

The Journal, 2021

The Journal: Mourning Characters, and Rewriting vs. Recasting

January 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * As you will see
- * Topic: Mourning Characters, and Rewriting vs. Recasting
- * Now it's almost 9 a.m.
- * Yesterday and today
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"It's never too early to start something new, and it's never too late to fix what's broken for next time." Wes Crowley

"WRITING A BOOK is a lonely pursuit, one that can take years of solitary work." Kate Knibbs, a senior writer at WIRED

"Yes. Alas, writing a book is such terrible drudgery. BWAAAAhahahahahahahahaha!" me

As you will see, it seemed appropriate to repeat the first quote of the day for today's edition of the Journal. The next one is just ludicrous, and the third is just me being a smartaleck.

Topic: Mourning Characters, and Rewriting vs. Recasting

Maybe interesting to note, I'm writing this topic on January 1. I had to address it before I start writing for the day. Addressing it helped purge it a little so I can go on with my life. (grin)

Have you ever killed off a character in one of your stories and then severely regretted it? I don't mean you mourn and then the mourning fades with time, even as it does with real human beings you've known in real life. I mean you mourn severely and the mourning doesn't seem to abate. Instead, it actually increases.

I have. This topic is about that and how I've decided to handle it.

The death of a recent main character affected me strongly, and that's a vast understatement. In fact, that death set up a strong internal conflict. So strong that I'm certain it's two parts of my subconscious creative mind arguing with each other.

One side is saying, naturally, “It’s just what happened. Leave it alone.” And the other side is saying, “But it shouldn’t have happened. She still had an important role to play in the story.”

Now trust me: I’ve been at this long enough to know the difference between the “sound” of my creative subconscious and the sound of my critical, conscious mind. I can say without even a shadow of a doubt that neither argument is coming from my critical conscious mind. So what to do?

Well, fortunately, that event — that death — occurred in Book 4 of the FOH series. And neither 3 nor 4 are published yet except to my first readers. And at least two of those readers were as strongly affected by the death of this character as I was (and am).

I was going to consider my options for a week or so as I finish Book 5 to consider what to do, if anything, about this anomaly. But if the character is not killed in Book 4, she might naturally affect events in the current future that is Book 5.

So I’m going to set Book 5 aside for now — it’s in a good place to be set aside, a place from which I and the characters can get a running start when we resume — and tackle recasting Book 4 from Chapter 3 forward. Then I’ll see what happens. I should add here, if this felt like “work” at all I wouldn’t be doing it. I’m excited. This will be fun.

Basically I’ll be cycling through the whole novel from the beginning. But where the character dies in the current version, she won’t die in this one — that’s the only stipulation — and the story will unfold from there. (And yes, I’ll save the new Book 4 with a different file name, probably something really clever like “Book 4 New Version” though I suspect I won’t need the old one.) I’ll document the recasting below as well as I can.

Slipping into the prophecy business for a moment, I expect much in the story will remain the same. On the other hand, I know for a fact much will necessarily be different. That’s how it is with different futures.

I’ll keep track of any new words I add each day below. Then when it’s all over I’ll subtract everything I cut and that will be the new novel. I have a side bet with myself that the new Book 4 will be shorter than the old one, but I guess we’ll see. Anyway, I’ll only count new words in the monthly and annual totals below that.

I expect this process to take no more than a few days. For that reason, for the time being, you’ll also still see “Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5” below, frozen in time on Day 5 at 18655 words.

For the record, I should make it plain here that I’m not abandoning my practice of writing into the dark, and I’m not rewriting.

Despite what many would have you believe, rewriting isn’t really writing at all. That’s the truth. Think about it. Rewriting is a kind of editing that the writer accomplishes with the critical, conscious mind, not the creative subconscious.

Recasting simply means writing into the dark on the same idea again. So it is the characters, not I, who are recasting the story. If you have any questions about that, please feel free to email me and ask.

This will be no different than those stories you see every now and then that have an ending and then one or more alternate endings. Except that this is not a whole story, but one scene in the middle of a novel. So only the final version of the novel (no alterates) will be published.

Also for the record, this is the first time I've ever felt compelled to deal with this issue. I've mourned other characters and been bothered by other events, but not to this degree or depth. And this is the first time I've ever even thought about cycling through and recasting most of an entire novel.

I suppose I could also put a fork in the novel. Then I'd effectively have to write two series from that point forward: one with the possible futures that evolve from the character being killed and one with the possible futures that evolve from the character NOT being killed.

But I don't want to do that. Too lazy. Keeping up with the characters and interactions and events in one series is difficult enough. Keeping up with two series in the same world but running along alternate timelines — well, let's just say it wouldn't be pretty.

In a way, I'll be engaging in a little time travel. Everything that happens (or doesn't happen) in the past affects every possible future one way or another. Mind boggling.

Now it's almost 9 a.m. on January 1. I'm off for a short break. When I return, I'll open the new Book 4 file and begin the cycling and recasting. Should be interesting to see how the story unfolds after that one major character isn't killed. (grin) Stay tuned.

While I was on that break, my sister-in-law and eldest son decided it was time to leave. So the break extended to around an hour. Back in the Hovel and to the novel at a little after 10 a.m.

Yesterday I got up to Chapter 9. This morning I rolled out at 3, grabbed my coffee, fed my angel and came to the Hovel to post this. I'll start on the novel again at 4.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Math is the Friend of Prolific" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/math-is-the-friend-of-prolific/>.

See "Zoom Book Tours..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/zoom-book-tours-5-authors-on-publishing-in-a-pandemic/>.

See "2021 Publishing Predictions – Pandemic Reshapes Publishing, Accelerates Consolidation" at <https://blog.smashwords.com/2020/12/publishing2021.html>.

See “Light Blogging Today” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/light-blogging-today-5/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1270 words

Recasting of The Journey Home: Part 4

Words brought fwd (before the death)..... 48240

Day 1..... 1735 words. Total words to date..... 49975

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179

Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004

Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750

Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782

Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655

Total fiction words for January..... 1735

Total fiction words for the year..... 1735

Total nonfiction words for December... 2130

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 2130

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 3865

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#),
[Smashwords](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Ongoing Saga

January 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The Ongoing Saga of Recasting a Novel
- * The Numbers

The Ongoing Saga of Recasting a Novel

The first two days went more slowly than I'd hoped. I hadn't remembered how much of the original Book 4 was predicated on and directly affected by Isabel's death. So cycling won't work.

Cycling means reading and allowing yourself to touch the story as you read. That is not helpful when recasting a book. Remember, I've never done this before so I'm learning as I go.

As I read, cycling through the book, my conscious, critical mind kept popping in: "You could probably keep this scene. Just change it up a little and make it work," etc.

Fortunately, I soon recognized what was going on. So instead of continuing to read through the novel, I switched over to read my reverse outline. If a chapter or major scene on the RO had anything to do with the death (or the two ensuing deaths and funerals, etc.) I went to the novel, highlighted those chapters or scenes as blocks of text (without reading them), and hit the delete key.

In all, I deleted slightly less than half the novel. So I have a clean slate to work with after having been handed the first two chapters and several other chapters that have nothing to do with the death.

That gave me a clean "brought forward" number of 24,256 words. Then I added the two days of writing I've done thus far. So the total as of yesterday was 29,273. Which means if this novel runs true to form for the others in this series, I should have about 21,000 words to go. So probably a weeks' work. With any luck, I'll finish in 5 or 6 days.

By the way, if you're one of those who thinks your words or scenes are golden (Golden Words Syndrome), don't try this at home. (grin) But seriously, words are to a writer what nails are to a carpenter. If you find a bent one, toss it out. There are always more words.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Licensing Pioneer..." at <https://wwd.com/eye/people/pioneering-fashion-licensing-executive-ruth-mccarthy-manton-dies-at-1234688061/>. Thanks to K.C. Riggs for the tip.

See "Story #1 of Challenge" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/story-1-of-challenge/>. Dean has challenged himself to write a short story every day of this year plus a novel every month.

See "Journey to the Center of the Earth" at <https://www.outsideonline.com/2419910/journey-center-earth-cave-oilbirds>. Possible story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 410 words

Recasting of The Journey Home: Part 4

Words brought fwd (before the death)..... 24256

Day 1..... 1735 words. Total words to date..... 25991

Day 2..... 3282 words. Total words to date..... 29273

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179

Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004

Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750

Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782

Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655

Total fiction words for January..... 5017

Total fiction words for the year..... 5017

Total nonfiction words for December... 2540

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 2540

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 7557

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Opening Up a World Early

January 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

* Opening up a World Early

* Good day

* The Numbers

Opening Up a World Early

A few days ago, one of my first readers emailed to say he'd awakened that morning with "an idea for another [FOH] storyline that could be interesting." Then he asked whether he should "pitch it" to me or "write it up" like I offered with the Galaxy stories.

I told him to go ahead and write it if he wants. So I'll open that world up to others too.

To save me reinventing the wheel, here's the note I sent him:

If you're interested in writing a short story, novella or novel in the Future of Humanity (FOH) series (formerly called The Ark series), you can do that. I planned on opening it up as a shared world later on anyway. But I haven't prepared the series or world bible yet.

Re the writing, all I really ask is that you don't significantly change any of the established characters' physical characteristics, the characteristics of particular settings in The Ark, the propulsion system, etc. And you can find all of those and more in the existing books.

Re the publishing, it's your story or book. All I ask in that regard is that in the front matter, you write, centered below your name (which is below the title) in 9 or 10 point font, "A Future of Humanity [Short Story, Novella, or Novel]" and centered below that, "Based on The Ark: The Journey Home and the Future of Humanity (FOH) series by Harvey Stanbrough."

(Note that as a first reader, he already has the first four books, so he has all the information he needs re the world bible. He just has to dig it out.)

Also note that I'm being extremely generous here. I'm not asking for a royalty split or an up-front payment or anything else monetarily to play in my sandbox. I'm only asking that writers in this world pay minimal homage to the source. That might change in the future, so if you want in, I suggest you jump in early.

If anyone else is interested in writing in the Future of Humanity (FOH) world, either become one of my first readers OR buy your own copy of [The Ark: The Journey Home](#) and [The Journey Home: Part 2](#). Then email me to let me know that and I'll send you, free, The Journey Home: Part 3 and, as they're finished, The Journey Home: Parts 4 and 5.

I had a good day of writing yesterday. Okay, now I'm back to writing the new version of Book 4.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Agent Laurie McLean Gives 10 Publishing Predictions for 2021" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/agent-laurie-mclean-gives-10-publishing-predictions-for->

[2021/](#). See PG's take. Interesting that in almost every item she mentions the rise in digital readership.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 480 words

Recasting of The Journey Home: Part 4

Words brought fwd (before the death)..... 24256

Day 1..... 1735 words. Total words to date..... 25991

Day 2..... 3282 words. Total words to date..... 29273

Day 3..... 4916 words. Total words to date..... 34189

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179

Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004

Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750

Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782

Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655

Total fiction words for January..... 9933

Total fiction words for the year..... 9933

Total nonfiction words for December... 3020

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 3020

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 12953

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [Shared World](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Just Rambling

January 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Just Rambling
- * On the other hand
- * The Numbers

Just Rambling

I'm constantly amazed by other "professional" writers, and all too often in a negative way. That sense of amazement makes me feel really blessed that I have my particular attitude and personality.

I'm glad I can actually achieve and not simply talk about achieving. I'm glad, as a writer, I understand that actually writing is a thousand times better and more fun than talking about writing or the dreaded "deciding to be more proactive and assertive about writing."

I know a lot of people believe in affirmations, and that's fine. But I can't personally imagine them working unless they're followed with action. Without action, an affirmation is just a feel-good exercise. Maybe it makes a writer feel as if she's accomplished something without having actually accomplished anything. That doesn't compute in my mind, but whatever helps you sleep at night, I suppose.

Repeating an affirmation without following up with action gives me the mental image of someone attempting to race across an ice rink in street shoes when the real skaters are wearing Easy-Glide skates.

I also know I should be more understanding of those who are more comfortable with talking about what they would like to do than actually doing it. But I can't. I'm incapable of understanding that mental process. To me, if you want to do something and you're physically capable of doing it, then the Nike ad kicks in and you just do it.

Anyway....

I'm not talking about new writers who are at least struggling to let go of the myths and trust themselves. That was me a short 6 years ago.

Those writers actually energize me because I know they have a future, if only they will break through the final lack-of-self-trust veneer and grab it. If anything, those writers make me wish I was just at the beginning of this wonderful journey again. Everything back then was new and exciting.

I'm talking about those who call themselves professional writers but really aren't. I read a post from one of those this morning, who felt an "at least" accomplishment: At least she "did manage to finish major revisions to a novel." What a terrible, depressing thought that is. I wish her a better 2021. One in which she does instead of dreams.

Meanwhile, over here at the Stanbrough Hovel, I've felt a sense of time slipping away because I've chosen to recast roughly half a novel. If I'd chanced upon the new twist I took off with in the recast when I wrote Book 4 the first time, I'd at least be close to finishing Book 5 by now.

By choosing to recast Book 4, I've created my own setback. And even that has me feeling as if time's slipping away. I can't begin to imagine how I'd feel if I felt a need to write, then rewrite, then submit work to a critique group, then polish, then whatever comes next. Especially after taking a year or two or three to write the novel in the first place.

The more posts I read from "professional writers" on various sites, the more alone I feel. But I feel more accomplished too, and fortunate that I am the way I am. Or maybe that I have the attitude I have. Or something.

It's all a matter of personality, I guess. For example, I was severely disappointed that I allowed myself to lose almost 5 months last year. I still wonder what I could have gotten done during that time had I only put my fingers on the keyboard and allowed the stories to come out. It still bothers me a little.

I have to consciously remind myself that 5 months is in the past and there's nothing I can do about it in the here and now except try to learn from it and not let anything like that happen again.

On the other hand, I know several good (real) professional who occasionally post something that helps others if only they'll read and listen.

I check almost every day to see whether Joe Konrath has returned yet. He hasn't. But if you haven't seen it before, you might want to stop by and see his "Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About" (see below).

I also checked for a new post from Neil Gaiman, who actually *has* returned. I've linked to an extremely valuable Gaiman post below.

Anyway, I'll shut up now and get this posted so you can see the good stuff in "Of Interest." That's the main reason I posted today anyway.

Another good day for me yesterday, but you can see that in the Numbers section below.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A New Year's Thoughts, and the old ones gathered" at <https://journal.neilgaiman.com/2020/12/a-new-years-thoughts-and-old-ones.html>.

See "Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About" at <http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>.

See “28 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/28-themed-submission-calls-for-january-2021/>.

See “Heating Up” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-heating-up/>. I don’t always agree with everything I post.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 850 words

Recasting of The Journey Home: Part 4

Words brought fwd (before the death)..... 24256

Day 1..... 1735 words. Total words to date..... 25991

Day 2..... 3282 words. Total words to date..... 29273

Day 3..... 4916 words. Total words to date..... 34189

Day 4..... 4687 words. Total words to date..... 38876

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179

Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004

Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750

Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782

Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655

Total fiction words for January..... 14620

Total fiction words for the year..... 14620

Total nonfiction words for December... 3870

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 3870

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 18490

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [J. A. Konrath](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: MOM (Moaning Over Misery)

January 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Lot Slower Yesterday
- * In a continuation of my MOM
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Being a writer does not make you an editor. And being an editor definitely does not make you a writer.” me

A Lot Slower Yesterday

Well, my progress on my recast novel was a lot slower day yesterday. I ran into the part of Book 4 that I kept, the thread that had nothing to do with the death that caused me to recast the novel.

A cautionary note: If I had it to do over (and if I ever decide to do something like this again) I would just delete everything after Chapter 2 and recast the whole thing. But at this late stage, I won't. I've already spent 16 days on this novel, the original version of which took only 11 to write. Ridiculous.

As it is, for the rest of this novel I'll be writing scenes and chapters that lead to or hook into the existing ones. Still, those should be all new scenes from this point forward so it should go fairly quickly.

Yesterday I did a lot of cycling and more deletions. So a lot of conscious-mind crap. It was not a good day — it was a day of almost arduous work instead of creative fun — and I ended with fewer than 1700 new words on the day.

I figure I'm probably 10,000 words or thereabouts from being finished. Then I can get back to Book 5. I'm looking forward to that. And I'm not sure, but with Book 6 I might skip ahead a generation or so.

And now that I've complained and groaned and moaned about all that lost time and slipping, tractionless wheels, this morning I was reminded once again to count my blessings.

In a continuation of my MOM (Moaning Over Misery) in yesterday's Journal, compare my whining above about losing a whole day with another writer who says, almost joyfully, “By the time most of us hit ‘The End’, we've been staring at the manuscript on a computer screen for months.”

If you're determined to suck every single ounce of joy out of the storytelling process, wallow in unreasoning fear, and be absolutely certain your manuscript reads exactly like all the other manuscripts in the slush pile, see the last item in "Of Interest" below.

It links to an excellent outline (forgive me the pun) of a critical voice mindset and explains perfectly why so many so-called "professional" fiction writers think of writing as drudgery. This is what happens when a writer believes her words are golden and her story is 'important.'

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Where Is My Office?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/where-is-my-office/>. See PG's take. I am pleased and feel fortunate that I can still "go to work" in the Hovel, a room of my own that's far enough from my house.

See "What Writers and Editors Do" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-writers-and-editors-do/>. I believe the author of the OP missed the point of the question (from the writer) "Who are you?" I believe the writer could more effectively framed the question as "Are you me?"

See "Sale Ends Thursday at 5PM" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/sale-ends-thursday-at-5pm/>.

See "Playing Tricks With Editing" (by Terry Odell) at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/playing-tricks-with-editing.html>. Being a writer does not make you an editor. And being an editor definitely does not make you a writer.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Recasting of The Journey Home: Part 4

Words brought fwd (before the death)..... 24256

Day 1..... 1735 words. Total words to date..... 25991

Day 2..... 3282 words. Total words to date..... 29273

Day 3..... 4916 words. Total words to date..... 34189

Day 4..... 4687 words. Total words to date..... 38876

Day 5..... 1698 words. Total words to date..... 40574

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179

Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004

Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750

Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782
Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655

Total fiction words for January..... 16318
Total fiction words for the year..... 16318
Total nonfiction words for December... 4450
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 4450
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 20768

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Yes, That's What Happens

January 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * I'm writing this
- * Yes. That's what happens
- * On an oddly related note
- * Today I'll finish cycling and write
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“My story began to develop and grow in unexpected ways, much like a baby who resembles neither parent at first but occasionally, even eerily, flashes a crooked smile or gives you that soulful gaze that makes you know you are staring at your spiritual twin.” Sunday Taylor

I'm writing this on Thursday morning. I finished the recast of Book 4 by around 7 a.m. It's a lot stronger now, though shorter at just over 42000 words once I deleted the cut scenes. It also no longer includes the death of that particular major character.

I took a brief and somewhat tumultuous break, then raced back to the Hovel to begin (again) on Book 5. That was interrupted by some sad news from New Mexico. After a long descent into

dementia, my mother died in her sleep at 10 a.m. My daughter (my mother's caregiver) was holding her hand as she passed.

I'm not mentioning this to garner sympathy, but as a kind of homage. Actually it was a disturbingly unemotional event for me. This woman gave birth to me 68 years ago, but my mom, the woman who raised me from the time I was 5, passed away 9 years ago. Still....

Suffice it to say I made a couple of phone calls, spent a short time grieving, and decided Thursday would be a non-writing day other than the small bit of writing I'd already done to finish Book 4.

Then I sent the new version of Book 4 in a PDF document to my first readers (not to be first-read but only to sate their curiosity regarding the recast book).

After that I read over the first 4 (of 13) chapters of Book 5 to start getting it back in my mind. Then I took the rest of the day off. Tomorrow (Friday) will be soon enough to finish cycling through Book 5 and start writing in earnest again.

When that happens, the story won't be interrupted by a funeral. My daughter has decided to have her grandmother cremated and to keep the cremains.

Nobody has mentioned even a memorial service, but I doubt that a gathering would be allowed anyway. The cremation will take place in my once-vibrant home state of New Mexico, which labors now under the thumb of Michelle Lujan Grisham, a self-styled benevolent dictator who unilaterally lays down rules "for your own good" and sees herself as the arbiter of the definition of that phrase.

And now it's today, Friday. Regarding the Quote of the Day, Yes. That's what happens when you're writing into the dark. After that, you only need to trust it and let the characters finish telling the story.

In one article today, the same article from which I took the Quote of the Day above, I read

"[T]here was a magic that would occur, with sparks of illumination so insanely thrilling, that I just couldn't stop writing. / Mostly though, as every writer will tell you, the process was more prosaic and consisted of staring at the computer screen for hours on end and coming up with very little."

The whole article saddened me. I have a lot of "if onlys" in my life about other writers and their processes. And most of the time they boil down to the writer trusting themselves and their characters.

If only this one had trusted in those "sparks of illumination," she would have stumbled into a wonderful, prolific world.

On an oddly related note, I received an email from a friend on Thursday in which he wrote, “I just saw an ad for a book that shows writers how to plot a novel in only ten days. Ten days to come up with a plot! Wow! People pay money for this stuff.”

Then he suggested we “collect all the writerly things we don’t do and put them into a book.” He suggested we title it, “How to Write Stuff and Really Drag Out the Process to Impress Friends and Relatives with Your Angst.”

He’s a funny guy, my friend. But he might be onto something.

Today I’ll finish cycling through the remaining chapters of Book 5 and then continue the story. It will be a relief to be writing again.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Problem of a Writing Rut” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-problem-of-a-writing-rut/>.

See “Book Reviews: Are They Useful to Writers?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/book-reviews-are-they-useful-to-writers.html>.

See “Why Do Dwarves Sound Scottish and Elves Sound Like Royalty?” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/why-do-dwarves-sound-scottish-and-elves-sound-like-royalty>.

See “Is Your Town a Member of the Sweet-As-Apple-Pie Club?” at <https://leelofland.com/is-your-town-a-member-of-the-sweet-as-apple-pie-club/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800 words

Recasting of The Journey Home: Part 4

Words brought fwd (before the death)..... 24256

Day 1..... 1735 words. Total words to date..... 25991
Day 2..... 3282 words. Total words to date..... 29273
Day 3..... 4916 words. Total words to date..... 34189
Day 4..... 4687 words. Total words to date..... 38876
Day 5..... 1698 words. Total words to date..... 40574
Day 6..... 4724 words. Total words to date..... 45298
Day 7..... 0831 words. Total words to date..... 46129 (done)

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179
Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004
Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782
Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655

Total fiction words for January..... 21873
Total fiction words for the year..... 21873
Total nonfiction words for December... 5250
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 5250
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 27123

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Writing “Fast”

January 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Writing “Fast”
- * A dismal day
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Professional writers think of stories or novels as just one continuous thing they write, never making one or another more important.” Dean Wesley Smith

“I usually write a play in six days. A novel takes a month.” William Saroyan

Topic: Writing “Fast”

Again today I saw a writer trying to define “fast,” as in “Are you a ‘fast’ writer?”

