

The Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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Circulation: 32107 writers, each of them creating a Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.

"Fiction Writing = Organizing + Creating + Marketing"

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- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!

Those of you who have joined in the past month (more than 200 of you signed up in September), welcome to my e-zine!

You should be on this list only if you signed up for it on my web site. If you no longer wish to hear from me, don't be shy -- there's a link at the bottom of this e-mail that will put you out of your misery.

If you need to change your e-mail address, there's a different link at the bottom to let you update my system.

If you missed a back issue, remember that all previous issues are archived on my web site at:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/ezone>

What's in this issue:

The successful novelist needs good organization, good craft, and good marketing. In this issue, we'll talk about each of these in turn.

* Want to know a simple technique for running your writing career like a business? Read my organizing column, "Journaling Your Business."

* Many writers believe that headhopping is a cardinal sin. But is it? If so, why? If not, when is it acceptable? Discover what I've learned by talking to professional novelists -- in my craft article, "Is Headhopping A Sin?"

* Is it better to be first or to be best? Or is that a sensible question? I'll give you my thoughts on that in my marketing column, "Being First."

Are you reading my blog? Join the fun here:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/blog>

2) Organizing: Journaling Your Business

If you're writing fiction and you intend to ever make money at it, then you're in the writing business.

It makes sense to behave like you mean business from the get-go.

Part of being in business is to set goals and then achieve them.

In my experience, one of the best ways to do that is to keep a business journal.

This doesn't have to be complicated. Here's what I do, and it's been working well for me:

At the beginning of this year, I created a document in my word processor called "Business Journal 2012."

Every day that I'm working, the first thing I do is to open the document and scroll down to the end. I type in the date and the day of the week in bold print. Then I spend a couple of minutes freewriting about the things cluttering my brain that I want to get down on paper somewhere. Often these are things I'm worried about or dreams I have for the future. Once they're on paper, my brain can let go of them and focus on the task at hand. I normally freewrite for one or two paragraphs.

If it's the first day of the week, I then make a list of bullet points for each major task I want to get done during the week.

Every day of the week I make a list of bullet points for the tasks I want to get done that day. These are usually baby steps along the way to getting the major tasks for the week done.

I define what success is for the day by adding a note at the bottom that says something like this: "If I get at least five of these done today, then it's a good day."

Then I just start working. When I finish a task, I append the word "Done" after the bullet point for that task and I highlight it in red. The growing set of red "Dones" gives me a psychological boost as I work. The tasks that aren't done at the end of the day will be easy to copy and paste into tomorrow's list.

At the end of the working day, I type in a few notes about what went well and what went wrong. I might also do another minute or so of freewriting on anything that's cluttered my brain while working.

The entire process normally takes about five minutes, and it keeps my day ordered.

It also gives me a very complete record of what I've been working on all year. If I need to know what I was doing in March, it's easy to scroll to March and read a daily account.

Being productive is partly a matter of keeping focused. And you can't focus if your mind is churning with worries, hopes, fears, dreams. Get those on paper and off your mind. Then focus on the task at hand.

If you're going to keep a daily journal, you need to learn how to specify achievable tasks. An achievable task is one you can plausibly get done in the time you have available today.

"Work on my novel" is pretty vague, so it's hard to know at the end of the day whether you deserve to write "Done" after it.

"Spend 3 hours working on my novel" is a lot clearer. Either you worked on the novel for 3 hours or you didn't. If you didn't, you can't write "Done" in red, but you can make a notation that you worked for 2.5 hours and got interrupted by a phone call from Aunt Sally who's hitchhiking across Siberia and needs money. Again. It's not as good as a "Done" but it's partial credit.

"Maintain industry relationships" is a completely useless task for your list because you'll never know when you're done.

"Call my agent and discuss my questions on the Random House contract" has a clear endpoint. At the end of the day, you either did it or you didn't.

When you're in the business of writing, you need to constantly be setting goals and achieving them.

If keeping a business journal sounds like something that will help you do that, then give it a try.

If it doesn't, then don't.

3) Creating: Is Headhopping A Sin?

Every so often the issue of "headhopping" comes up among writers, and the fur soon begins flying. It came up recently in a circle of novelists I belong to.

Some writers insist that there is no sin more vile than headhopping, except possibly teaching the cat how to smoke.

Other writers claim that headhopping is an acceptable practice in romance, where many readers like it and a few editors even insist on it.

