

KINGDOM

pen

VOL 3 ISSUE 3

AUTUMN / WINTER 2013

kingdompen.org

NINJAS IN HINDSIGHT

**HOW TO KEEP YOUR
MIDDLE FROM KILLING
YOUR STORY**

BY BRADEN RUSSELL

BREAKING THE MOLD MAKE YOUR CHARACTERS THEIR OWN PEOPLE

BY ERIC JOHNSON

VIEWING YOUR STORY AS A FORM OF ART EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION THROUGH BEAUTY

BY JOSIAH DEGRAAF

BACKYARD MIRACLE

**SHORT STORY
BY SVEN ALQUIST**

KINGDOM PEN CINEMA: A NEW PLACE FOR ASPIRING FILMMAKERS

>>> NEW COLUMN COMMANDER KEMMITS: YOUR GUIDE TO WARFARE IN WRITING

*Encouraging teen authors to write well,
write purposefully,
and to always write for Christ*



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ABOUT THE COVER

A bustling scene in one of the world's most iconic cities: NYC. Countless books, films and plays have been set here, in a place as rich in literature as in history, music, and art. As Christians, we have no ambitions to make a name for ourselves, but we do work to make Christ's name known, loved, and respected everywhere.

We wait on God to lead us wherever he wants us to go or stay. He is King no matter where we are, and every place is His place. The world with all its dangers becomes safe for us, since we are never alone. Look around you; the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. (*Psalms 24:1*)

Check out more of Rachel's work at
flickr.com/ofloveandbeauty & www.rachelramm.com

photo credit: Rachel Ramm

WORKING WORDS

Esoteric: Only Taught to or understood by members of a special group: hard to understand

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Shining Scars

When it comes to novel writing, actually finishing that first book is hard.

First Novel!

TITLE: Shining Scars **LOCATION:** Malton, eight tenths, England
MAIN CHARACTER: Hag **WORD COUNT:** 25,161
OCCLUSION: Hag and age **COMPLETION TIME FRAME:** Sep. 2011-Aug. 2012

All her life, Hag has been reminded of the ugly scars that cover half of her face. The only life she knows is that of a slave, serving her scarcer master every waking moment. Every day it is burned in her mind that he is the only one capable of loving her and her scars.

But when a thief is caught rifling through the dark wizard Ubel's belt, Hag is shown kindness and Ubel is finding the truth about the man she thought was a monster.

When it comes to novel writing, actually finishing that first book is hard.

A HEART DIVIDED

The year is 1864, and the American Civil War has torn apart the life of newly orphaned Hetti Brooks. Hetti is a spunky, passionate 16-year-old who cares deeply about those she loves. Filled with anger at the war for killing so much of her family, she doesn't understand why everyone has to sacrifice so much for their beliefs. However, there is one thing Hetti herself believes in and cares about more than anything else in the world: her brother Casper.

When Casper insists on becoming a soldier in the war, Hetti goes to desperate lengths to protect him. Her plans seem to work...but can Hetti continue to satisfy the malicious Colonel Attie as with what he demands? And what happens when Hetti finds her heart shifting loyalty to the enemy side? Her goals suddenly not so clear, Hetti's heart is thrown into turmoil. Could it be that there really is a cause in this war worth fighting for, worth dying for...worth giving up Casper for? Hetti must accept the true purpose and power of love - both for one's family, and for one's country. She must realize that true love will conquer over everything, even death.

First Novel!

TITLE: A Heart Divided **LOCATION:** Virginia, Civil War Era
MAIN CHARACTER: Hetti Brooks **WORD COUNT:** 46,108
OCCLUSION: War and age **COMPLETION TIME FRAME:** Sep. 2011-June, 2012

Sarah McCrinky is 16 years old and lives in Virginia with her 8 siblings, of whom she is the second oldest. She has enjoyed writing from a very young age, but it was when she was diagnosed with a challenging chronic illness at age 12 that the discovery is as a passion. Using stories, poems, and essays to share her experiences with others and tell them about how she since become one of the greatest joys of her life. Sarah also loves reading, philosophy, and helping and caring those around her, and she hopes to become a nurse after she finishes high school.

DAUGHTER OF EURIVION

Ever been drawn to the mountainside with her adopted parents, going to school, spending much of her time with her brother, but never truly belonging anywhere. She will always wear the red dress. Her family is the missing Princess Eurivion, find her parents and restore stability and safety to the kingdom? Can she break free from merely being a pawn on the chessboard and actually succeed in her quest?

First Novel!

TITLE: Daughter of Eurivion **LOCATION:** Eurivion
MAIN CHARACTER: Eurivion **WORD COUNT:** 12,743
OCCLUSION: School/pen time/dable hand **COMPLETION TIME FRAME:** Oct. 2011 - Feb. 2012

When I first began outlining Daughter of Eurivion, I was disappointed to be out of the fantasying by that I could never truly finish it and put up with the demand for originality. I determined to get my idea (that, no matter how often it had been used before) with that I had been established, my been-forming began producing books and comic books.

"The hardest part was still plugging away even when I would have been to get them over pain to the point I don't know if I would have made it without the encouragement of my sister, Sarah."

FIRST NOVEL!

WHEN IT COMES TO NOVEL WRITING, ACTUALLY FINISHING THAT FIRST BOOK IS HARD. Kingdom Pen wants to acknowledge the landmark accomplishment of completing a novel for the first time. Any KP subscriber who has recently finished their first novel may submit their synopsis to be featured in the magazine. Each First Novel will be given a whole page in the magazine, fully illustrated to help bring your story to life! We want to celebrate with you, so don't hesitate to email us at kingdompenmag@gmail.com



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SANDBAGGING

Beginning writers make a lot of mistakes. From improper pacing to shallow characters, young writers are going to make mistakes. It's the only way to grow. All of these weaknesses can be overcome; however, in my opinion, there is one weakness--the greatest weakness of young writers—which can derail any possibility of improvement.

The biggest weakness I've seen in beginning writers (and I'm guilty of it too) is sandbagging.

Now what is "sandbagging"? Sandbagging is building up your defenses and lowering the expectations of another person. This almost always manifests itself when a young writer sends me part of their story to read. They'll say something along the lines of, "Here you go, it's absolutely horrible, you'll understand once you read it."

I used to do this myself, but I've stopped (or I've at least tried to stop). Yet so many young writers feel the need to lower their reader's expectations before they read it; that way, if they don't like it—we theorize—that's okay because I know it's terrible already and it was nothing special anyway.

In my experience, there are two reasons writers sandbag (even if they don't consciously realize they're doing it). There are those of us who sandbag, but only to people who we know will be merciful (or at least won't ridicule us for our writing.) Thus, when we hear positive feedback after the low expectations we've set, we seem like writing gurus.

"Wow! She is such a good writer but she thinks she's terrible! She must know something I don't know!"

Sandbagging, in this case, is really an expression of pride, I believe. We look good when we criticize our writing and others praise it.

The other reason for sandbagging is that we are afraid. We want to downplay our writing to keep ourselves protected from any criticism that may be lurking in the bushes. We build our sandbag walls to brace ourselves against the onslaught of negative feedback. Yes, we writers are an insecure bunch.

Whether you sandbag for the first reason, the second reason, or both, it needs to stop.

Now, what's so wrong with sandbagging? If sandbagging really was just a mechanism to brace against criticism, then I might say that it's okay, but sandbagging is rarely as simple as that.

Unrealistic:

Sandbagging is hardly ever realistic. If we want to improve as writers, we have to stay real. Sandbagging usually involves making up problems that aren't there, or overreacting to real issues. This can either be out of fear, pride, or both. Whatever combination, when we sandbag, we weave a protective web of self-deception. Consciously or subconsciously, we want to hide from the truth, because we fear that truth will be bad, or horribly depressing. That

won't help us improve. We don't want to be blind to our mistakes or our strengths.

As a general rule of thumb, things are never as bad as they seem, nor are they as good as we think. Keep that in the back of your mind when evaluating your own writing, and try to objectively evaluate where the weaknesses are. Objectively critiquing our own writing is extremely difficult, which is why finding others to read and critique your writing is paramount to your development. Speaking of others...

Inconsiderate:

Sandbagging is inconsiderate to others. They don't want to hear how deplorable your novel is before you shove it off on them to read. You're pretty much manipulating them into going easy on your novel, which you don't want! They may overlook faults in the story because they know how negative you already feel towards it. Your poor critiquer may feel the need to reassure you that your novel has potential, rather than provide you accurate feedback. So please, be

We build our sandbag walls to brace ourselves against the onslaught of negative feedback. Yes, writers are an insecure bunch.

WORKING WORDS

Capricious: Subject to, led by, or indicative of a sudden, odd notion or unpredictable change

nice and don't put your reader in an awkward position by sandbagging them.

It's weak:

Sandbagging is weak and fearful. Don't be weak and fearful.

"But I am weak and fearful..."

Oh! There you go again! It's weak and fearful to say that you're weak and fearful. That's the easy way out. You don't have to be that way. You get to choose!

Even if your writing is astonishingly deplorable (which, if you're reading this, I highly doubt it is) there is still no reason to be insecure about yourself or your writing. Everyone has to start somewhere, and you have to write to get better. You don't need to apologize for where you are; in the same way, you shouldn't brag for where you are. It's two sides of the same coin.

It harms your development:

One of the most important aspects to becoming good at anything, is attitude. A positive attitude of excitement leads to hope and motivation. You can focus on enjoying writing for the sake of writing,

and not get caught up in the quality of it. This allows you to achieve the quantity you need to produce quality. Negativity shuts down inspiration and creativity. Don't be ashamed of your writing, no matter how good or "bad" you think it is. You can't afford it.

Stop with the sandbagging. Be realistic, and realize the reality is that it takes time and hard work to become good. But if you allow yourself to indulge in negative thoughts about your writing, you will lose the desire to improve and become good. It's hard to start the climb to greatness when the wall looks insurmountable. You have to start at the beginning, and take it one step at a time.