To me, this is like defining heat and cold or light and dark. Really, there is no such thing as “cold” or “dark.” There is only heat and the absence of heat, light and the absence of light. Meaning everything is defined by the level of (or lack of) heat or light in a given area.

Likewise, there is no “fast” in writing. There can’t be. Have you ever heard anyone describe a writer as being “slow”?

There is no fast or slow. There is only writing and the absence of writing. You either spend the hours in the chair writing or you don’t. If you’re putting new words on the page, you’re writing. If you aren’t, then you’re doing something other than writing.

Most writers I know write at around 1,000 to 1,200 words of publishable fiction per hour, a blazing slow 17 to 20 words per minute. As Dean Wesley Smith once said, “That leaves a lot of time for staring off into space.” He’s right. It does.

Some probably write faster than that, but few if any ever approach their high school typing class typing-test speed of 40 or 60 or 80 words per minute. That would be 2,400 or 3,600 or 4,800 words per hour. Duh. I wish.

What most writers mean when they talk about speed is how long it takes to finish a “full-length” novel, which they never define, but if they did they would define it as something in the 100,000 to 120,000 word range.

Which has nothing to do with writing. It harkens back to traditional publishing in the 1980s and forward. The 100,000 to 120,000 word range has zero literary merit. It’s a length the tradpubs came up with to meet a certain price point for novels. Silly. In many genres, most “full-length” novels are around 50,000 words. They can go as low as 25,000 words.

Here are my own fiction-length guidelines. I use these to set price points on my own work (also dependent on genre):

Up to 99 words — flash fiction
100 to 1,999 — short-short story
2,000 to 7,999 — short story
8,000 to 14,999 — novelette (long short story)
15,000 to 24,999 — novella
25,000 to 39,999 — short novel
40,000 to 79,999 — novel
Over 80,000 — long novel

But back to the discussion of speed. Most writers who are mired in the myths don’t talk about how long it takes to finish a novel in hours or days. They talk about months or years, and even then they don’t talk about the finished work. They talk about the “rough first draft.” Again, silly.

But I have a theory. I suspect they talk about months or years because they would be embarrassed to talk about how much time they spend in the chair actually writing fiction, all the while calling themselves writers.

It's all math. If a writer writes 1000 words per hour (again, that's only 17 words per minute), and spends 4 hours in the chair every day actually writing, that's 4,000 words per day and a 100,000 word novel (or two 50,000 word novels) in 25 days. Or a 50,000 word novel roughly every two weeks, or a 100,000 word novel every month. With five or six days off.

If, on the other hand, it takes a writer 3 months to write a 100,000 word novel, that's only 1,111 words per day. And if it's a 50,000 word novel, that's only 550 words per day. Seriously, what are they doing with the rest of their time?

But let's drop in for a moment on a meeting of Fast Writers Anonymous:

Hi there. I'm Harvey Stanbrough, and I'm a slacker. I piddle around. A lot. Even on days when I reach my daily word count goal of 4,000 words, I've spent only 4 hours in the chair actually writing fiction. Who else here has a day job where they can spend only 4 hours per day and not get sacked?

Yet I'm called a "fast" writer. And the word "fast" carries a negative connotation. Some people have actually said to me that because I write "fast" my books can't possibly be any good.

Of course, those who say that won't bother actually reading one of those books to see for themselves. Might be embarrassing.

But more likely, even if they *do* read one of my books and like it, they won't be embarrassed. They'll just mark it up to "magic" and assume they "can't" do the same or better. Well, "can't" never did anything worthwhile, did he?

The truth is, they could do the same or better, easily, if only they would trust in themselves and what they know, and if only they would trust the characters to tell the story.

But it's much easier to pump their fists in the air while screaming, "There is no One Way to write!" and then cling tenaciously to the One Way that's been imbedded in their mind since grade school. As I wrote above, silly.

I had a relatively dismal day of writing yesterday. I hope today will be better, but I might take some time today and tomorrow to watch a couple of NFL wild-card playoff game. I haven't watched for a few years, and I could use a mind-numbing break.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Benefits and Challenges That Come With Writing Under a Pen Name” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/the-benefits-and-challenges-that-come-with-writing-under-a-pen-name/>. Not really that informative, but just in case.

See “Virtual Museum Visits” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/museum-tours-online>.

See “My Novel” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/my-novel/>.

See “Reader Friday: How Fast?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/reader-friday-how-fast.html>. Oh yes, I left a comment. And my personal thanks to James Scott Bell for priming my pump for the topic above. And to Terry Odell for telling me in no uncertain terms there is no “one way” to write. Sigh.

See “Making Do With Dollar Tree” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/making-do-with-dollar-tree.html>.

See “Thoughts about what Covid and 2020 mean for book publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/thoughts-about-what-covid-and-2020-mean-for-book-publishing/>. See the Passive Guy’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179
Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004
Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782
Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655
Day 6..... 2052 words. Total words to date..... 20707

Total fiction words for January..... 23925
Total fiction words for the year..... 23925
Total nonfiction words for December... 6330
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 6330
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 30255

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Thought on Priorities and Writing

January 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: A Thought on Priorities and Writing
- * Another Note on Numbers
- * A decent day yesterday
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“You don't need more time, you need more focus.” FS Blog

Topic: A Thought on Priorities and Writing

When I was a child in New Mexico, I heard a Realtor's spot on the local radio station: “There will always be more people, but there will never be more land.”

The Realtor in question most often dealt in large tracts of land: farms, ranches and the like. And the fact that I still remember it almost 60 years later is evidence of at least its memorability if not its effectiveness.

Per the quote of the day, I think the same can be said for time. There will never be more time. There might well be less. So it's probably wise to prioritize whatever time is available and then focus on doing what you love.

I'm not talking about spending time with family and friends and all that. I'll stipulate that most or all of us have that as well, but for most of us those times settled long ago into a routine. And those are shared times. Group activities.

I'm talking about doing those things you love to do by yourself, individually, in your own time. The following are my own loves in that regard. Naturally, yours may vary.

- * I love challenging myself (stretching myself) and achieving goals. My status quo is continually moving into the past.
- * I love learning new things, especially by testing them (usually in an attempt to *disprove* them) and then being smug when they don't work and excited when they do.

* I love sharing what I learn and achieve, not to brag but in an effort to be an example of what is possible if others stretch themselves too.

* More than anything, I love being the first person ever to witness my characters' stories. I don't see myself as a writer so much as a voyeur with a keyboard.

For me, all of that started to come together in a perfect storm 7 years ago next month when I found Dean Wesley Smith's blog. Back then he was doing what I'm doing now: writing fiction prolifically and sharing his thoughts on writing almost every day in his daily blog.

He taught classes back then too, but you could get the equivalent of a master's degree in writing from just reading his blog. I got my master's, then set out to expand on it through practice. Imagine if Stephen King blogged every day about writing. It was like that.

Yet by and large, the most difficult thing I've ever tried to do is convince others to trust in what they know, and to trust their characters to tell the stories that the characters, not the writer, are living. It's as if they believe I have a personal stake in their writing and stand to gain if they trust themselves.

Most of us would never dream of telling our neighbors what to do in the course of their daily lives, yet most writers relish in controlling their characters' lives through outlines. They even invite others in to beat up on their character-children and force them to conform to one formula or another.

And I was no different until almost seven years ago. For many years, I called myself a writer and longed for the day when I could find a "good" critique group or an agent or an acquisition editor or just anyone who would tell me in their "professional" capacity how to make my character-children behave.

How insane is that? How can anyone who lives *outside* your characters' world be so brash as to assume they know how the characters *should* live their lives or what *should* happen next or whether this scene *should* happen before that scene? Today, I defend my work—my characters and their stories—zealously. Even from my *own* conscious, critical mind, never mind anyone else's.

As my first-ever Psychology 101 professor said one day in class, "Don't should on people." He had a valid point. I can extend that thought now: Don't should on your characters. And for God's sake, don't allow others to should on your characters.

As you might have surmised by now, this topic is all about writing into the dark. About trusting yourself and the knowledge you've gleaned over the years since grade school, and about trusting your characters to tell their own stories.

Put bluntly, if you don't write into the dark, it's because you're afraid. Oddly, the most common fear is that what you write won't measure up. Meaning the story you write won't look like the story someone else writes.

But that's the whole beauty of it. When you write into the dark (and *only* when you write into the dark) you're writing in your own unique, original voice. No rewriting. No polishing. Just trust.

But be forewarned: What you write really won't "measure up" to anyone else. It will be worse than what some writers write, but it will be much better than what most writers write, depending on reader taste.

And it won't sound like anyone else, but that's a good thing. It will sound like you at your core, original and unique, and there is nothing better than that.

Another Note on Numbers (a bit of fun)

Yesterday I talked a little about numbers in my topic on writing fast. To me, numbers are important, primarily because they don't lie.

And the importance of numbers to my writing life causes me to dislike the month of January. I will be ever so glad when January is behind us and the calendar flips over to February 1.

Why? Because on January 1, my fiction words written for the year exactly equals my fiction words written for the month. And it stays that way all stinking month. Only when February 1 rolls around will my numbers finally appear to grow instead of slogging along.

It's annoying. It's like marching in place. And it serves no useful purpose other than to mark time, which means to stand there like a moron and watch time go by. And I've had an epiphany. I suddenly understand the inane reason behind the command for marching in place in the military: The command is actually "Mark time, march."

The thought occurs to me, the military might have chosen "Mark time, march" because "Waste time, march" was already taken. Perhaps by "writers" who actually serve in a lot of different capacities. First they spend months creating outlines (so they're outliners) and years forcing their characters to bend to those outlines in the manuscript (control freaks) and then rewriting (rewriters) and submitting the manuscript to a critique group (members of a committee) and polishing (polishers). After which they finally do something to cause the manuscript to be published and start counting the number of downloads and the Amazon ranking (nail biters).

But maybe not. I could be wrong, or satirical. Besides, I digress.

To the point — at this time every year, I go into a kind of stasis and slog, slog, slog along as I wait for stupid January to hurry up and be finished already so I can watch numbers begin to jump in February. Maybe next year I'll start my new year on December 1. Or November 1. Or....

I had a pretty decent day of writing yesterday. I expect the same today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Fall Back in Love With Writing” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/fall-back-in-love-with-writing.html>.

See “Stay Organized” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/stay-organized/>.

See “Did Vincent Van Gogh Really Commit Suicide?” at <http://dyingwords.net/did-vincent-van-gogh-really-commit-suicide/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1300 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179
Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004
Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782
Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655
Day 6..... 2052 words. Total words to date..... 20707
Day 7..... 4313 words. Total words to date..... 25020

Total fiction words for January..... 28238
Total fiction words for the year..... 28238
Total nonfiction words for December... 7630
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 7630
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 35868

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Writer Seeks Actual Publisher

January 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: Writer Seeks Actual Publisher
- * Wimped out a little
- * The Numbers

Topic: Writer Seeks Actual Publisher

A couple days ago I posted about numbers, and yesterday I posted about priorities. Who knew I was building up to posting about Heinlein's Rule 4: "You must publish" (in today's parlance)?

I just read another post about organizing, or rather the consequences of the lack of organization. And I was moved to leave a brief comment. I wrote "For me, at least, that's why Heinlein's Rule 4 is so easy to fall off of."

(Yeah, I know. Don't end a sentence with a preposition. And I'm sure you all know the old joke about the southern waitress. So if the "of" at the end of the comment bugs you, just insert a comma and your name afterward and move on.)

But as I posted that comment, a thought struck me. The big reason it's so easy for me to fall off Heinlein's Rule 4 is that I really don't care.

The joy for me is in writing the stories. And I'm not saying that from some haughty "I'm an Author" stack of fresh, steamy bullcookies. I'm saying it because I really, honestly don't care. I'm a very fortunate guy.

* I get to talk with my friends almost every morning (that would be you) and maybe help a few along the way.

* I get to spend hours alone doing what I love to do. And best of all

* I get to see my characters come to life and act out their various roles in romantic and action-adventure and SF and hard-nosed detective and other scenes, none of which I know in advance. Every scene is a surprise.

Don't get me wrong. My books sell when I put them out there so folks can find them. And I have a huge back catalogue with over 50 novels, around 220 short stories and a bunch of collections.

But whether other people read them really is secondary to the storytelling itself. And publishing, for me, is increasingly becoming a secondary evil.

However, there are people out there who have a natural penchant for publishing. Or designing covers. Or marketing. Or whatever else.

Not that I can't design covers or publish, etc. But I don't want to.

Dean would say this is because I "want to be taken care of." Nope, that's not it. It's because I don't care.

And I'm becoming increasingly uncaring about the slogging through the work side of all this. The business side of it. I don't think I've even updated StoneThread Publishing (my publisher website) for a few months.

So I'm looking for a publisher. No, not Random House or one of those other scam outfits who would pay me a pittance for all rights to my work. That is never gonna happen, nor do I want it to. (I would sell all rights, but my price is in the high six-figures.)

I'm looking for a person to take over StoneThread Publishing. A person who will run that part of the business and be the publisher of all the stories that flow out of my apparently prolific computer.

I need someone who actually enjoys the business side of things.

The right person will enjoy my work to the point they will be avid about designing covers or having them designed, then publishing and marketing my work. (I'll provide the promo doc and the sales copy.)

That person will be paid on a commission basis. Meaning how much that person earns will depend on his or her skill and ability. And with the right person, I'll be very generous.

I'm writing this because I hope you might know someone who will fall into that category. If you do, please have that person email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

If I don't get a response fairly soon, I'll probably put an ad in a few places. This is one of those win-win situations that come along so very seldom. So if you know anyone who might be interested, let them know. I appreciate it.

Wimped out a little yesterday and missed my daily goal by just under 500 words. But I only worked until 2. I wanted to watch the Bears-Saints game on TV. (grin)

Well, what a bust that was. I haven't watched for a long time, and frankly I'd forgotten how politicized the NFL has become. The whole experience was ruined for me by those paid to narrate the action. Why can't they just call the damn game? (I know they're paid to teach us all [cough, cough] valuable social and life lessons. It's a rhetorical question.)

The real value was in finally putting a personal end to the NFL. The players need to grow the hell up and be thankful for what they have, and the on-air personalities need to just call the game. Barring that return to reality, watching a bunch of spoiled millionaires playing a child's game is truly a waste of my time.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “That’s Annoying” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/thats-annoying/>. Another cautionary post on organizing your IP.

See “Writing Tips from Elmore Leonard’s Boyd Crowder” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/writing-tips-from-elmore-leonards-boyd-crowder.html>.

See “George Saunders: ‘These trenches we’re in are so deep’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/george-saunders-these-trenches-were-in-are-so-deep/>. I link to this primarily because it contains a link to A Swim in a Pond in the Rain, “In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life.”

See “The ‘Green’ Test for the ‘F’ Bomb” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-the-green-test-for-the-f-bomb/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179
Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004
Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782
Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655
Day 6..... 2052 words. Total words to date..... 20707
Day 7..... 4313 words. Total words to date..... 25020
Day 8..... 3501 words. Total words to date..... 28521

Total fiction words for January..... 31739
Total fiction words for the year..... 31739
Total nonfiction words for December... 8430
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 8430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 40169

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Gripes of the Day

January 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Gripes of the Day
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[I]f an artist of any kind sits around waiting for inspiration, he’ll have a very small body of work. Inspiration usually comes during work, rather than before it.” Madeline L’Engle

Gripes of the Day

Gripe 1

“Writing may be art, but publishing, when all is said and done, comes down to dollars.” Nicholas Sparks

Okay, first, duh. Do people *never* grow weary of stating an obvious fact as if no one’s ever said it before?

Second and more importantly, does Mr. Sparks actually mean writing “may be” art? So it also may not be art?

If he were cornered and asked by a person armed with an understanding of the nuances of the language and a modicum of common sense, I suspect and hope he would shrink back and say, “Well, no. Obviously writing IS art.”

If it isn’t apparent yet, I despise — no, I *hate* — the lazy, high-brow, haughty, smug, snotty, inappropriate use of “may be” when a person at least *should* mean to say or write “is” because the situation obviously demands it. Using “may be” when you mean “is” serves only one purpose: to avoid taking responsibility for stating the obvious.

And yes, I know any number of dictionaries will say “may be” is a perfectly appropriate stand-in for “is.” Most dictionaries, to my dismay, also say “likely” is fine to use as a synonym for “probably.” I suspect that’s because modifying the definition is (not “may be”) easier than teaching people that not all words that end in “ly” are adverbs and “likely” is actually an adjective that is synonymous with “probable,” not “probably.”

A long time ago when I was a Marine Corps recruiter, some general somewhere (or some lower-ranking officer trying to impress a general) came up with an ingenious way to increase the

recruiting pool. At the time, the Corps required all potential recruits to be high-school graduates. But recruitments were flagging.

Instead of being honest and changing that requirement, said officer changed the definition of high-school graduate. If a person “sat through” twelve years of school and could provide transcripts to prove it, then that person was deemed a high-school grad and qualified for recruitment. Sigh. (No, as a recruiter I never took advantage of the new definition. Upright is not a matter of degree.)

Back to Mr. Sparks — Characters, in dialogue, speak however they speak and that’s fine. But the first time a narrator uses “may be” when he means “is,” or “likely” when he means “probably,” I close the novel, toss it in the trash, and find something more entertaining and less maddening to do. Like poking myself in the eye with a sharp object.

Gripe 2

“I had a lot of fun outlining the novel, but halfway through writing it, I realized that composing it felt too much like real work — like digging fence-post holes or working on an assembly line. I’d had all of my fun up front, in creating the outline, and thus the writing became drudgery.” David Farland, in “Plotting Your Story” (see “Of Interest” below)

In the quote above, Farland is referencing a once-upon-a-time moment when he was required by the publisher to create an outline which the publisher would then approve before he was allowed to write a Star Wars novel.

Note that Dean Wesley Smith, a contemporary of David Farland, also wrote Star Wars novels and also was required to submit an outline for approval. So he wrote the outline and submitted it. And when the approval came back, he threw the outline away and wrote the novel into the dark. The publisher never noticed.

As I’ve alluded to in other editions of the Journal recently, I’m always amazed when I come across a writer who gets as close as Farland does above to an epiphany and then misses it or pulls back.

In the quote, Farland states an obvious truth. Later in the article he does his best to avoid putting it into practice.

Now instead of plotting his novels, he plots only the first third, then writes. Then he plots the second third, then writes. Then the final third.

I understand from those who read his work Farland’s fantasy novels are excellent. I can’t help but wonder how much more excellent they would be if only he would let go and trust himself completely.

Don’t worry. “Gripes of the Day” won’t become a regular feature of the Journal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Some Updates” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/some-updates/>. In which Dean’s critical mind is showing a few times, proof that it sneaks up on all of us.

See “Plotting Your Story” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-plotting-your-story/>. No, I do not advise plotting your story. In fact, as if you didn’t know, I advise strongly against plotting your story. In my humble opinion, David Farland should read his quote above until he gets it.

See “The Differences Between Line Editing, Copy Editing, and Proofreading” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-differences-between-line-editing-copy-editing-and-proofreading/>. Silly, really. With whatever editing you hire, don’t allow anyone to change the content of your book. Defend your work.

See “Editing: The Three Levels Of Hell” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/editing-the-three-levels-of-hell.html>. Yawn. Stretch. Whatever.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 870 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179
Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004
Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782
Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655
Day 6..... 2052 words. Total words to date..... 20707
Day 7..... 4313 words. Total words to date..... 25020
Day 8..... 3501 words. Total words to date..... 28521
Day 9..... 4209 words. Total words to date..... 32730

Total fiction words for January..... 35948
Total fiction words for the year..... 35948
Total nonfiction words for December... 9300
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 9300
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 45248

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	214
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Gripes of the Day](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: An Opportunity to Learn

January 13, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * An Opportunity to Learn
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[A]void using an abundance of clunky “ly” words.” Lee Lofland

“The best crime stories are not about how cops work on cases. They’re about how cases work on cops.” Joseph Wambaugh

An Opportunity to Learn

See “Five Tips For Writing to a Large Audience (48 minute video)” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/get-the-five-tips-for-writing-to-a-large-audience/>.

I suggest listening to this free video by David Farland. For one thing, it will help with good ways to think about your IP, not only the stories themselves but parts of the stories (characters, settings, etc.) as marketable IP.

As you know, I do not agree with much that Farland says in general about creativity. But you don’t have to agree with someone to learn valuable information about the business side from him. You can glean gems of information from pretty much anyone who has the success David Farland has.

This is one of those opportunities to use your conscious, critical mind to learn and absorb things that your creative mind will later feed into your writing. I took notes as I listened. There were gems I wanted to be sure I absorbed. And later, I might listen a second time to be sure I didn’t miss something important.

So again, I recommend taking the time to listen to what he has to say.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “He Angrily and Loudly, and a Bit Threateningly, said, “Stop Using So Many “LY” Words!” at <https://leelofland.com/he-angrily-and-loudly-and-a-bit-threateningly-said-stop-using-so-many-ly-words/>. Now and then, Lee hits one out of the park. This is one of those.

See “When The Dog Catches The Car” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/when-the-dog-catches-the-car.html>.

See “Writing with Self-Doubt” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-with-self-doubt/>. I laughed with disbelief all the way through this. It was painful. Do you fall into any of these traps? ALL novels bog down and feel boring as you write. That’s mostly because they’re in your voice, a voice you live with 24/7. The best antidote is to trust yourself and Write The Next Sentence (vs. “figuring out” anything with your conscious mind).

See “Writing Better Dialogue” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-better-dialogue/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 360 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 10... 3547 words. Total words to date..... 36277

Total fiction words for January..... 39495

Total fiction words for the year..... 39495

Total nonfiction words for December... 9660

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 9660

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 49155

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Dialogue Tag vs. Brief Descriptive Narrative

January 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * An extremely good post link
- * I lost a subscriber on the 12th
- * The purpose behind the Journal
- * Trigger Alert (joking)
- * I expect a good day
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Be ruthless about protecting writing days.... Some people do not seem to grasp that I still have to sit down in peace and write the books, apparently believing that they pop up like mushrooms without my connivance.” J.K. Rowling

“Jenny told me that the eye passes over ‘said’ and ‘asked’ and doesn’t stop my story the way flashier tags did. Nothing said amateur writer like so-called ‘creative’ dialogue tags. I avoided the hundreds of synonyms for the simple, efficient ‘said.’” Elaine Viets

“Never use a verb other than ‘said’ to carry dialogue. Never use an adverb to modify the verb ‘said’.” Elmore Leonard

There’s an extremely good post by David Farland linked in “Of Interest” today. I enjoyed it, and I like (and agree with) his excellent examples.

The only differences between what he teaches in this regard and what I teach are the labels. What he calls a “dialog tag” I break into two categories: The first (he said, she said) is what I call a dialogue tag. It provides no information other than which character is speaking.

But the second, in which the reader is given a bit of action, I call a “brief descriptive narrative.” You’ll see examples of both in his post. (PS: The same goes for what Elaine Viets calls “observations” in her post, also linked in “Of Interest.”)