Is headhopping a sin? If it's so horrible, then why does Joe Bigname Author hop heads like crazy? Is headhopping just another gotcha invented by writing teachers to put newbie writers in knots? Isn't

headhopping just the same thing as the omniscient viewpoint?

First things first -- we need to define "headhopping."

To do that, let's review the main alternatives. The two most common points of view in fiction are first-person and third-person.

In first-person POV, the author writes as if she is one of the characters, using the pronouns "I" and "me" to refer to that character.

When you write in first-person, you put your reader firmly inside the head of that one character and it would be unnatural to get out.

In third-person POV (the most common POV these days), the author chooses one particular character in each scene to be the viewpoint character. The author uses the pronouns "he" and "him" or else "she" and "her" to refer to that character.

When you write in third-person correctly, you put your reader firmly inside the head of that one character. You show only what that character can see, hear, touch, taste, smell, or feel. Nothing more.

So third-person is very much like first-person, except for the pronouns you use.

Either first-person or third-person puts your reader on intimate terms with the viewpoint character for the course of any given scene. This makes it fairly easy to give your reader a Powerful Emotional Experience, which I believe is the main goal of writing fiction.

Now of course it's possible that a writer will do a bad job of writing either first-person or third-person, which means that the reader will have no Powerful Emotional Experience. But tens of thousands of

professional novelists use these viewpoints effectively because they work.

Now we can define headhopping. Headhopping is like third-person, except that the author uses two or more viewpoint characters within a single scene.

In headhopping, you put your reader firmly inside the head of one character for a while and then hop into another character's head for a while.

Let's look at those questions we raised at the beginning of this article:

Is headhopping OK?

My own opinion is that it's OK to do this IF you do it well. But it isn't easy to do it well, for two reasons.

First, those pesky transitions from one head to another are hard to get right. If you confuse the reader, then that's a speed bump in the reading experience and that's bad.

Second, even if you do the transitions well, doing them too often will make your reader feel jerked around.

Why does Joe Bigname Author use headhopping in his novel?

Good question. Some authors actually don't know any better (and neither do some editors). Some authors know that headhopping is risky but do it anyway because they believe they can do it well and the rewards are worth the risks.

Is headhopping just an invention of selfish writing teachers who want to earn more money by putting up more roadblocks for new writers?

Not that I can tell. Headhopping is hard to do well,

and very often it just plain doesn't work. Headhopping by novice writers almost always doesn't work. Writing teachers spend most of their time working with novice writers, so they spend a lot of time telling them not to hop heads.

Is headhopping exactly the same thing as the omniscient viewpoint that was used so successfully by the great 19th century writers?

In my opinion, no. I believe that omniscient viewpoint means that the narrator is actually omniscient and can know things that NONE of the characters know.

I am tempted to say that all right-thinking people must agree with me, but I know at least one writing teacher who believes that headhopping is the same thing as omniscient.

I'm afraid that rational discussion will never settle this argument. However, kicking, biting, scratching, and hair-pulling might, so I have hope that someday all writers will agree with me on this point.

So should you hop heads? Will you suffer eternal torment if you indulge in the forbidden fruit of headhopping?

My own opinion is that if you're a new writer, then it's best to avoid headhopping, for two reasons:

- * Headhopping requires that you master third person viewpoint AND that you master transitions from one head to the next. It's easier to master one skill than two.

- * Some editors will reject you outright for headhopping.

Once you've learned to write third-person Xtremely well, then you'll have the skills to try hopping heads when you have a scene where you believe it makes sense.

At the very least, if you're going to hop heads, you should be aware that you're doing it, you should have a reason to do so, and you should make it work.

The goal in writing fiction is to give your reader a Powerful Emotional Experience. Do whatever it takes to do that.

4) Marketing: Being First

Being first always earns you extra points.

J.R.R. Tolkien took us in new directions when he published THE HOBBIT and THE LORD OF THE RINGS.

So did Tom Clancy with his military technothrillers.

So did J.K. Rowling with her Harry Potter series.

So did John LeCarre with his literary spy novels.

So did Stephenie Meyer with her Twilight series.

So did Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with Sherlock Holmes.

So did Dan Brown with THE DA VINCI CODE.

You can argue that certain of these authors could have done better on quality. Yes, of course.

But being first means that any copycat who comes after you needs to have much higher quality in order to compete.

