

7 AUGUST 2015

Writing Seminar

PRESENTED BY ZECHARIAH BARRETT AT GLORY CHRISTIAN CENTER

Contents

§ It Starts With A Story... The Initial Idea

To develop a story, first you must have an idea. You can outline your idea using methods we'll cover later in this seminar.

§ Writing and Communication: Inspired by Authors

When you were born, you didn't immediately know how to communicate through formal language. You learned by listening. Observing. This is the case with writing, as well. If you wish to be a fiction novelist in the fantasy genre, read fantasy fiction by established authors. You may take notes of how they structure their story by identifying key events just as in language your brain analyzes patterns.

§ Writing and Communication: Emulating Authors

Once you observed formal language, you began to emulate the language that others were using. When you initially begin writing, you may attempt to emulate the 'speech patterns' of others. You aren't born with an accent. You learn it. In writing, you may find that your stories follow patterns from other authors' works. You may also find that you don't execute your stories quite as well as them. This is a journey, and you must find how to get into characters' heads, establish convincing imagery, and captivate readers.

§ Writing and Communication: Learning Structure

Plots often have a common structure. There's a beginning to the story, and there's some kind of problem, dilemma, or objective that drives the story and the characters.

Characters' personalities develop, the reader gradually learns more about the problem, and the characters do as well. At the climax, the problem may be resolved, or there may be a great confrontation – whatever the case, the story begins winding down after this point, tying up loose ends, unto its resolution.

§ Writing and Communication: Style Development

To be an effective writer, you must develop a style independent of the authors' from which you've drawn inspiration. You must think of ways to innovate with your story, such as with wording, plot structure, and diverse characters and settings.

§ Writing and Communication: Finding Flaws (Beta)

As you develop your style, you may come to a point where you believe you're done! You've perfected your own personal style. There is, however, a crucial step missing. A vital process which should be engaged with each manuscript you write – the beta reading process. Give your story to friends, family, and online reading communities, and request honest feedback on all aspects of your story. Do not give your story to individuals who may only give you positive feedback. Find readers who will be 'real' with you about where they struggled with reading your story, and be open to any feedback. Adjust your style as necessary.

§ Writing and Communication: Adjustments

Write down suggestions from beta readers and use these as a guide in your future manuscripts.

§ Protecting Your Ideas! Copyright Law and Registration

Under international copyright laws and treaties, your work is already protected the moment it goes from your mind to paper, computer, sound recorder, or some other retrievable, tangible medium. No registration is required. Registration does not grant copyright. Registration costs money, and gives you extra advantages in a court battle. You do not *need* to register your work, and you can order infringing websites to take down your pirated work without registration. Bear in mind that it's a simple matter of licensing or waiving some of your rights through publishing and online terms of service agreements. This is where you must be especially cautious. Moreover, your story is protected. However, general ideas are not. This would make writing a story very difficult, yes?

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Publishing Seminar

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§ Self Publishing v. Traditional Publishing: The Lowdown

Self-publishing often affords more control, allows you to retain more rights, and renders higher royalty rates. It also requires a great deal of work.

Through Traditional publishing, you often must relinquish certain rights to your agent and publisher, you may receive advancement payments but a lower royalty rate, and you must still take care of marketing. The publisher won't do it all for you, but they will take care of a great deal of the work.

§ Traditional Publishing: Polish Your Manuscript

Ensure your manuscript is properly edited, and just as you would like it before pitching it to a literary agent. A literary agent may offer suggestions, and an editor may receive your manuscript once a deal has been made with a publishing house, but you need to stand out from the crowd. Poor grammar, spelling, and formatting won't impress.

§ Traditional Publishing: Creating the Perfect Pitch

Create a compelling sales pitch by avoiding clichéd words and phrases, avoid comparing your work with other authors and works, and do not provide assurances that your book will sell. Keep your pitch brief, and grab attention in the first sentence.

§ Traditional Publishing: Securing an Agent

It is handy to have a directory of reputable agents. See "Additional Resources" if you'd like a recommendation.

§ Traditional Publishing: The Waiting Game

Query agents, and wait for replies. Exercise courtesy.

§ Traditional Publishing: The Contract

Ensure that you understand what rights are being given away.

§ Traditional Publishing: Marketing Time

Start early.

§ Self Publishing: Formatting and Perfecting the Manuscript

For my Detective Games 2-in-1 print edition with CreateSpace, I opted for a 6x9 size with 1-inch margins, 1.5 line spacing, and first line tabs of 0.3 (if you tabbed manually through your document, you'll need to remove them for the eBook edition. So it's best to let it auto-tab for both editions). I also used for fontsquirl.com to locate a commercial free font for my print edition. For the eBook, just go with the default. Don't change the font, because many eReaders change the font themselves.

§ Self Publishing: Channels and Formats

I use CreateSpace for paperbacks, and Lulu for hardcovers. Also consider local bookstores at a 60/40 consignment agreement or with better terms. For eBooks, I like to use Lulu for the iBookstore, Amazon, and Lulu store, and Smashwords for everything else besides the iBookstore, because of royalty rates. I often like to directly distribute my eBook to Amazon as well, through Kindle Direct Publishing, if the ebook is \$2.99+. All that said... I do find that Lulu simplifies the process a bit more, so you may want to go entirely with Lulu the first time around for your eBook.

