



**MILITARY WRITERS
SOCIETY OF AMERICA**

Writing Your Story Workshop

Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, Charleston, SC, Nov. 8, 2018

Bob Doerr, Vice President, Military Writers Society of America (MWSA)

Valerie Ormond, Board Member, MWSA

Karl Warner, Historian and Educator, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center



Agenda

AM (9:45 – 11:55)

- Welcome
- Getting Started
- Choosing Topic and Story Arc
- Point of View and Setting
- Writing Exercises (AM and PM)

PM (12:00 – 2:45)

- Lunch
- Character Development
- Editing and Dialogue
- USAHEC Programs
- Wrap Up and Q & A

Getting Started

Bob Doerr

Vice President, MWSA

Getting Started

- Do you have a story to tell?
- You are not alone - you have thousands of helpful resources
- How? When? Where?
- A strong beginning
- Does it need to be an original idea?



Exercise

- Writing exercise
- Discussion



Choosing Your Story and the Story Arc

Valerie Ormond

Board Member, MWSA

Chief Executive Officer, Veteran Writing Services, LLC

Choosing Your Topic

- How much to tell?
- Focus?
- What is important to you? Willing to share?
- Start small...but start somewhere
- Point of view



Sharing Ideas

- Projects started?
- Routines that work (ex. Writing.com)
- How-to's?
- Who are your readers?



Time

- Most precious commodity - 1440
- Just write
- Consider using a timesheet application or program (OfficeTime)
- Figure out what works for you – AM, PM, in order, or not, outline or “pantster”

The Narrative Story Arc

- Must follow a story, or else it's just facts
- For non-fiction: “Let the facts tell you a story. Then figure out how to share this story with your readers in a narrative arc structure.” *Jill Swenson*
- Outline your story
- Think of classic movies

Choose What to Include



Exercise – The Six-Word Story

- Inspired by Hemingway's famous six-word tale:
 - "For sale: baby shoes, never worn"
- Painfully, he changed "is" to "was."
- In five minutes, and six words, tell a story
- Share



Point of View and Setting

Bob Doerr

Vice President, MWSA

Point of View and Setting

- Discussion
- Story Exercise



Character Development

Valerie Ormond

Board Member, MWSA

Chief Executive Officer, Veteran Writing Services, LLC

Choosing Your Characters

- Every character should have a purpose and move the story forward
- Characters can be human, animal, or supernatural
- If writing memoir-type works, include those that help tell the story best
- Let the reader fill in some details on his/her own
- *A Novel Approach* – page 47 questions



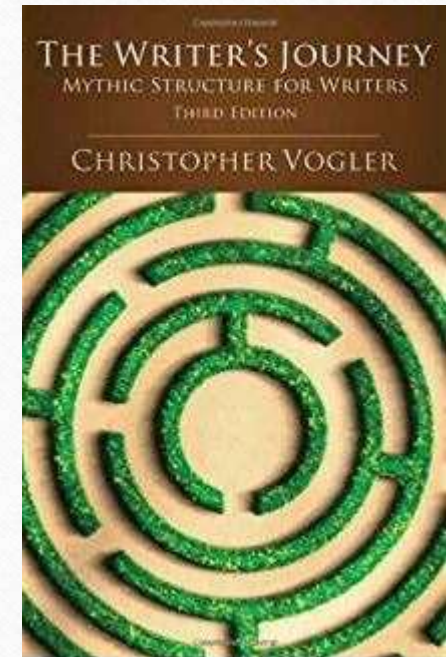
Questions to Consider for Your Characters

- Name _____
- What motivates him/her? _____
- What is his/her ultimate goal? _____
- What keeps him/her from reaching that goal? _____



Types of Characters

- Archetypes from ancient history through today
- Models of personalities or behaviors
 - Hero, Mentor, Herald, Threshold Guardian, Shape Shifter, Shadow, Trickster
- These characters help build stories



ORACLE WISE OLD MAN WISE OLD WOMAN

THE PROPHET



oracle

visionary

wise old man

guide

wise old woman

seer

fortune-teller

sage

priest

divine speaker

catalyst

moral leader

THE TRAITOR



betrayal
two-faced liar

judas
antagonist
turncoat
spy
tell-tale
the rat
whistle-blower

TREACHERY

BETRAYAL

TREASON

WHISTLE-BLOWING

THE SIDEKICK



hero's
contrast
complement

supporter

foil

cheerleader

minion

helper

partner

confidante

companion consort

right-hand man

bff

friend



Character Development Exercise

- **Free write rules:** Don't stop; don't edit
- Remember to think about the SENSES: sight, sound, scent, touch, and taste
- Focus on one of the archetype characters
 - Hero, villain, or others...
- In five minutes, create a story character



Discussion

- Sharing characters
- Hardest/easiest part
- Questions?



Editing and Dialogue

Bob Doerr

Vice President, MWSA

Editing

- Editing: It's your job, too
- Line Editing and Copy Editing
- More than just proper English



Dialogue

- Dialogue: The critical stuff
- Say, don't tell
- Don't forget who your character is
- Exercise
- Discussion



USAHEC Programs

Karl Warner

Historian and Educator at USAHEC

Wrap Up and Q & A

Attendees

Bob, Val, and Karl

Evaluations and Contact Information

- Evaluations – your feedback let us know what works and what does not – thank you!
- Contact information:
 - Bob Doerr: rddoerr@cs.com
 - Val Ormond: ceo@veteranwritingservices.com
 - Karl Warner: karl.k.warner.civ@mail.mil
- Military Writers Society of America: <http://www.mwsadispatches.com/>