And sometimes being first is such a huge advantage that no amount of extra quality by the copycats will be enough to beat you.

Yes, it's good to learn from others. You don't want to be constantly reinventing the wheel. But once the wheel has been invented, making another wheel just like it isn't a big deal.

Whereas making an exciting new improvement to the wheel is a big deal.

The first spoked wheel was a huge improvement over the solid wheel, because it wasted less energy on rotational motion and allowed the chariot to go that much faster.

So learn from others, but go beyond them in some way.

It's much easier to market an innovation than to market a copycat.

If you're going to copy from others, add something new and original to the mix. In one way or another, strive to be first.

Because being first always earns you extra points. Even if you lose points on quality.

5) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com

After attending three terrific conferences in six weeks, I'm at my desk again catching up with life.

I'm currently working on a new edition of my novel *DOUBLE VISION*, to be released in e-book format. I'm also revamping my personal web site.

My book, *WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES*, has been selling well since it began shipping nearly three years ago. For the last year, it's been the hottest selling

fiction-writing book in the Kindle store. You can find out all about WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES here:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/info/wffd>

If you've already bought the book and like it, I'd be delighted if you wrote an Amazon review. Thanks to those of you who already have! I appreciate you!

I've also been gratified at the response to my flagship software product, "Snowflake Pro," which makes it fast, easy, and fun to work through the steps of my wildly popular Snowflake method for designing a novel. You can find out more about Snowflake Pro at:
<http://www.SnowflakeProSoftware.com>

I normally teach at four to six writing conferences per year. In 2012, I've now taught at four conferences and that's all the teaching I'll do this year.

I expect to also attend the Novelists, Inc. conference in New York in October (where I will just be enjoying the workshops and hanging out with writers).

Why don't I teach at more conferences? Because teaching is an incredibly demanding blood sport and it sucks a huge amount of energy out of my tiny brain. I prefer to put my absolute best into a few locations than to muddle through at many.

If you'd like me to teach at your conference in 2013 or beyond, email me to find out how outrageously expensive I am. Please be aware that I'm cutting back on my teaching in 2013 to give me a chance to tackle some long-standing projects.

If you'd just like to hear me teach, I have a number of recordings and e-books that are outrageously cheap. Details here:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/info>

6) Randy Recommends . . .

I don't take paid ads for this e-zine. I do, however, recommend people I like.

I'm a huge fan of Margie Lawson's courses, both the ones she teaches in person and the ones she sells on her web site at
<http://www.MargieLawson.com>

Margie is a psychologist who applies what she knows about human psychology to writing fiction. I believe her material is brilliant. Check her out on her web site!

I've also become a fan of Thomas Umstattd's terrific uncommon-sense thoughts on internet marketing. You can read Thomas's blog at:
<http://www.AuthorMedia.com/blog>

Thomas and his team are especially skilled at helping authors create a powerful web site using WordPress blogs. I am a huge fan of this approach, since it gives the most bang for the buck in an author site. Find out more about this at:
<http://www.AuthorMedia.com>

I'm watching Thomas's latest venture with interest: The BestSeller Society. I don't know enough to have an opinion on it yet, but wanted to mention it because Thomas is a bright guy who usually has smart things to say. More info on it here:
<http://www.best sellersociety.com>

Please be aware that in this section I ONLY recommend folks who have never asked me to do so. Tragically, this means that if you ask me to list you here, I will

be forced to say no.

7) Steal This E-zine!

This E-zine is free, and I personally guarantee it's worth at least 144 times the price. I invite you to "steal" it, but only if you do it nicely . . .

Distasteful legal babble: This E-zine is copyright Randall Ingermanson, 2012.

Extremely tasteful postscript: I encourage you to e-mail this E-zine to any fiction writer friends of yours who might benefit from it. I only ask that you e-mail the whole thing, not bits and pieces. Otherwise, you'll be getting desperate calls at midnight from your friends asking where they can get their own free subscription.

Of course you should not forward this e-mail to people who don't write fiction. They won't care about it.

At the moment, there is one place to subscribe:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>

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Award-winning novelist Randy Ingermanson, "the Snowflake Guy," publishes the free monthly Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, with more than 32,000 readers. If you want to learn the craft and marketing of fiction, AND make your writing more valuable to editors, AND have FUN doing it, visit <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>.

Download your free Special Report on Tiger Marketing and get a free 5-Day Course in How To Publish a Novel.

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