§ Self Publishing: Aggregator or Direct Publishing?

Do you want to go with an aggregator like Lulu or Smashwords, or go directly through each retailer? Sometimes going directly can yield higher royalties, but you also have differing contract terms to consider, more time needed managing all of the channels, and differing requirements. I usually prefer an aggregator.

§ Self Publishing: Self-Serve or Services

You may decide that all this is too difficult and you need help. In that case, there are many self-publishing services that you can purchase to have others do the work for you. Lulu, for example, offers both self-publishing and services.

§ Self Publishing: Marketing Time

Start early.

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Marketing Seminar

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§ Join Social Networks

WordPress, Twitter, Facebook, and Goodreads are great places to start. There's also Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest, SnapChat...

I'm also a member of Write On by Kindle and WatPad, and I post current writing projects to get feedback. After the writing is done, and I begin publishing, let readers know about the news and take down all except for an excerpt.

§ Prepare a Professional Site

I use WordPress for my author site (contingencywriter.wordpress.com), but there are many other services, and it's professional to purchase your own domain name. You can have an updates section, publications section, calendar / events page, forum, newsletter...

Be sure to link to your professional site from your social networks.

§ Pre-Order

Let readers purchase your book in advance of the release, and build hype.

§ Special Offers

Coupons, giveaways, pre-order pricing.

§ Manage your Online Presence

Prepare appropriate meta-data for retailers, such as a catchy description for your book, tags, biography, editorial reviews, and others data as they apply.

§ Book Signings

Coordinate with local bookstores and author outlets.

§ Press Release

Prepare a press release for news outlets.

Recommended Reading: *“How to Write a Press Release—A Mini-Tutorial”* by Joel Friedlander of TheBookDesigner.com

§ Author's Groups

I've been looking into this myself, lately. Find a local author group for support, and coordinate events together.

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Web Security Seminar

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§ The Environment

White hats, black hats, grey hats, crackers, and what they mean to you.

Recommended Watching:

“Mikko Hypponen: Fighting viruses, defending the net” at the TED YouTube channel.

§ Proper Passwords

Create a formidable password using a password generator or your own ingenuity. If you want to maximize your security, you may wish to change your password up every 3 months. Keep your passwords stored in a password manager, like those offered online, such as LastPass or make your own by creating a PDF, listing your passwords, and encrypting it with a password you can remember. In addition, keep a password to secure your devices, and make a habit of powering off your devices to clear the RAM.

Recommended Activity: Use the password Generator at LastPass.com/GeneratePassword.php

§ It's All About Encryption

Whether you're browsing the web, entering passwords, sending messages, using public wif-fi or shopping online... it's all about encryption. Don't make a purchase on a site that doesn't have https:// in your address bar when you're at the purchase page. Use a sandboxing browser like Google Chrome or Firefox.

Recommended Activity: Install the HTTPS Everywhere plug-in from the Electronic Frontier Foundation at EFF.org/HTTPS-EVERYWHERE

§ Security and Privacy on the Go

Turn off bluetooth and wi-fi when you're not using them, disable geolocation when desired, and utilize a service such as CyberGhost VPN.

§ Anti-Virus / Anti-Malware Solutions

Install a reputable anti-virus, even if you have a Mac. Even cell phones and tablets can be vulnerable.

Recommended Reading: "*The Best Antivirus for 2015*" by Neil J. Rubenking for PCMag.com (or the latest article, be it 2016, 2017, etc.)

§ Stay up-to-date

Keep software, plug-ins, and the OS up-to-date to avoid security vulnerabilities.

§ Be Aware of the Cost

Greater connectivity may equate to greater vulnerability, and loss of privacy. Cameras on your devices can be hacked. Cover them up.

§ Backups

I recommend investing in a portable hard drive to backup your data (e.g. Seagate Backup Plus Slim 2TB or Western Digital My Passport 2TB. Look for a price point around \$80-90. If you regularly store HD videos and RAW photographs, the WD My Book 4TB at a price point of about \$130 may be a better fit. Know that drives, just like the one in your computer, are not flawless and may fail. This is why backing up data is important).

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§ Post Seminar:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FOR WRITING, PUBLISHING, AND MARKETING ATTENDEES:

There will be a number of resources you can access after the seminar is over, and in the coming months. First, if you're set on the traditional route, one of the most important tools to have is the latest 'Guide to Literary Agents' from editor Chuck Sambuchino (ISBN 9781599638430). These volumes often include helpful tips from literary agents, and a directory of current literary agents to choose from, as well as what genres these literary agencies serve.

Whichever path you take, Mark Coker's *Style Guide* (formatting guidelines for eBooks) and *Book Marketing Guide* (available at smashwords.com) are invaluable resources to read before getting started.

FOR EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED:

Additional video resources from Zechariah Barrett may be made available at his website. If you have any questions about the information contained within these seminars, submit them to [email redacted] and your question may be considered for a future Q&A video. If you'd like to subscribe to future updates, include a note stating such in your email. A recording of the seminars will be conducted, and this is how we can share the link with you.

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