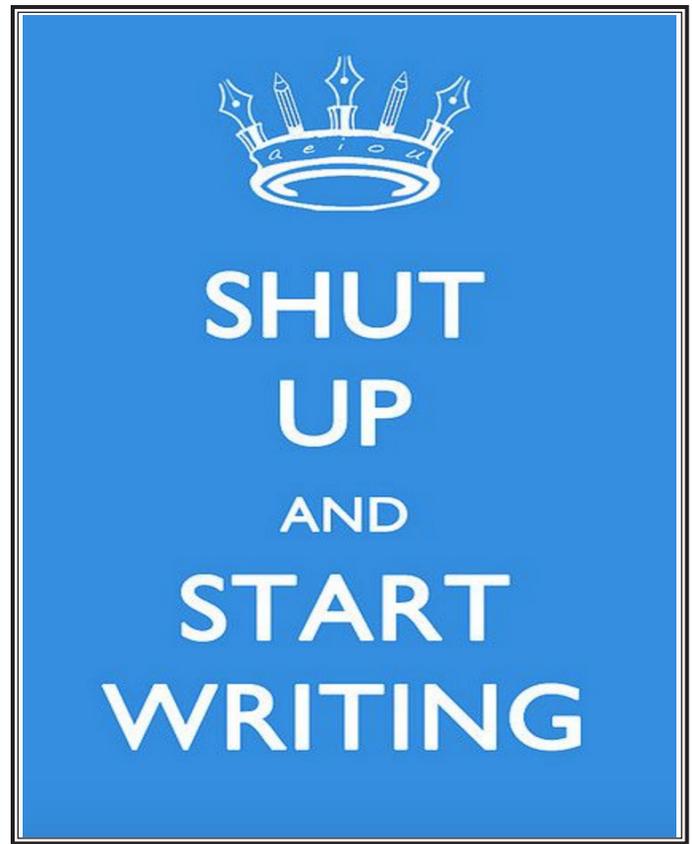
She imagined knowing back then, ten years ago, what she'd have done differently if she'd known she'd only have ten years with her life's greatest love. More sleeping in on Saturdays, more generous portions of butter on their daily cinnamon toast, more trips to Martha's Vineyard, less saving and scrimping for a future that didn't exist.

MANA's Writers' Conference Cont'd

In conclusion, as you can see by reading the two responses, two writers do not see the same story in the same image. If nothing else, the exercise teaches there are endless, infinite possibilities for writers to find inspiration from. If you find yourself avoiding the computer or writing tablet, conjure up an image from a Google search and force yourself to put ideas down. Any progress is progress!

MANA's Online Course

This is a good time to mention that MANA offers an online course through the MANA website: marketingnewauthors.com. The Introduction and Outline for the course is available on the website. For those of you who would like to get a taste of the lessons, all you need to do is send an e-mail to info@marketingnewauthors.com. Then, you will receive, within 24 hours, the password to Lesson One for free! If you're seeking out help with your writing but haven't taken any steps to seek it out, this is the perfect opportunity.



Dr. C's Blog

Dr. C is a writing coach who offers advice and support for writers. Dr. C has gone back through her archive of diaries kept as a child up until now. She excerpts entries from the diaries, followed by her present voice, which provides further insights into what the entries of the past meant. Her project is being archived on the MANA Blog and is a wonderful example of how your past writing--yes, even writing from childhood and adolescence--can act as a force for your present self. Check out Dr. C's Blog @writerssunrise.blogspot.com. We've included an insert from Dr. C's very first post:

I was a different kind of kid. First, from age five, I always wanted to become a teacher and a parent—yes, in that order. At a very young age, in my bedroom or in the basement, I held my classes. I always lined up my dolls and teddy bear as my “students.” Later on, I outgrew using these toys. I just developed my imaginary “students.”

As my reading skills developed, at age ten, I read the plays Agamemnon and Macbeth and taught my “students” these plays as my mother was on the other side of the basement washing clothes and listening to my giving them their “lessons” and instructing them to pay attention: “Now, you listen you Sojos; this is very important.” “Pumpkin, who are ‘Sojos’”? “Mommy, you know. There are freshmen and juniors and seniors and sojos!” She chuckled and helped me understand that they are called “Sophomores.” Thus, my career as a teacher really continued on the right foot.

I always loved to write as much as read. And I was always thinking of the future and how I wanted to be able to record things so that I could use them for the future. Quite honestly, when a dear friend gave me my first diary, I wanted to use it as a way for me never to forget how it was like being a kid or teenager. And so, even though I was not the “typical” kid or teen, still, when I became a mother (that was my other wish), I would have a textual reference whenever totally befuddled by my future children.