Wow. I lost a subscriber a couple of days ago. He’d only been around since the 6th of January. The reason he gave was “Too negative for my taste.” Must’ve been my one-time “Gripes of the Day.” Which at least were all about language. Sheesh. They were not, for example, about politics or religion or any other hot-button topic.

Anyway, I looked back over the seven posts from the 6th to the 12th. I didn’t think they were negative, or not all *that* negative. So I’ll mark it up to reader taste or what a reader/writer feels comfortable with. I wrote quite a bit about WITD in some of those posts too. I suppose for some

writers that's a hot-button topic. Oh well. I do hope he finds what he's looking for in the way of writing advice.

Your opinion matters to me. If you feel I'm too negative, please email and tell me. If you feel I'm too positive, I'd appreciate knowing that too.

However, bear in mind that the purpose behind the Journal is not to butter (or mold) anyone's bread, though I do make a weak attempt at being a little entertaining on occasion, usually through a dry kind of sarcasm.

But seriously, my real purpose with this venue is to pass along to those who read the Journal the same opportunity (to learn) that Dean Wesley Smith gave me almost 7 years ago. That opportunity so radically changed my life that I want to pay it forward.

I guess you could say I want to be the alternate go-to poster boy for following Heinlein's Rules and for writing into the dark. Because it makes so stinkin' much sense. That's it. Shrug.

TRIGGER ALERT (joking): I guess it's a good thing that one subscriber is gone 'cause this paragraph and the next will be negative too, and God knows I don't care enough to want to "offend" anyone. I didn't write fiction yesterday. I *did* do about an hour of cycling and wrote maybe 100 new words, but my Internet in the Hovel went out right after I posted the Journal. (That's the negative part.)

So I spent part of the morning walking back and forth to the house trying to get it to work. By about 7 I was so disgusted with my Internet Service Provider (they refuse to send a new modem or to service the one they sent us before because apparently we now live in a time when customer service is no longer a thing) and in such a bad mood that I finally flopped on my fanny and watched TV most of the day. (Okay, that part was negative too.)

But it was all good. Mostly I watched old black and white *Twilight Zone* reruns, complete with Rod Serling. And for the first time ever, I noticed in the upper left corner of the screen a warning that the show contained "horror and smoking." I'm not kidding. And frankly, I was horrified a short time later. One of the characters in one of the shows sipped from what appeared to be an alcoholic drink, but there had not been a warning about "drinking."

Then around 3:30 or so I came back to the Hovel, smoked a cigar to relax, and wrote most of what appears above this.

I expect to have a good day of writing today, and a great day if I can pull it off. The novel is charging ahead.

At one point, I thought the novel seemed a little slow. But when I read back over the reverse outline (yet another positive use for the RO) the story seemed to flow well and was fine. And again I reminded myself to Just Write the Next Sentence.

God I love my job.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Attributions in Dialog” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-kick-in-the-pants-attributions-in-dialog/>.

See “Nuff Said” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/nuff-said.html>. In one of those strange coincidences, this is a good companion to Farland’s post above.

See “Serial Killers by State, 2020 Edition” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/serial-killers-by-state-2020-edition/>. How many serial killers live near you?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 950 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 10... 3547 words. Total words to date..... 36277

Total fiction words for January..... 39495

Total fiction words for the year..... 39495

Total nonfiction words for December... 10610

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 10610

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 50105

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Feedback and Thinking Out Loud

January 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * One astute reader noticed
- * Feedback on my negativity
- * I didn't have as good a day
- * Just thinking out loud
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I think some aspects of writing can be taught. Obviously, you can't teach vision or talent. But you can help with comfort.” Toni Morrison (via The Passive Voice)

One astute reader mentioned she noticed that although I finished the recast of Book 4 of the FOH series earlier this month, my novel total for 2021 still indicates 0.

That's true, but it wasn't an oversight. I finished the original novel in 2020 and counted it then. That version will never be published (except as it already was to my unfortunate first readers), so the recast simply takes the place of that one.

I thought about removing the novel from 2020's tally and adding it to 2021's but that felt a little disingenuous — moving it to 2021 would give me a head start on the 2021 novel count — so I decided against doing so.

Feedback on my negativity

Thanks to everyone who emailed me about this topic. Like everything else in the writer/reader world, whether I'm “too negative” apparently boils down to reader perception. Of the comments I received via email, they were evenly split between “not too negative” and “too negative.” Go figure. (grin) (Hmm. Maybe I don't add [grin] often enough.)

Still, it was a fun question, and I got some great responses on both sides. One writer even assumed, wrongly, that she'd made me “mad” with her response. Uh, no. Your opinion is your opinion. I neither have nor want control over that.

At any rate, please know that my advice (negative or otherwise) is worth exactly what you want it to be worth and/or what you paid for it. In fact, even if you love my advice, it will do you no good at all unless and until you practice it and make it your own.

And if you dislike my advice, why in the world are you reading this? I'm on your side here. If you don't like what I write, please, I urge you, spend your time doing something you enjoy or reading something you're comfortable with. Clicking an unsubscribe link costs nothing but an instant of your time.

Anyway, I think my responses to two particular points bear sharing. As I told one respondent,

* I often post links to articles I don't agree with personally in "Of Interest." Sometimes I add a negative comment, but more often I don't because I don't want to interfere with what someone else's opinion of the article might be. And even if I disagree with an article, the fact that I linked to it at all should tell you I'm leaving whether you agree with it up to you.

Note that even if I post a negative comment, there's no law that says you have to agree with me. In every case, I urge you to follow your own heart and mind. However, to maybe rectify this situation, I hereby resolve to either post a link without adding any negative comments or to simply not post it at all. I will never link to an article that I believe will actually harm a writer's practice on the creative or business side.

* I repeat myself often in talking about Heinlein's Rules and writing into the dark. That's intentional, believe it or not. I learned long ago as an instructor that sometimes if you say something in a slightly different way, you might get through to one more writer. So yup, I've been guilty of this one.

But I also talk a lot about HR and WITD because, as I wrote in yesterday's post, I'm one of only two voices that I know of who actively teach following HR as they were originally written and WITD at all. But most of all, I talk about them because those concepts so radically changed my life that I want to pay them forward. Still, I get tired of my own voice, so I can easily understand some of you getting tired of it as well.

So instead of talking (I guess incessantly) about Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark, I'm considering posting a few permanent links in every edition of the Journal. They would be a permanent fixture so anyone who wanders by can find them. You could click on them or not. Your choice.

Those links would be to the best writing-advice books I know. Some would be Dean Wesley Smith's nonfiction books and some would be my own nonfiction books. Plus a new one I have in mind. I think I'm going to write a nonfiction book about my own experience with Heinlein's Rules and writing into the dark. Then I can post the link here and shut up about it. (grin)

That might be a good idea. We'll see.

Okay, I'm glad that's over. Again, seriously, thanks to those of you who took the time to respond.

I didn't have as good a day yesterday as I'd hoped but it was still better than being jabbed in the eye with a stick. I got tired and decided 3600 words on the day was enough. Back at it today. And the next time I post, you will see a whole new Journal.

Just thinking out loud, and at risk of sounding repetitive yet again, I visit Neil Gaiman's and JA Konrath's blog almost every day to see whether the former has posted anything new and to see whether the latter has returned to posting at all.

Occasionally I am reward with a great post on writing from Gaiman. (Ironically, he posted today but it's very short and personal and has nothing to do with writing.)

Konrath, on the other hand, apparently dropped off the face of the earth after his post of July 19, 2019. I keep wondering whether he's still churning out novels. I'll check with Amazon sometime, but I'll bet he is. I'm thinking he might be even more prolific now that he's abandoned banging his head against the wall.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Colliding Worlds Kickstarter Campaign" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/colliding-worlds-kickstarter-campaign/>.

See "Inmate Healthcare: Who Pays the Bills?" at <https://leelofland.com/inmate-healthcare-who-pays-the-bills/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1060 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 10... 3547 words. Total words to date..... 36277

Day 11... 3630 words. Total words to date..... 39907

Total fiction words for January..... 43125

Total fiction words for the year..... 43125

Total nonfiction words for December... 11670

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 11670

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 54795

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: What We Keep

January 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * There are links to several
- * Topic: What We Keep
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Hahahahahaha!! What??? Me and you grumpy?” anonymous, a friend responding to [yesterday's Journal post](#)

“I have no trouble accepting my own flaws. It's other people who have a problem with that.”
Wes Crowley

There are links to several very good articles in today's “Of Interest” section. I hope you'll take the time to click through and visit some of them.

Topic: What We Keep

For close to a year after I learned the technique of writing into the dark, my screen saver on my writing 'puter read “Just Write the Next Sentence.” It helped, often and a lot.

Once I no longer needed the external reminder — once I was able to remember that bit of advice on my own — I deleted the screen saver. But I still keep other artifacts close at hand.

Back in the day, I enjoyed the occasional sip of whiskey. Once I found “my brand” I could do so without suffering so much as sluggishness the next day, much less a full-blown hangover or even a mild headache.

Today I keep a square bottle of one of my two favorite brands on my desk. It has only about an inch of the lovely elixir in the bottom of the bottle, yet I haven't had so much as a taste of it for the past 20 years or so.

But, possibly owing to the silly Hemingway story that's lodged in the back of my mind — he used to tell would-be writers all sorts of silly stories, including that he drank while writing — I keep the bottle on my desk as kind of a reminder that I'm a storyteller.

On one edge of my desk is a foot-long bit of mesquite root I found in the desert. To me, it looks remarkably like a lobster-sized scorpion, a reminder of my astrological sign and all the quirks that allegedly can be attributed to that.

And above my desk, hanging on a bare nail and occasionally swaying when the wind seeps through the necessary 1/4-inch opening along the side of the window directly behind it, is a print of a painting of some foreign café that's reminiscent of Van Gogh's *Café Terrace at Night*.

I've written at least three short stories as a result of glancing up at that print and "seeing" characters either moving along the street or in an alley behind the café or lying in a bed in a room above it.

These are not things that enable me to write. Writing is a purely physical action that requires only a working knowledge of the alphabet and a desire to form it into words — strictly speaking, when you create a grocery list you're writing — and sentences and paragraphs (or stanzas) that eventually become short stories or essays or novels (or poems).

And they are not things that enable me to write well, by which I mean tell good stories in poems or short stories or novels. That is a skill that can only be developed over time with practice, which is the paradox that keeps most would-be storytellers out of the profession. But that's a topic for another time.

My print and my bottle of hootch and my recently acquired mesquite scorpion are on or near my desk to remind me that — through births and life cycles and deaths and whatever comes afterward, if anything — I'm a writer.

So this morning as I glanced at my three objets d'art, I wondered whether other writers keep similar reminders on their desk.

What do you keep on your desk or elsewhere to remind yourself you're a writer? Or to provide inspiration or story ideas? Please take a moment to stop by the actual Journal website at <https://hestanbrough.com> to share.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing Media Tie-in" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-writing-media-tie-in/>.

See "Why The Vastness of Space Workshop..." at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/why-the-vastness-of-space-workshop/>. Some gems here.

See "Limp, Reel, or Totter" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/limp-reel-or-totter.html>. A very informative post chock full of story ideas. I left a comment if you're interested.

See "The Art of Describing Characters" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/the-art-of-describing-characters/>.

See “George Saunders Wants You to Accept Your Flaws (Writing and Otherwise)” at <https://lithub.com/george-saunders-wants-you-to-accept-your-flaws-writing-and-otherwise/>. Thanks to KC.

See “The curious incident of the second-hand bookshop in lockdown” at <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-01-12-the-curious-incident-of-the-second-hand-bookshop-in-lockdown/>. Thanks again to KC.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 730 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 10... 3547 words. Total words to date..... 36277

Day 11... 3630 words. Total words to date..... 39907

Day 12... 1782 words. Total words to date..... 41689

Total fiction words for January..... 44907

Total fiction words for the year..... 44907

Total nonfiction words for December... 12400

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 12400

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 57307

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [LitHub.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: What the Journal Is Not

January 18, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * What the Journal is not
- * Why I didn't post yesterday
- * The Numbers

This Journal is not a political blog and it will never become a political blog. Nor will I ever ambush you with political commentary here.

You come here expecting to read my ramblings about writing fiction and, to a lesser degree, nonfiction and poetry and my personal life as a writer. And that's what you should find when you get here.

Why I didn't post yesterday

Some will notice I didn't post at all yesterday. There are two reasons for that: One, I'm currently and seriously reevaluating the worth of this Journal. And two, I was too annoyed to post an entry. I was too annoyed even to write much fiction, and folks, that's going some. I couldn't turn off my mind and let go. So yesterday was a non-writing day. I lost a whole day for nothing. And days are precious to me.

I hope to finish the novel today, and for me, that's what matters. I almost didn't post a Journal entry today either, but I finally decided to get the annoyance off my chest.

Don't worry. I won't go into detail. I've already done that separately and privately in two documents totaling a couple of thousand words.

I was annoyed because I opened two blog posts from people I've long considered friends. And in both cases I stumbled into a political-statement ambush.

I promised not to bore you with details, so here's my writing advice for the day:

If you write a blog about "[insert particular topic here]," then I suggest you keep your implied promise and write about that. I also suggest you stop assuming everyone will welcome little political asides in your blog posts. Some won't, and it will cost you readers. Like me.

Yes, I know where the delete key is, and yes, I know where the unsubscribe link is. But both of those options occur *after* the ambush, don't they? The delete key and the unsubscribe link are the equivalent of a corpsman or a medic or a fire-department paramedic tending to your wound. But they can only bandage it. The damage has already been done.

Enough said. Now I'm going to escape back into my novel. With any luck I'll finish it this morning and start something else. Anything to stop putting up with this inane covid- and politics-infested bizarro world.

Talk with you again soon probably.

Of Interest

See "Will We All Be Grunting Soon?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/will-we-all-be-grunting-soon.html>. I'm glad to see someone else is concerned with the dumbing down of America.

See “Freelance Fight Goes National...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/freelance-fight-goes-national-must-know-info-on-the-abc-test/>. Any freelancers out there? Be concerned. Be very concerned.

See “Free Lecture: How to Write a Memoir that Wins Over Readers and Publishers” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/free-author-lecture-the-4-pillar-framework-for-writing-your-memoir/>.

See “Melinda Gates Donates US\$250,000 to New Carol Shields Prize for Fiction by Women” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/melinda-gates-donates-us250000-to-new-carol-shields-prize-for-fiction-by-women/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 490 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 10... 3547 words. Total words to date..... 36277

Day 11... 3630 words. Total words to date..... 39907

Day 12... 1782 words. Total words to date..... 41689

Day 13... 5490 words. Total words to date..... 47179

Total fiction words for January..... 50397

Total fiction words for the year..... 50397

Total nonfiction words for December... 12890

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 12890

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 63287

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Most generations are given a fight

January 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Most generations are given a fight
- * Taking a Break with JPS Brown
- * Finished the novel
- * Thank you
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Traditional publishing has a highly-conflicted view of libraries. They have the idea that a high percentage of borrowers would buy their books if it were unable to conveniently borrow them from a library.” The Passive Guy

“[T]he impulse to silence the opinions of or “deplatform” others has experienced a troubling resurgence of late, at least in some myopic intellectual bubbles in the United States.” The Passive Guy

“Some 250 self-described ‘publishing professionals’—mostly junior employees of major houses—have issued a statement titled ‘No Book Deals for Traitors,’ a category in which they include any ‘participant’ in the Trump administration.” Thomas Spence in a Wall Street Journal article, most of which appears in “Of Interest” below

Most generations are given a fight they do not choose. The current one is all about censorship.

These are troubling times for writers who want their work to be published and read. But how much trouble you might incur depends largely on your political leanings.

If you lean the wrong way (a matter of perception, not intention or fact) and let others know that, you will incur the wrath of the intellectual elite. Certainly the big traditional publishers will not consider publishing anything written by any person with whom the aforementioned elite disagree in any way.

But indie authors are not shielded either. Big tech can at any time refuse to list or distribute our books. Fortunately, at least at present, the major stores (Amazon) and distributors (D2D, Smashwords, StreetLib and others) of indie works don’t actually read them.

But if the trend that’s only hinted at in the Quotes of the Day above continues, it’s only a matter of time before those stores and distributors develop algorithms that detect certain keywords and phrases that will get your book bounced.

So for the first time since I figuratively picked up a pen and began writing, I’m hoping my audience doesn’t grow too much. Because at the moment, blatantly flying in the face of the guarantees in the US Constitution, you do not have freedom of speech (or, if you wish, freedom of expression).

The only defense you as a writer have is that nobody will learn your political leanings. Which of course they probably won't if 1) you keep them to yourself except in your fiction and 2) people who believe they have the right to silence you don't read your fiction.

In a perverse way, this is great news for me. I've always been one who would rather write than publish. I fall off Heinlein's Rule 4 with a disturbing regularity. However, the best possible way to get me to do something is to tell me I'm not allowed.

So chances are, very soon I'll be forced to take a break from writing fiction for a few days in favor of designing covers, creating promo docs, and publishing what I've written that is thus far unpublished.

And if that algorithm crops up and starts rejecting my books, I'll publish them to my publisher website. And if the powers that be shut down my websites, I'll print them myself and hand them out free on [expletive deleted] street corners.

Finally, a disclaimer: If you believe there is no fight, I'm happy for you.

Taking a Break with JPS Brown

For those of you who are interested in authentic western stories, author JPS Brown passed away at age 90 in Patagonia, Arizona. He was a former Marine, and therefore a brother of mine. I wish his spirit fair winds and following seas.

This is from a friend:

“Brown, a former Marine, was an interesting man and one of those old-school, cowboy gentlemen. In the early 2000s I occasionally worked with him at book signing events. [My husband] and I enjoyed some of his books and the authentic voice of the stories.”

Here's the link she sent me to the notice of his passing: https://tucson.com/news/local/a-real-border-cowboy-and-writer-j-p-s-brown-dies-at-90/article_eacf00be-9e0e-5f6b-ac98-42ebad3176a5.html.

My friend had me at “authentic voice.” I bought a Kindle copy of Brown's acclaimed novel, [The Forests of the Night](#). I look forward to making time to read it.

Note: Because this is a blog for writers, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the novel was priced one dollar too high to earn the 70% royalty rate from Amazon. Consider, 35% of \$10.99 is only \$3.85, whereas 70% of \$9.99 is \$6.99.

Finished the novel yesterday at just over 52,000 words, then spell-checked it and sent it to my first readers. I can hardly wait to start the next one.

Interesting to note, over the 14 writing days, my average was 3737 words per day. Over the 16 calendar days, the average was 3270 words per day.

Thank you to those who chose to leave a comment or email me. I appreciate your support. Good luck.

Talk with you again soon probably.

Of Interest

See “WebNovel” at <https://www.webnovel.com/>. Note that I am not recommending this site. Only mentioning it as a possible additional revenue stream. Enter at your own risk. And please be sure to read the Terms of Service, Privacy Statement, and any other applicable fine print.

See “20 Speculative Fiction Markets Seeking Submissions” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/20-speculative-fiction-markets-open-in-january-2021/>.

See “Blacklists Are the Rage in Publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/blacklists-are-the-rage-in-publishing/>.

See “Finished Cave Creek Novel” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/finished-cave-creek-novel/>. Good news for those in Dean’s Shared Worlds class.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 880 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179
Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004
Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782
Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655
Day 6..... 2052 words. Total words to date..... 20707
Day 7..... 4313 words. Total words to date..... 25020
Day 8..... 3501 words. Total words to date..... 28521
Day 9..... 4209 words. Total words to date..... 32730
Day 10... 3547 words. Total words to date..... 36277
Day 11... 3630 words. Total words to date..... 39907
Day 12... 1782 words. Total words to date..... 41689
Day 13... 5490 words. Total words to date..... 47179
Day 14... 5142 words. Total words to date..... 52321 (done)

Total fiction words for January..... 55539
Total fiction words for the year..... 55539
Total nonfiction words for December... 13770
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 13770
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 69309

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... X	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	214
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: An Excellent Quote for Writers

January 20, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * About the quote of the day
- * "Vignette from a Third-Floor Window"
- * Playing catch-up with numbers
- * In an item that I finally chose
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"You hear about how many fourth-quarter comebacks that a guy has, and I think it means a guy screwed up in the first three quarters." Peyton Manning

What an excellent quote that is for writers!

How about writing your very best on the first pass, then send it to a trusted first reader to check for typos, then publish and move on to the next story? How much time would that save you? How much more writing practice could you get and how many more stories could you write?

When I mentioned WITD to another writer one time, she (smugly) said, "Well, I could do that too, but I want to put my very best work out there."

I wanted to say, "Well excuse the [expletive deleted] out of me."

What I actually said was, "Umm, and what am I, a moron, that I spend all this time writing and then actively strive to put out something *less* than my best work?" Frankly, I wanted to add, "Are you *stupid*?" but I kept that to myself.

The only difference between me and that writer is that I do my best in the first place. Well, and I don't expect other people or one program or another to make my best better. In other words, I take full responsibility for my work and I'm proud of it.

You know... I *believe* in myself.

Well, I didn't quite start a new novel yesterday. Instead I wrote a short story, my first for 2021.

On my way from this computer to my writing 'puter (a distance of about 5 feet on my rolling desk chair), I glanced up at a framed print of a painting that hangs above my business desk in the Hovel. I've written two or three short stories based on that print in the past.

And before I got to the writing 'puter, an idea for another short story from that print sprang into my mind. I saw a guy standing at a window looking out and down at the tables and chairs and people at the sidewalk café (the focal point of the print) on the corner across the street.

So I started with a description (setting) of the guy and what he saw as he looked out the window, which quickly became *why* he was looking out the window, and the story took off. Easy as falling off whatever you fall off of regularly.

While cycling back through the first couple of thousand words, my conscious, critical mind tried to intervene and I became worried. After all, it had been a long while since I'd written a short story. So I thought about how little room there is for description, etc. etc. etc.

And then I remembered the only difference between a short story and a novel is that the short story is about One Event. Remembering that has saved me many times, and it saved me again.

I stopped worrying and went back to writing whatever came next. (grin) It truly still amazes me how well that works, not that I don't expect it to. I do. But it's still like magic.

"Vignette from a Third-Floor Window" is a moody, Hemingway-flavored story (I think). If I had to slap a genre on it, that would probably be post-apocalyptic psychological suspense. It came in at a little over 5300 words. If any of you would like to read it, let me know and I'll send it to you in PDF format.

So anyway, I got that out of my system so I hope to start *The Journey Home: Part 6* today. It will be interesting to see how this one comes out.

Today, as I was finally playing catch-up and adding all the FOH novels to my IP spreadsheet, I discovered that I've written 250,114 words in that series alone. That's since November 1.

That's a mean average of 3166 words per day every calendar day (not only writing days) from November 1 through January 18, inclusive. I am *stoked!* (grin)

In an item that I finally chose not to list in "Of Interest" (sigh... because of its obvious hateful political bias) the writer blames "world events" for his recent inability to focus on writing and

writing-related matters. I won't repeat the one-word response that sprang to my mind. Suffice it to say it had to do with flying mammals and fecal matter.