If you stay positive, and keep practicing and working hard, it's not a matter of if you will become a great writer, but when.



REAGAN RAMM
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Former all-conference high school football player turned writer, *Reagan Ramm* graduated from Ramm Preparatory Academy in October of 2012, after partially enrolling in both homeschool and the local public schools. He is in the process of finishing his fourth novel and has many other novels in the works, along with several non-fiction book ideas. To sample his non-fiction writing on life and culture, check out his blog: reaganramm.com. In addition to writing, Reagan also enjoys making movies with his siblings, and making music with his indie electronic project (Andromeda Coast), which he started in the Spring of 2012.

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NINJAS *in* HINDSIGHT

BY BRADEN RUSSELL

HOW TO KEEP YOUR MIDDLE FROM KILLING YOUR STORY



We writers are like tightrope walkers. We can do beginnings and endings just fine, but when we get to the middle, things get a little wobbly.

Most of us, anyway. If you're one of those rare individuals who can churn out brilliant middle sections with grace and ease, multiple appendages tied behind your back, a disdainful smile curling your mouth, then congratulations and more power to you. Now please exit the room--you're making the rest of us nauseous.

The rest of you, stick around. Thou art my brothers and sisters in affliction, those of us who slog through our middles with much groaning and gnashing of teeth, each keystroke a torturous plea to our snoring muse to please, please wake up and help us through this. Because we have absolutely, positively no idea where we're going with this thing. It stinketh.

And I'm not just talking about story middles, either. There is also the smaller middle, the part that comes between two set plot points. Here's what I mean.



No, you're not back in Algebra 1. These are two separate events in a story, Point A leading into Point B. In Point A your hero has been slammed with a completely unpredictable situation in which two bone-chilling consequences lie on either side of an unavoidable decision. Point B is the pride and joy of your right

brain, a plot twist of ginormous proportions.

But something happened between those two points that brought the unbearable stench of lameness into your story, and no matter how hard you fan, it lingers in the air like the reminder of the trash can you should have emptied two weeks ago. And it's depressing. Frankly, it's making you wonder why you ever bothered with this novelling thing in the first place.

The problem has nothing to do with your plot points. They're good. They're original. The problem is that tiny innocent-looking horizontal line connecting the two. Therein lies the stinkage.

The problem has nothing to do with your plot points. They're good. They're original. The problem is that tiny innocent looking horizontal line connecting the two.

Let me backtrack a little bit. You know that in Point A your hero, a bold young ninja, has been slapped with the icky news that a massive army of mutant killer koala bears is five minutes away from demolishing his unsuspecting home village. He is given the news by his aged Sensei uncle, who has developed a severe ingrown toe hair that renders him helpless to do anything but hoarsely bid his young protégé to go and warn their beloved village. Our eager hero is just about to run and do just that, when he remembers something that turns his tender young blood to blueberry slushee. His fiance had informed him that morning that she was going to spend the day frolicking among the northern rice fields--incidentally, the direction that the mutant koala bears will be rampaging from. He hesitates for several excruciating moments, then runs off toward the rice fields, confident that he can warn the love of his life and still get to the village in time.

Fast forward to Plot B. Having failed to save his true love or the village, our hero wakes from unconsciousness on the cold stone floor of a subterranean dungeon. In sweeps the Evil Ninja Overlord of Shocking and Unmitigated Evilness, who removes his hood and reveals himself to be... (your reader waits with bated breath) ...our hero's Sensei uncle, who apparently has quite a gift for faking ingrown toe hairs.

WORKING WORDS

Obsequious: Characterized by or showing servile compliance or deference; fawning

(Okay, so perhaps the proportions of ol' Point B aren't particularly ginormous after all, but we can work with it.)

Now that we have our two plot points, all we need to do is connect them. We stare at our computer screen, scratch our noggin, and finally, itching to move on, slap down a quickie scene that we don't have to think too hard about.

Our hero is running across the northern rice fields, his frolicking fiancée in sight, when he trips and falls, knocking himself out. Minutes later, the Koalas sweep by, kill his true love, raze the village, and take his unconscious body back to their leader. Right?

(Hint: Nope.)

That little horizontal line connecting Point A and Point B is just that--a short, straight line. It doesn't swerve, it doesn't deviate from its businesslike path. And this is what causes one of the most common writerly problems known to mankind. We use up

all our brain-juice thinking up genius plot twists, and then don't have the creative energy to connect them with anything but that boring, predictable horizontal line.

How do we fix this? With a simple tool called reverse outlining.

Reverse outlining has become one of the favorite weapons in my creative arsenal. Don't let the name put you off if you are of that spontaneous camp known affectionately as "pantsers"--this technique works for outliners and pantsers alike.

To demonstrate, let's go back to our ninja story. Our first impulse might be to start at Point A, where he's deciding to go warn his fiancée, and try to shove ahead from there, figuring out the story in sequential order. This very well could work, but there's also a good chance that we'll just end up writing something as lame and groan-inducing as him tripping and knocking himself out on a rice plant.



Enter reverse outlining. Instead of trying to cram in some kind of filler scene to get us to the exciting stuff in Point B, we go to Point B and tell the story *backwards*.



So let's go to Point B, where the hero is lying chained in his uncle's dungeon, and look back. How did we get here? Well, the Koalas carried us in. What happened before that? He must have been captured, probably with some kind of big dramatic fight scene. But how did that happen? Wasn't he confident that he could move fast enough to get to his fiancée and the town in time? Maybe he just overestimated his speedy legs, but that's too boring to be the main impediment of the scene. Something must have happened to delay him in the rice fields. Maybe his dimwitted fiancée was too wrapped up in her frolicking to listen to a word he was saying. Or maybe she had a good reason to stay in

the rice fields, one that he disagreed with. Maybe she was secretly on his uncle's side, and, while tossing an appropriately devious and scornful laugh in his face, told him so. This would be more than enough of a shock to delay our poor hero long enough to be swept up by the hordes of ravening Koalas.

Or... what if the fiancée was really an illusion the diabolical uncle had planted in the hero's mind many years ago with his twisted psychological powers, and never really existed at all?

This completely changes the genre of our novel, but you get the idea. Corny though it be, it sure beats that wimpy little hori-

zontal line we started with.

This is a very simple technique, and it may not seem earth-shaking or revolutionary enough to make that much of a difference, but there's a very good reason why it works so darn well.

It all comes back to the rule of Hindsight 20/20. Looking ahead and trying to estimate what the future may hold will always be foggy and uncertain, at best. But looking back at the past, at events that have already taken place, the memories come into place with a satisfying click, and things that might have confused the bejeezers out of you at one time all make sense now. It works the same way in your stories, as weird as that sounds. It's almost a psychological gimmick.

This technique becomes invaluable when you hit your Big Middle--for most novels, that's the seventy-five percent or so of story that lies between Act One and Act Three. This is where the fun stuff happens. This is where we get to write the epic battles, the breathtaking chase scenes, and all those fight sequences we've choreographed in the shower. Unfortunately, this is also the part that makes most of us want to strangle our fledgling story with its own entrails. Because Act Two is where the problem of Boring Horizontal Line becomes epidemic. We have our plot twists, our little black dotted points on our storyline, but now they're spread out over seventy-five percent of the novel. And we're racking our brains trying to figure out how to get from insanely clever plot twist No. 1 to epic battle to ravaging defeat to astonishing discovery and insanely clever plot twist No. 2.

TOO MUCH, our tortured brain sobs, and we either write an anti-climactic midget of an Act Two, or we give up and pack our poor unfinished works of fiction off to the Home for Abandoned Stories like the worst parents in the world.

That's what happened to me in my first novel, *The Nephilim Project*. At the end of Act One, my hero, Greg, was running for his life, dogged by creepy shaven-head dudes who wanted him for a nefarious and top-secret genetic experiment. Because of a last-ditch plan that cost him the life of his mentor, Greg was able to make contact with an underground resistance group who smuggled him back to their headquarters, where he was safe...

QUOTES

"In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible"
George Orwell

OF THE CRAFT

Looking ahead and trying to estimate what the future may hold will always be foggy and uncertain, at best.

but not really, because unbeknownst to any of the good guys, the creepy shaven-head dudes had managed to get a spy inside the rebel headquarters.

And then I hit the Big Middle. I knew that Act Three would open with Greg finally captured by the bad guys, lying on his back in a bare concrete cell with a cracked rib and a majorly pouty attitude. I also knew how that would escalate into my climax, then glide down into a satisfying last scene. I just had no clue what would happen before that. I didn't know how to fill Act Three.

So I had Greg chilling with the rebels for a couple of chapters, recovering from a couple of injuries and really just killing time. Then he decided to volunteer for an undercover operation (of a degree of lameness that prevents me from disclosing the full details here) and the rebels are all gung-ho about letting the untrained newbie go take care of this super important thing, and they send him on his merry way in a car. Which is driven, incidentally, by the evil spy. One chase scene later, Greg is captured.

Can anyone say convenient? Not to mention short. My Big Middle had become a Dinkie and Most Unimpressive Middle.

When I went back to rewrite the novel, it became clear that Act Two was going to need some serious beefing up. After a L.M. Montgomery-esque period of languishing in the Depths of Despair, I decided to try reverse outlining.

First I went to the beginning of Act Three. Greg captured, broken rib, concrete cell. How did he get there? Well, duh. He was dumped there by the bad guys. How did they manage to capture him? They chased him down and cornered him somewhere, right? Which meant he had to be out in the open, not hiding in the rebel headquarters where he was safe. Why the heck was he running around outside, where he knew he ran the risk of being nabbed? Forget the lame secret mission thing for now--let's give him another reason for putting himself in danger. Is he looking for something, or somebody? Maybe he's on a mission so deeply personal that he snuck back out of the rebel headquarters to accomplish it.

