

The Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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Circulation: 32384 writers, each of them creating a Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.

"Fiction Writing = Organization + Craft + Marketing"

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

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

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

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

If you missed a back issue, remember that all previous issues are archived on my web site at:

<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/ezine/>

What's in this issue:

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

* If you want to be productive, it helps to be fit. But who has time for that? There's one exercise you can do in sixty seconds that will pay dividends quickly. Can you guess what it is? Find out in my organization column, "Increase Your Productivity in 60 Seconds."

* What do you do if your character is very different from you? How do you know if he's behaving plausibly? I've got some thoughts on that in this month's craft article, "Would The Godfather Really Do That?"

* Every writer wants to promote books better. A new tool is coming soon, and there are only a few days left to get in on the ground floor. I've wangled an exclusive interview with the developer in my marketing column, "A Hot New Book Promotional Tool."

2) Organization: Increase Your Productivity in 60 Seconds

Like most people, I believe that being more physically fit will make you more productive.

For a writer, productivity is critical.

But time is money.

If productivity is the only goal, then it's hard to justify spending an hour a day in the gym. You'd have to become quite a lot more productive to make it financially worthwhile.

(Of course, productivity isn't the only benefit of fitness. But it's the easiest to put a number on.)

There's a simple exercise you can do every day in 60 seconds that will give you remarkable results in your core muscles.

If you're a writer, you want a strong core, because you spend a lot of your day sitting.

Strengthening your core will give you better posture and may help reduce lower back pain, or prevent it altogether. It might even give you abs.

If you've ever seen ads for those pesky ab devices, you know that everybody on the planet wants great abs, but crunches or situps are apparently boring and ineffective.

From what I hear, most of those ab doodads are also boring and ineffective.

Before we go further, we need one of those annoying disclaimers that put all the blame on you or fate or the universe if anything goes wrong.

Standard disclaimer: I'm not a physician and I don't give exercise advice. Before starting any exercise program, you should consult with a physician. Pain

during exercise is a signal that you should stop. Persistent pain is a signal that you should consult a health professional. End of disclaimer. Sigh.

I know from personal experience that the "plank" exercise is very effective at strengthening the core. And it's not boring, because a plank severely challenges your body. A challenge is never boring.

You can find any number of YouTube videos that show how to do a good-form plank.

The basic idea is that you support yourself in a horizontal position above the floor, face down, putting your weight on your elbows and toes. Hold that position while keeping your body straight from your ankles to your head.

I recommend finding a video online if you want to see exactly how it's done.

A plank is HARD. Most people can't do it for even 30 seconds on their first try. A worthy target is to be able to hold a plank with good form for a full 60 seconds.

That doesn't sound like very long, until you try it.

If you can hold a plank for 5 minutes, you're amazing.

Planking is hard but it feels great when you stop. And after you've been planking regularly for a few weeks, you'll notice that your core is getting stronger and it's easier to sit or stand with good posture.

Good posture means less fatigue which means higher productivity.

That's a pretty good return on investment for 60 seconds per day.

3) Craft: Would The Godfather Really Do That?

It's 1953 in Birmingham, Alabama. Sherlock Holmes, Scarlett O'Hara, the Godfather, and Uncle Tom walk into an exclusive whites-only restaurant. It's 4 PM and the place is nearly empty.

The maitre d' hurries up, throws a scowl at Uncle Tom, and says to the Godfather, "I'm sorry, sir, but there are no tables available at the present time."

The Godfather grins amiably and hangs his head. "Gosh, I had no idea! Should we come back later when it's less crowded?"

"Let's just think things through rationally," says Scarlett. "I'm sure that if we slip this gentleman a large enough bill, he can find us a table. Or maybe we can find some dirt on him and blackmail him."

Sherlock shakes his head dejectedly. "They don't seem to like us, so let's leave. It's boring here anyway. Let's find some place that's more fun!"

"Leave this to me." Uncle Tom puts on a pair of brass knuckles and slugs the maitre d' in the jaw, knocking him out. "These people are going to serve us or else." He leads his friends to the best table and shouts for a waiter to serve them, pronto.

What's wrong with the picture above?

Yes, the characters are behaving out of character. But how do you know? You've never read a scene in which any of these characters were in Birmingham in 1953. Yet you know roughly how each of them would behave in this situation. The way I wrote it above is completely wrong.

Different people have different "social styles" -- patterns of social behavior.

The Godfather is a Driver. He makes things happen and he's not too concerned about just getting along. He'd be the one to pull out the brass knuckles.