If you are also suffering with this problem, I suggest you ignore what you can't affect directly and pour all of your attention onto what you *can* affect directly, namely, your writing. As evidenced in the second paragraph above, you'll be far ahead.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Runelords Board Game Kickstarter" at <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/reddjinnproductions/the-runelords-board-game-relaunch>.

See "We are removing distribution to 24Symbols" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/we-are-removing-distribution-to-24symbols/>. Meh.

See "7 Ways Deep POV Creates Emotional Connections With Readers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/7-ways-deep-pov-creates-emotional-connections-with-readers/>. I agree vehemently with their third point. If you do that, you won't have to worry about the rest.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of "Vignette from a Third-Floor Window" (short story)

Day 1..... 5351 words. Total words to date..... 5351

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for January..... 60890

Total fiction words for the year..... 60890

Total nonfiction words for December... 14630

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 14630

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 75520

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Run-on Sentence? Nope.

January 21, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * An alternate dictionary
- * A Little Fun
- * A Run-on Sentence? Nope.
- * No writing yesterday
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Noir is urban gothic—hopeless. Hardboiled is gritty and unsentimental.” Garry Rodgers

For maybe the past 40 years or so, I've been slowly compiling an alternate dictionary of sorts as a mental exercise, something similar to The Devil's Dictionary by Ambrose Bierce.

Despite its name, Bierce's dictionary has nothing to do with Satan, by the way. If you're not familiar with it, you can find a free copy at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/972/972-h/972-h.htm>. It's great fun to read. I recommend it.

One of the definitions I wrote for my own dictionary was this one:

“democratic republic, n. That form of government in which, every four years, the citizenry is kept busy canceling each other's votes while the electoral college selects a president.”

I'm envious of Bierce. My own dictionary contains only maybe 30 or 40 definitions, whereas his contains probably a few hundred.

A Little Fun

A friend in California sent me a link to [an article in Wired magazine](#). According to the article, to write a book in 2021 you need

- * A Way to Take Notes
- * Some (Any) Kind of Writing App

- * A Second, Safe Copy of Your Work
- * Something to Track Your Progress, and
- * The Right Space

According to Harvey, you need

- * A character with a problem in a setting (grin)

I win, at least for brevity.

A Run-on Sentence? Nope.

In a post today The Passive Guy wrote this sentence:

“So, back to frolicking, if Jane delivers her load for Super-Fast Deliveries and, instead of returning the tractor portion of the truck to the closest Super-Fast depot as she is supposed to do, Jane decides to ‘borrow’ it for a weekend getaway out by the lake, and, on her way to the lake, runs a red light and smashes into into a loaded bus filled with wealthy investment bankers, causing a huge amount of damage, well beyond the limits of Super-Fast’s liability insurance, Super-Fast might contend that Jane had the accident not while she was doing the job for which she was hired, but rather, ‘on a frolic of her own’ or an updated term that means the same thing.”

Then he wrote, “(Yes, PG acknowledges that was a run-on sentence and Mrs. Lascelles would be upset with him even if he were still only in the third grade.)”

So I stole the example and his comment for a teaching moment. Here’s the (tongue-in-cheek if you can’t tell) comment I left on his site:

“Strictly as a case in point, PG, the sentence you wrote that begins with ‘So, back to frolicking’ and ends with ‘the same thing’ is a very long sentence, but it is neither a run-on sentence nor a comma spliced sentence. It’s written and punctuated correctly, and though it might cause mind-strain for some, it works fine as-is.

“A ‘run-on sentence’ is two or more independent clauses (each with its own subject and verb) that are joined by simply being smashed together, without benefit of a comma and a coordinating conjunction (or a semicolon). You have plenty of commas, each in a correct, useful place, and just enough coordinating conjunctions. Y’done good.”

Any questions, email me or leave a comment on the site.

By the way, there are some very long stream-of-consciousness sentences in my “Vignette from a Third-Story Window” too, but there are no run-on sentences. It won’t be published for awhile, so if you’d like a copy, email me.

I didn’t do any writing yesterday except cycling over the short story I wrote. That added about 150 words, so the fiction totals below jumped by that much. Otherwise it was a non-writing day.

Not because of anything going on over in DC, but because my wife is a bit under the weather. We did watch a little TV, but we watched fiction. No live events.

Today I will dive headlong back into writing fiction. It's my favorite escape. I'll probably continue my SF Future of Humanity (FOH) series for now.

But another storyline's lurking in the back of my mind. It would document the culmination and ramifications of a determined and expertly choreographed 4-year coup in a fictitious democratic republic, probably set in Africa or Central or South America.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Rules for Your Writing Group" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/rules-for-your-writing-group/>. I'll point out that despite the title, he is not actually talking about a "writing" group, one in which people gather to write. He is talking about a critique group. I recommend not letting anyone else into your story.

See "Crime Writing — Do You Like Yours Hardboiled or Noir?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/crime-writing-do-you-like-yours-hardboiled-or-noir.html>.

See "Long Black Veil" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/long-black-veil/>. One of my favorite old songs and linked here as a continuation of "noir" talk.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for January..... 61039

Total fiction words for the year..... 61039

Total nonfiction words for December... 15440

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 15440

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 76479

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Story Ideas

January 22, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Story Ideas
- * A slow start
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“A government of, by, and for the people requires that people talk to people, that we can agree to disagree but do so in civility. If we let the politicians and those who report dictate our discourse, then our course will be dictated.” Donna Brazile (thanks to the Passive Guy)

Note: Beyond hinting at censorship, the Quote of the Day has nothing to do with writing. I included it only because it is so closely related to the tone of the short story I wrote recently and to an excellent conversation I had this morning. (Thanks, AH.)

Topic: Story Ideas

I enjoyed an excellent if relatively brief conversation this morning with an astute reader who emailed to ask me specific questions about the motivations of the character in one of my short stories. Of course, I could only tell her my opinions. I didn't know his motivations, though I believe my assumptions about them ran mostly in parallel with hers.

And that conversation caused me to rediscover the great joy to be found at wondering about other people's motivations, what causes them to do the things they do or to reveal certain things in their thoughts while guarding certain secrets even within the confines of their own mind. (I'm talking about the protagonist in my story here, not my co-respondent.) After all, you never really know from one moment to the next who or what might be listening in even to your innermost thoughts.

And some great story ideas come from exactly that sense of wonder: Wondering what motivates a character —

(or your neighbor or the greeter at your local Walmart or the guy who's coming out of a store as you're going in or the other person in the doctor's waiting room or the person who lodges her shopping cart directly in the center of the aisle as if she really is not aware other people are in the

aisle with her and want to get past or any of the seemingly dozens of other people you encounter each day)

to do something or to believe something or to believe *in* something?

And once you've determined the imaginary motivation, wondering what will happen next: What will the character's actions or thoughts cause him to do or cause to happen in the next frame of the story?

But take caution: You're only *wondering* what will happen next, not deciding it. Deciding it will cause the story to fizzle out from boredom. Every Single Time.

And all of that and more caused me to realize that the short story I wrote a couple of days ago, "Vignette from a Third-Floor Window," was actually only one scene from a full novel, or maybe even a series, as vividly illustrated by my co-respondent and her questions.

After all, something — and probably a great many somethings — happened *before* that scene, didn't they? And certainly a great many more somethings happened afterward. I just didn't hang around to watch and listen.

Fortunately, the only way for me to find out what happened before or after that scene is to put my fingers on the keyboard and allow the character himself (and the other main characters him- and herself, and still more characters who haven't been cast yet, much less on-stage) to reveal all of that.

So today, in the midst of the opening of The Journey Home: Part 6, which is moving along just fine, I have to consider setting that one aside long enough to write this other one, the one I inadvertently started with "Vignette...." Or I might spend another day or two or twelve on Part 6 and *then* start the new novel. Who knows? I don't.

Quite a conundrum. However it works out, further stories in the FOH series will be there, waiting. That journey, that rifle shot into the galaxy, will continue even while I'm writing the other, Earth-bound story.

And in a couple of weeks, when I've finished either The Journey Home: Part 6 or a novel I haven't quite started yet, I'll return to the other one. Or I'll begin the next novel in the new series or The Journey Home: Part 7 or I'll write something else entirely. Am I a lucky guy, or what? Well, yes, I am.

And at the risk of repeating something I've said time and time again, the best way to learn a new story is still to sit back and do nothing actively beyond allowing the fingers to move over the keyboard. The best way to learn a new story and satisfy the curiosity remains to sit back and allow the characters to tell the story they're living.

They're really open and friendly that way when you allow them to be.

I had a very slow start to The Journey Home: Part 6. This can be normal and is no cause for concern, especially given my rambling above.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Kris Read the Cave Creek Novel” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/kris-read-the-cave-creek-novel/>. Of special interest to those in Dean’s Shared Worlds class.

See “6 Outside-the-Box Book Marketing Ideas” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/6-outside-the-box-book-marketing-ideas/>. I didn’t read this but I thought some of you might want to.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 880 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628

Writing of The Vignette Novel (tentative title)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for January..... 62667

Total fiction words for the year..... 62667

Total nonfiction words for December... 16320

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 16320

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 78987

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Decisions, Decisions

January 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I started writing
- * Decisions, decisions...
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Traditional publishing and selling physical books are, in the 21st century, narrow-margin operations without a lot of room for error or financial difficulties.” The Passive Guy

“[E]ven fools can often recognize a death spiral.” The Passive Guy, talking about the book business, but easily relatable to other endeavors as well

“Leonard, we know you're great, we just don't know if you're any good.” CBS Records President and CEO Walter Yetnikoff to Leonard Cohen, as reported by Joe Hartlaub in TKZ

Well, I started writing the new novel, the one I thought I would write “around” the short story that would comprise a scene somewhere in the middle.

I was excited about it, and it was going well, but—I killed it. The short story worked very well, but I remembered how difficult it was to write Book 3 of the Wes Crowley series “to” Book 4, which was already written. I don't want to go down that path again.

Anyway, I wrote the 2064 words, so I'll count them in my monthly and annual totals below, but if I ever finish the story, at least as a novel, it won't be anytime soon. More than likely I'll write a series of short stories in the same vein and combine them in a collection sometime in the future.

This is not a big deal. As I wrote yesterday, “further stories in the FOH series will be there, waiting.” I'll begin writing those again today.

Because I'm far too candid for my own good, I wanted to let you know I'm still assessing the actual worth of the Journal against my health and the time required to put the Journal together almost every day. (Please, no comments either here or via email. I won't respond.)

As I see it, I have three options: continuing as-is but on a more relaxed schedule, going to a membership model, or shutting down entirely.

For the time being, of course, the Journal will continue as-is, albeit probably on a more relaxed schedule.

If I move the Journal to a membership model, only members will continue to receive every edition of the Journal as well as other rewards. Donors at any level, my first readers, and a few others will be grandfathered in.

And if I choose the last option, well, then that will be that. I will, of course, discontinue the few automatic donations I receive each month. (Again, please, no comments. Thank you.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Nil by Mouth” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/nil-by-mouth/>. Not about writing, but beautifully written.

See “Prison Cooking: Cake in the Crotch – A Dessert to Die For!” at <https://leelofland.com/prison-cooking-cake-in-the-crotch-a-dessert-to-die-for-2/>.

See “BookExpo, Bookstores, and Libraries” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bookexpo-bookstores-and-libraries/>. Be sure to see PG’s take.

See “Creating Rooting Interest Early” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/creating-rooting-interest-early/>.

See “Fridays...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/fridays/>. Not about writing, but interesting especially if you like marbles.

See “We Know You’re Great...” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/we-know-youre-great.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628

Writing of The Vignette Novel (tentative title)

Day 1..... 2064 words. Total words to date..... 2064 (killed)

Total fiction words for January..... 64731

Total fiction words for the year..... 64731

Total nonfiction words for December... 16780

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 16780

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 81511

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Bestseller Goes Indie (and Why)

January 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * See the rest
- * I wrote nothing
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Which brings us to the huge burning question: what will the publisher do for us that will be worth giving up 3/4 of our money forever? A publisher would have to make a very compelling argument and that argument can't be just ‘We will give you a big advance.’ Here is why the advance argument falls flat on its face.

“Let's say we get an advance of \$100,000 for a book price \$4.99. The book sells 30,000 units in one year.

“Traditional model: the publisher earns \$3.49 off each copy, and then pays us 25% or 87 cents.

“Self-published model: we get \$3.49.

“Traditional : 30,000 units will bring in \$26,100 for us. A little over 1/4 of our advance.

“Self-published: 30,000 units will bring in \$104,700. We have made as much as the advance given to us by the publisher without strings attached. Math is our friend.”

See the rest in “Flowers and Questions” in “Of Interest” below. It's a good post that touches on a few other topics as well.

Per Dean Wesley Smith's blog, this romance bestselling author, Ilona Andrews, is “going indie.” Per the blogger herself, “we are going to *take the year off* from traditional publishing [emphasis mine],” not necessarily abandon it altogether.

I get annoyed when people pull a bait-and-switch with me, so I don't want you to think I'm doing the same thing. But it's still an interesting blog post. Go read it for yourself.

I wrote nothing yesteray other than the blog post. I just wasn't in the mood, and I don't like to bring my problems into my writing. Today I'll climb back up on the saddle.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Hybristophilia — the Bonnie & Clyde Syndrome" at <http://dyingwords.net/hybristophilia-the-bonnie-clyde-syndrome/>.

See "Flowers and Questions" at <https://ilona-andrews.com/2021/flowers-and-questions/>. A blog post from a bestseller going indie and why. Deah recommends reading this post, as do I.

See "Stretch That Tension" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/stretch-that-tension.html>. Yes. As I keep saying, take your time when you write.

See "Why I Turned Away From Realism and Began to Write Surreal Fiction" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-i-turned-away-from-realism-and-began-to-write-surreal-fiction/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 360 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 6** (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628

Total fiction words for January..... 64731

Total fiction words for the year..... 64731

Total nonfiction words for December... 17280

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 17280

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 82011

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [DyingWords.net](#), [Ilona-andrews.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Mind-Control Technique

January 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: A Mind-Control Technique
- * Help Keep Me in Cigars
- * Be Wary
- * The Numbers

Note: Today's post is around twice as long as usual, but it's very informative.

Topic: A Mind-Control Technique (and Why to Use It)

You've heard it here at least a few times: When you allow your POV character (not yourself) to describe a setting, it's a good idea to let the character use all five of his or her physical senses: sight, smell, sound, touch, and taste. I also recommend letting the POV character use his emotional senses: dread, elation, joy, fear, etc.

"But why?" you say.

And that's a question I haven't answered other than in general terms, as follows:

- * To draw the reader into the story.
- * To firmly ground the reader in the setting.
- * To cause the reader to be so deeply involved and invested in the story that he'd rather remain where he is for just one more page and risk peeing his pants a little than put down your story to go into the bathroom.

And those are all very good reasons, but they're still too general. They don't go deep enough, and therefore they let you off the hook.

Do you want your writing to take a major leap forward? Then here's why you want to let the POV character use all five of his or her physical senses to describe a setting:

Because you want to control his mind.

I know, that doesn't sound like your job description as a writer, does it? But it's true. If you want the reader to experience the story you have in your mind, the one you spent all that time turning into a short story or a novel, then you have to exert control over the reader's mind.

If you don't control every aspect of your story, the reader's basically making up his own story. It's like you walked up to a guy on the street and said, "So anyway, a priest and a rabbi walk into a bar." And then you shut up and walk away.

Granted, the guy might shake his head and wonder what institution hasn't noticed your absence yet. On the other hand, he might finish the joke in his own head, which of course is what you wanted him to do. But even if he does finish it for himself, chances are it won't be the joke that was in *your* mind.

The same applies to your fiction. For example, you never want to write "Mary and Joe went into the barn" and then go on about the story. If you do, you'll force the reader to fill in the details. And I can pretty much guarantee he won't see the same barn in his head that you saw in yours. He won't even see the same Mary and Joe that you saw.

When you wrote "Mary and Joe went into the barn," were Mary and Joe both naked in your mind or were they wearing clothes? What were the clothes from the feet up? Spend a few sentences describing them through the POV character.

But here: To illustrate why, let's mentally move to a stage production of a Jane Austen novel. Since the audience knows the genre and historical time period from the playbill, you can trot the actors on-stage naked, right? Save on costume costs. And the audience will "see" the appropriate clothing in their own mind, right? Right? Uhh, no. Same thing with your short story or novel.

Even in your short story or novel, the reader won't get the clothing from context. If Mary and Joe are insurance adjusters, Joe might still be wearing lace-up boots and jeans and a blue cotton long-sleeved work shirt instead of a suit. And Mary might be wearing anything from heels to sneakers on her feet and anything from jeans and a blouse to a pantsuit to a skirt and blouse or a dress on the rest of her body. They've come a long way, baby.

Did either of them have hair or was one or both of them bald? If either of them had had hair, how long was it? How was it cut? What color was it? If Joe's personally interested at all in Mary (depending on genre) did Mary's hair have a scent to it? How about his? Brylcreem or soap or grease or something else?

But back to the barn. Is it a hip-roofed barn or is the roof peaked or flat or sloped? Is the barn red (cattle or horses or a hay barn) or white (dairy) or black with narrow spaces between the boards to allow for air flow (tobacco)? Is the floor concrete and relatively clean (dairy) or covered with hay (horses or cattle or a hay barn)? Speaking of that, is there a hay mow or a loft, or not? If so, are there stairs up to it or just a ladder? Are the stairs rough-hewn or professionally built? Wood or steel? Is the ladder attached to the wall? Metal or just a pair of two-by-fours with boards or rails of varying sizes nailed across the front?

How does the barn look on the inside? Is sunlight (or shadowy moonlight) slanting across the floor? Do they go in through a walking door or a bay door or a pair of bay doors? Are there mower blades and cythes hanging on the wall inside? Is there a tractor or other equipment? Is there a workbench anywhere inside? What's on it? A vise? Horse tack? Tins of various liniments? A grinding wheel? Splotches of black grease? Are there stalls inside? Anything hanging on or draped over the walls of the stalls?

How's it feel, physically? Is the air cold, cool, warm, or hot? Dry and dusty or muggy and damp? Is the wood of the barn (and inside the barn) painted or rough? Splintery or polished and worn smooth? Lumps of anything beneath your feet as you walk? How does the barn smell? Does it smell of oil or dust or manure or hay or the rotton apples at the base of the apple tree just outside? Maybe a mixture of those? Do the hinges on the door creak or smell of a recent oiling? Are the hinges themselves clean or rusted? And a million other things.

Some writers in some genres might go a thousand or two thousand or five thousand words doing nothing but describing the setting before they get into the first plot element or the first bit of action. And if you think that costs them readers, you're wrong. More often than not, readers will remember that the book started in the midst of action.

(By the way, much has been said about "too much description" so here's a rule of thumb for you: If the author adds it, no matter how short or terse, it's too much. Period. If the POV character notices it and adds it, it's just right. Remember, you're trying to get the reader into the POV character's head, not into yours.)

The more your reader is forced to use his imagination—the more details he is forced to provide because you omitted them, intentionally or otherwise—the less likely he is to experience the story you thought you put on paper.

The reader will use his imagination anyway, but only passively. If he has to use his imagination actively to fill in details that you omitted, reading becomes work. And when that happens, he'll put down your story and walk away, probably muttering that the story was "flat" or "thin." Because it was. And he didn't come to work. He came to be entertained.

So yes. It's a good idea to use all five of the POV character's physical senses in every opening (every chapter of a novel or every short story), and Dean Wesley Smith and Kristine Kathryn Rusch recommend using them every 500 words.

Me? I just recommend using them in every opening and in every major scene (which for me are the same thing). For me, that's easier to remember.

And why?

Well,

* to firmly ground the reader in the setting, and

* thereby draw him deep into the story.

Which means you're exerting mind control over your readers. Seriously.

Help Keep Me in Cigars and Coffee

I haven't mentioned this for awhile. If you find this Journal useful or informative and you want to donate to the cause, please visit the recently revised patronage page at <https://hestanbrough.com/become-a-patron/> and select a level. Every little bit helps.

Be Wary

I've linked to an article via The Passive Voice in "Of Interest" below because it contains some information that might be valuable for some readers.

However, be wary while reading the article. For example, the author of the original post (allegedly an attorney *and* agent for a particular author, and that's a whole other ball of ugly) writes, "There are other mechanisms, such as reversion of rights and out-of-print clauses, that can help you retain your copyright." In actuality, neither of those help you "retain" your copyright. They help you GET BACK your copyright. There's a huge difference.

And just FYI, with ebooks and the internet being what they are, a publisher can always say, truthfully, a book is NEVER "out of print," rendering that particular clause useless. Finally, where the author of the OP talks about the "the royalty share between the author and publisher" the percentages shown in the list below that are actually publisher/author, not the other way around as the author of the OP implies.

As always, I recommend indie publishing and "retaining" your copyright yourself.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How To Animate Book Covers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/how-to-animate-book-covers.html>.

See "Authors: Know Your Rights! Key Provisions in a Publishing Contract" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/authors-know-your-rights-key-provisions-in-a-publishing-contract/>. Be sure to see PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1650 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639

Total fiction words for January..... 66742
Total fiction words for the year..... 66742
Total nonfiction words for December... 18930
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 18930
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 85672

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#),
[the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A New Nonfiction Book Is Coming

January 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Anyone can figure out
- * Are you one
- * Topic: A New Nonfiction Book Is Coming
- * I had a good day writing
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“One thing that apparently still has the power to infuriate people, though, is how many spaces should be used after a period at the end of an English sentence.” from an article sent to me by a friend via email

“I’ve gotten lots of advice in my novel writing career. Some of it good. Much of it stupid. It just took me a while to figure out which was which.” PJ Parrish

“I won’t say another word — not one. I know I talk too much, but I am really trying to overcome it, and although I say far too much, yet if you only knew how much I want to say and don’t, you’d give me some credit for it.” L.M. Montgomery (via The Passive Voice)

Anyone can figure out where the two-spaces-after-a-period typing-class rule came from. (Hint: first think of monospaced fonts, and second, think of people not wanting to change something with which they had become comfortable even when proportional fonts came into being.)

Anyone can also answer for themselves whether they want to continue inserting two spaces after a period in their own writing or whether they want to throw caution to the winds and brave the dangerous waters fraught with peril etc. of the one-spacers. Do what you want and don't worry about it.

Are you one who has a problem coming up with ideas for stories? Do you write or want to write SF? Here's a link to a story that all by itself, could generate any number of short stories or novels in series.

To begin any length story, you only need a character with a problem in a setting. Drop your character(s) into this setting. Maybe the characters are human in the far-off future. Or maybe the characters live there, have always lived there.

What is the intent of the musical tones? Welcoming, friendly, or antagonistic? What do the tones mean? Do they mean something different to people/creatures on each planet?

Have fun. See "Scientists spot 6 alien worlds orbiting a star in strange — but precise — harmony" at <https://www.space.com/six-alien-planets-orbit-strange-harmony-toi-178>.