Or maybe he was running from something other than the creepy shaven-head dudes. Maybe it was something he had

WORKING WORDS

Polyglot: 1) Speaking or writing several languages; 2) Composed of numerous linguistic groups

stumbled onto inside the rebel headquarters, something so [fill in the blank] that he would sooner risk capture by his enemies than stick around there. Now that opens a whole new world of possibilities... and there's a chance that once I figure out what this nameless thing is, I could have a whole lot more material to construct my Act Two with.

So that's reverse outlining for ya. Try it, just once. Who knows, it may give you that elusive twist you've been scouring your brain for.

Oh, and if you ever figure out what happens to our ninja friend, let me know. I'm stuck there.



Braden Russell wrote his first “novel” with a red felt-tip marker on construction paper when he was six years old. It is believed by some that whiffing toxic fumes from the aforementioned marker permanently altered his brain, but regardless of the reason he has been writing ever since. To date he has finished a plethora of short stories and one-and-a-half novels, with the fundamental goal of providing God-honoring, quality fiction to a broken world. When not writing stories or songs, he plays music, works on his family’s Oklahoma farm, and produces comedic videos for the web.

EXERPT FROM *Treasure Island* BY ROBERT LEWIS STEVENSON CHAPTER ONE

Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, and the rest of thses gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island, and that only because there is still treasure not yet lifted, I take up my pen, in the year of grace 17--, and go back to the time when my father kept the Admiral Benbow Inn and the brown old seaman with the saber cut first took up his lodging under our roof.

I remember him as if it were yesterday. He came plodding to the inn door, his sea chest following behind him in a handbarrow -- a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brownd man, his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulder of his soiled blue coat; his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails; and the saber cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the cove and whistling to himself as he did so and then breaking out in that old sea song that he sang so often afterward while he stayed with us at the Admiral Benbow,

“Fifteen men on the Dead Men’s Chest --
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!”

WORKING WORDS

Tergiversation: 1) Evasion of straight-forward action or clear-cut statement: equivocation. 2) Desertion of a cause, position, party, or faith



BREAKING THE MOLD

Making Your Characters Their Own People

BY ERIC JOHNSON

Developing characters is one of the most important things you can do—for any story. This is perhaps one of the most exciting parts of the pre-production phase; the process is easy for some writers and challenging for others. However, I have discovered that for almost any writer, there is a tendency to develop characters that are very similar to one another. This can have a very negative effect on the characters, the story, and even the writer.

If you're like me, you may notice that your male characters tend to have brown hair and your female characters are usually blonde. Or perhaps you've realized that all of your protagonists are courageous and their sidekicks are more hesitant. Maybe all of your villains wear black. Then again, maybe not, but even so, according to my hypothesis, if I dug deep enough I could find a recurring theme through most of your characters. This isn't always a bad thing, as the writer is always going to come through in the characters in some way. My point is this: too much of this and you're going to end up with the same character twice.

Going back to the hair color example, you may wonder why it even matters what the hero's hair looks like. Well, I'll tell you why. I got through five completed novels (and novellas) and numerous uncompleted ones before I realized something: if I were to give a couple of my main characters personality tests, they'd probably

“We do not need to proselytise either by our speech or by our writing. We can only do so really with our lives. Let our lives be open books for all to study.” - Mahatma Gandhi

QUOTES

OF THE CRAFT

Try something drastically different from what has become the ‘norm’.

end up with mostly all of the same answers as the other one. In the same way if I lined them up, they'd be (for practical purposes) indistinguishable (except, perhaps younger or older.) I realized then that I had to break the mold somehow. The first thing I did was start a brand new novel with a brand new main character. I gave her red hair as opposed to the typical blonde, and things took off from there.

This was significant not because the appearance of the character changed, but because this character was now officially an individual—her own person. She was no longer a character that could be confused with any of my others—even on a surface level. I decided to do this because I realized the importance of doing anything at all different from what I typically did.

After establishing her as someone different from the rest, I gave her an entirely unique personality that made her stand out from my other characters like a person wearing neon in a crowd of people wearing black. At this point I started work on writing a story with a character that I still look on as one of my favorites. Even with a bit of a sloppy, underdeveloped plot, I was able to write thousands of words purely because I was intrigued with who this character really was.

Maybe your example isn't quite as extreme, and maybe you do ensure that your characters aren't caught with the same hair, eyes, voice, etc. Even so, I would encourage you to try something drastically different from what has become the “norm” to you personally. Even small, somewhat insignificant changes can make a great effect on how you view your character as separated from

BREAKING THE MOLD BY ERIC JOHNSON

Write a character that you'd want to meet (or would be afraid to meet).
Try something different

the rest. If all of your characters like rock music, try writing one that listens to country. If they all prefer to be alone, write one that thrives in a social setting. One of these changes may have a great effect on their personality, or they may change little as far as the story is concerned. The point is changing it up and giving the character more and more of their own personality and less and less of yours. The larger the split, the better the character will be.

On the flip side, maybe you do need to make significant changes from one character to the next. Maybe your next main character should be a coward where your last was courageous. Or maybe they should be physically strong where the last was not. If you're stuck in a rut, it might take drastic changes to get

WORKING WORDS
Panegyric: A public speech or published text in praise of someone or something.

out. Writing different types of characters can be challenging and unfamiliar, but even a failed attempt at this will do more good than harm. Besides, if you're stuck somewhere anyway, it might just be worth a shot.

This entire article can be summed up in a few words: write weird characters. Few notable stories have been written about totally average people. Write a character that you'd want to meet (or would be afraid to meet). Try something different and see where it takes you. You might end up with a few thousand words and a "learning experience" or you might just write your new favorite character. Either way, take the chance. You (probably) won't regret it.

Writing has interested *Eric Johnson* for a long time, but it was in April of 2010 that he decided to start getting serious about it. He finished his first novella in the summer of that year, and has since finished several more novels and novellas of varying lengths. Writing has become one of the most important things he ever decided to learn, and he now hopes to use the skills he has started to learn throughout the rest of his life. He lives in Minnesota with his parents and his one brother. Some of his other interests are filmmaking, marketing, and almost anything involving creativity."

EXERPT FROM
Little Women
BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT
CHAPTER ONE

Margaret, the eldest of the four, was sixteen, and very pretty, being plump and fair, with large eyes, plenty of soft brown hair, a sweet mouth, and white hands, of which she was rather vain. Fifteen-year old Jo was very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt; for she never seemed to know what to do with her long limbs, which were very much in her way. She had a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp grey eyes, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns fierce, funny, or thoughtful. Her long thick hair was her one beauty; but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way. Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a fly-away look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman, and didn't like it. Elizabeth -- or Beth, as everyone called her -- was a rosy, smooth-haired, bright-eyed girl of thirteen, with a shy manner, a timid voice, and a peaceful expression, which was seldom disturbed. Her father called her "Little Tranquillity," and the name suited her excellently; for she seemed to live in a happy world of her own, only venturing out to meet the few whom she trusted and loved. Amy, though the youngest, was a most important person -- in her own opinion, at least. A regular snow maiden, with blue eyes, and yellow hair curling on her shoulders; pale and slender, and always carrying herself like a young lady mindful of her manners.

COMMANDER KEMMITS: YOUR GUIDE TO WARFARE IN WRITING

BY DANIEL KEMMITS

NEW COLUMN!

GOOD ORDER
AND
STEADFASTNESS

We are at war.

It is a war in which there are no civilians and no neutral territory. As Christians we are warriors under the banner of a victorious King. Our enemy, Satan, is already defeated.

But he is not destroyed. Don't make the mistake of thinking that Satan will rest from battle. He launches offensives and counterattacks every hour of every day.

Yet in the Church—the Army of God Himself—this undeniable truth is denied. It is scorned, and spurned, and hidden. The Gospel of Peace that the Apostle Paul, one of God's mightiest champions, spoke of to the Ephesians has today become the Gospel of Passivity. Weakness has replaced Meekness in the lives of Chris-

tians. Not only do we not take the fight to Satan, we willingly let his forces overrun our lives, homes, and churches. We welcome in his worldly minions and obey the orders of his demonic commanders.

These actions are manifestly against our orders. In Colossians 2:5, Paul uses two very specific words. Though translated steadfastness and good order in the New King James, they are much more graphic in the original Greek. These two terms are *stereoma* and *taxis* respectively. *Stereoma*, translated as "steadfastness," refers to the maintenance of a unified battle front, with all soldiers facing the enemy and ready for combat. It is only used once in the entire New Testament; in Colossians 2:5.

Taxis, translated as "good order,"

conveys not only an image but a command. The image is of soldiers standing in disciplined ranks. The command is to never desert our posts, surrender, or retreat. Both of these words, together with many others in the New Testament, convey the image of the Church as a spiritual army arrayed in well-ordered and disciplined ranks against the Devil's forces.

Why is this of importance to Christian writers? Does this mean we can only write stories about war and death?

No. What it means is that we must at all times remember the military nature of our Christian life. Everything we do in some way either holds Satan at bay or opens a gap in the lines that he will exploit without mercy. This doesn't just include writing; it is of the utmost importance to the craft.

GOOD ORDER AND STEADFASTNESS BY COMMANDER KEMMITS

Words have immense power. They are the tools God Himself used to create the entire universe. The Word is one of Christ's titles (John 1:1.) Spoken words were God's favorite method of communicating favor and judgment to His people, and He has given us our marching orders in the form of the Bible; a book of books.

So how do we apply this to our lives? Some people like to use the term "mission field" to refer to their calling as writers. I use a different word: Battlefield. Learn to view yourself as a commanding officer. Your characters are your soldiers. Your words are bullets, bombs, and artillery shells. Each syllable you pen, each scene you type, is like a projectile fired from a gun. Your worldview determines your aim and thus where your shell will land. If you are guided by the Holy Spirit, then your shots will strike the enemy lines. If you allow yourself to be influenced by your foe, then your shells will land on your own troops and endanger your comrades. If you take care to craft your stories in such a way as to always be pointing your guns at the enemy, you will help create and maintain the unified front that Paul speaks of. Even if none of your characters ever fire a shot.