Scarlett O'Hara is an Expressive. She's highly sociable, and when she's rejected, she feels it keenly. She enjoys fun and would be the first to suggest they go elsewhere.

Sherlock Holmes is an Analytical. When he has a problem, he thinks it through. He might try a bribe or blackmail or anything else he could think of to solve the problem rationally.

Uncle Tom is an Amiable. He likes to get along with people, and he always asks permission, so he never needs to ask forgiveness.

Most people fit into one of these four categories -- Driver, Expressive, Analytical, or Amiable.

As a novelist, you probably find it easiest to write characters who fit your own social style. You might find it harder to identify with characters with other social styles.

But you have to. You can't write a whole novel in which all your characters have your social style. That would be implausible, and it would also be boring.

Why boring?

When you have characters with a variety of social styles, you have a lot more chances to create conflict. More conflict means a more interesting story.

A couple of examples are in order ...

If Uncle Tom and the Godfather are working together to solve a mystery, they're not going to agree on how to do it. The Godfather will be action-oriented and won't

much care about whom he offends. Uncle Tom will be relational-oriented and he'll care very much about other people's feelings.

If Sherlock and Scarlett are dating, they're going to face all sorts of obstacles. Sherlock prefers a quiet evening at home with a pipe and a good conversation, while Scarlet wants to go out somewhere fun and dance, dance, dance. Sherlock may think he's complimenting Scarlett by telling her that she's not as scrawny as she was last month, but Scarlett won't love him for saying she's put on weight.

Most people tend to have a dominant social style and a secondary one. I'm an Analytical Amiable. I'll probably beat you at chess, but at the end of the game, you'll be my friend.

There are 16 combinations of dominant and secondary social styles. And of course there are more aspects to a character's personality than their social styles.

This means that you'll never run out of quirky combinations of character traits. Every character you ever create can be an original.

Yet by studying typical social styles, you can create believable characters that ring true.

If you want a successful salesman who can take rejection in stride and push on to the next customer, make him a Driver Amiable.

If you want an unsuccessful salesman who staggers at each rejection and finds it hard to ask for the sale, make him an Analytical Expressive.

If you want a boring, dull, narrow-minded accountant who obsesses over details, start with an Analytical Analytical and pile on from there. (We Analyticals are sometimes considered fussy and obsessive by flaky, unfocused people. Hmphh!)

Let's be clear that you don't stop with your character's social style. It's a nice place to start, but people are much more complicated than a category.

But knowing the social style of each of your characters will give you a running start on understanding them.

There is very much more to say about social styles, so if you're interested, try Googling the phrase "Driver Analytical Expressive Amiable" and see what you come up with.

One nice summary I've found online is here:
<http://www.softed.com/resources/Docs/SSW0.4.pdf>

Sherlock says this resource explains a lot of things that have always puzzled him about stupid people.

The Godfather says it'll be useful in figuring out how to manipulate his minions.

Uncle Tom says it'll help him get along better with people.

Scarlett says it's boring.

4) Marketing: A Hot New Book Promotional Tool

A couple of months ago, I did a column on a free web site widget I was testing which allows you to easily direct visitors to online retailers that sell your book.

The main problem I had was that the widget doesn't let you earn affiliate income at Amazon and the other retailers. The reason is because the widget maker already inserts his own affiliate info into all links.

That's why the widget is free.

After I ran the column, I heard from my web developer, Thomas Umstattd, who told me he's creating a WordPress plugin that will do something similar.

But the paid version of his "MyBookTable" plugin will let YOU earn the affiliate income.

In my view, that's a terrific deal.

Thomas is currently running a KickStarter campaign to raise money to complete the plugin. The campaign has raised more than 200% of the goal. That takes it past the first stretch goal. There are several other stretch goals it might still reach.

The KickStarter campaign ends this Friday, April 5, 2013, at 10 PM EDT.

Here's a link:

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/authormedia/mybooktable-wordpress-bookstore-plugin>

I've asked Thomas to do an exclusive interview for readers of my e-zine. He's super busy, but he made time:

Randy: One of the benefits of your MyBookTable plugin will be something you call "SEO." What's that all about and why would any author care about it?

Thomas: The #1 cause for book sales is word of mouth. What is the the first thing most readers do when they hear about your book? Google it. So controlling what shows up about your book on Google is critical.

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization and MyBookTable is coded to help you rank well on search engines. If you can rank #1 when people search for your book, you will get most of the clicks and thus most of the money.

If you are published, I challenge you to google your book title. Chances are, Amazon and perhaps several other sites outrank you. This is a lost revenue opportunity.