Topic: A New Nonfiction Book Is Coming

Yesterday, I talked about reader mind-control as it is accomplished through describing the setting through the POV character's five physical senses. As I wrote that topic, an idea was born.

I'm thinking about putting together a nonfiction book that will delve much deeper into the topic. Of necessity, I will talk a bit about Heinlein's Rules (the beginning of all things writing) and about writing into the dark and cycling, the best possible way to put Heinlein's Rules into effect.

I will include chapters focused on each of the POV character's physical and emotional senses, how and why to use them, how and why to combine them, and which senses to omit at times and why that's sometimes the wise thing to do. I'll also talk about situations (settings) in which one or more senses might be enhanced even as others are blocked.

Finally, probably in a separate section, I will also discuss how and why to "focus down" into the setting and the incredible value of doing that.

If I remember right, I haven't talked at all, ever, in the Journal about omitting or combining the physical senses, or about what might cause one or more to be enhanced or blocked, or focusing down. The book will be well worth the price for the section on focusing down To bealone.

Of course, every chapter of the book will also be replete with real examples both from my own stories and from the stories of other professional writers. Regardless of what genre(s) those other

writers write, the examples will apply to all fiction in all genres. For example, if you believe in your heart of hearts you can't learn anything about writing by reading Stephen King (because you don't write horror), well, good luck with that.

To be certain I don't omit something I should include, I'll prepare an outline for this book. (Remember, it's nonfiction. I would never prepare an outline for a novel or novel series.) Then if the outline is as good as I expect it to be, I'll write the book.

But if I write the book, and there's a 99% chance that I will, I won't post those chapters live here on the Journal or over on my main website.

But I will make those chapters available in real time (as I write them) to all my donors at every level as a bonus on top of all the other rewards.

So if you've thought about jumping in but haven't pulled the trigger on that thought yet, now would be a great time to do so. Visit <https://hestanbrough.com/become-a-patron/> and check out the rewards, in addition to what you read above.

For now, here's a freebie: When I talk about focusing down, I'm not talking about general details—those should be addressed almost in passing with the five senses—I'm talking about tiny, minuscule details. Details that make the setting (or the characters) more “real” to everyday life, focus the reader's attention, and pull him deeper into the story.

If you want to learn about focusing down in depth, and if you want to learn it sooner rather than later, consider becoming a patron.

I had a good day of writing yesterday. I expect another good day today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “What's The Best And Worst Advice You Got About Writing?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/whats-the-best-and-worstadvice-you-got-about-writing.html>.

See “90 Poetry Manuscript Publishers Who Do Not Charge Reading Fees” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/90-poetry-manuscript-publishers-who-do-not-charge-reading-fees/>.

See “Class Action Suit...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/class-action-suit-amazon-publishers-face-price-collusion/>. Be sure to see PG's overly witty and informative response to the OP.

See “Understanding Third-Person Point of View...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/understanding-third-person-point-of-view-omniscient-limited-and-deep/>. I have not read the OP. Just passing it along in case some of you are interested.

However, I should note that I agree with PG. And secondly, that “deep POV” means describing the setting via the POV character’s five senses.

See “How to be an Imaginative Writer” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/how-to-be-an-imaginative-writer/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1030 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 6** (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628

Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639

Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361

Total fiction words for January..... 71464

Total fiction words for the year..... 71464

Total nonfiction words for December... 19960

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 19960

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 91424

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Trust Your Process

January 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Trust Your Process
- * Only a little over
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I have always read to be entertained, and have always written to return the favor.” John Gilstrap

“I often tell people that I don’t want to think too hard about the creative process for fear of breaking a machine that I don’t know how to fix.” John Gilstrap

“Remember always that the voice in your head is unique to you. Even a well-meaning teacher can ruin that voice if you’re not steadfast in your defense of it.” John Gilstrap

“Aspiring authors, get this through your head. Cover art serves one purpose, and one purpose only, to get potential customers interested long enough to pick up the book to read the back cover blurb. In the internet age that means the thumb nail image needs to be interesting enough to click on. That’s what covers are for.” Larry Correia

Topic: Trust Your Process

In today’s “Of Interest,” I link to David Farland’s “Trusting Your Process.” There are some good tips if you haven’t yet taken the leap yet to trusting your creative subconscious.

For just one example from the post, he (or maybe Sam Witt, whom he mentions in the article) says you should

“Prepare to write: the night before you write, think about the scene that you want to write. Create an outline on a notepad, and go to sleep.

“The reason for this is twofold. You want your subconscious mind to be focusing on writing, and it will actually begin working on the story in your sleep. But this also helps you ‘defeat the blank page’ by deciding what scene to work on and how to approach it.”

Again, if you haven’t gotten past needing the safety net of conscious thought yet to write, this is probably pretty good advice. If it works for you, use it.

Farland started the post with a question: “What is your writing process?”

Well, my process is different, and (harkening back to the title of his post) I do trust my process. And because I trust my process and was invited by his question to talk about it, I left a comment:

“I sit down, put my fingers on the keyboard, and trust my characters to tell the story that they, not I, are living. I write 800-1200 words per hour and take a break about every hour and a half. When I come back to the novel, I read-over (in alpha [creative subconscious]) what I wrote during the previous session, then keep flowing.

“In this way, since November 1, 2020, I’ve written 276,657 words of fiction in five novels and about 1/3 of a sixth. Well, plus one short story of 5500 words. (This last novel will be number 56 in six years.) [I misspoke. It will actually be number 56 in *seven* years, not six.]

“For me, writing is strictly a creative-mind activity. I never allow my conscious mind into it because I don’t want to signal my creative subconscious that I don’t trust it.”

I left the comment not to be negative or argumentative, but to maybe let others who read his post know that there is another way.

When I first discovered writing into the dark, I didn’t believe it could possibly work. Still, the idea of it was intriguing. So I decided to test it for myself. As I did that, I remained aware of my feelings, being especially watchful for feelings of fear, which I’d been told would quickly derail the process of writing into the dark.

I’m stubborn, and I’m persistent, and both of those are probably understatements. When I set out to test a new technique, especially anything so radical and frightening as writing a novel without an outline, I put my nose to the ground, my fanny in the air, and plow ahead.

To do that, I had to convince myself that if I failed at writing into the dark, nothing would change. I could always go back to outlining novel after novel and writing nothing but outlines. And telling others I hadn’t actually written a novel yet because I hadn’t found a cast of characters I could live with that long. (Yes, that’s what I told people for 40-some years.)

I convinced myself that if I failed at WITD the world would not end, and nobody would come to my house to beat me up or shoot me. In other words, I convinced myself I had absolutely nothing to lose.

So I was able to give myself over fully to the technique. I would trust myself, I would trust the characters to tell the story that they, not I, were living, and I would see what happened. That was on April 15, 2014.

Admittedly, I first tried the technique only on short fiction. The first short story I wrote into the dark is titled “Consuela.” I still remember it after all this time. Anyway, over a period of months I wrote 70 or 80 short stories using the technique. One of those was titled “Adobe Walls.”

I remember that one because the characters in “Adobe Walls” grabbed me. The main character, especially, said he had a lot more story to tell.

So finally, on October 19, 2014, I took a deep breath, put my fingers on the keyboard, and started my very first novel, determined to write it into the dark. That novel was titled *Leaving Amarillo*, and over the next few years, intermixed with many other novels in other genres, it grew to be the 11-volume Wes Crowley saga.

The thing is, the only way to know whether something will work for you is to test it for yourself. Most writers never try writing into the dark. Most writers, if they even think about trying it, practically break out in hives. They succumb to the immediate fear that hits as a result of just thinking about it. But for those who overcome that feat, a wide, beautiful new world awaits.

For a long time, I've believed that following Heinlein's Rules and writing into the dark will work for anybody. I still believe that, but really, it isn't true.

It worked for me because I'm tenacious. If I had given into the fear even one time as I was writing those short stories—if I had gone back to *thinking* about writing and *talking* about writing and *fretting* about writing instead of sitting down and actually writing—I wouldn't have written even that very first novel, much less 55 novels going on 56.

But by writing Leaving Amarillo into the dark, I proved to myself, for myself, that WITD works. And I've never looked back. And in case you're wondering, yes, the fears abate quickly once you give yourself over to the technique, once you truly trust yourself and your characters.

Only a little over 3700 words yesterday, but I also did a lot of work on the 'bible,' especially on the security teams, so I count it as a really good day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Trusting Your Process" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/trusting-your-process/>.

See "Are You A Phil Or A Doug?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/are-you-a-phil-or-a-doug.html>.

See "How to Evoke Emotions with Book Cover Design" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-evoke-emotions-with-book-cover-design/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1200 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 6** (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127

Total fiction words for January..... 75230
Total fiction words for the year..... 75230
Total nonfiction words for January... 21160
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 21160
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 96390

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [John Gilstrap](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Information

January 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Information
- * Yesterday turned out
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You need to remember this. The cat sat on the mat,” said David. “That’s not a story. But the cat sat on a dog’s mat. Now that’s a story.” Kate Weinberg quoting David Cornwell (AKA John LeCarre)

“The writing is a great palliative...” David Cornwell (AKA John LeCarre)

Information

I don't think I've mentioned this “Colliding Worlds” Kickstarter here before, so I'll mention it now. Seems like a great deal to me if you enjoy reading science fiction. See “A Sixth Volume in Colliding Worlds” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-sixth-volume-in-colliding-worlds/>.

And if you have a self-hosted WordPress website (not WordPress.com, but the self-hosted WordPress.org), see “2020 WordPress Threat Report” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/2020-wordpress-threat-report/>. Be sure to read PG's take.

Also see “True Crime Thursday – COVID 19 Scams” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/01/true-crime-thursday-covid-19-scams.html>.

If you'd like to see a bit on book covers that neither PG nor I have seen discussed elsewhere, see “Learning About Book Covers: A Touch of Grey” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/learning-about-book-covers-a-touch-of-grey/>.

For various reasons, yesterday turned out to be a nonwriting day. Back at it today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Life in Federal Prison for Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman” at <https://leelofland.com/life-in-federal-prison-for-lori-loughlin-and-felicity-huffman/>.

See “Three Authors’ Associations Address Status of Audible.com Talks” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/three-authors-associations-address-status-of-audible-com-talks/>. Again, read PG’s take.

See “John Le Carré Offered a Piece of Advice to a Struggling Novelist. She’ll Never Forget It.” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/john-le-carre-offered-a-piece-of-advice-to-a-struggling-novelist-shell-never-forget-it/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 240 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127

Total fiction words for January..... 75230
Total fiction words for the year..... 75230
Total nonfiction words for January... 21400
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 21400
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 96630

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Character with a Problem

January 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Character with a Problem
- * Additional References
- * The Numbers

Topic: Character with a Problem

Yesterday, I received a complimentary email from a writer. In it, he initiated two topics, one intentional and one peripheral. The more important is the peripheral one, so I'll talk about that today.

Many times, I've said all you need to start a story is a character with a problem in a setting.

In his email, the writer wrote, "I have no trouble with the setting part. That's what comes to me first. (Like the painting that has given you what, four stories now?) And the problem comes from who the character is and what he or she wants."

Let me repeat that last line: "[T]he problem comes from who the character is and what he or she wants."

Game show host: "Nope. [Insert buzzer sound.] But thanks for playing!" (grin)

Seriously, thank you to my friend for pointing out this misunderstanding. Because it is a misunderstanding.

This is important: That whole "discover what the character wants" is conscious-mind myth stuff we've all been taught over the years. That's the sort of thing that will *hold you back* from writing into the dark (assuming you're interested in the first place in trying to WITD).

First, let me give credit where credit is due. The notion that "All you need to start a story is a character with a problem in a setting" is not original to me. I first heard it from Dean Wesley Smith. But I tested it and made it my own and it works. It's true.

All you need to start a story is a character with a problem in a setting.

But as I've also said, the problem does not have to be "the" problem of the story. That's where the "trust yourself and your characters" comes in as you write into the dark.

The initial problem might be nothing more significant than the character glancing down and noticing one of his shoes or boots is untied. Or a door he rightly expected to be unlocked is locked. Or a door he expected to be locked is unlocked. Or he's on his way into Walmart and

realizes, halfway to the store from his car, which he parked at the far end of the lot, that he forgot his stupid &#%\$@#% mask. Or he just woke up in a bad mood. Or on his way to the coffee pot, he barked the shin of his right leg on a lower cabinet drawer that someone else left open. Or whatever. That's six story ideas right there.

The point is, “a character with a problem in a setting” is only a self-prompt. It's meant to get you to the keyboard and get you started writing. Here's the beginning of the fiction-writing process:

1. Describe the setting to ground the reader. This always comes first. (You can see this at work in any of my stories or novels and in any of Stephen King's stories or novels and in most, but not all, bestselling writers' stories or novels even if you think they begin in the middle of the action).

1. Introduce the character by name. (The “1” is not a typo. You might introduce the character by name, quickly, in one sentence, before diving into the setting description. But either way, all setting description comes through the POV character's five senses.)

2. Mention the problem. Again, this problem most often is not “the” problem of the story. It's only something to get you started writing. Which you've already done if you wrote “1” and “1” above, in either order.

3. Keep writing. Write whatever comes next. Yes, it's that easy. Trust yourself and your characters. Just write the next sentence, and the next, and the next until the character or characters lead you through to the end of the story.

So why is this important?

Because if you learn to trust this technique, you literally will never lack story ideas again. Ever.

In the paragraph I wrote above that begins with “The initial problem,” each time I listed a problem (there are six problems listed), a story took off in my mind. That's how well this technique works.

I could literally write the opening to a story (and maybe even a novel, depending on where the opening leads) by simply typing a character name, describing the immediate setting, and then mentioning any of the problems listed in that paragraph.

I was actually tempted to write a story opening for each of the problems I described above, right here, right now, in this post. I literally wrote and then deleted “To prove it, here are the story starts that came to me as I wrote that paragraph:”

I deleted that sentence because each opening would be 300 to 1000 words. So for one thing, this post would be ridiculously unwieldy if I wrote the openings. For another, writing them would also take a significant part of my writing day, and I'm writing a novel that I'm anxious to get back to as soon as I post this. As you'll see from yesterday's numbers—I had a really good day yesterday—that story is really popping right now.

But so could you write the opening to a story (and maybe even a novel, depending on where the opening leads) by simply typing a character name, describing the immediate setting, and then mentioning any of the problems listed in that paragraph.

It really is that easy, folks. I urge you to try it for yourself. And if you think for some weird reason that I'm trying to con you, please just pause and ask yourself what I'll get out of you writing a story.

The answer is Nothing. I will gain nothing if you write a story, and I will lose nothing if you don't. I have zero stake in your success. I would just like to see you succeed.

The next time I post the Journal, I'll address another part of my friend's email, to our mutual benefit.

Additional References

You can find additional references to this topic at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-the-essential-elements-of-a-story/> and

<https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-a-rare-second-post/> and

<https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-cave-creek-and-a-few-thoughts-on-writing-into-the-dark/> and

<https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-writer-fear/> and

<https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-monday-january-28/> and in many other places.

I found those by going to the Journal website and keying "shoelace" into the search box in the sidebar. If you type in "story start" or "opening" you'll find a lot more.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Just Publishing Advice" at <https://justpublishingadvice.com/>. I haven't checked this out thoroughly.

See "Does Your Cover Work In Book Thumbnail Size?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/does-your-cover-work-in-book-thumbnail-size/>.

See "A Riderless Horse and Bagpipes..." at <https://leelofland.com/a-riderless-horse-and-bagpipes-police-funeral-traditions/>.

See "26 International Literary Journals" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/26-international-literary-journals/>.

See “Ideas On My Lists...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/ideas-on-my-lists-for-pop-up-and-workshops/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1090 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 6** (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127
Day 5..... 5161 words. Total words to date..... 17288

Total fiction words for January..... 80391
Total fiction words for the year..... 80391
Total nonfiction words for January... 22490
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 22490
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 102881

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [JustPublishingAdvice.com](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Character with a Problem, Part 2

January 30, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Ooh I was so tempted
- * Censorship
- * Pro Writers Writing
- * Topic: Character with a Problem, Part 2
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“One of the things Dean Wesley Smith talks about is how he learns himself through teaching. I feel that this has been as much about me learning as anything. Putting down my thoughts about things I’ve learned over the years has helped to crystalize and solidify them for me.” Sean Monaghan in a comment on Pro Writers Writing

“For those of you who have already transitioned to a writer’s life, please share with us the barriers you had to overcome. What advice would you offer to those who are contemplating such a change?” Steve Hooley on TKZ

Ooh, I was so tempted. But I didn’t comment. It would take too long. Here’s the extremely short version:

The barriers I overcame were all the “have-to myths” we’re all taught. You know. If you want to be a writer you have to outline, write character sketches, rewrite X number of times, shop your story around critique groups and all the other silly myths about writing.

My advice? You’ve learned everything you need to know to be a writer. Trust yourself, trust your characters, let go of all the “have-to” myths and go write a story. It’s called Practice.

And if you’ve learned that every story is about how the character reacts to the setting, and if you’ve learned to take your time and allow the POV character to describe the setting through his five physical senses, you’ve learned everything you need to know to be a good storyteller. Again, go practice.

Well, at least some of the censorship has begun. I received notice from D2D (my primary ebook distributor) that Hoopla, a company that deals largely with dissemination of texts to libraries, has decided, 3+ years after my short story “The Dawning of Dexter” was published, not to release it due to “content issues.”

I tried to determine through both D2D and Hoopla what issues those were, but found nothing beyond Hoopla’s generic, original statement in the D2D email: “Hoopla reserves the right to prohibit certain content from publishing. This title is considered to violate their content policy.”

So that you might check for yourself if you want, you can find the happy little short story, free, at <https://harveystanbrough.com/free-short-story/the-dawning-of-dexter/>. If you do see any offensive content, please let me know.

The Pro Writers Writing (PWW) website will expire in 14 days unless I decide to renew it. It’s difficult to let go, but there’s really no reason to keep it. If you were a contributor and you want to retrieve any of your posts off it, hurry.

If you are one who enjoys reading writing advice and have never visited PWW, you might check it out. I added 32 posts myself, some of which appear only in that venue. Other contributors added 420 posts. But again, hurry. You can find it at <https://prowriterswriting.com/>.

Topic: Character with a Problem, Part 2

I've often said all you need for a story starter is a character with a problem in a setting. The problem does not have to be "the" problem of the story, and most of the time it won't be. The character plus a problem in a setting is only a story starter, something to get you to the keyboard and get you started writing.

Yesterday I talked about this, based on an email I received from a friend. In another part of his email, he wrote "I know DWS says the character reveals itself gradually as you write. But it's not just a blob slowly taking shape or coming into focus."

My friend is correct. The character is not just a blob slowly coming into focus. But neither, when the character first appears at the beginning of the story is he fully formed. Sure, he probably has a face, a body type and (with any luck) clothing. And the clothing might indicate what kind of job he has, even if you don't know what his specific job is.

If, when you first see him, he's wearing jeans that droop low in the back and he seems not to notice or care, possibly you can pinpoint his job based on a stereotype.

If he's dressed in a suit, though, maybe he's a lawyer or a doctor or a poorly paid proofreader at a major publishing house dressing "up" to try to catch the boss' attention.

If he's dressed in western boots, a western hat, has bowed legs and a horse tied out front, already saddled, he's probably a wannabe cowboy. (I don't know any real cowboys who don't prefer to saddle their own horse.)

But what DWS said is true. No matter what state your character is in when you first meet him, the character reveals himself gradually as you write.

I had a perfectly good Texas Ranger in one book who snapped and started making deals with the worst Comanche war chief in the territory. I had another one who really was a good Ranger, but unbeknownst to his comrades (and me, until his stream-bed confession as he lay dying), he was a reformed bank robber who joined the Rangers as a way to escape his former life. Those two examples are from my 11-volume Wes Crowley saga. (You can still get the first chronological novel free by emailing me or in PDF by clicking <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/The-Rise-of-a-Warrior.pdf>.)

In one of the books in my current series, the chief medical officer on the generation ship was a pretty good guy, though he was a little gruff at times. Slightly overweight, mid-40s, greying hair, bushy eyebrows, and a little full of himself. Later in the story, he revealed himself as a nutcase who was doing everything possible to sabotage the mission. He met a grisly end.

I've never met a POV or other major character (and even some minor ones) who didn't surprise me in one way or another.

But even if you don't write into the dark, you can't meet a character who's fully formed anymore than you can meet a stranger who's fully formed.

When you first meet either "real" people or characters, you see them only as stereotypes at first. Of course, you would never admit that out loud if your politically correct, but it's still true.

Human beings make assumptions about other people all the time.

Example 1: I went to an outdoor theater (the Crest in Yuma AZ for anyone who might remember it) to see *Easy Rider* when it first came out. I went to the snack bar to pick up some popcorn and sodas.

I was in the queue dressed as I always was back then: western boots, a blue-plaid cotton long-sleeved shirt with pearl-looking snaps, my hand-tooled leather belt with a rodeo buckle (third place, bullriding) and my western straw hat.

There were also a lot of biker-types in the queue. The mumbling around me grew louder, until eventually one of them shoved me and called me a "****ing redneck." Actually, I was a Marine and a poet who had won awards for my poetry and been nominated for others. But all they saw was a stereotype. Like all humans do.

Example 2: In a small town in New Mexico, I was in a bank when I overheard some teenagers making fun of a very large man with calloused hands. He was dressed in scuffed black work boots and all but threadbare coveralls over a grungy white t-shirt. One of them finally said, "Why don't you step aside and let people with money up to the cashier?"

To my neverending pleasure, JP Townsend, a very successful local rancher and farmer, turned around and grinned. He held out a check and said, "Can't. I have to deposit this check I just got paid for some'a my beef." The check was for \$810,000.00. Finally the boys shut up.

Everybody you meet, in real life or in fiction, is a stereotype at first. If you hang around long enough to get to know them, in real life or in your story, you'll come to learn a great deal as they reveal, over time, who they really are. And if you get to know them while writing into the dark, you're in for some wonderful surprises.

And if you don't? Well, then you'd better be really imaginative. Because anything you can think up (conscious mind) for your character to do or become, your reader can think it up too. As Ray Bradbury said, "No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader."

And that's enough on that sub-topic.

Next time I'll come back to finish this little series of topics. In that one, I'll answer the main question my friend asked me in his email. I had a great day yesterday and I'm anxious to get back to it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The 2020 email marketing benchmarks by industry” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-2020-email-marketing-benchmarks-by-industry/>. Maybe of interest to those of you with newsletters or blogs.

See “The POV Character’s Opinion” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-pov-characters-opinion/>. Related to today’s Journal post.