Something else you must consider is the difference between tactical and strategic thinking. Strategic thinking involves your overall objectives for the entire campaign or war. It is taking a big-picture view of the conflict. Tactical thinking is a microscopic view that analyzes a specific engagement between smaller forces and directs limited actions. Despite common misuse, these two terms are not in fact synonymous.

They are important because of the different emphases a tactical versus strategic approach will place on the same situation. Strategically, we must remember that Satan is defeated. He cannot ultimately claim a true believer whom Christ has called. He

cannot permanently pull them away and drag them down into Hell.

But tactically, he can still inflict horrific damage on believers' bodies and souls. As the dark god of this world he exercises limited control over our fallen surroundings and can inflict bodily sickness and

Strategic thinking involves your overall objectives for the entire campaign or war.

Tactical thinking is a microscopic view that analyzes a specific engagement between smaller forces and directs limited actions.

pain. He can lead us astray into sins that not only affect us but also harm others. In so doing he carves out gaps in our defenses, using them to access other Christians to whom he once had only limited access because we stood in his way.

Each story we as Christians write is a tactical engagement and must be viewed accordingly. If we attempt to attack the entire enemy front with a single book—confronting every sin we can think of in the space of eighty thousand words or so—the result can be compared to attacking a tank with a pistol. The result will be laughable and humiliating at best. It is more liable to be dangerous and devastating. However, if we instead think of each story as an attack on specific manifestations of darkness we are far more likely to

achieve lasting success.

This is indeed the approach directed for us in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 10:4, Paul says that our spiritual weapons are useful for "pulling down strongholds." The language here is that of siege warfare; surrounding a single target and hammering it until it is destroyed. In a real siege, the more an attacking army is spread out, the easier it is for the defender or his outside allies to break the siege and scatter the enemy. If we keep each individual story, poem, or non-fiction piece focused on a specific sin to combat—and more importantly, a specific virtue to praise—we will be conducting an effective siege. This is a prime example of tactical thinking in pursuit of our overall strategic goals.

Though most of the warfare references in the New Testament are metaphorical, this is not to say that it is unchristian to write stories of physical warfare. Yes, we do serve the "Prince of Peace." But in Exodus 15:3 God says: "The LORD is a Man of war; the LORD is His name." Elsewhere in the Bible (Joshua 6:21, 7:2, 1 Sam. 15:2-3, Luke 22:36 to name a few,) physical violence is allowed or even commanded. Indeed, Christ Himself engaged in physical violence. At two different points in His earthly ministry He cleared the Temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:13-16.) The first time, recorded in John 2, He actually crafts a weapon—a whip—with His own hands. He is not the effeminate "guru" teacher of most modern films and artwork. He was "a Man of war; the LORD is His name." But even this forceful confrontation between Jesus and the merchants of the Temple was for a higher purpose. It was pursuing the righteousness of God (John 2:16.) It

QUOTES

"Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life."
Confucius

OF THE CRAFT

GOOD ORDER AND STEADFASTNESS BY COMMANDER KEMMITS

is of the utmost importance to remember that we fight not for fighting's sake, but for the ultimate goal of God's peace. And we must always bear in mind that while our opponents may wear physical masks, we really fight "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12)

Comrades in Christ, our war is one with eternal consequences, and it is not always easy to distinguish friend from foe. We are to love our enemies even as we are called by God's might to make war upon Satan and sin. "Hate the sin, not the sinner," is sometimes almost impossible to implement because of our own sin na-

ture and the depraved state of our opponents. This is why we must tread carefully and aim our words well. Satan is a master of misdirection and manipulation. He has twisted language so as to make vocabulary a minefield, and he hides his forces among those of his enemies to ensure the maximum amount of collateral damage. This is why we must be not only unified and courageous, but also ask God for His wisdom and guidance, so that we do not waste our ammunition on our allies.

With this column I'll be helping those of you who do choose to write stories with real, physical combat to write such confrontations well. But whether your story is about a foot soldier fighting for his life on the front lines, or a civilian dealing with

a devastating spiritual crisis at home, remember that life is a battle, words are our weapons, and God is a King and Captain who never leaves his soldiers to fend for themselves.

Have questions about writing warfare or military? Email Kingdom Pen and Commander Kemmits may just write his next dispatch in answer.

kingdompenmag@gmail.com

WORKING WORDS

Rainbetical: Arranged in the order of the colors in a rainbow.



Daniel Kemmits, age 18, is a Christian homeschool graduate who lives in southern Minnesota with his family. He is enrolled in CollegePlus, with plans to major in History. Daniel has always loved stories, especially adventures. Before he could write he would make up plots and act them out. Once he could write he began putting these stories down on paper. He still keeps many of these plot fragments, and returns to them for inspiration. Within the last couple years Daniel has completed several short stories and two novels; one of them a Western, the other the first in a Military Science Fiction trilogy. He has more short stories and novels in various stages of development. He has had one piece of non-fiction writing purchased for publication; an article about his Russian rifle from World War II.

BAD... is good

IT'S OKAY
TO WRITE
POORLY

by Reagan Ramm

“Bad isn’t bad. Sometimes bad is good.”

—Daniel Schwabauer

I’ve heard it many-a-time, “My writing is terrible!” Almost every beginning writer thinks that their writing is an abomination at one point or another. I’m sure you’ve expressed such sentiments about your own writing before. Or perhaps you’ve talked to a writing friend who has lamented over the sad state of their writing. While I think some writers do this in order to fish for complements, many really are in despair about the quality of their writing, and often for good reason.

It’s disheartening when you think about how much of your time, effort, and soul you’ve poured into your writing only to come to the conclusion that it isn’t very good. To give up all the blood, sweat, and tears and not see the results is one of the most frustrating things I’ve ever experienced. It can even be enough to make you quit writing completely.

I just returned from the One Year Adventure Novel summer writing workshop in Kansas, and while all of the sessions were incredible, the one that stood out most to me was the last

session. During this session, Mr. S said the profound words which I have quoted above, “Bad isn’t bad. Sometimes bad is good.” Mr. Schwabauer specifically asked us not to post this quote by him on the internet, but I couldn’t resist.

Of course, the context of that sentence is what is most important. Mr. S wasn’t talking ethics, he was talking writing. I wish all of you could have listened to the entirety of his talk, but you will have to settle for my meager summary.

Mr. S began by explaining how “Creating” and “Analyzing” happen separately. During creation, God first created, and then analyzed, concluding that His creation was “good”. This was God, though. Of course His creation was going to be good. Still, Mr. S insisted, this was the method God used. Perhaps we should try it on for size. We have to let ourselves create, first. We can’t be concerned about whether or not it’s “good” or “bad”. The mere act of creating is good, because it is helping us improve and we are using the creativity God blessed us with.

“Creativity is impossible when wrong or bad aren’t options,” Mr. S continued. It can be utterly paralyzing to

sit down
to write
and then
realize

WORKING WORDS

Pariah: An outcast

that whatever you type is going to be “wrong” or “bad”. “What’s the point?” you might think. Thus, you sit staring at a blank word document, cursor blinking impatiently, until you finally give up.

“Creativity requires risk, and risk sometimes means failure. You have to create bad things before you can create good things.” Thus, creating something “bad” is actually very worthwhile! You have to get all of your bad stuff out of the way before you can be good. Not writing is the worst thing you could do, because you can’t get any better unless you practice. You’re just delaying yourself from becoming good. You’re prolonging your time as a “bad” writer.

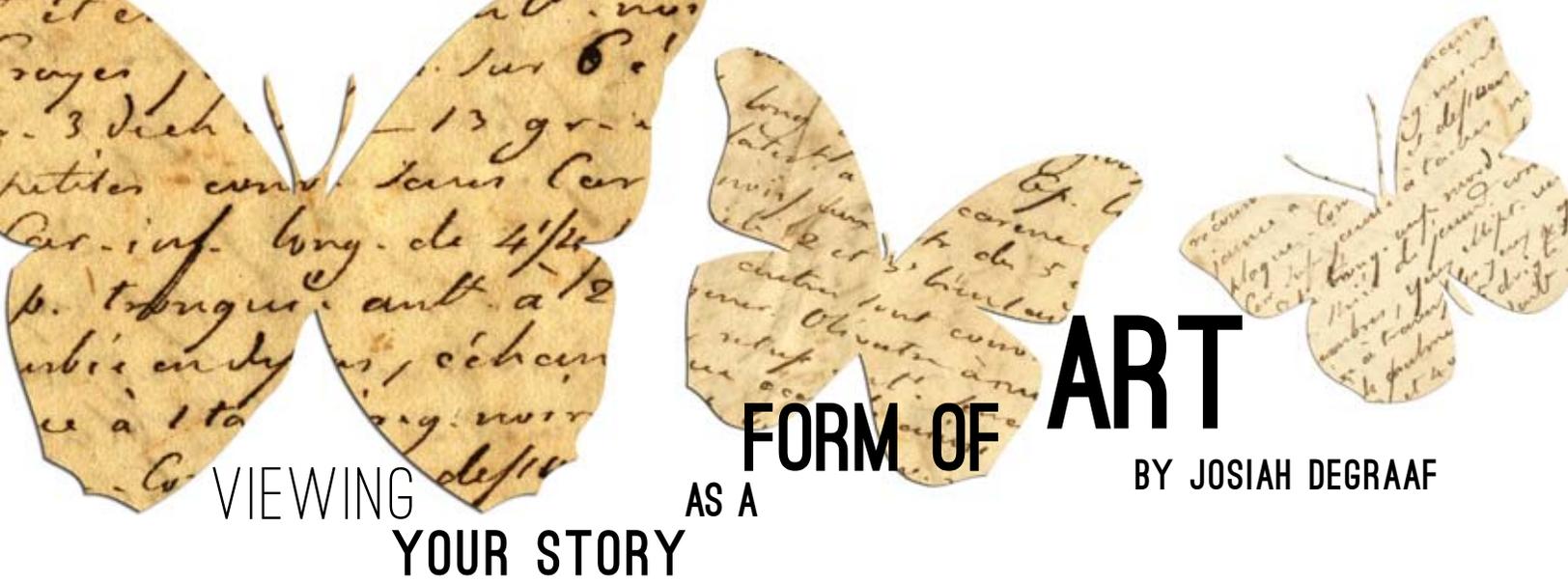
In the writing world, many versions of a quote are frequently circulated, though who originally said it has been disputed. The quote goes something along the lines of:

“Your first million words don’t count – Be prepared to throw them in the trash.”

