

NEWSLETTER

Developing the Writer's Habit



Habit is an established pattern of behavior. Words that arise through a number of dictionary definitions are “unconscious” and “practice.” The pattern becomes unconscious because of the degree of practice. If you’ve been writing within a pattern, for any length of time, you know what happens when you disrupt the pattern: You miss it, every bit as much as the runner misses the run. In my case, I become overwhelmed by

what nice people would call grumpiness.

The Latin “habere” means “to have,” and when used reflexively it means “to be.”

I believe this is why I’m a more content person when I maintain my writing habit: I’m being who I am.

Make it a priority to write. “How do you know if you’re a writer?” some ask. “Are people born writers?” ...see p. 2

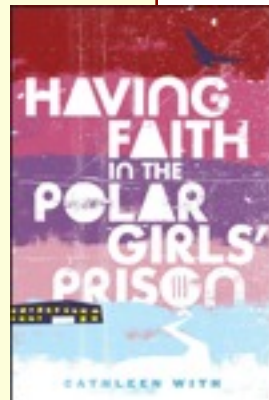
notes

Cathleen With (former student) has won the Ethel Wilson BC Book Prize for the amazing *Having Faith in the Polar Girls’ Prison*.

As a writing teacher, some of my favourite moments are when I receive those emails...that a manuscript has been accepted, or an agent has said “Yes.” Much as we love to write, knowing that our work is communicating out in the world is significant, yes.

Another area of communication and writing is the blog. Tanya Lloyd Kyi’s (author of *50 Burning Questions*, and others, both fiction and non-) is a wonder you’ll find at: <http://www.tanyalloydkyi.com/>

Check it out!



SCREENING THOUGHTS

What Is & What Isn’t...

It can be useful to think about both what is present in your writing, and what is not present. In writing dialogue for the screen, “What is not” is at least as important as “what is.”

The writer can use visuals and sound to fill this “absence.” It’s something like “negative space” for the visual artist.

For beginning screenwriters it can be a challenge to resist the urge to create busy dialogue. Those pages of script can look so “white” as opposed to the full pages of a novel. DO read through actual screenplays. DO watch a movie with the sound off in order to learn what MUST be said. And in your own work, say only what must.

see p. 2

WRITERS' HABIT... P. 2



Writers write. There's some initial pull to write—which generally indicates some degree of talent—but after that, only the habitual act of writing determines who is and isn't a writer. (Sometimes that initial pull is about wanting to be JK Rowling, or an "author," but it's not the stuff of persistence.)

It seems an over-simplification perhaps, but there is only one way to come to the end of a project: Begin, and Keep Writing...to the end. (Re-vision-ing is another topic!) I chose a visual of watches, because **time** is a critical element of the writing habit. It's too easy to think there's not enough. You can begin with 10-15 minutes each day. It's the "each" part that's the key...then let "each" become "every." How long will it take to become "habit?" We usually hear "3 weeks" trotted out as reply, so take a look at this: <http://www.spring.org.uk/2009/09/how-long-to-form-a-habit.php>

And consider: Where you work, and How. Do you work by a window? With music on? in silence?

Do you work best keying directly? hand-writing? Do you need to switch from one to the other? Do you outline? or plunge in?

When I first began to write, for several years in a row, I took part in the madness known as the Three-Day-Novel contest. This takes place over 72 hours in early September. Even though I had a "day job" at the time, this event each year was focussed in a way so that each time I participated, I walked away understanding so much more about myself as a writer. It's a worthy endeavor, if only for this reason. <http://www.3daynovel.com/>

Practice=Habit.

And here's a possibility: don't believe in block. Block doesn't exist. There's only daily habit. Even if it's just 15 minutes. Even if it's only 10.

Of note in the how-long-to-form article: if you miss a day, it doesn't mean all your work is blown. It only means you've missed a day. Self-kindness is significant for writers. I think that once you form habit, that sense of being who you are will keep you at it; that's when you know you're a writer.

SCREEN.... from p. 1

You can call this presence/absence, or text/sub-text.

<http://www.tutorial9.net/resources/enhancing-your-art-with-negative-space/>

Check this out, and consider how it relates to your characters' communications, and how silence can outline spoken word. _____

COURSES

June 28 - 8 weeks

writing for children: picturebooks, illustrated books, early readers, short stories

July 5 - 8 weeks

Getting Started - Screenwriting

July 5 - 8 weeks

Getting Started - Fiction

July 19 - 4 months

Advanced Novel writing - Young Adult and Adult works

September-October

New Courses/Sections TBA

Contributors/
Instructors

Alison Acheson

Admin. and Instructor for WritersWebWorkshops, former instructor at University of BC, Vancouver.



Amy Whitmore

Amy has edited scripts and taught from sea-to-sea in Canada (Vancouver to St. Andrews, NB!) Her understanding of character and human nature is a fundamental strength of her work.