See “Meet YInMn, the First New Blue Pigment in Two Centuries” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/meet-yinmn-the-first-new-blue-pigment-in-two-centuries/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1510 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127
Day 5..... 5161 words. Total words to date..... 17288
Day 6..... 6572 words. Total words to date..... 23860

Total fiction words for January..... 86963
Total fiction words for the year..... 86963
Total nonfiction words for January... 24000
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 24000
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 110963

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Character with a Problem, Part 3

January 31, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Character with a Problem, Part 3
- * My Recent Novels, and Numbers
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear.” Joan Didion

“The arrangement of the words matters, and the arrangement you want can be found in the picture in your mind. The picture dictates the arrangement. The picture tells you how to arrange the words and the arrangement of the words tells you, or tells me, what’s going on in the picture. Nota bene: It tells you. You don’t tell it.” Joan Didion

“Who was Victor? Who was this narrator? Why was this narrator telling me this story? Let me tell you one thing about why writers write: had I known the answer to any of these questions I would never have needed to write a novel.” Joan Didion

“Vanity publishers are always and everywhere a bad path for any author to take.” The Passive Guy

Topic: Character with a Problem, Part 3

In the email that started this three-part series of topics, as his main question to me, my friend wrote this:

“I know you’ve done this in the past, but since everything seems to hinge on it, could you tell us how you discover your characters, especially the initial one? Do they present themselves and say ‘tell my story,’ or do you find yourself ‘eavesdropping’ on a character and ask yourself who they are and what they are doing? That initial character inspiration seems to be the thing that sets it all rolling.

Before I address his question, though, he also wrote this in a subsequent email:

“I guess in addition to not worrying about what the character ‘wants’ in the bigger picture, I also maybe need to let go of what I WANT as a writer.”

Yes. “What I want as a writer” has no place in a fictional story. Why? Because it isn’t your story. It isn’t a story you’re living. It’s the story your characters are living, so let them tell it. “What I want as a writer” belongs solidly in essays or articles or memoir or personal letters.

If your neighbors returned home from a vacation and regaled you with tales from their trip, would you even think of saying, “Nope. It didn’t happen like that. What actually happened was this”?

Of course you wouldn’t. Because your neighbors are telling THEIR story, not your story of what you did while they were gone. Show the same respect to your characters as they live their story. And be glad you’re the one they deigned to tell it to.

And now, finally, to answer my friend’s first question, sure. Here you go:

I don’t “discover” my characters. I happen across them. Or maybe they find me. Maybe a faceless, nameless guy (or girl) says a line of dialogue with a particular accent, or no accent at all.

As my wife and I were driving back from Tucson one day on the freeway, I burst out laughing. She looked at me like I had two heads. “What?”

I grinned and said, “You don’t want to know. A character just popped into my head.”

“What’d he say?”

After I issued the appropriate warning, she still wanted to know.

I laughed again and in my best Brooklyn accent (trying to imitate the character), I repeated what he said: “Oh, I din’t tell you? Maybe it wasn’t nona’a your f***ing business.”

That, eventually and probably, will become a story about a wiseguy. If I ever write it. If the voice and attitude appeals to you, knock yourself out. By the way, when you read that line of dialogue did you “see” the character? Yeah, I find a lot of characters like that.

Or maybe I “see” my characters in a piece of art in which no humans reside. I’ve written at least three short stories based on a single print of an oil painting that hangs above my desk. In the most recent story (which is still unpublished), I saw a guy standing at a window watching the people at the tables at the sidewalk café on the corner below him.

In another, I saw a wounded guy (around the time of the Spanish Civil War) lying on a white-ringed quilt in a room above the café. In another, I saw another wounded guy around the same time period leaning against the back of the building in the alley (the alley is not present in the print) as a young, barefoot woman in a dark grey dress ran toward him.

Sometimes watching horses run in a pasture gives me an idea. Or seeing a one-armed guy walking down the road pushing a lawnmower. Or “seeing” a guy lying behind a sniper rifle in a

jungle, hunting the guy who's hunting him. I'd put the names of them here, but I don't remember all of them. They weren't important to remember, or important at all. They were only stories.

What I write (the story or novel) is not important in and of itself. THAT I write is what's important to me. Any importance of the stories themselves is assigned by the reader.

So you really can get story ideas—great story ideas—literally anywhere. They're all over the place.

Today, as I was writing a chapter of my current novel, another story idea popped into my head. WHILE I was writing. WHILE my fingers were moving over the keyboard. I might write it later, and I might not.

But no, I didn't stop and write it down. If it comes back, it comes back. Ideas are not important. They're not golden. They're just ideas, and they're a dime a gross.

Again, what you write isn't important. What's important is THAT you write. And the easiest way I know of to start is to come up with a character with a problem, drop him or her into a setting, then sit down and write the opening. If the opening takes off (and they usually do) just keep writing until the characters lead you through to the end of the story. And if it *doesn't* take off, so what? Chuck it and write another opening on that idea or on another one.

Once you become practiced at writing a character with a problem in a setting, you'll wonder why you used to think story ideas were so difficult to come by, or that you had to wait for "inspiration" to strike. Because you will be deluged with them. You will wonder, as another writer told me recently, how writers CAN'T come up with ideas.

Seriously. If you want to be a writer, you must write. That's Rule 1. And really, it's the only one that matters.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Do You Change Your Book Cover?" at <https://justpublishingadvice.com/do-you-change-your-book-cover/>.

See "Joan Didion: Why I Write" at <https://lithub.com/joan-didion-why-i-write/>. Who knew Joan Didion writes into the dark? I didn't but I'm not surprised (see the third Quote of the Day above). This article is chock full of knowledge and story ideas. Thanks to my friend Gary V. for sharing this.

See "Vanity Press Storm Warning: Waldorf Publishing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/vanity-press-storm-warning-waldorf-publishing/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1530 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127
Day 5..... 5161 words. Total words to date..... 17288
Day 6..... 6572 words. Total words to date..... 23860
Day 7..... 4680 words. Total words to date..... 28540

Total fiction words for January..... 91643
Total fiction words for the year..... 91643
Total nonfiction words for January... 25330
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 25330
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 116973

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [JustPublishingAdvice.com](#), [LitHub.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: My Recent Novels, and Numbers

February 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * My Recent Novels, and Numbers
- * The Numbers

My Recent Novels, and Numbers

Because the novels in my recent series have been coming in at around 50,000 words, I was totally stoked there for awhile that I might finish the current one in January. Meaning yesterday. (I'm actually writing this yesterday, on the 31st of January.)

Why was I stoked? Because my best day on this one thus far was Day 6 at 6572 words. If I'd done 6500 words per day for 7 days, the novel (as of the 30th) would have stood at 52,000 words. Meaning it probably would have wrapped yesterday. That would've really been cool.

But alas, I was lazy. Of the 11 calendar days when *The Journey Home: Part 6* was a thing, I wrote on only 8 days. And of those 8 writing days, I hit or exceeded my 4000 WPD goal on only five times.

But I'm not terribly upset. If I'd hit only 1600 words per day (my worst writing day during this novel), the total on the 31st would be only 12,800 words. Aren't numbers wonderful?

To round-out what has become a month-end wrap up, I also wrote 25,300 words of nonfiction in January, all in this Journal, for a word-count total of 122,807 words as a writer and blogger/teacher/insurrectionist (grin). But again, the fiction is what really matters.

This is why I recommend having a daily word count goal. If you miss it, it resets to 0 the following morning. If you exceed it, it still resets to 0 the following morning. Every day is a new day with a goal to be accomplished. And every day, you're reminded that you're a writer.

I mentioned earlier too that with goals, the average is what really matters. After a pretty good day on January 31, the novel now stands at 34,374 words, an 8-day average of just under 4300 words per day. And at 97,477 words of fiction for January, my all-inclusive calendar-day average is over 3100 words per day. That includes even days when I didn't write at all. Still, I want to get that up to 4000 words per day. But now it's a new month, so we'll see. (grin)

I'm also in Dean's Shared Worlds class, which is FINALLY getting off the ground. We should be writing for that within another week or so. I figure I might write a few short stories for that one, but much depends on how I feel about it after I read his short novel, *Cave Creek Silver*. If a story occurs to me, I'll interrupt my own FOH world for one day and write a short story for him. If a story doesn't occur to me, I won't. Again, what's important is that I write, not what I write.

And then there are other numbers, not-so-good numbers. They're all on the publishing side, so they automatically don't really matter.

In yesterday's post I mentioned that I haven't published my most recent short story. That led me to check: I haven't published the last FIFTEEN short stories I've written. Goodness! That's 19 additional revenue streams of income (15 individual stories, three 5-story collections, and one 10-story collection) just sitting in my computer gathering gnome dust.

And three of the novels in my current series aren't published yet. And that doesn't count the one I'm writing now and will finish in the next few days. (I did notice I hadn't posted Book 2 of the series to StoneThreadPublishing.com yet even though it's published everywhere else. Maybe I'll do that today. See why I'm looking for a publisher-type to take over STPublishing?)

And see why I say I tend to slip off Heinlein's Rule 4? But I'm still having a blast writing. And that's what matters.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “We Have to Save Books from the Book People” at <https://jezebel.com/we-have-to-save-books-from-the-book-people-1846094573>. And other aspects of CancelCulture, yes.

See “Hit 4th Stretch Reward” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/hit-4th-stretch-reward/>. Back this thing for even \$5 and you get some great stretch rewards.

See “How I Did In January... My Challenge” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/how-i-did-in-january-my-challenge/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 620 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 6** (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127
Day 5..... 5161 words. Total words to date..... 17288
Day 6..... 6572 words. Total words to date..... 23860
Day 7..... 4680 words. Total words to date..... 28540
Day 8..... 5834 words. Total words to date..... 34374

Total fiction words for January..... 97477
Total fiction words for February..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 97477
Total nonfiction words for February... 620
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 25950
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 122807

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jezebel.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Practice in Writing

February 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Question for You
- * Topic: Practice in Writing
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on.” Louis L'Amour

“Fiction writing can be learned, if one studies diligently and keeps practicing.” James Scott Bell

“I don't know how to tell if my writing's any good while I'm writing it.” Greer Macallister

A Question for You

Given today's topic. I have a question, and I'm serious.

One of the most clichéd sentences in the writing profession is “Everyone's process is different.”

I personally find this a very strange comment.

I don't think they're talking about the process of actually writing. Because that's only putting your fingertips on the keyboard or the tip of your pen on the paper and adding words to the page.

Since most people follow the traditional “write, edit, rewrite X times, shop to critique groups, polish, and submit or publish,” what do people mean by “process” when they say “Everyone's process is different”?

If you have any thoughts on this, please leave a comment on this post at the site (<https://hestanbrough.comthe-journal-practice-in-writing/>).

Topic: Practice in Writing

Frankly, I added the second Quote of the Day above because I found it so ironic. As a bit of an iconoclast, I do love irony. (grin) Especially when the author of the ironic statement doesn't realize he's being ironic.

Practice—this is another topic that's near and dear to my heart, but it's one you will seldom hear anything about. And you will never, never, *never* hear about it on the writing boards or from any writers anywhere who are still mired in the myths.

It isn't that the word "practice" is anathema for them. It's that it isn't even in their vocabulary, at least as the word is related to writing fiction.

In every artistic field of endeavor, artists are practitioners. Meaning they practice. They finish a work to the best of their current ability, then they move on to the next work, often with a new technique they've learned firmly lodged in the back of their mind. They practice.

Even in fiction writing. And even if that seems to contradict the second paragraph above this one, it doesn't.

Fiction writers who are artists, who learn and study and strive to improve their craft as storytellers, also practice. Constantly. This, of course, omits those who are busy "preparing" to write, creating outlines and doing character sketches and the like, and it especially omits those who hover rather than practice.

Those who profess to be fiction writers can be separated into two broad groups: those who practice, and those who hover.

Those who practice create one work, then another, then another. That includes almost all prolific professional fiction writers.

Those who hover create one work, then they edit. Then they rewrite the work (X number of times). Then they shop it out to critique groups. Then they polish. And finally, finally, they publish. Or more likely, they begin shopping the poor, frazzled, over-kneaded work around to literary agents. Who most often require more rewrites and more polishing.

Which of course is fine with me. All they're doing is removing themselves, for an extended period of time, from the competition for readers.

Think about it. While a "traditional" writer is slowly moving through their extended process of editing and rewriting and polishing all the originality off their work, I and other prolific professionals are writing the next work and the next.

Even if the hovering writer's process from beginning to end takes only three months, chances are in that time I've written at least three novels, and maybe four, five, or even six. And chances are they're better than the one that's being hovered over because they still have my original voice and I've practiced.

One solid Stage 2/3 writer I know hovers. A lot. She is considered by many to be prolific because she manages two novels per year, like clockwork. One novel every six months. Of course, that takes into account her own hovering process, complete with rewrites, critique groups and all the rest.

In that same six months, I turn out at least six novels, and I'm capable of turning out 8 or 10 or even 12 in that time. (My average over the past almost 7 years has been 8+ novels per year.)

Understand, I'm not disrespecting this writer, and I won't tell you her name even if you ask. I'm only stating facts. And her process is far, far more typical than mine is. So if you're looking to learn what "most" would-be writers and Stage 1-3 writers do, copy her. The truth is, most writers don't spend a lot of time actually writing. Even I only spend 4-7 hours out of every 24-hour period actually writing.

This particular writer's novels typically come in at around 60,000 words. So if you do the math, two 60,000 word novels in a year equals 120,000 words per year or 10,000 words per month (333 words per day).

So from November 1 2020 through January 31 2021, while that writer ostensibly practiced her craft by writing 30,000 words of fiction (based on her average), I practiced mine by writing 302,670 words of fiction, an average of slightly less than 101,000 words per month. That's a lot of practice.

But please don't get me wrong. This isn't about speed at all. It's about the value of practice. When you practice any skill, you get better at it. It stands to reason that the more you practice, the better you get.

To practice, you learn something new and/or focus on a technique in the back of your mind, then you write. Which is to say, you practice.

You can learn everything there is to know about writing fiction, but if you don't write, if you don't practice putting what you've learned into a story, all the learning does no good.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "26 Themed Calls for Submissions" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/26-themed-submission-calls-for-writers-in-february-2021/>.

See "How to Reach Your Writing Zone, Part 3" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/how-to-reach-your-writing-zone-part-3/>. An alternative take.

See "A Science Fiction Author's Pointers for Worldbuilding with Negative Space" at <https://crimereads.com/a-science-fiction-authors-pointers-for-worldbuilding-with-negative-space/>.

See "Want to Talk to a Kill Zone Author?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/want-to-talk-to-a-kill-zone-author.html>. I posted this because I thought it would be irresponsible of me not to.

See “Publishing Has A New York Problem” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/publishing-has-a-new-york-problem/>. See PG’s take specifically. Here’s a little of that:

“PG just checked Barnes & Noble’s online store and found a prominent display of six ‘Now Trending’ books.

Only one title out of the six had any reviews. For that single book (publication date: 05/11/2021) there were two reviews. One of the reviews just said, ‘BUY IT NOW!’ and the second review began, ‘i still have yet to read it but from the previews’ – both were five-star reviews. (PG didn’t notice if either review ended with, ‘Love, Your Mom’)

See “All the Things I Don’t Know” at <https://writerunboxed.com/2021/02/01/all-the-things-i-dont-know/>. The beginning of a laundry list of why some of us write into the dark.

See “Amazon Faces Alabama Union Election” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-faces-alabama-union-election/>. Again, see PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1180 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127
Day 5..... 5161 words. Total words to date..... 17288
Day 6..... 6572 words. Total words to date..... 23860
Day 7..... 4680 words. Total words to date..... 28540
Day 8..... 5834 words. Total words to date..... 34374
Day 9..... 3157 words. Total words to date..... 37531

Total fiction words for January..... 97477
Total fiction words for February..... 3157
Total fiction words for the year..... 100634
Total nonfiction words for February... 1800
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 27130
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 127764

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [CrimeReads](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [writerunboxed.com](#)

The Journal: Quotes, Comments and an Email

February 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Quotes of the Day by Ray Bradbury (and one from me)
- * Thanks
- * Topic: Email, the “writing zone,” and whose story is this, anyway?
- * Public Service Announcement
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“By the end of the third day [at a writing retreat], I find myself waking up eager to write.” David Farland

Quotes of the Day by Ray Bradbury

“The great fun in my life has been getting up every morning and rushing to the typewriter because some new idea has hit me.” RB

“My stories run up and bite me on the leg – I respond by writing down everything that goes on during the bite. When I finish, the idea lets go and runs off.” RB

“If you want to be good, you have to practice, practice, practice. If you don't love something, then don't do it.” RB

“Don't think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity. It's self-conscious, and anything self-conscious is lousy. You can't try to do things. You simply must do things.” RB

“I don't control my writing – it controls me.” RB

And one from me that seemed to fit: “I wake up every day eager to write. Eager to get back to my characters' story.”

Thanks to a couple of folks I don't get to hear from very often — Linda Maye Adams and Duke Southard — for responding to the question I asked yesterday. Interesting responses.

Comments, pro or con, are always valuable to a blogger because they enable search engines to find the blog more easily. So they're a painless way for the commenter to help spread the word about the blog on which they're commenting.

Topic: Email, the “writing zone,” and whose story is this, anyway?

I received an email regarding my on-again off-again linking to a series of posts on how to get to your “writing zone.” To explain, well, I'm a bit of an iconoclast, remember?

Advising folks to jump through a series of hoops in order to jumpstart their creative subconscious only to quash it intentionally later as part of their “process” seems counterproductive to me. So although a couple of those particular posts were at least palatable to me and contained a few rhinestone gems, two others weren't and didn't. So I didn't link to those two. I'll correct that omission later in this topic.

But while I'm on the topic, advising writers to bring their conscious mind in to “correct” their creative subconscious, likewise, seems counterproductive, and it's a severe mistake.

Allowing, much less encouraging, your critical mind to correct your creative subconscious is an excellent way to shut down your creative subconscious forever, or to at least make it wary of giving you story ideas. Why should it try to work with you when it's learned you're going to shut it down? Every time you invoke your (or others') critical mind to “correct” your creative subconscious, you're teaching your creative subconscious that you don't trust it — which is to say you don't trust yourself.

And you already know my take on that. 1. Trust what you've learned over the years, and 2. trust your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living.

For example, I'm not living the story that I'm currently writing. My characters are living it. It's their story. I'm only recording it for them. Perhaps I should put a “writer” character on the generation ship in his own little compartment and have him writing the story the characters around him are living. But then, I'm already serving in that role.

And I know me. If I created that character, I would soon become too envious of him. I would have to kill him off in a kind of jealous rage for his good fortune at having been placed on the actual generation ship — by me. Kind of an ugly, vicious circle, right? So I won't do that. Better to leave things as they are. The characters will live the story and I will record it for them. But again, it isn't my story. It's theirs.

If I wrote MY story, it would bore you to tears by comparison. For example, just thus far today...

I rolled out a little after 2, fed my 9 year old kitten. (She snubbed what I fed her and wandered off for a nap.) Then I poured my mug full of coffee and, due to a physical problem, literally stumbled out to the Hovel to begin my day. I checked the Internet for quotes and for items to include in “Of Interest,” then sat down to write this. When I finish this, update my numbers and

post everything to the Journal, I'll probably play a few games of spider solitaire. Then I'll finish my commute by moving about five feet to the left to my writing 'puter to type what my characters give me of THEIR story. It's much more interesting.

But in the interest of being fair to writing-advice providers who, by the way, would never return the favor, you can read all four of the posts I mentioned at the top of this topic in their entirety at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-blog/>.

Public Service Announcement

If you post a blog hosted on WordPress and the word count at the bottom still reads 0 after you've posted, you can click Save Draft to make the word count appear. Just a little tip from yer Uncle Harv.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Beware the 'ING' Construction" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/beware-the-ing-construction.html>. I would add, beware advice to not use a construction because some people don't know how to use it. The present progressive is a useful tense to indicate ongoing action. I'll just leave this right here.

See "Stand-Alone" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/stand-alone/>.

See "A Year for the (Record) Books in Publishing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-year-for-the-record-books-in-publishing/>. Actually this title is misleading. As you'll see in the article, it wasn't "publishing" but "readers buying books" that set the record.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 990 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127
Day 5..... 5161 words. Total words to date..... 17288
Day 6..... 6572 words. Total words to date..... 23860
Day 7..... 4680 words. Total words to date..... 28540
Day 8..... 5834 words. Total words to date..... 34374
Day 9..... 3157 words. Total words to date..... 37531
Day 10... 3615 words. Total words to date..... 41146

Total fiction words for February.....	6772
Total fiction words for the year.....	104249
Total nonfiction words for February...	2790
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	28120
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	132369
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Fact or Fiction Indeed

February 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Fact or Fiction Indeed
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The words are maps, and the map is not the territory. The map is static; the territory constantly flows. Words are always about the past or the unborn future, never about the living present. The present is ever too quick for them; by the time words are out, it is gone.” Polish scholar named Alfred Habdank Skarbek Korzybski (via The Passive Guy)

Topic: Fact or Fiction Indeed

In today's “Of Interest” there's a link to an article titled “Fact or Fiction: ‘Flow’ Improves the Writing Life.”

First of all, yes, the title itself is fact. Duh. As I read through the excerpt, I wasn't going to click through and read the OP, but I decided to do so. Primarily because I disagree with (or if you wish, my experience diverges from) the points in the excerpt.

To her credit, maybe, the author of the OP didn't even invoke the clichéd "every writer is different" mantra. I urge you to read the article as an exercise in learning what not to do. Here are my responses to the points:

1. For me, writer's block does not exist. Probably because it's a function of the critical mind and when it's time to write I don't allow the critical mind in. The excerpt basically says the same thing.

2. This is a statement loaded with misdirection. I do not need a "perfect" writing space, though a penthouse overlooking New York City's Central Park would be nice.

But yes, I do need a dedicated writing space because it cues my subconscious that it's time to play. My friend Alison Holt, on the other hand, does not, though I'd bet she has a favorite laptop on which to write. (I'm guessing.) So again, your experience might vary.

Probably no surprise that I also disagree with their list of external things the article says writers should have on hand "to optimize their chances of getting into the flow." There's no "chance" involved. If you want to get into the flow, sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write whatever comes. The characters and story will draw you in.

3. Pure bovine excrement. I've written both commercial genre fiction and literary fiction, and if there's any "heavy decision making" involved (there isn't, ever), I stop and find something fun to do. And I suggest "assistant professor of Psychology, Baptiste Bardot" never tells Stephen King (especially) or Anne Rice that they "have limited choices as to themes, setting, and plot." In fact, Stephen King is about the most unlimited writer since Ray Bradbury.

4. Duh.

Final analysis? The author of the OP, Kris Maze, really needs to read my nonfiction book *Writing the Character-Driven Story* and *DWS' Writing Into the Dark*. They would help her immensely. But she's young. She has time.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Is Blogging Worthwhile for Thriller and Mystery Writers?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/is-blogging-worthwhile-for-thriller-and-mystery-writers.html>.

See "How Real Do You Want Your World to Be?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-real-do-you-want-your-world-to-be/>.

See "Fact or Fiction: 'Flow' Improves the Writing Life" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/fact-or-fiction-flow-improves-the-writing-life/>. I personally disagree with almost every item here, but that's just me. Your experience may vary.