I’ve only written about 500,000 words. Does that mean everything I’ve ever written has been terrible and a waste of time? Not at all! My writing may not be very good, but that’s okay because no writing is wasted. Everything you write makes you better, and brings you closer to perfection. First you have to make it real. You have to put your writing on “paper,” and then you make it good later. “Bad isn’t bad. Sometimes bad is good.”

But don’t stay bad. Technical excellence matters. Your writing will help someone, even if it’s only you. Writing will help refine your thought process and skill. It can even improve your relationship with God, and God can use your own writing to talk to you. Creating is a god-like act.

Keep writing; keep improving. Let yourself be bad so you can become good. Don’t give up. Be excited. Bad is good.



VIEWING YOUR STORY

AS A FORM OF ART

BY JOSIAH DEGRAAF

As Christians, all of us likely have some message we are trying to actively communicate in our writing. And those of us who are not actively trying to communicate a message still can't keep their worldview from slipping into their work. As Douglas Wilson writes in *Wordsmithy*, "The independence of art from worldview and worldview concerns is a myth. Every work of art is produced within a framework of worldview assumptions. [...] It is not whether certain values will be propagated by art, but rather which values will be propagated."

As Christian writers, hopefully our central concern is less on what values we should propagate, but more on how we should propagate them in our novels. We have all likely read that book where the author just preaches the morals through the characters rather than showing us them through their actions. We have all likely seen that story where the values are poorly presented in the book. We have all likely seen such examples of unsuccessful ways to communicate messages in a story. Most readers not already in agreement with the author will tend to reject such messages that are so blatantly preached through such works and will be turned off by it. They reject it because the art was sacrificed for the message.

Stories, therefore, will most effectively communicate their message when they are first a beautiful form of art. By pursuing aesthetic perfection in our stories, we will be taking important steps toward more effectively communicating our message.

"Art forms add strength to the worldview which shows through, no matter what the worldview is or whether

Stories, therefore, will most effectively communicate their message when they are first a beautiful form of art.

er the worldview is true or false." Francis Schaeffer, in his work, *Art and the Bible* correctly points out the power that forms of art hold in their ability to persuade. Like the old adage goes, "Give me control of the nation's songs, and I care not who makes the laws." Even as songs, poems, and paintings are works of art, even so are stories likewise a form of art. As Annie Dillard wrote in *Living by Fiction*, "Aesthetic perfection in a work of fiction carries with it a certain felt tension of tone which not only awes the reader, so that he judges the work to be absolutely excellent, but also inspires him to consider it more deeply." As a form of art, although the message of the novel remains

important, a story is first and foremost a work of art. In other words—it's supposed to be a good story. And simply being a good story can be enough.

In an answer to the question of how a person can read literature to the glory of God, Leland Ryken in *The Christian Imagination* replies that it is, "By enjoying the beauty that human creativity has produced and recognizing God as the ultimate source of this beauty and creativity." As a form of art then, stories must pursue a type of perfection in the grammar of the writing itself, in the depth of the characters, and in the intricacy of the plot. When this has been done, a well-crafted story will more powerfully bring out the message contained in the story. The better the art, the more powerful the message becomes. As Schaeffer writes, "The effect of any proposition, whether true or false, can be heightened if it is expressed in poetry or in artistic prose rather than in bald, formulaic statement."

How does this art communicate the message? In his blog post "How Stories do their Work on Us," Jonathan Rogers writes, "Being mere mortals, we can't really understand any of those things if they aren't grounded in what we can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. You can talk about grace until you're blue in the face, but you aren't going to come up with a definition that improves on the parable of the Prodigal Son: a father, arms outstretched, welcoming a rebellious and wicked son back into his home." In order to communicate their message, stories do not need to be explicitly Christian. Although Christ's parables bore powerful Christian messages in them,

QUOTES OF THE CRAFT
"Nothing will work unless you do."
Maya Angelou

WORKING WORDS

klimklow: an unusual situation

many did not have explicitly Christian characters in them. In Esther, we even see an entire book of the Bible that doesn't mention God. And although Esther details real events which actually happened, it also forms an excellent story, told by the greatest story-teller of all: God Himself. And so, although Esther is not explicitly Christian, it remains still a very Christian book and still presents many truths for us to grasp. Art in stories therefore communicates the message by giving us examples of people who either hold to or reject the truth, and then goes on to show us the end of such course of action. We learn by example.

So what does it mean then, to refine the perfection of the form of art which is your story? What makes a good story? There is no easy answer because there is no single right answer. Like the multiplicity of well-done paintings and the different forms they can take, stories can go many different, yet legitimate, ways. As Christian writers, we ought to be assured that, to some extent, the message of our story will take care of itself, since we cannot keep our worldview from infiltrating our story. But although no easy answers can be given for what makes a good story, advice can still be given and received, like it is in any other form of art. Read recent articles by Kingdom Pen about how to

make your character their own person or how to learn from your poor writing in order to get some of this advice. Through these articles, when we first understand that stories are another

We can rest assured that we can still communicate specifically-Christian morals while writing in a less-explicit framework.

form of art, we can work to refine our understanding of and our skill in the craft of story-telling. And through that, we can pursue greater aesthetic perfection in our stories.

So where does the rubber meet the road and the theoretical meet the practical in this article? Compare *The Lord of the Rings* to your average modern Christian fantasy work today and you may be able to see the difference. Although modern Christian writers mean well, many focus more on the message of their novels than on the art form of it, and thus sacrifice the beauty of their story to the message being told. And while the message of our story is important, it is most effective when the story is first pursued as an art form. Don't sacrifice the quality of your story for preaching your message. Relax, and let the message slip into your story. While there is nothing wrong with explic-

itly Christian stories, don't be afraid to write an implicitly Christian novel. We can rest assured that we can still communicate specifically-Christian morals while writing in a less-explicit framework. When we pursue our stories as a form of art, we will more effectively communicate our message. And as the beauty of the trees, waves, mountains, and stars all proclaim the glory of God, so our stories will express the truths and beauty that ultimately find themselves in the glory of the risen Messiah.



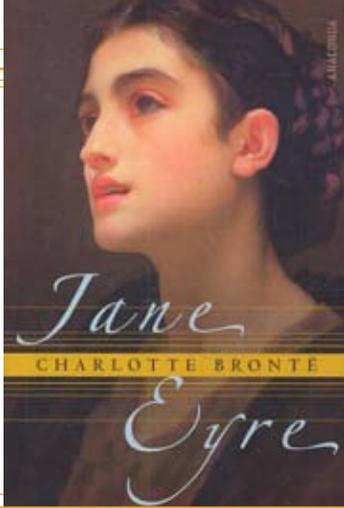
Josiah Degraaf grew up in Pennsylvania with seven younger siblings before he started attending Patrick Henry College in the fall of 2013. Having aged seventeen years since birth, he likely has an unhealthily over-active imagination. He can thus sometimes be caught enacting various battle scenes against imaginary opponents when he's having trouble writing a battle scene (or when he's just having fun). Josiah began writing when he was six (he wasn't so good back then!), and has continued ever since. Thankfully, his experience and skill has grown over the years. Primarily a fantasy lover, apart from a few slice-of-life short stories, he tends to mostly write fantasy novels. His dream is to build a fantasy world as deep and as broad as Tolkien's Middle-Earth where he might be able to set all his future stories. Favorite authors include (but are not limited to) J.R.R. Tolkien (obviously), Fyodor Dostoevsky, N.D. Wilson, Stephen Lawhead, and Wayne Thomas Batson. Josiah is a co-blogger at <http://worldpen.wordpress.com>

THE FOUR CORNERS

4

- WRITING
- FILMMAKING
- MUSIC
- FINE ART

We have plans to gradually expand Kingdom Pen into more areas of the arts. You can help by submitting your own work! Short films, songwriting, photography, drawing, painting, sculpture, digital art -- we want to support your creations. Email us at kingdompenmag@gmail.com to find out more.



A BOOK REVIEW BY COREY POFF

Jane Eyre

BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Ever walked into Barnes & Noble and taken a sweeping glance at all the recent releases and latest bestsellers? I have. Inevitably – at least in my experience – a significant chunk of the bestseller shelving belongs to the “romance” genre. They say never judge a book by its cover, but when I see another picture of a languid heroine clasped in the arms of her buff (often shirtless) lover, I do start judging. Harshly.

So I move on. And when I get back home, I walk to the bookshelf to remind myself of how love stories used to be done. I see Shakespeare and *Romeo and Juliet*. I see Austen and *Pride & Prejudice*; I see Tolstoy and *Anna Karenina*. Last, but in no way least, I see Charlotte Bronte and *Jane Eyre*.

Jane Eyre is one of those books I first encountered through Hollywood. Never the best way to go, but I made an exception for Cary Fukunaga’s 2011 adaption, which had been praised by

“It was like moving from a burger meal at McDonald’s to a three course dinner at a fancy restaurant...”

friends and critics alike. I enjoyed it. Then I read the book. How do I make this comparison? It was like moving from a burger meal at McDonald’s to a three course dinner at a fancy restaurant (the kind where the silverware looks more expensive than your car).