Randy: Gack! You're right! I just checked and Amazon outranks me for every one of my titles when I Google them.

You'll have a free version of your plugin and a paid version at \$49. Why would anybody pay when they can get it free? What would I get for my money?

Thomas: The paid version comes with affiliate integration. That means that Amazon (and others) pay you every time someone buys from them after clicking your Buy button. They typically give you a cut of the whole cart, so if they buy your book and a digital camera you get a healthy sum.

The paid version also comes with more Buy buttons for stores like Barnes & Noble and Audible. I should mention that the paid version is a lot cheaper through Kickstarter. The paid versions also come with support, so if you have questions there is someone there to answer them.

Randy: You're running your KickStarter campaign through this coming Friday night. I see that people who pledge \$100 or more for your project will get a one year membership in your Bestseller Society. Have you lost your mind? A year membership normally goes for \$499. What were you thinking?

Thomas: I don't know. I kind of regret that funding level actually. But part of the fun of a Kickstarter campaign is hiding crazy deals in the higher backing levels. I doubt we will do a year Bestseller Society membership this cheap again.

Randy: Never regret generosity, Thomas. I think it'll pay off for you in the end.

There's a pledge level at \$250 (this is the level I pledged at) that offers a listing in the sample store of your plugin. This sounds like a crazy good deal to me. How long is my book going to be listed on the sample store? Six months? A year?

Thomas: We plan to keep your book in the sample store as long as it is in print. We anticipate that the free version of this plugin will be installed on tens of thousands of author websites. So if you have a book for authors, this is a great promotional tool.

Randy: No kidding, especially since the book I'll be promoting is an e-book, which is NEVER going out of print. If your plugin does well, it'll be an amazing platform to promote my book.

Final comments by Randy on this campaign: As noted above, I pledged some money to this campaign. I think it makes good economic sense, and it'll help bring Thomas's plugin to market quicker.

If you're interested in supporting this campaign, check it out here:

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/authormedia/mybooktable-wordpress-bookstore-plugin>

Thomas's KickStarter campaign ends at 10 PM EDT on Friday night, April 5, 2013. This is a hard deadline, so if you want to support it, do it right now.

5) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com

I'm currently working on a new edition of my novel DOUBLE VISION, to be released in e-book format. I've finally completed and launched my new personal web site at <http://ingermanson.com>. I'm in the middle of launching the new version of my writing web site at AdvancedFictionWriting.com. The last month has been ... hectic.

My book, WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES, has been selling well since it began shipping more than three years ago. For the last couple of years, it's been the hottest selling book in its category in the Kindle store.

You can find out all about WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES here:

<http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/product/writing-fiction-for-dummies/>

If you've already bought the book and like it, I'd be delighted if you went to your favorite online bookstore and posted a review.

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

I normally teach at four to six writing conferences per year. This year, I'm easing off some -- I'm currently booked to teach at only two in 2013, which should give me a bit of breathing room.

Why don't I teach at more conferences? Because teaching is an incredibly demanding blood sport and it sucks a huge amount of energy out of my tiny brain. I prefer to

put my absolute best into a few locations than to muddle through at many.

I will be teaching a six-hour class on marketing for writers at the Oregon Christian Writers Conference in Portland. Details here:

<http://ocwsummerconference.com/>

I'm already booked for six hours of teaching at a large conference in 2014. Details later this year.

If you'd like me to teach at your conference in 2014 or beyond, email me to find out how outrageously expensive I am.

If you'd just like to hear me teach, I have a number of recordings and e-books that are outrageously cheap.

Details here:

<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/products/>

6) Randy Recommends . . .

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

I'm a huge fan of Margie Lawson's courses, both the ones she teaches in person and the ones she sells on her web site at

<http://www.MargieLawson.com>

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

I've also become a fan of Thomas Umstattd's terrific uncommon-sense thoughts on internet marketing. You can read Thomas's blog at:

<http://www.AuthorMedia.com/blog>

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

<http://www.AuthorMedia.com>

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

<http://www.bestsellersociety.com>

Please be aware that in this section I ONLY recommend folks who have never asked me to do so. Tragically, this means that if you ask me to list you here, I will be forced to say no.

7) Steal This E-zine!

This E-zine is free, and I personally guarantee it's worth at least 1331 times the price. I invite you to "steal" it, but only if you do it nicely . . .

Distasteful legal babble: This E-zine is copyright Randall Ingermanson, 2013.

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

friends asking where they can get their own free subscription.

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

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

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

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

Randy Ingermanson
Publisher, Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/ezine>