Let me share with you my first two diary entries that I wrote to my “guardian angel” named, Bishop. You need to know that I believe in a Higher Power, God, and I believe He has given us a special protector, a guardian angel. So that no one thinks I am totally “off my rocker,” I “talk” to this guardian angel via my diary:

Dear Bishop (Day One, Age 13): Today was not a good day. Mommy and Daddy had a fight. Gee, I wish that would not have happened. It is quiet now. Daddy left. Mommy is trying to get the house back in order. I pray when Daddy returns home, they do not fight again. Mommy could sense my fear, but, as always, she just hugged me and said everything would be all right. And she would always emphasize that Daddy was a good man who loved me in spite of what I had seen.

Dear Bishop (Day Two, Age 13): Daddy returned yesterday. He was not grumpy. There was just that silence. Mommy fixed dinner. We ate. That was it. Well, not quite. Later on, Daddy would talk to me and would always say, "Although your mother and I may not always get along, she is a good woman."

Reflections: I would go to bed every night praying that they would not fuss and fight. I continued that prayer, even when they stopped their fisticuffs, until the day they both passed (after over 55 years of marriage), and even beyond. I guess it had become such a habit for me that I had to stop myself and keep in mind that God had taken them. Also, even in those many years I witnessed what, now is called domestic violence, I knew that Daddy loved my mother more than any man could. And I knew she cared for Daddy. Um, that is when I began to learn and come to understand just how unique the institution of marriage was. And when folks say: "I don't know why she or he won't leave," I realize that no one will really understand unless S/HE is actually IN that marriage.

I knew that Mommy did not fear Daddy. She never covered in the corner as you see in many of today's movies and TV shows. She never begged him not to leave. She stood or fought "her ground"—lick for lick. And she said to me after one of their major encounters, of course, when Daddy was at work, when Daddy dragged his trunk from the attic saying he was leaving and I was crying and babbling, "don't go," and calm, eventually, again, came into the household and, yes, Daddy dragged that trunk back into the attic, she told me, "Pumpkin, you worried your Daddy was going to leave, right? Did you see that I did not beg him to stay? Don't you ever beg a man to stay with you. If he wants to go, let him go. Don't beg!" I responded, "What if Daddy had left, what would you have done?" She looked at me directly in the eye and responded, "I would have figured something out or packed my things and gone back home in the South. Still, remember: never beg."

So, I learned another lesson that I would keep deep in my heart—no matter how much I would love a guy. If he wanted to leave, I should let him go, not beg. The dude has to want to stay with me because of his choice, not because of any "snot-nose" dribbling and beggin' on my part. And, yes, that lesson came in handy a few times (I'll write about that later).

When my Daddy became ill (he was a very strong man in will and health) first time in their marriage (I was in college), I saw more than concern in my Mother's eyes. I saw just how much she cared—she loved him.

I shall say more about that later on, too, as you follow my posts. Bishop and I will be with you next week.