In other words, there really is no comparison.

Now, I can give credit where credit is due. The film was very well-made, the cast was exquisite, and the score was a work of

art. Where the movie really failed was in capturing the heart and intellectual depth of Bronte’s novel. Cary Fukunaga’s adaption was just a love story: a well-told love story, an interesting love story, but in the end, just a love story. But Bronte’s story is brilliant precisely because it’s more than a love story. Like

It’s about sacrifice, redemption, and yes, love - but not the limp-wristed, saccharine sentimentality of the modern romance.

all the great and classic romances, Jane Eyre is about so much more than two people who really like each other and overcome odds so they can get hitched. In many ways, it’s an epic to rival Homer’s Iliad, only here the conflict marches on through the bloody, treacherous battlefield of the human heart. It’s about sin, self-deception, and (for at least one character) a deep, dark walk through the Valley of Humiliation. It’s about sacrifice, redemption, and yes, love - but not the limp-wristed, saccharine sentimentality of the modern romance. This love is robust, it is fierce, it is genuine, and (dare I say it) it is biblically-informed. None of the story takes place in a moral vacuum: nothing, in fact, could be clearer than the mighty hand of Providence - in all things - over the course of Jane’s tale.

Gloomy castles, windswept moors, tragic secrets, and sinister family members – Jane Eyre has all the ingredients of a true gothic romance. But what elevates it – what makes it a classic worth reading again and again - is Bronte’s unflinching moral vision, a vision that bleeds into all the nooks and crannies her storytelling.

We need more writers like that. We need more books like *Jane Eyre*.

QUOTES

“My ideas usually come not at my desk writing but in the midst of living.”

Anais Nin

OF THE CRAFT



Corey Poff first and foremost is a sinner saved by grace alone. He’s seventeen, and a lover of books, movies, music, theology, and science fiction. Exploring the endless possibilities of the English language is one of his favorite pastimes as an aspiring writer. He’s the type who will sit down and read a grammar book from cover to cover...and enjoy every minute of it.

BY DEBORAH ROCKELEAU

Heaven's Declaration

The darkness was great
darkness so ancient, the days could not be counted
since light had touched the world,
for there had been no day since that time.
Only wandering stars and tangled
constellations
to offer guidance

And then, a pale glow across the world
from somewhere above a beacon, a light
not just another high example of purity
a moon which rose quietly from the horizon
and lit the world in white, a light
vaguely familiar
and brilliant.

It cast shadows in the night,
gleaming in eyes that had never seen light
yet the world could not accept the moon as it had the sun
and perhaps hated it for its likeness
and this pristine, alien being
became a symbol
of the night
and the darkness.

Heaven's Declaration by Deborah Rocheleau

And as their contempt for it grew,
the darkness of the Earth
touched that round disk
first a sliver, now a half
the shadow spread
as did their complacency
until the moon was gone
and it was dark again, the stars flickering

Yet it was not the same
for in the light the
world had seen the darkness
and without the light
they saw it still.

And in that night the stars
did not seem splendidous
or able to illuminate as the sun had
as the moon had in its life
for so long they had forgotten the day
but now could not
for dawn was coming.

For in the people was light, there was life
light like a star, like a distant moon
that shown so close like a candle
it came from within them
and burned
and caught

Heaven's Declaration by Deborah Rocheleau

It was a light they had never dreamed of
like a fire they had never felt
and the darkness could not bear
could not hope to fight
fueled by their hope
the hope of morning.

And as their light grew
something familiar crept over the horizon
a great Star, their Star
and in it, the light of the sun, and that of the moon
and all imitations of hope crumbled in the glow
and were replaced
with the genuine.

And somewhere, past the countless worlds
of planets dancing round their stars
upon the limitless horizon
where once was darkness
a brilliance beyond compare
shining,
calling

Heaven's Declaration by Deborah Rocheleau

And planets dying of despair saw their stars fade
fade in the wave filling everything
all the darkness of the universe
could not compare, would not overcome
as the night could not
despair could not
and as the Sun shown
so did the moon
and so did the people
and so did we.

Deborah Rocheleau is an eighteen-year-old writer and language fanatic. Her fiction has appeared in publications such as the Tin House Open Bar, A Clean, Well-Lighted Place, and Mock Turtle Zine. She was also the winner of the Graham Greene Award in the 2012 Athanatos Christian short story contest. She is currently writing a contemporary young adult novel. She blogs at deborahrocheleau.wordpress.com.

BY CAROLYN GARNER

Broken Face

Eyes of fire
Mouth that hates
Tongue that scorns
Heart that lies

Shoves out thought
That torments soul
Kills the hope
Of ones who mourn

Buries love
To help forget
Pain it caused
The ones who left

Men meant to run
Crawl in shame
Conscience screams
Of duty now lost

Broken Face by Carolyn Garner

A heart twists
Bruises and burns
Ice like fire
Melts to pain

Wracks the body
Tortures the mind
Kind words stab
The heart that cries

Light stings
Blinds the eyes
Blackened by hate
Sheds the lies

Shakes the body
Light overcoming
Fills the mind
Words come flowing

Moved the course
The feet had walked
Now gone flying
To people he sought

Overwhelming
No thought of dark
Mustard seed grows

Broken Face by Carolyn Garner

Into tree of life

Full of passion

Spirit now eased

Music in soul

Gone is disease

Fills the body

Beauty explodes

Changed the face

Once broken in pieces



Carolyn Garner is a fifteen year old Christian Homeschooler. She has written two novels, (one of them a semi-finalist in the One Year Adventure Novel contest) and has become interested in short stories and poetry. She lives with her parents and seven siblings on the eastern side of the Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina. Aside from writing, she feels strongly called into ministry and music. She plays the cello, autoharp, violin, and is in the process of learning the piano and guitar. She enjoys doing extensive literature reading, particularly the works of C.S. Lewis, Tolkien, Dickens, and Austen. She hopes to become a finalist in the 2014 One Year Adventure Novel contest and would someday love to release a Christian music album.

by Sara Spradlin

Unbroken

Deep in a warm and welcoming forest,
amidst the stone walls of a great fortress,
there dwells a heart not untouched,
but rather unbroken.

The heart, you see,
is scarred and hurt.
The heart has weaknesses and pain
that no others have seen.

But do not ask the heart for details;
it will not answer but to say:
“I am forgiven,
and so I, too, shall forgive.”

No, the heart realized early on
that, as with all in-looking,
you learn little
from staring at the reflection
and rather focused its efforts
on those without.
Those without love.
Those without hope.
Those without dreams.

Unbroken by Sara Spradlin

For the heart cared for all,
and was, after every wrong thing done,
still troubled when those around it cried,
still anxious when those around it screamed,
still angry when those around it were abused.

There are few left in the world,
like the gentle heart
that saw the miscreants in their flamboyance
and still believed in redemption.

And so the seasons passed,
the leaves turned, the snow fell, the sky stormed, and the rains fell.
The heart's fortress remained strong.

Many travelled to the heart's gate,
for it reached out to many,
pulling them close
when the storms thundered,
when the winds blew,
when the fortress rumbled and shook
and when fear lingered in flashes of lightning,
holding someone back
while they stood on the threshold of some unknown greatness.

Unbroken by Sara Spradlin

But, never, did it give itself away.
No, it knew its destiny did not lie with one
but with all.
This heart was driven, after all, to be a guardian.
This heart bore the troubles of other hearts,
whose fortresses were not so strong.
It brandished a valiant sword
before those who had slipped
in the darkness
and who needed a way out.

It extended its hand into the darkness
to grasp the most vile of the fallen
and bring them back to light.

Yes, this heart welcomed all kinds
and this heart saw many things.
It saw the pain someone was hiding,
it saw the despair that to someone was clinging,
it saw optimism despite great and terrible fear,
it saw the great oak in the acorn.
It saw the worms
that try to eat away at the acorn.

It saw the fire in their eyes,
when they are angry.
It heard their livid words
spat at it in fury and hate.
And, yet, it was not afraid.

Unbroken by Sara Spradlin

This heart stood as a sentinel--
as a shield against the inferno.
It has felt those flames before.
But not on its own.
Oh, no, this heart stood as anything but alone.
For this heart loved the King
and gave everything to Him,
though the heart knew
what it has to offer was not much.

And the heart lavished on the King
all its worship and praise.
For it was the King who taught the heart to breathe.
It was the King who held the heart
and taught the heart how to guard itself.

And so, the heart went on,
pouring on others
the love of the King
that was not always gentle,
but was reliably selfless and upright.
It tried very hard, you see,
to shine the flickering flame
of Light in all of the darkest corners.

It sought out the hearts who did not know the King
and loved them even while they were still in the darkness,
for that was what the King did for it.

Unbroken by Sara Spradlin

And sometimes the heart was grieved,
for all did not know that it loved them dearly
and wished for them to succeed.
There are some hearts who mistook its motives
as romance,
or other silly fancies
when all the heart had truly wished
was to give all it had
as a brother, a sister--
never a lover.

But the heart learned to forgive.
The King showed it this.
And so, the heart continued on
as best it could,
learning to dance freely,
to smile often
and to sing loudly.

Its path was not one traveled by many,
and the heart was not vastly understood.
But the heart loved the mystery of it
and treasured all whom it came across.

It prayed and taught and tried to remain humble in all things.
But the heart, too, would slip and fall sometimes.
It would cry and it would bleed,
for sins, you see, are nasty things.

Unbroken by Sara Spradlin

Ever faithful, though, was the King
who forgave and forgave.
The heart loved the King for this
and it praised Him often.

And so life went on for the heart
until at last its journey ended
where it found eternal peace.

And though this heart's tale has ended,
yours has yet to be finished.
So remember the heart,
for it was the Christian
we should all be trying to be.



