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# *Introduction*

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Everyone has a story to tell. Creative writing is all about the human experience. But those stories should only be told if they are interesting, hold the reader's attention and perhaps imagination, and are truly worthy of telling. How do you develop the skill to write a story that is compelling reading?

Many writers of fiction find it very difficult to get their works published by magazines or publishers. I don't tell them it's easy, because it's not. But I encourage people to write if they have that passion to put words down and create a story—their story.

Develop those writing skills you probably thought were lying there, asleep. Now's the time to wake them up and put them to good use. This *Easy Guide To Creative Writing* will take you through the art of writing fiction—short stories or your novel. You will learn how to develop a plot that will take your characters wherever you want them to go. Develop your characters. Create real people. They will work, they

will have relationships, sometimes broken relationships, sometimes happy ones. They will have hobbies, they will be big or small, tall or short. Readers will be able to say, ‘That sounds like Uncle Don ... ’

Make your characters do exactly as you tell them. They will live, and breathe, just like real people. They will speak like real people. Make your characters old fashioned. Make them sexy. Vibrant. Devious. Unscrupulous. Make them loveable. Make them bore people in their environment. Make them stimulate those around them. Make them ... well, it’s your story.

Your characters must say something. Well, modern characters usually say lots. But it’s how they speak that can convey so much information to the reader. Proper dialogue actually tells the reader something important, and moves the story along.

All stories take place within a setting. Where is your story set? Is it a historic country town? Or squashed into a tiny corner of some horrible, smoky, filthy city?

Develop a setting your readers will be able to relate to. Bring your characters into the setting. Make them do something—let them all fight amongst themselves. Let them set goals. Let them do whatever you want them to do. This

is where the action begins. It's the plot, or the story. And it is here too that you can really let your mind run away with your story.

Your first draft will probably need a lot of work to make it tidy, the sentences crisp and short. You will want to improve the punctuation, remove those loose ends, and the weakness of the characters you created. Edit your story and turn it into a literary masterpiece.

This book, like the others in the series, does not depend on endless exercises. The author considers many such exercises a waste of time, as it is most unlikely that any book, no matter how massive, will contain just the right exercises that a writer will need in writing a particular piece of writing. Instead, it concentrated on the writer's story. This book also assumes a certain degree of understanding of the English language—the normal grammar rules and so on, without which you will have endless difficulties writing anything.

# *Chapter 1 What's It All About?*

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**C**reative writing is all about human experience. It is about cultural values. It is about how the writer sees something in his or her society, or imagines how it could be. Because all fiction—short story or novel—is the creation of an individual, it should be unique. Yes, there are many love stories, murders, tragedies, dramas in life portrayed through literature, but each story has a unique element. That element is the writer's input.

But before we even start, let's put writing—good writing—into perspective.

Most good writing is merely re-writing. You start with a draft, no matter how bad, and you make it good. Very few writers can write well on their first go. Their masterpiece is the result of frequent re-writes, edits, and further re-writes to get it to the high standard where the world reads their compositions and says, 'wow! That's truly wonderful. I wish I could write like that.' And how do they write so well? As I

mentioned ... by re-writing. A good writer will make the end result of their effort look easy, but most likely, it was far from easy, full of frustration and disappointment.

Once you have written that first draft, there's often hours of work ahead of you—as there is for the world's very best writers. The writing—to produce the first draft, is one thing. The main thing is in the re-writing, because that is the effort that is going to pay you well, and result in that hidden genius that is just waiting to come into the real world.

Do you want to become a writer? Of course you do. So how good a writer do you want to become? Well, it depends on how often you are prepared to re-write your work, and edit it, and rewrite ...

Good writing comes from being prepared to throw out that early draft because it didn't lead you to where you hoped it would go. Good writing comes from patience, endless patience, and believing that you can turn that first draft into a masterpiece. Writing and re-writing are almost inseparable. One can't exist without the other.

If you think your first draft is not very good, feel better in knowing that nearly all the great writers in the world felt the same way about their first drafts. But with patience, with determination to reach their goal of becoming a good writer—

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indeed the best writer—they re-wrote as often as their goals dictated.

And only then did they try to get their work into print!

Now, having got all misunderstanding out of the way, let's get on with looking at the writing process.

Literature can show you things you have never seen before and will never forget.

In writing fiction, like all other forms of writing, it is necessary to learn a few simple rules. If you know what you are doing, you can break these rules. Most writers do!

Creative writing is a portrait of life, or a portrait of a small portion of a life, a few minutes or perhaps a few days taken from a person's life, with all sorts of events and people woven around those moments, no matter how long a time they span. But such time excerpts should not be so trite or trivial that a reader could say that they were taken from some newspaper, the article conceived by a journalist who lacked imagination about the possibilities in the real world, where he could have described events that could have happened, or people who might have lived.

This doesn't mean that the creative writer can't make up the story, or the characters, or the scene. After all, that's what creative writing is about—creating events and characters and

putting them together to make them do something interesting.

It is the originality of a story, and of the characters, that readers want, not a regurgitation of some worn-out story rehashed many times over by writers who don't, and can't, develop originality for themselves.

Nevertheless, that time excerpt should be believable, except perhaps in the case of science fiction or fantasy, where just about anything out of this world is allowed to happen, indeed, is encouraged to happen!

There is one thing all creative writers should believe, even if it is the only fact in writing fiction. When you sit down to write, as a writer you should do so not because you have to tell a story, but because you have a particular story to tell. And that story must really want to be told. It must be told. It has to be told. Then, and only then, is it a good time to start writing!

Virtually all fiction (science fiction, romance, suspense, fantasy, adventure, western or anything else you want to write about) follows a formula, but make sure you never tell an editor you are creating formula writing! That's definitely a no-no when it comes to getting your works published. But basically, that magic formula is simply writing about



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experiences editors want for their readers. Writers who give editors what their readers want will attain greater success than if they do not follow this simple formula.

Editors claim to know their readers well. So, in creating your story, you really write it for the editor. Please him or her, and you will please all your other readers. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Many readers do not want literary masterpieces that are going to win prizes for the obscure messages they contain. So write it for the editor, and for your intended readers! The average reader reads only to be entertained. What the reader wants has not varied much over time.

The best way to improve your own writing is to read lots of other stories. Don't read only stories you like. Read stories you think are terrible, and ask yourself why you thought they were terrible. It's like watching terrible television. It is much easier to find fault with something that is bad, rather than finding praise for something you like, unless that is obvious. And then apply your criticism to your own stories when you have finished them.

Having a thousand good ideas in your head is no good. You have to get them on paper. Just sit down and do it. Begin. Don't worry about what the first draft looks like. That can generally be fixed up in the heavy editing when you have

finished the draft. The important thing, as a new writer, is to get those ideas of yours down on paper.

You will get your ideas down, develop those new ideas, and turn them into a plot that interests readers. And then, by improving your work, hopefully get it published.