See “Reading My Way Through a Pandemic...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/reading-my-way-through-a-pandemic-with-post-apocalyptic-literature/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 550 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 10... 3615 words. Total words to date..... 41146

Day 11... 3621 words. Total words to date..... 44767

Total fiction words for February..... 10393

Total fiction words for the year..... 107870

Total nonfiction words for February... 3340

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 28670

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 136540

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Writer’s Block and Coming Up with Ideas

February 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Writer's Block and Coming Up with Ideas
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“You can not do this from critical voice. You must learn it by reading and typing in openings of top bestsellers (stage four writers) and pay attention to what they are doing. Then you just trust your creative voice to add what it has learned into your stories over time.” DWS on learning pacing

Note for any RSS readers: I added the above Quote of the Day after I initially posted today's edition of the Journal.

Topic: Writer's Block and Coming Up with Ideas

From a commenter on a recent post:

“I think it doesn't help to say writer's block doesn't exist. That becomes very frustrating to someone who actually has trouble coming up with ideas. ... I struggled with ideas so much that I stayed stuck on one novel for a long time because I didn't have any other ideas....”

There's a great deal more. You can read the comment in full at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-fact-or-fiction-indeed/#comments>.

Here's my response, shared here because I thought it would make a good topic:

I think we might be defining writer's block differently. The clearest definition I've seen is “a psychological inhibition preventing a writer from proceeding with a piece.” (online, Merriam-Webster). It has nothing to do with coming up with ideas. That's a whole other problem.

In this blog, which is intended to help writers, I can only pass along what I know. Perhaps it doesn't help you in particular for me to say writer's block doesn't exist, but there's no way to tell how many other people were helped by the same statement. In any case, I can't imagine that anybody was harmed.

With that in mind, re writer's block, years before I became a very prolific novelist, I used to tell people this: “If you believe writer's block exists, then write about the writer's block.” Yes, even in the midst of a story or novel. Chances are, the act of writing *something* will ease you back into the story line.

And that wasn't original to me. SF novelist CJ Cherryh used to tell people if they thought they were experiencing writer's block, they should stop writing in the middle of an action sentence or scene. (Her tongue in cheek example was to “Put the character in the shower. You'll have to write him out of the shower and that will get you back into the story.” Then she grinned. “If I believed writer's block exists, I'd have a very clean character.”

None of my literary or genre-fiction heroes or heroines have ever talked about writer's block except in response to a question. Those responses ranged from “It doesn't exist; next question” (my personal favorite) to more elaborate responses like CJ Cherryh's above. Maybe they're onto something.

For me, writer's block does not exist, period, but that's because I don't allow my conscious mind to intrude on my writing. If I feel a little stuck, I cycle either through the writing (for flow) or the reverse outline (for the timeline) or both. That gets me back into the story and the flow and I am unable NOT to write. So I guess I have the reverse of writer's block.

Re coming up with ideas, I'm pretty sure I'm safe in saying every writer has been there. Like every writer I know, I used to believe ideas were rare and special gems. But they aren't. And the more importance people attach to them, the more difficult they are to come up with, and the more importance people attach to them. It is the very definition of a vicious circle.

Today, again, I literally can't NOT have ideas. There are reasons for that, and the chief one is that I stopped "trying" to have them (conscious mind) and just let them come. The more tightly I focused on getting ideas, the more I lost sight of all the ideas flying past me.

Finally, if you "struggled with ideas so much that [you] stayed stuck on one novel for a long time because [you] didn't have any other ideas," that seems to me a different problem altogether.

When most people talk of a problem coming up with ideas, they mean for a new story or novel. If you mean you had trouble continuing with a current work "because [you] didn't have any other ideas," my (and I'm betting DWS') only advice would be to let go of control and just write the next sentence. Let the characters tell the story that they, not you, are living.

Again, every writer I know has been there, and frankly, it's Writer's Hell. I personally overcame it by trusting DWS enough to actually try writing into the dark. But maybe trusting isn't as easy as I make it out to be. Maybe it worked for me because I was so bull-headed and determined to make it work. Perhaps I'm very fortunate that I was able to do that, because for me, it worked.

So my advice, as always, is this:

1. Come up with a character with a problem in a setting. This is the idea stage.
2. Write the 300-1200 word opening. This is the beating writer's block stage.
3. If it takes off (and it usually will) write the next sentence and the next until the characters lead you through to the end of the story or novel. If it doesn't take off, send it to the trash and either write a new opening on the same idea or write an opening on another idea.

I know this sounds trite, but it isn't, and I know it sounds repetitive, and you're right, it is. But again, all I can tell other writers is what I know works. Had I not trusted DWS enough to actually try WITD I have zero doubt I would never have written a novel, and I would have written very few short stories, if any. Because why should I if it isn't fun?

I'm also aware I'm not a very forgiving guy, of myself or anyone else. If I want badly enough or stringently enough to do something, I simply find a way to do it. If I can't do something because of some physical limitation, I drop it and do something else. Today, in writing, I study those who have come before whom I admire to figure out how they got to be who they are, and then I try it.

Back when I couldn't come up with ideas, frankly, it pissed me off. (Pardon the language, but no other word carries quite the same emphasis.) So I found a way to come up with ideas: I stopped thinking about them and trying to come up with them, and I was happily deluged.

When I *decided* (conscious mind) I wanted to be a novelist and realized trying to “think” my way through a novel idea-by-idea would be far too much like work, I was ready to say screw it. Then a perfect storm hit: I rediscovered DWS, from whom I learned Heinlein’s Rules and WITD, and I’ve never looked back.

As a direct result of that, today or tomorrow I’ll finish my 56th novel (all of which are selling well enough) and have written well over 200 short stories.

Again, I can only tell you (collectively) what works for me. Just as DWS could only tell me what works for him (and so many others). But only I could sit down and actually do the “work” of putting words on the screen.

In the beginning, it wasn’t easy for me to sit down at the keyboard and overcome the myths, but doing so has provided the biggest possible reward of my professional life. I wish the same for all of you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Formatting Meets Craft” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/formatting-meets-craft/>. I haven’t read this yet, but it sounds interesting.

See “Reader Friday: Are You Publishing Too Soon?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/reader-friday-are-you-publishing-too-soon.html>.

See “The Therapeutic Value of Reading” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-therapeutic-value-of-reading/>. See PG’s exhaustive take.

See “The Dark Triad: Psychopathy, Narcissism, and Machiavellianism” at <https://leelofland.com/the-dark-triad-psychopathy-narcissism-and-machiavellianism/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1270 words

Writing of *The Journey Home: Part 6* (novel)

Day 10... 3615 words. Total words to date..... 41146

Day 11... 3621 words. Total words to date..... 44767

Day 12... 4018 words. Total words to date..... 48785

Total fiction words for February..... 14411

Total fiction words for the year..... 111889

Total nonfiction words for February... 4610

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 29940
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 141828

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#),
[The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: An Addendum

February 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: An Addendum
- * It will be interesting,
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“My advice to writers who think they're out of ideas is to tell them to write the word ‘The’ and then follow with another word and... bing-bam-boom straight to the Moon, Alice... there's your idea.” Dan Baldwin

Topic: An Addendum

One addendum to [yesterday's post](#) — Everything you are able to learn and absorb and put into practice about writing or anything else is dependent on whether you're ready to learn and absorb the lesson.

Much as I like to say I wish I'd found Heinlein's Rules and the writing into the dark technique when I was still in my twenties or thirties, chances are good that even if I'd stumbled across them back then, I wouldn't have done anything with them. I might have been ready, or I might not.

It's all a mind-set. An attitude. And really, what age you are or what stage of life you're in don't really matter in the slightest. What matters is whether you're ready, and we all come to that (or not) in our own time.

A little math tells me Dean Wesley Smith was “ready” to follow Heinlein’s Rules and write into the dark (which he originally called “dare to be bad” after Nina Kiriki Hoffman) when he was in his 30s.

Ready or not, I didn’t stumble across the Rules or WITD until February 2014, when I was 61. Following the Rules and practicing writing into the dark has been hugely successful for me, but I’m not stupid. I know doing the same won’t result in success for everyone, for any of myriad reasons.

* Maybe you don’t trust yourself.

* Maybe you can’t separate your characters’ lives from your own because they, after all, are in your head.

As an aside, I personally believe the above is actually a common misconception. I personally believe my characters are living their lives in alternate dimensions, which I am blessed to be able to access through a “portal” in my creative subconscious mind. And because I access that portal often, it’s more readily available to me.

Maybe too that’s why it’s so easy for me to separate my characters’ incredibly interesting lives from my own frankly boring one. And maybe, of course, I’m wrong. But feel free to try my dimension [dementia?] theory for yourself if you think it might help.

* Maybe you just need the multiple safety nets provided by what DWS calls the myths.

* Maybe you have trouble letting go of things from the past. (WITD is clearly a forward-looking technique.)

* Or maybe a lot of other things, including but not limited to that you’re just not ready yet. In that case, if the idea of WITD appeals to you, I encourage you to keep trying. Or not. Up to you.

For all writers, if you attempt to follow Heinlein’s Rules you will fall off one or more of them occasionally. Even Heinlein himself admitted that he found it difficult to follow them all the time. As with WITD, success in following Heinlein’s Rules is found in the attempt.

And for some writers, unfortunately, attempting to write into the dark will be never be anything but an exercise in futility. Especially for those who believe the preceding sentence. Because if you aren’t ready yet to trust yourself and what you know and to trust your characters to tell you the story they’re living, you won’t get it.

A blast from the past — Before I’d written even my first novel, I taught classes on writing. Not on writing novels, certainly, but on dialogue and narrative and the sounds of words and so on.

And at the beginning of almost every class, I said some version of “First, if I can dissuade you from being a writer, let me refund your fee and you can go away. Because writing fiction is hard...” and blah blah blah.

Today, having established myself as a successful novelist and short story writer, I sing a different tune: “Try this. If you trust it, and if you want it to, it will work for you.” My how times have changed.

It will be interesting, to me at least, to see whether I finished the novel yesterday. Right after I posted yesterday’s Journal, the idea for today’s flooded over me and, instead of moving to the novel as early as I usually do, I came back to the business computer and wrote this bit of tripe.

Oh well... as long as somebody gets something out of it, I suppose it wasn’t a complete waste of time. Anyway, now (as I write this at 7 a.m. yesterday) to the house for breakfast and a break, then back to the Hovel and the novel.

Update: I thought I might finish the novel yesterday but I didn’t. Or maybe I did and I just need one final cycling session. I’ll find out today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Be An Original Writer” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/be-original/>. Right away he started listing conscious mind activities. (Not complaining, just stating fact.) So I posted this one without reading most of it. The best way I know to be an “original” writer is to write in your unique voice, and to do that you have to not muffle the creative subconscious with your (or others’) critical, conscious mind. Maybe bear that in mind as you read the article.

See “Leading Them to Water...” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/leading-them-to-water.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 920 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 10... 3615 words. Total words to date..... 41146

Day 11... 3621 words. Total words to date..... 44767

Day 12... 4018 words. Total words to date..... 48785

Day 13... 4112 words. Total words to date..... 52897

Total fiction words for February..... 18523

Total fiction words for the year..... 116000

Total nonfiction words for February... 5530

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 30860

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 146860

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	55
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dan Baldwin](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Journey Home: Part 6

February 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Journey Home: Part 6
- * A Second (Very Short) Addendum
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Most cynics are really crushed romantics: they’ve been hurt, they’re sensitive, and their cynicism is a shell that’s protecting this tiny, dear part in them that’s still alive.” Jeff Bridges

“No one expects a medical student to perform surgery correctly on his first try. And no corporate lawyer would be allowed to negotiate a merger without experience and years of law school behind her. Lawyers and doctors learn by doing. Writers feel we should already know.” Sarah LaBrie

“I think we do ourselves a serious disservice by not talking more openly about what failing at writing feels like. By this, I mean the physical feeling of writing badly: the instinct that tells you when a prepositional phrase is wrenching your sentence in the wrong direction; the sense that comes upon a writer all at once that her entire career has beached itself upon a handful of paragraphs she just can’t order correctly; the feeling that settles upon her, even as she hits ‘send’ on a manuscript, that she just hasn’t gotten it right, and that perhaps she never will.” Sarah LaBrie

And this! Let this sink in! “I strained for months and years over pieces that would never see publication, while all my best stories tended to be completed in a matter of hours or in an afternoon.” Sarah LaBrie

The Journey Home: Part 6 ended yesterday at 54,490 words. I cycled through the very short last writing session, cut a few hundred words of excess, then ran the spell check and sent it off to my excellent first readers. My average over the 14 writing days was 3892 words per day. The average over the 17 calendar days was 3205 words per day.

Today I will read a short novel for DWS' Shared Worlds Class, then watch a video and consider whether I want to write a short story for one of his anthologies. If I decide to do that, I will do so on Monday. Then more than likely I'll start my next novel on Tuesday.

That's my schedule as it stands at this moment. I might be away for a day or two, or I might blog about the novel-reading, anthology-short-story-writing process if I can think of anything that I believe might be useful to you.

A Second (Very Short) Addendum

If you haven't already, first read "An Addendum" in [yesterday's post](#).

And if you believe you're in the "not ready yet" for writing into the dark, check in with yourself.

That thought might be just one more trick of your critical, conscious mind. Its job is to protect you, in this case from failure. If you don't try, the reasoning goes, you can't fail.

Then again, as Bradbury famously said, "You fail only if you stop writing." Or, put another way, if you want to write and you don't, you've already failed.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Movie Gems from the Early 1930s" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/movie-gems-from-the-early-1930s.html>.

See "Demystifying the Writer's Fear of Failure" at <https://lithub.com/demystifying-the-writers-fear-of-failure/>. Good essay with more gems than I listed in Quotes of the Day above. I do not ascribe to the notion that writing is "hard," though, in any way, shape or form. But then, I've dug ditches and repaired barbed-wire fences.

See "How Fear of Failure Keeps Writers From Producing Their Best Work" at <https://thewritelife.com/fear-of-failure/>.

See "Search Dogs, Search Warrants, a Search for Words, and Lies" at <https://leelofland.com/search-dogs-search-warrants-a-search-for-words-and-lies-2/>. (Offering an online seminar.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 560 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 6 (novel)

Day 1..... 1628 words. Total words to date..... 1628
Day 2..... 2011 words. Total words to date..... 3639
Day 3..... 4722 words. Total words to date..... 8361
Day 4..... 3766 words. Total words to date..... 12127
Day 5..... 5161 words. Total words to date..... 17288
Day 6..... 6572 words. Total words to date..... 23860
Day 7..... 4680 words. Total words to date..... 28540
Day 8..... 5834 words. Total words to date..... 34374
Day 9..... 3157 words. Total words to date..... 37531
Day 10... 3615 words. Total words to date..... 41146
Day 11... 3621 words. Total words to date..... 44767
Day 12... 4018 words. Total words to date..... 48785
Day 13... 4112 words. Total words to date..... 52897
Day 14... 1593 words. Total words to date..... 54490 (done)

Total fiction words for February..... 20116
Total fiction words for the year..... 117893
Total nonfiction words for February... 6090
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 31420
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 149013

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 56
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [LitHub.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sarah LaBrie](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Today, Yesterday, Sometime Later

February 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Today
- * Yesterday

- * Sometime later
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Saying that taste is just personal preference is a good way to prevent disputes. The trouble is, it’s not true. You feel this when you start to design things.” Paul Graham

“It takes confidence to throw work away. You have to be able to think, there’s more where that came from.” Paul Graham

Topic: Today in “Of Interest” is a link

to an article that purports to list “12 Signs You’re Still in the Learning Phase of Your Writing Career.” That should have been the whole title (though it should read “A learning phase, not THE learning phase), but it isn’t. The title begins with “Is Your Novel Ready to Publish?”

The answer to the question, if you’ve finished a novel and had it first-read and maybe copyedited, is a resounding Yes. A finished novel is ready to publish regardless of how young you are at the craft.

“But if I publish something that’s bad I’ll ruin my career.”

One, no, you won’t. You don’t have a career.

Two, “bad” is subjective. What you think is “bad” or mediocre, another reader will love. You can’t hear your own authorial voice because it’s with you 24/7. And that’s what will be in your work, if you don’t obey the myths and polish it off.

After he finished listing his Business Habits for Writers (better known as Heinlein’s Rules), he alluded back to Rule 4: Paraphrased he said, “If you finish what you write and submit it (today, publish it) you will find some publisher somewhere who will buy it (someone somewhere will read and enjoy it). And that “career” everyone worries about ruining will begin.

Make no mistake: If I had followed the advice in the article re whether I should publish my first novel, I would not today have the 11-volume Wes Crowley saga. In writing, you learn as you go. You learn as you practice. As Bradbury put it (again, paraphrased), you “jump off the cliff and build your wings on the way down.”

In reality, the article has nothing to do with whether your novel is ready to publish. In reality it is a good checklist to determine whether you’re still a Stage 1 or 2 writer.

The best yardstick I’ve seen for that is Dean Wesley Smith’s nonfiction book [Stages of a Fiction Writer](#) with a couple of minor changes: One, I recommend you forget about the necessity of being a “bestseller” to move from one stage to another. Whether you are or will ever be a

bestseller is not within your control. It's up to readers. The world of publishing is not what it used to be.

And Two, I added a Stage 5. Among active living fiction writers, in my experience Stephen King is pretty much alone in Stage 5. (Just to be clear, both of those changes are from me, not DWS.) You can also find the unedited version of Stages on his site at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/tag/stages-of-a-fiction-writer/>.

Yesterday I read Dean's novel *Card Sharp Silver* (not yet available to the public). Great ending (my opinion). Then I listened to the final two videos posted in his Shared Worlds class and read the instructions. And a couple hours later, started a short story. It's untitled as of this posting, but I wrote almost the first 3000 words.

Today, I'll finish it, read it aloud, put it in the format he requires, and send it off today. Turns out I like challenges. Who knew? (grin)

Sometime later, I'll also write another short story, one that occurred to me as I was reading the novel. However, I won't send that one in. It includes, as a minor pivotal point, one aspect of the novel he won't allow us to use in a story for the anthology.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Is Your Novel Ready to Publish? 12 Signs You're Still in the Learning Phase of Your Writing Career" at <https://annerallen.com/2021/02/novel-ready-to-publish-12-signs/> (via The Passive Voice).

See "Taste for Makers" at <http://www.paulgraham.com/taste.html>. The guy says only one really stupid thing (no doubt an assumption he's heard and chose to repeat) in the entire essay.

See "Herding Cats (Writers)" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/herding-cats-writers/>. No, I'm not one of the writers he's talking about in this article. On the points of following instructions (duh) and not caring what beginning writers think, I'm with him 100%.

I haven't listed it for awhile, so See "Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About" at <http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of "Untitled" (short story)

Day 1..... 2893 words. Total words to date..... 2893

Total fiction words for February.....	23009
Total fiction words for the year.....	120486
Total nonfiction words for February...	6840
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	32170
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	149013
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	56
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [J. A. Konrath](#), [PaulGraham.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Shared World short story

February 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The Shared World short story
- * Still looking for a publisher
- * And where do I leave a legacy?
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“There is only one place to write and that is alone at a typewriter. The writer who has to go into the streets is a writer who does not know the streets. . . when you leave your typewriter you leave your machine gun and the rats come pouring through.” Charles Bukowski (via The Passive Voice)

Well, yesterday I stopped writing the short story with what I believe was a good ending and sent it to Dean at 6997 words (the limits were 3000 to 7000 words).

But a curious thing happened on the way to the word count: I fell in love a little.

I enjoyed writing the story so much, I decided to keep going and turn it into a novella or a novel. So that's the new project. (grin) You'll see that reflected in the Numbers section below.

I'm still looking for a publisher. Not a traditional publisher and all that. I'm looking for someone who wants to take over my own publishing and marketing business. I think I've mentioned it here before.

I just don't want to stop writing in order to publish what I've written. I'll still do it, but not anytime soon. I'm not a business person. I'm a writer.

And I'm writing so much that I'm drastically behind in publishing. I've reached critical mass. So I posted this notice to Facebook this morning. We'll see what happens.



Out of work publisher?
Or have you ever wanted to learn publishing?

Truly prolific fiction writer
looking for someone to take over his publishing and marketing business on a commission basis. Actual numbers available. Serious inquiries only.

Email harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

I'm also at the age where I'm thinking about my legacy, which is to say my writing, and where it will repose after I'm gone. Ownership of my copyright extends to 70 years after my death.

I am blessed with five children. Unfortunately, none of them read my work. So I'm looking for a person or organization or institution who will keep my work alive.

And frankly I'm amazed at how very few people and organizations or institution know anything at all about licensing or the actual worth of intellectual property.

As just one example, I recently contacted the president of my university alma mater. I was thinking of donating my IP — all of it, thousands of bits of IP potentially worth millions of dollars — to that school after my wife passes. It might be worthwhile, I thought, because that university holds the copyright to all of SF Grand Master Jack Williamson's works.

All of his books and manuscripts sit in their library. Yet they do not have a program or even a single person on staff who promotes those works or the million bits of IP included within them.

If you've never heard of Jack Williamson, direct from his brilliant mind came words and phrases we hear every day: terraforming, android, The Prime Directive, etc. etc. ad nauseam.

The search continues.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Improving Your Dialogue” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/improve-your-dialogue/>. I almost choked at the second sentence of this blog post. (grin) But after you get past the first paragraph, this is actually a fairly good article. I recommend it.

See “Holy Smokes!!! Was That Fun!!!” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/holy-smokes-was-that-fun/>.

See “First Page Critique: Whose Face Is Behind That Pebbled Glass?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/first-page-critique-whose-faceis-behind-that-pebbled-glass.html>.

See “Book PR and Marketing Questions Answered” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/book-pr-and-marketing-questions-answered/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 560 words

Writing of “How ‘Best’ Is Defined” (short story)

Day 1..... 2893 words. Total words to date..... 2893

Day 2..... 4104 words. Total words to date..... 6997 (done)

Writing of How “Best” Is Defined (novel, tentative title)

Words brought forward..... 6997

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for February..... 27113

Total fiction words for the year..... 124590

Total nonfiction words for February... 7400

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 32730

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 157320

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 56

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Garbage Runs in Cycles

February 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Garbage Runs in Cycles
- * Great start
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“We often think we need to open with a huge bang, something that’ll catch the reader’s attention and play out like a blockbuster movie. But here’s the thing about those high-powered opening scenes: readers don’t care because they don’t yet know the characters or the baggage....” Becca Puglisi

Topic: Garbage Runs in Cycles

This morning was weird in two ways. Like so many other natural phenomena, garbage seems to run in cycles.

One: I just realized this morning that not all of “David Farland’s Writing Tips” are actually written by David Farland. What a trusting dumbass I am sometimes.

The “Farland” article I almost linked to in today’s “Of Interest,” for example, is a harmless piece of yawn-so-what nonfiction written by someone named “Evan M.” The piece is titled “Is it a Good Time to Write?” My immediate sense was “Well, that’s a stupid question.” I could hardly believe Farland had written the post.