Sarah E. Spradlin is a full-time Georgian High School student who lives in her own “house on the hill” with her parents, younger sister, and two dogs. She has been writing since she could hold a pencil and has completed over 10 novels with her best friend and sister in Christ, Brooke Norris. Currently, she is working on her first solo novel endeavor titled *Kingsblade*, a medieval fantasy rooted in Christian beliefs, and hopes to publish it once she has completed it. Although Sarah enjoys all genres, she has always been drawn to medieval history and fantasy, engrossing herself in stories such as Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. When she gets the chance, Sarah also loves to shoot her compound bow or swing around her Spanish long-sword, *Santa Ira*.



BACKYARD MIRACLE

BY SVEN ALQUIST

By 11:30am Tyson had finished his chores and was at the game. The turn-out was amazing. Tyson had no idea there would be this many fans at a backyard football game. Kids from all over the surrounding area were there. Some were sitting on swing-sets, others were sitting in the grass, while a few had brought chairs. Most of the fans, however seemed to be clustered around a make-shift concession stand that was selling over-priced hotdogs, nachos, pretzels, pop, and candy, among other things. If you've got kids with money in their pockets, they're going to spend it. The rest of the spectators were lined up in front of a trampoline at the back corner of the Greenwood's backyard. The "ride" had an entrance fee of 50 cents and also looked to be making a good profit.

"Casey must be trying to get every penny he can out of these football games," thought Tyson. He also noticed that Trent Greenwood's deck, along the side of the field, had been made into a press box. A long table draped in an Ultimate Backyard Football table cloth had been set up on the wooden platform. On the table were a few open Coke cans, hot dogs, and other concessions. Mixed in with the food were papers, writing utensils, and two microphones occupied the center. At the table sat five important looking kids, all well-dressed. Four of them were unknown to Tyson, while the fifth one suddenly stood up and waved Tyson over. It was Casey Montrell. Tyson quickly mounted the steps and walked over to Casey.

"Tyson, I hoped you would show up a little early. I've been meaning to give you a couple of things," Casey greeted happily, "Oh, by the way this is Jeff and Randy," he said gesturing to two identical looking boys. The only difference between them that Tyson could see was that one was wearing glasses while the other wasn't. They both looked up, nodded to Tyson, then returned to scribbling notes on a piece of paper. No...Tyson looked again and saw that they were playing Tic-Tack-Toe.

"Jeff runs the score board, while Randy takes care of the stats. That's Aaron and Ryan at the microphones there. They announce the games for a local kid's radio station called Kids on Air."

"So you said you wanted to give me something?" Tyson asked, eager start warming up for the game. He noticed that some of his teammates had arrived.

"Yes, two things, actually. The first thing is your team's schedule." Casey then handed Tyson a sheet of paper with the dates and locations of the Cedar's upcoming games. "And the other is a uniform." Casey then pulled a green shirt out of a box. It had black sleeves and a gray number seven

on the front. Casey then proceeded to pull out a pair of grey mesh basketball shorts. The shorts had two wide black stripes that came down the sides and tapered into points. Inside the black was white and running down the middle of the white was a green stripe. "I have a number seven and a number ten."

"I'll take the number seven," Tyson answered, pleased that he would be able to keep his number from the teams he had played on in Alaska.

"Ok, and here's your equipment." Casey grabbed a pair of light, lacrosse shoulder pads and a leather helmet out of the box and handed them to Tyson. Casey then tossed Tyson the uniform then also tossed him a beanie cap and long green socks.

"For cold weather," he explained, "and Oh, Tyson, you owe me thirty bucks to play."

Tyson nodded then strapped on the shoulder pads over his black Underarmor and pulled the green uniform on.

Interesting. Just like good, old-fashioned football, Tyson thought, examining his leather helmet and light shoulder pads. He put the rest of his gear with his bike then jogged out on to the field, carrying his helmet, which was painted in similar design and color to his shorts. He joined up with his teammates a couple seconds later.

"Hey Tyson! You made it!" called Veer.

"Where's Trent?" asked Tyson.

"He's getting interviewed by Lauren Mills, she's a school reporter," answered Markus.

"Yeah, the captain is like the coach, so the captain always gets interviewed before a game," added Brock. Just then Trent came trotting over to their huddle.

"Hey Tyson. Good, I see Casey gave you a uniform. Now, you don't know any of our plays, so you won't play much offense. Then suddenly a small boy wearing a referee shirt blew his whistle.

"Alright, captains," he called in a high pitched voice.

"That's me," Trent said, then headed off toward center field.

"Come on guys, sideline," called Thor who was already jogging over there. They all sat down on a portable aluminum bench, and after a few seconds Trent came running back.

"We have Ball!" he called.

"Alright boys, let us praise the Lord and ask Him to give us the strength to vanquish our opponent," said Thor as he and the rest of the team got down on one knee.

"Oh, Lord..." Thor paused "Please, please give us strength, Amen." Then all the players rose in a chorus of cheers and shouts.

"Yeah, alright Tyson, left kick returner Thor, you're out for this play; the rest of you, you know what to do, let's go!" commanded Trent. All but the enthusiastic red-head took to the field and got into position. The red and white Finney Drive team was set up for the kickoff. The score board read 0 to 0 with 8:00 left in the first quarter, the sign that the game was about to begin. Every fan was on their feet. You could feel an electricity in the air as the buzz of the crowd grew louder. The kid referee blew his whistle, signaling the start of the game.

The Finney kicker started toward the rubber football and kicked a solid one that took Tyson back to his goal-line. The first game of the season was underway. Tyson caught the ball and sprinted down the left sideline. He cut off of Markus's block and broke tackles until he made it to mid-

"Just like good,
old-fashioned
football."

field, the 25. Tyson headed out and Thor came in. Markus was center and Trent was quarterback. Veer was running back and Thor and Brock were the receivers. Brock and Thor were in tight next to the center and Veer was deep, behind Trent. "Hike," Trent took the snap and pitched it to Veer, who was running left. He took it on the dead run and sprinted to the line of scrimmage, where he was creamed by three Finney defenders. The next two plays were incomplete passes by Trent. Tyson ran on the field.

"Hey Trent, let me punt."

"OK," he answered dejected. Brock left the field and Tyson booted a high kick. It was caught by the Finney player at his goal-line where he broke a tackle and headed down the sideline.

Oh, no, Tyson thought as he sped toward the Finney Fire player running down the sideline. Tyson sent him out of bounds with a vicious hit at the Cedar 20, much to the discomfort of the Finney runner and much to the pleasure of the crowd which roared at the great hit. The runner was replaced by a new player who took his place at running back. Markus lined up at nose guard while Trent played linebacker. Veer took Safety, and Brock and Thor the corners. The Finney QB rolled out to his left with Markus on his tail. He cut up field and Trent and Brock converged on him. Then when it looked like he was trapped by three players, he leaped in the air and threw the ball back to the center who was all alone at the line of scrimmage. He caught the pass and ran to the right where he had two blockers setting up a wall. Veer was still covering the running back who was in the end zone now, and Thor was trying to break through the wall, but to no avail. The nimble center crossed the goal-line before Veer even realized what was going on. Tyson then found out that there was a rule in this league that you have to stand three yards off the ball before rushing a kick. The Finney QB booted the ball between the trees for a 7 to 0 lead.

Tyson sent him out of bounds with a vicious hit at the Cedar 20, much to the discomfort of the Finney runner...

This is a good team. Tyson ran out to return the kick. He caught it on the dead run on the five yard-line and sprinted for the wall his teammates had set up along the left sideline. Two Finney players were closing in on him as he crossed the fifteen. One dived and grabbed a hold of his right leg. He high-stepped out of the tackle, slowing himself down. The other defender leaped on his back, but Tyson at 5'7" 135 pounds, was too strong. Tyson stopped and ducked. The would-be Fire tackler flew off Tyson's shoulders and landed on his back in front of Tyson, his breath completely knocked out of him. Markus was holding his block at the 20 while the rest of the Cedars were chasing theirs. One Fire defender was dead ahead of Tyson and Markus was to his inside. Tyson cut off Markus's block, using him as a screen. Now Tyson was in the clear, with only the kicker to beat, standing at his own 20. Tyson dashed sideways toward the right sideline with the kicker in front of him. Tyson suddenly stopped and quickly rotated his upper body to the left like he was going to cut back. The kicker stopped too, trying to cut him off, but Tyson never cut back, but instead kept on running straight up the sideline. The kicker tried to follow, but he was stopped with his feet too close together, and when he tried to speed up too quickly, he fell down. It was a comical image if you were watching from the stands. It simply looked like he got stuck in mud and fell. The fans erupted in both laughter and celebration as Tyson Crossed the goal-line to make the score 7 to 6 in favor of Finney Drive. Tyson replaced Trent at kicker as they attempted the extra point.

"Don't take your finger off," Tyson instructed Veer.

"I never take my finger off!" Veer said, insulted. The snap came back wobbly and to the right. Veer tried to grab it, but it slipped through his hands. Tyson had done his hop step then realized

what had happened.

“Take it!” yelled Tyson to Veer as he ran to set a block on the bull rush of Finney defenders. Veer grabbed it and ran for the corner of the end zone. Tyson pancaked one man and it looked like Veer was going to make it. He reached out the ball and then was hit, hard. The ball came loose and was picked up by the Finney “all-star” QB and he took off down the field in the other direction. Tyson pursued, but he was too far out in front and the defender took it in for Finny score. At the end of the first quarter it was, Finney Drive 9, Cedar Lane 6. Tyson played defense in the second quarter, but not offense. “You don’t know the plays.” Trent would say. A Veer fumble gave the Fire great field position on the Cedar’s 10, which was turned into 7 points by the QB on a scramble. On the next drive, a Trent Greenwood Pass was intercepted and returned all the way into the endzone, and the score at half-time was Finney 23, Cedar 6. Many fans were already starting to lose interest and the trampoline was starting to look very appealing to some in the crowd.