Quote of the Month

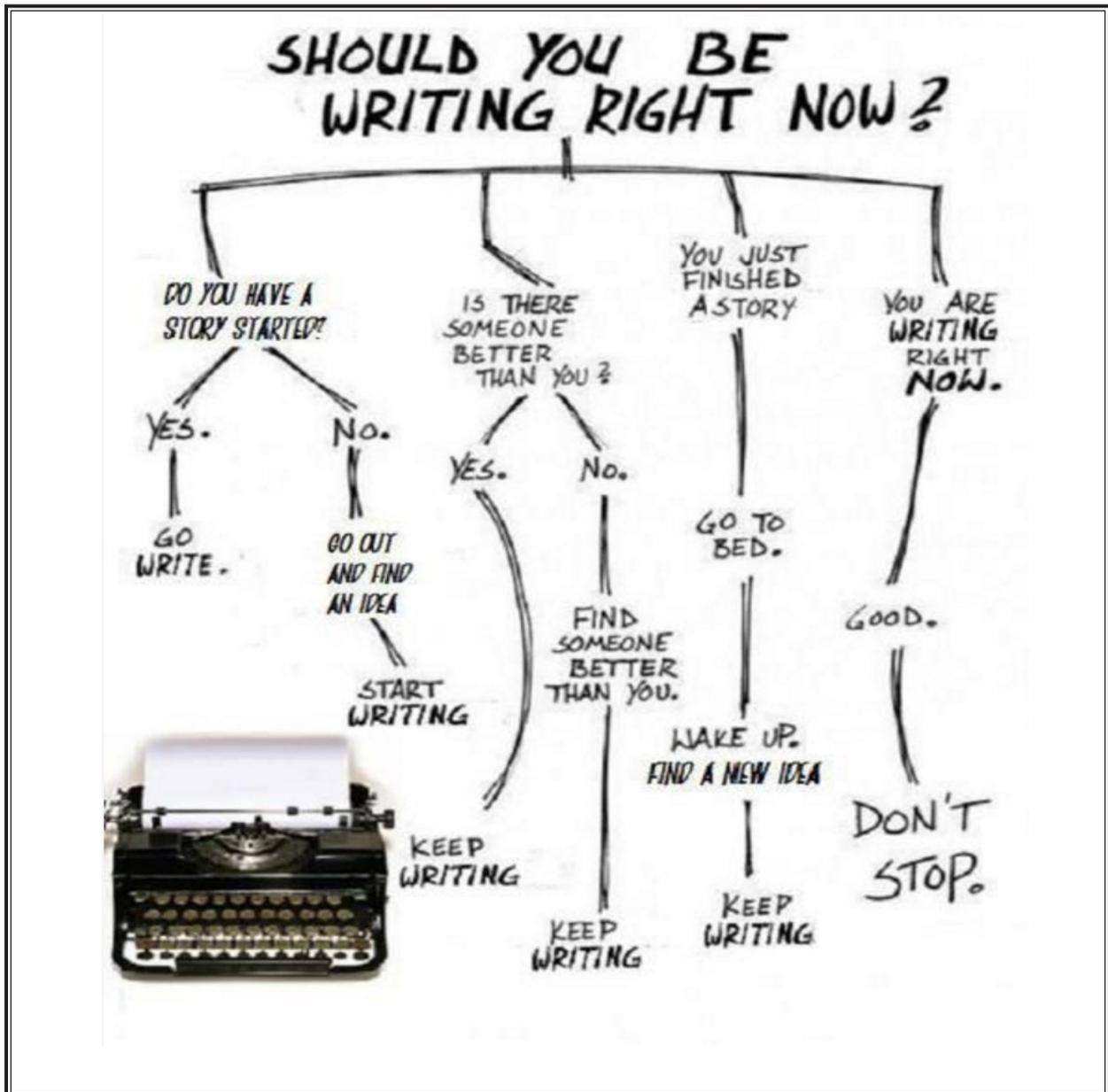


*“Though we dream
and hardly know it,
longing,
like an angel,
fosters us,
smooths our hair
and brings us
wild strawberries.”*

~Excerpted from the novel *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson

Upcoming Publications

- 1) *Bare Essentials: A Handbook for Beginner Writers, 16th edition* by Fairy C. Hayes-Scott, Ph.D. (September 2016)
- 2) *Learning to Write for Academic Success in Undergraduate and Graduate School* by Erin Knoche Laverick, Ph.D. (debut September 2016)
- 3) *Through the Storms: A Murder Mystery and Autobiography* by Emilee Davis (debut December 2016)



A Letter From the Editor

As a writer, and a developing writer at that, I've been a member of countless workshops--productive workshops, emotional workshops, frustrating workshops. I've compiled a list of Top Five Dos and Don'ts to Workshopping. Above all else, the most important thing I've learned, the place from which all workshops must come is a place of compassion and good will. Criticism should be constructive, not destructive. Without further ado:

- 1) **Balance your comments--start with one strength, then follow with areas that need work.**
- 2) **Don't let the workshop become competitive.** You're there to grow and learn from each other, not see who uses the fanciest words and turns of phrase.
- 3) **Tune your comment radio to a suitable frequency.** Not all suggestions should be heeded, nor should they be ignored. Decide which comments will strengthen your piece and which ones are insignificant to it.
- 4) **Don't let emotions rule.** There is writing intended for workshop and writing intended for personal discovery. The latter form should remain in a diary or journal and shouldn't be shared unless the writer is prepared, emotionally, to uncover those feelings in front of a group. It's very difficult to objectively critique writing in which experiences play a large role.
- 5) **Share stories that matter to you.** This isn't meant to contradict the previous point. You've gathered together with other writers, so don't waste your time or theirs by putting forth a half-baked story. Commit time and energy to the stories you bring to the workshop. Everyone will benefit from workshopping your best work.

*Happy
Writing!*

