

MCCORD'S WRITING KIT

A month of writing guidance



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Introduction

A month of writing fun! Although many months have only 4 weeks, 5 weeks are covered in this kit. Within this kit, you will find questions pulled from longer resources available from online, prompts, and other fun things to get your writing started (or un-stuck). Happy writing!

Writer Pep talks: Words of Encouragement!

"Don't give up. Keep your eyes on the project you're working on right now, and make it the best that it can be. More importantly, love that process.

In the end, that's what made me stand up and get back to work on book thirteen: the realization that I loved telling stories. No stack of unpublished novels, no matter how high, would change my enjoyment of this process—no more than a finished set of dives would make a scuba enthusiast feel discouraged about diving again."

-Brandon Sanderson

"Close your eyes and see if there is a movie playing on the black screens behind your eyes. Then scribble down the details of this movie, all the colors and foliage or furnishing. Maybe you can see one of your character's faces: how she tucks her head when she enters a room, like a shy duck; or how he takes on the persona of a bank president, arrogant and amused and yet pretending to care, even at meetings with his child's homeroom teacher. Maybe you can see his child's face—the pride she takes in her father's potency, or the shame.

"So describe that to us on paper, in words and images, imperfectly. That's all. One small moment, face, locale, conversation at a time, maybe overwrought or trying to sound like Hemingway or perhaps with a bit too much magical realism for the suburb your characters inhabit."

-Anne Lamott

"The middle is where you prove what you're made of. This is where you pull up your socks and think of some interesting things for your characters (who should be pretty well developed by now) to do with/for/to each other. And it had better be some good, exciting, and maybe even evil stuff.

Personally, I always kill someone."

-Charlaine Harris

Week 1: Idea

Plot Generators:

Want to just click a button and get random prompts to get those creative juices flowing? That's what a plot generator does! You can find an annotated list of plot generators at <https://mccordlibrary.org/writers-corner> as well as more resources. Here is one set of prompts. Use the blanks to fill in the nouns then try to create a story from this plot. Feel free to use extra paper in addition to the space provided.

Setting

- **Mac Guffin:** "MacGuffin" (a.k.a. McGuffin or maguffin) is a term for an object or element in a story that drives the plot, but serves no further purpose
- **Your characters have to retrieve the _____ in order to _____!**

Plot

- **Rags To Royalty:** A classic of literature, this Changeling Fantasy is as simple as it is sublime: the beautiful, hard working, put upon commoner girl who never loses her hope will be a princess or queen by the story's end.
- **_____ a commoner girl, is suddenly chosen as a princess candidate due to _____**

Narrative Device

- **Frameup:** Framing someone means providing fake evidence in order to falsely prove someone guilty of a crime. "Frame" here means making someone innocent look guilty by "putting the person in a picture frame of suspicion".
- **_____ finds herself framed by _____ her arch foe!**

Hero

- **Action Mom:** She keeps her role as savior of the day and the world *while raising her children*.
- **Action Mom faces her greatest foe, _____!**

Villain

- **Evil Brit:** A villain who's British.
- **The Evil Brit, _____, has stolen all of the world's supply of _____.**

Character As Device

- **Pride Before A Fall:** A character is introduced as an insufferable jerk; arrogant because of some amazing talent or high station in life.
- **_____ the evil, has the skill to _____**

Characterization Device

- **Flanderization:** The act of taking a single (often minor) action or trait of a character within a work and exaggerating it more and more over time until it completely consumes the character. Most always, the trait/action becomes completely outlandish and it becomes their defining characteristic, turning them into a caricature of their former selves.
- **_____, once known for his enjoyment of bread, became obsessed to the point of fanaticism with a lone loaf.**

Week 2: Character

Let's interview your main character. Here are 5 questions. You can find more resources at <https://mccordlibrary.org/writers-corner>

1. What does your character do when they think no one is looking?

2. Their wallet is stolen. What do they do?

3. What is the one thing they have always wanted to do? Why haven't they done it yet?

4. What book does your character pretend to have read?

5. How does your character feel about bugs?

6. Does your character have any siblings?

7. Who would they turn to if in desperate need of help?

Week 3: Plot/Outline

Fast draft. Do you need to write a draft quick? Try these!

You can find more resources at <https://mccordlibrary.org/writers-corner>

1. Start with a SHORT story pitch. What's your story in 140 characters or less?

2. Expand your pitch into tent pole beats. Expand on each "tent pole" to make a longer pitch. Make each "pole" 140 characters or less.

Opening Scene:

Inciting Incident:

"A" Plot (the main plot):

Stakes:

"B" Plot:

Midpoint:

Stakes Raise:

Character Arc:

Failure:

3. Flesh out your beats into a detailed synopsis (Keep it under 300 characters this time!)

Week 4: Setting

World building. Answer these questions to flesh out your setting. You can find more resources at <https://mccordlibrary.org/writers-corner>

1. What does the calendar look like? Is it different than our Earth calendar? 5 day weeks, 37 hour days?

2. Visualization is your friend! What does everyone look like? What fruit can you find? What do they drive? Sketch a few notes below.

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Week 5: Organizing

Make a plan to plan. You can use note cards, sticky notes and red string, or online programs.

You can find more resources at
<https://mccordlibrary.org/writers-corner>

Some starting notes:

What do people wear? (sketch)

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a sketch. It occupies the lower half of the page.

Does your world have coffee shops? Is caffeine available at all?

What climates does your world have? (ex: Desert, Rainforest, Tundra)

What is your main character's goal?

Who rules the world? _____

Do dogs exist? _____

What might your main character find on the side of the road?

What do people eat for breakfast? (Do they even eat breakfast?)

How much water is available? _____

What kind of music does your world have? Do they even have music?

What color is the sky? _____