“Alright guys, we need some changes,” stated Trent. “Let’s put Tyson at wide receiver for Thor. We’ll try some quick slants and maybe go deep.”

Trent, Brock, Veer, Thor, and Tyson took their positions for the kick-off to start the second half.

“Hey guys,” whispered Trent, “Let’s try a surprise onside kick.” Tyson nodded, then started forward and kicked the right middle of the football as hard as he could. It took a high bounce and the Fire were caught off guard. Thor dived and came down with it. The Cedars all ran over to him cheering and shouting. They grabbed Thor and lifted him to his feet. Through slaps on the back Thor was able to point one finger sky-ward.

“Praise the Lord!” he shouted, then ran to the sideline.

The Cedars huddled up, and Trent called the play.

“Brock, go long. Tyson, slant inside. Veer and Markus, block.”

Trent took the snap, then fired a pass over the middle. It was a little too far inside, but Tyson reached out with one hand and pulled it in right on the 25 yard-line where he was swarmed and brought down. 2nd and 5.

“It’s almost 30 yards,”
Trent added.

“I know. I can make it.”

“Brock and Tyson line up far right. Screen pass to Veer,” Trent commanded.

Trent took the snap, then ran to the left like he was going to run it. Two defenders converged on him while another pursued from the rear. At that moment Trent jumped in the air and threw the ball back to Veer who was standing behind Markus, Brock and Tyson. He caught it and flew down the sideline. The three blockers made short work of the two remaining defenders, and Veer took it in for the score. Trent went in to hold and he didn’t take his finger off as Tyson kicked it through. Finney 23 Cedar 13. On the Fire’s next drive they ran twice for five yards then threw an incomplection and had to punt from their own 20. Tyson returned it thirty yards right back to their 20. Veer ran it five yards to the 15. Trent tried another slant to Tyson, but Finney was ready and tipped it, nearly intercepting it. Trent bootlegged out on third down and gained two. It was 4th and 3.

“Let’s go for it!” suggested Markus.

“No. Let’s kick the field goal,” insisted Tyson.

“It’s almost 30 yards,” Trent added.

“I know. I can make it.”

"Alright, we'll kick. Brock and Thor will block," commanded Trent.

The snap was good, the hold was good, and the kick was good. Finney 23, Cedar 16. The crowd was really getting into it now as they cheered on their street. The teams traded punts and there was no more scoring in the third quarter. It remained a 7 point game going into the fourth.

It continued to go back and forth -- no scoring when Finney's running back broke away and was tackled on the Cedar's five yard line with only ten seconds left. The game looked over. The QB tried a sneak, but Markus blew up the center, hurling the QB through the air in the process. The next thing Tyson knew, the ball was out and Thor had recovered it on the one with five seconds to go. The crowd was so loud that the Cedars could barely hear Trent say Tyson would be Playing QB and Thor, Brock and himself would be playing wide receiver.

"Brock and Thor, go long down the sidelines while I take the middle, Markus block," Trent commanded.

"Hike!" Tyson took the snap and dropped back into his own end zone. Finney dropped four guys back in their own end zone, and only blitzed one. Tyson waited until his players were near the end zone then released the ball with all his might. A hush fell over the entire street—or so they say—when Tyson Toliver's fifty yard pass soared a mile high through the air over the Greenwood's backyard.

The ball came spiraling down upon a crowd of players assembled on the goal-line. Two Cedar players and four Finney Players leaped high in the air for the elongated ball that was falling toward them. The ball seemed to bounce off of everyone's hands and went flying back toward the ten yard line. It seemed that the Cedars had lost the game when Trent, who was standing near the ten caught the ball, inches off the ground and sprinted for the far corner of the end-zone. Half of the Finney players thought it was over, and so too thought half the fans, but they soon thought otherwise as they saw Trent cross the five yard-line.

Two Finney players were between Trent and the goal-line. Trent crashed into them at the one. He drove his legs and reached out the ball. It appeared that he would be in, when from out of nowhere a third defender smashed into him, separating himself from the ball. He watched helplessly from under a pile of humanity as the football skipped into the end zone. He had fumbled.

He watched helplessly from under a pile of humanity as the football skipped into the end zone. He had fumbled.

Sven Alquist is 12 years old and has been writing his whole life. His family moved to America from Iceland when he was four years old, and he was immediately enamored by sports, especially American football. Most of his novels are about one sport or another, and he draws his inspiration from his own experiences playing pick-up games with his friends. Sven believes whole-heartedly that God cares about sports, and that Christians should not forget the command to love God with all of our strength, as well as heart, mind, and soul. *God Bless!*

YOUR QUESTIONS: ANSWERED

Have a question about writing? Email us at kingdompenmag@gmail.com, using the subject line, "Question For The Panel". A panel of Kingdom Pen writers will then attempt to answer the questions you email to us here in the quarterly issues. We'll also be posting the questions and answers on our website, so you'll have a chance to comment with your own thoughts and solutions.



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Question:

I've been hearing a lot about subtext, how using it correctly can really help your story. But there seem to be a lot of conflicting ideas about subtext and what it is—can you guys clear up some of the confusion for me?"

Answer:

A lot of people view subtext as an "advanced writer's tool" that can only be fully understood after having completed three novels, purchased a platinum membership on one of the more prestigious writing forums, and learned the top-top-secret Novelist's Fistbump. I disagree. Subtext is an organic element of storytelling that you've probably always known about to some extent, but that will take a lot of work and conscious thought to master.

At its most basic level, subtext is the meaning that lies underneath your character's words and actions. Your character says one thing, but means another—and the subtext peeps out from what he's saying, revealing his true thoughts and motives. Sometimes this is on an unconscious level, and the reader doesn't really understand what he's really saying until later, when the story events suddenly make everything make sense. At other times, the subtext is a little less subtle and instantly discernible, but it's still subtext.

A stellar (and not-so-subtle) example of this is in the movie *It's A Wonderful Life*, where George Bailey violently denounces any intentions of having any kind of romantic feelings for Mary, who retorts that she really couldn't care less, and that if he feels that way, why doesn't he just leave

town and travel like he's always wanted to. Through the subtext, we as viewers get a much better feel for the characters' true motives and emotions than if they just cheerily announced that they were crazy about each other and didn't want to live life apart.

Subtext is too complex a topic to really talk about in depth in this column—whole books have been written about it. But hopefully this will give you a place to get started from, and will dispel some of the confusion you've had on the subject. A full understanding and mastery of subtext will bring a whole new dimension to your characters and their story.

- Braden Russell

Question:

How can I get rich quick through writing?

Answer:

Write a best-seller that becomes a series that becomes a movie. However, unless you have the luck of Stephanie Meyer, that isn't likely to happen. If you want to get rich quick, don't turn to writing. Go try something else. Making a living at writing means going into it for the long haul: countless rejections, thousands of hours and words spent in growing and refining your skills, tons of marketing, building a reader platform, and a lot of patience. Some authors /do/ end up making a living by their craft and sell thousands of books. Dekker and Peretti are two such examples. Others never get rich, still work a day job, and write only a handful of books. Author/forensics expert Bill Bass

YOUR QUESTIONS: ANSWERED

is a good example of that. If you are writing for the possible financial payoff, you might want to stop and think again. What inspires your /best/ writing? A handful of green paper or the undeniable urge to exercise your voice and say something worthwhile? Beautiful, artistic, important writing shouldn't be about the money, but about the things being written.

- Hannah Mills

Question:

When writing stories about Bible characters, do I have to adhere absolutely to the facts or can I use some imagination? It's quite hard because the Bible does not contain many facts about a particular person.

Answer:

My short answer is, yes, you can use some imagination, because you have to. Like you said, details are lacking. What facts there are, you must adhere to, but there is a lot that isn't said, and allows for flexibility.

My long answer is that attempting to add facts or events to Biblical peoples' lives is risky. You are straying from the truth, which could potentially confuse your readers as to what the truth really is. One example of this is in the famous book *Paradise Lost* by John Milton. Many commonplace ideas about Christianity come from that book, even though it is not scripture. Therefore, I probably would not even write a historical fiction novel using real Biblical people, as I would be too concerned about misrepresenting them, and thus, confusing others' understanding of what they were really like.

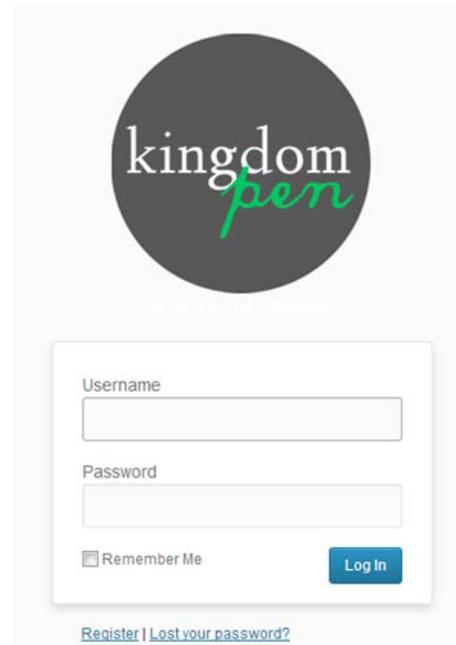
But if you're set on using the events and characters recorded in the Bible, why not just change the names and locations? The *Passages* books by the creators of *Adventures In Odyssey* are a great example of this, and they made for very compelling books, even for a 12-year-old me who did not like reading at the time.

- Reagan Ramm

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We would love for you to join in the discussion! We're posting our works-in-progress for open critique and are building each other up as fellow writers and enthusiasts of the written word. We want to share our favorite passages from the things we're reading, and engage in thinking through what makes great writing so great.

Let's pool our resources and learn from each other, since, let's face it, writing can be a very solitary activity, and sometimes we need encouragement from community. Just go to www.kingdompen.org/forum to see what others are posting, and create your own account.



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