And as I scanned it for anything worthwhile, I found that (alas and aw shucks) he hadn’t. The credit was at the very bottom of the post, not at the top per common practice. I felt a little like a clueless fool who’d wandered into a bait-and-switch.

So more than likely, I’ve been getting annoyed at the wrong person recently.

Of course, that’s the fault of Farland himself or whomever runs the “writing tips” portion of his website for him. And no, I’m not going to go back and check “his” earlier posts to see who the actual author was. I don’t care that much.

But I'm annoyed with myself for passing on writing tips to you via "Of Interest" that are not from mega-author David Farland at all but from just whomever. Maybe they're from members of his Apex writer's group or maybe the guy at the local convenience store. Who knows.

When I clicked the linked "Evan" name, it led to nothing. Apparently Evan M. hasn't bothered to fill out his author info page yet. (Now there's a red flag for you regarding professionalism. A knowledgeable writing instructor who prefers to remain anonymous? I don't [expletive deleted] think so.)

So I don't know what or how much fiction Mr. M has written, whether his work is even published, etc. Maybe he, like Farland, is a mega-bestseller. Maybe, as I wrote earlier, he's a clerk from the corner convenience store or a stockboy at Walmart.

From now on I'll have to watch more closely what I post from "David Farland's Writing Tips" and make sure they're either actually written by Farland himself or at least contain something valuable. Or both.

Also, as has so often been the case, the title of that particular "writing tip" is misleading.

If a writer walked up and asked me that stupid question at a conference back in the day (never happened), my head would probably explode. Why? Because if you're a writer, yes, it's a good time to write. Duh. If you're a writer, it's ALWAYS a good [expletive deleted] time to write. And if you're a writer, you already know that.

What he probably meant was "Is it a good time to publish?" (Again, the answer is always Yes.) Or maybe "Is it a good time to make money as a writer?" (Pretty much always "No" or "Doesn't matter" or "What the [expletive deleted] ever." Because if you're a writer, everything except writing the next story is a second or lower priority.)

As a fiction writer, I only care about the current story. As I near the end of that story, I only care about the next story. And as a writing instructor and blogger, I only care about passing along valid information.

Two: I actually did link to another article in today's "Of Interest" that was written by someone named "Guest." However, that person is only passing on facts, not opining, and some of you might find some of the facts useful in your writing.

Great start on the novel yesterday with almost 6,000 words. And I wanted to keep writing (a great sign) but I was mentally depleted. My brain was too tired to make my fingers move on the keyboard any longer.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Opening Scenes: 3 Critical Elements” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/opening-scenes-3-critical-elements/>. I recommend you click through to the OP.

See “The Art of Story Structures” at <https://writetodone.com/the-art-of-story-structures/>. (Thanks to PG for the link.)

See “Downside of Being Disorganized...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/downside-of-being-disorganized/>.

See “Flying Too Close to Reality” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/flying-too-close-to-reality.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 770 words

Writing of How “Best” Is Defined (novel, tentative title)

Words brought forward..... 6997

Day 1..... 5644 words. Total words to date..... 12641

Total fiction words for February..... 32357

Total fiction words for the year..... 130234

Total nonfiction words for February... 8170

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 33500

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 163734

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 56

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [John Gilstrap](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [writershelpingwriters.net](#), [WriteToDone.com](#)

The Journal: A Primer on Learning to Write Fiction

February 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: A Primer on Learning to Write Fiction
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Those that know, do; those that understand, teach.” Aristotle

“We can know something without understanding it. But what a difference it makes when we do understand; when the subject in hand isn’t something that we know a few facts about, but we have personal experience of what that feels like.” John Dsouza

“Resident Writing Coach — [name redacted] has been a freelance editor and reader for literary agent [name of agent and agency redacted] for over five years. In conjunction with [name redacted], she offers developmental editing, author coaching, and more.” quoted from a website offering writer services

Topic: A Primer on Learning to Write Fiction

In the third quote of the day above, notice that no mention is made of any actual writing accomplished by [name redacted]. The internet is replete with sites like that one.

Yet this particular person also does “developmental editing,” meaning that for a fee, s/he will help you develop the story that’s in your mind. How insane is that?

So here are a few quick thoughts on learning to write fiction.

1. Learn — But learn from those who know and understand. Guard your greatest commodity — time — jealously. Realize there’s a point of diminishing returns in writing advice.

A. If you read a million words of fiction by a beginning (Stage 1, 2, or early 3) fiction writer, chances are you will learn nothing valuable about writing or storytelling. Read and enjoy, but don’t study.

B. If you read a million words of nonfiction by a beginning fiction writer (or someone who doesn’t write fiction at all), you might pick up a gem or two. Maybe. And chances are, the beginning writer himself won’t even realize he wrote it, definitely won’t understand it, and it will most often be advice that he himself doesn’t follow. Or she herself.

C. If you read a million words of fiction by an advanced (Stage upper-4 or 5) fiction writer, chances are you’ll learn a great deal about storytelling if you’re advanced enough in the craft to recognize it when you see it. But either way, your subconscious will absorb information about structure, description, etc.

D. And if you read ANY nonfiction by an advanced, experienced fiction writer, hang on every word.

2. Practice — Write fiction at every opportunity.

A. Write an opening every time an idea (character with a problem in a setting) occurs to you. If it runs, write the short story. If it keeps running (as happened to me recently), run with it and write the novella or novel.

B1. If you're bent that way, write every time you have a 15-minute time period free. That's another 250 words.

B2. If you aren't bent that way, write every time you have a half-hour free.

C. If you trust yourself and write into the dark, You can easily write a story opening in a half-hour.

D. Don't worry about leaving the story opening alone for awhile if you have to. If it's going to run to a story or novella or novel, it will still run when you get back to it. And chances are, you'll be anxious to get back to it.

E. And if you've already written and surpassed the opening, keep coming back. If you have a half-hour (and trust yourself, etc.) that's another 500 words. If you have an hour, that's another 1000 words or a scene.

If you're a fiction writer, or if you want to be a fiction writer, write. And never trust medical instruction from a plumber or plumbing instruction from a doctor.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Write to Done" at <https://writetodone.com/>. Click the Fiction menu item. Some of you might find this helpful.

See "Bail, Bond, or Get Out of Jail Free" at <https://leelofland.com/bail-bond-or-get-out-of-jail-free/>.

See "Scamming the Scammers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/scamming-the-scammers.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650 words

Writing of How "Best" Is Defined (novel, tentative title)

Words brought forward..... 6997

Day 1..... 5644 words. Total words to date..... 12641
Day 2..... 5799 words. Total words to date..... 18440

Total fiction words for February..... 38556
Total fiction words for the year..... 136033
Total nonfiction words for February... 8820
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 34150
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 170183

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 56
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#),
[Topic](#), [WriteToDone.com](#)

The Journal: Copyright: It Isn't Rocket Science

February 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Copyright: It Isn't Rocket Science
- * No bites
- * Great day
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"I am a writer, a writer whose work has been published widely, so I have figured out a thing or two about how copyright does and does not work." Emily Harstone

Copyright: It Isn't Rocket Science

Sorry, but the quote of the day is just a really stupid statement. Being a writer, even a widely published writer, doesn't mean you know copyright any more than being an experienced driver means you know the inner workings of an internal combustion engine.

Still, thanks to Emily Harstone of AuthorsPublish.com for pointing me to the first two articles linked to in "Of Interest." They are both useful articles. I did not link to her article on the topic

because, ironically, she infringed on the copyright of the writer of one of the articles. And apparently she didn't even realize it. Sigh.

Emily explained in her article that "Before I wrote this article I spent time researching the subject." That "research" consisted of reading two other articles, then quoting lines without quotation marks or direct attribution from those articles. Yeah, that would be a no-no. I would have left a comment, but apparently those aren't allowed.

Just to be clear, I recommend purchasing and reading [The Copyright Handbook](#) from NOLO Press. They're having a 25%-off sale right now.

In a related note, I've had no bites, nary so much as a nibble, on my offer to hire someone to run StoneThread Publishing. That's how little understanding people have of the value of IP and the potential of licensing.

So eventually I suppose I'll be forced to take some time off to catch up on publishing some of these things. Or not. At present I have 4 FOH novels, the one-off (maybe) I'm almost finished with, and around 15 short stories, all waiting to be published. But I'm having a ball writing them.

What's worse, I suspect if I bothered putting together an ad to attract someone to manage my legacy after I'm gone, I'd get the same reaction. Very unfortunate. A lot of relatives, organizations and institutions will be leaving a \$%#@load of money on the table. But then, that won't be my problem.

Great day yesterday. The novel, as it should, is writing itself. After this one I expect to catch a high-speed shuttle back up to The Ark and write the next story in the FOH series.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "10 Big Myths about copyright explained" at <https://www.templetons.com/brad/copymyths.html>. Thanks to Emily Harstone of AuthorsPublish.com for pointing me to the article

See "Copyright Information for Writers" at <https://www.pw.org/content/copyright>.

See "What We See When We Read" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-we-see-when-we-read/>. Good article. This is why I advocate providing ample description. If the POV character notices it, it should go on the page.

See "Amazon Recommendations and Also Boughts" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-recommendations-and-also-boughts/>.

See “6 BookBub Ads Features You May Not Know About” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/6-bookbub-ads-features-you-may-not-know-about/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500 words

Writing of How “Best” Is Defined (novel, tentative title)

Words brought forward..... 6997

Day 1..... 5644 words. Total words to date..... 12641

Day 2..... 5799 words. Total words to date..... 18440

Day 3..... 6237 words. Total words to date..... 24677

Total fiction words for February..... 44793

Total fiction words for the year..... 142270

Total nonfiction words for February... 9320

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 34650

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 176920

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 56

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [copyright](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: In Protest of Hatred

February 13, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: In Protest of Hatred
- * Another good day
- * The Numbers

Topic: In Protest of Hatred

There are only two things I cannot personally tolerate: intolerance and hypocrites. But with that statement, when it comes to some writers, I repeat myself.

I despise writers (and people in general), who lade themselves with tons of unearned guilt, primarily to call attention to themselves and how wonderful they are, and then attempt to project that guilt onto others.

I despise writers who make absolutely certain they're touching on all the accepted and expected social biases and preferences of the moment and then claim to be thinking or writing "outside the box" and pronounce themselves heroic for doing so.

I despise writers who decry capitalism in all its forms even as they make hundreds of thousands (or millions) of dollars per annum as capitalists.

I despise writers who project hatred in the name of equality and project themselves as defenders of people or groups who don't want or need to be defended because they aren't being attacked.

I despise writers who proclaim themselves a shining beacon of justice but shine their light in one very narrow direction.

And I despise writers who bite the hand that (no longer) feeds them.

But I find myself quite happy (though I am a little ashamed of that fact) that they are living in and enduring a private hell of their own construction.

Frankly, I would like it very much if writers in general (yes, even I) would all shut the hell up and remember they really don't matter in the slightest (as they themselves constantly proclaim) and that their job is only to write stories that don't matter either (yes, even mine) except as a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for those who enjoy reading them.

Perhaps it would do us all some good to understand that tolerance and "getting along" begins with each of us.

To all of those people, none of whom probably will read this anyway, I say "Pull up your big-person pants and just tell stories already." Because seriously, seriously, you really aren't all that. And if it doesn't have to do with the writing craft, nobody cares what you think.

Another good day yesterday, the primary reason I posted today's Journal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "12 Tips To Help Your Detective Become A Real Crime-Solving Pro" at <https://leelofland.com/12-tips-to-help-your-detective-become-a-real-crime-solving-pro-2/>.

See “Shake, Rattle, and Roll” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/shake-rattle-and-roll.html>.

See “I’m a Copyright Junkie” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/im-a-copyright-junkie/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400 words

Writing of How “Best” Is Defined (novel, tentative title)

Words brought forward..... 6997

Day 1..... 5644 words. Total words to date..... 12641

Day 2..... 5799 words. Total words to date..... 18440

Day 3..... 6237 words. Total words to date..... 24677

Day 4..... 5620 words. Total words to date..... 30297

Total fiction words for February..... 44793

Total fiction words for the year..... 142270

Total nonfiction words for February... 9720

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 35050

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 182940

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 56

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Succinct Titles

February 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quotes of the Day

* Topic: Succinct Titles

* The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There is nothing like looking, if you want to find something... You certainly usually find something, if you look, but it is not always quite the something you were after.” JRR Tolkein

“[T]hings that are good to have and days that are good to spend are soon told about, and not much to listen to; while things that are uncomfortable, palpitating, and even gruesome, may make a good tale, and take a deal of telling anyway.” JRR Tolkein

Topic: Succinct Titles

I had a strange thought this morning and decided to share it. C'mon into my head for a moment.

It all started when I glanced down below at the tentative or working title of my current novel. That definitely will not be the title of the finished version, and not only because it's the title of the short story that started it all.

The title was adequate (though far from perfect) for the short story, but it falls far short of adequate for the novel.

I need a good, succinct title. Something like Time After Time but something that hasn't been used time after time. Something short and biting that hints strongly at the content. On the other hand, I trust (really) that the story itself will hand me the title sometime before it ends.

Then for some reason I thought about Tolkein and his masterpieces. I'm not lauding Tolkein or his publisher or whomever for the titles, but I *am* lauding the titles themselves. Absolutely Excellent. *The Hobbit*. *The Lord of the Rings* (and the titles of the three books within). *The Silmarillion*. Excellent.

Then an image of a hobbit popped into my head, and he was wearing a slick suit with a fedora cocked slightly on his head. I wasn't quite able to picture rich Italian leather shoes on his oversized, furry feet, so those and his stature remained to indicate maybe he really was one of the good guys instead of a wise guy. But the emotionless, steely look in eyes jerked the picture back to the alternate reality.

And I realized that alternate reality came from the terse title too. You know. *The Hobbit*. *The Godfather*. Ugh. What is *wrong* with me?

So maybe next up will be an alternate history story about a little guy who eats six meals a day and is publicly jovial and who receives a strange visitor (a shadowy, mysterious guy known only as The Wizard) in his home late one night.

A home that the hobbit suddenly finds taken over by others whom the strange visitor has invited because he knows he will get away with doing so. After all, *The Wizard* is the one person whom *The Hobbit* won't cross. And so we have *The Dwarf*. *The Elf*. Et al.

Of course (heh heh) the story probably won't be written, at least by me. Still interesting to think about though, however briefly. I suppose in the end whether I write it will all come down to how

much I want to know about the little menace. (I'm tugging at Superman's cape here. I'll bet The Hobbit—the guy, not the title—doesn't like being called “little,” or a “menace” for that matter.)

Hey, if you know any of the good folks over at Corporate Mordor, you might want to suggest they put an extra guard on the gate.

Oh, and yeah, I had a good writing day yesterday. Hope it was the same for you or better.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Em Dash and I—A Love Story” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/the-em-dash-and-i-a-love-story.html>.

See “The 37 Best Lines from The Hobbit” at <https://bookriot.com/the-37-best-lines-from-the-hobbit/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of How “Best” Is Defined (novel, tentative title)

Words brought forward..... 6997

Day 1..... 5644 words. Total words to date..... 12641

Day 2..... 5799 words. Total words to date..... 18440

Day 3..... 6237 words. Total words to date..... 24677

Day 4..... 5620 words. Total words to date..... 30297

Day 5..... 4877 words. Total words to date..... 3565

Total fiction words for February..... 55290

Total fiction words for the year..... 152767

Total nonfiction words for February... 10450

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 35780

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 188547

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 56

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [BookRiot.com](#), [JRR Tolkein](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Shared Worlds and Poetry

February 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Shared Worlds and Poetry
- * I thought the novel
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It’s the job that’s never started as takes longest to finish.” JRR Tolkein

“All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.” JRR Tolkein

“[What matters is] who you are and how you treat people, not what you signal.”
FarnamStreetBlog.com.

Dean announced in today's post (linked below) that the Shared Worlds class is still open to anyone who wants to jump in and write for anthologies.

And there was an interesting question in the Kill Zone blog this morning. The writer asks whether anyone reads poetry anymore.

I first made my writing bones as a poet. It’s where I learned the nuances of the language “working easy in harness” (Frost) writing metered lines.

In fact, my *Lessons for a Barren Population* was the first-ever book-length collection of poetry published as an electronic book (Hardshell Word Factory, 1999).

In that year, the same book was nominated for Book of the Year at the Frankfurt Book Fair in the Fiction category (because they didn’t have a Poetry category). It place but not in the top three. And there are other collections, some nominated for major prizes.

So I certainly hope people still read poetry and that, as an extension, poetry collections still sell.

But I can attest that they do not. Much.

I still write poetry occasionally, but I don’t publish it much. Still, poetry is like any other form—it’s all about story—not that many understand that, even among writers.

Some stories are about one event and are therefore presented as short stories. Some are about many events and can be presented only in my current favorite form: the novel.

But some stories have to be delivered succinctly, precisely, in a way that can only be achieved in a poem. Here's the last one I wrote:

“A Fiction Writer Ponders His Own Demise”

I have these morbid thoughts, am left to wonder:
Which are real and which are fantasy?

There you go. And yes, if you take away the line break, it's flash fiction.

I thought the novel was going to end yesterday but it kept going. (grin) I'll be interested to see how it ends. It's getting close.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Righting the Copy – Advertising Your Work” at <https://fourknightspress.com/f/righting-the-copy—advertising-your-work>. This originally is issued as a free newsletter. I recommend subscribing.

See “Lots of Fun Reading This Week” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/lots-of-fun-reading-this-week/>. You can still sign up for the Shared Worlds class.

See “Does Anyone Read Poetry Anymore?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/does-anyone-read-poetry-anymore.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 440 words

Writing of How “Best” Is Defined (novel, tentative title)

Words brought forward..... 6997

Day 1..... 5644 words. Total words to date..... 12641

Day 2..... 5799 words. Total words to date..... 18440

Day 3..... 6237 words. Total words to date..... 24677

Day 4..... 5620 words. Total words to date..... 30297

Day 5..... 4877 words. Total words to date..... 35174

Day 6..... 6147 words. Total words to date..... 41321

Total fiction words for February.....	61437
Total fiction words for the year.....	158914
Total nonfiction words for February...	10890
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	36220
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	195134
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	56
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dan Baldwin](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: WITD, the Novel and Dean

February 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Despite the playful
- * Wow. The novel
- * Yesterday I mentioned
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Don’t get so obsessed with writing advice that you fail to write.” JR Murdock

“But how do I do this? How can I type words to a story when I’m not sure what’s happening?”
JR Murdock

(Harvey, in the back of the classroom, arm raised, hand waving frantically: “Ooh, ooh! Pick me! Ask me!” (grin))

Topic: Despite the playful, tongue-in-cheek jab immediately above this paragraph, reading JR Murdock’s post this morning (see “Of Interest”) reminded me to include this occasional disclaimer: In the Journal, I’m only telling you how *I* write (WITD), which is all Dean Wesley Smith did for me. It is not the “only” way, but it far surpasses the alternative.

If you want to try it, I believe it will work for you. If I didn't believe WITD would work for you, I wouldn't hawk it so much, and more than likely I wouldn't use it myself.

That being said, much depends on how much you really trust in your own abilities, or in the reverse, how much fear and doubt you harbor. Only you can know that.

I've been writing novels for only 7 years, but I've been writing for well over 50: poetry, essays, articles, classes, blogs and fiction. So maybe when I found Dean I was ready to take the next step and believe that it was all right to trust myself. Trust really is the key to being prolific, or at least to being easily prolific, and a good storyteller.

WITD isn't about (as detractors will try to tell you) only slapping words on a page and then publishing them without a thought for whether the story or how it is presented is any good.

WITD practitioners still "edit," albeit in creative voice (cycling), and they still put out their best effort at their current level of craft. They just don't allow themselves or others to polish their unique, original voice off the work before they publish it.

But the question was, "How can I type words to a story when I'm not sure what's happening?" In case you're wondering, "Harvey's" answer would be "I don't *want* to know in advance what's happening. The characters know what's happening, and that's all that matters."

Wow. The novel finished yesterday morning in a quick 365 words. That included me cycling back through the final chapters. Then I ran a spell check and shipped it off to my first readers. Then I took the rest of the day off and mostly vegged-out with TV.

I was actually sorry to be finished with the novel so quickly. I liked most of the characters, and enjoyed even the ones I didn't like. I might have to revisit that world again.

As I think I mentioned earlier, the novel was based on the short story I wrote for Dean's Shared Worlds anthology. So if (when) I publish it, I'll go through it again first and change the name and location of the town and a few other things about it so nobody can claim copyright infringement in the future.

But for now, I'll leave it alone. I'm just happy it's out to my first readers. It will be interesting to see their reaction.

So anyway, today I'll start something new and tomorrow there will be a new listing beneath Numbers.

Yesterday I mentioned you can still sign up for Dean's Shared Worlds class. I recommend it. Frankly, I'm amazed he's still letting people in. If you write a few good stories, you can earn back more than it costs to join the class, plus you get the learning experience.

However, I should also add that Dean can be very condescending, and that's putting it mildly. To say he can be condescending is like saying if you stand in the path of a tidal wave, you might experience a little moisture.

So I listen closely to what he says, but I ignore how he says it. I mark his gristle up to the fact that he deals every day with a lot of brand-new baby writers (BNBW), most of whom believe they know better than he. They want him to say the same things they hear from almost every quarter, and Dean's too honest to give them that.

It's a standard hallmark of BNBW that they think they know everything about the craft when in fact they know almost nothing at all. It isn't really their fault. The thing is, they don't have a clue about how much they don't know.

So Dean finds himself repeating things he's learned over the years (and he's still ignored by BNBW) and that sort of thing has to wear on him. I'm not trying to excuse his behavior, just doing my best to explain it.

So if you do jump into the Shared Worlds class, be ready to hear some things from him that will sound condescending, or even "insulting" and "derisive," as a writer friend put it.

But if you're a professional, you'll obey his instructions to the letter. BUT (and this is key) IGNORE the way he says them. Just write and submit a good story already and earn yourself a few hundred bucks.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Libby is stuck between libraries and publishers in the e-book war" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/libby-is-stuck-between-libraries-and-publishers-in-the-e-book-war/>. Ooh! See PG's take! (grin)

See "20 Poetry Markets Seeking Submissions Now" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/20-poetry-markets-seeking-submissions-now/>. For those overwhelmed by the incredible poetic prowess I displayed in yesterday's post, here's a link for you. (Sorry, sometimes HS is so overcome by PG's third-person witticisms that he endeavors to try one himself.)

See "How I write so darned fast – Part 4" at <https://jrmurdock.com/2014/02/25/how-i-write-so-darned-fast-part-4/>. Contains links to Parts 1–3.

See "When Characters Talk – Interview with Author Assaph Mehr" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/when-characters-talk-interview-with-author-assaph-mehr.html>.

See "Ten Rules for Fantasy Maps" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ten-rules-for-fantasy-maps/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 990 words

Writing of The Portals (formerly reported as How “Best” Is Defined)

Words brought forward..... 6997

Day 1..... 5644 words. Total words to date..... 12641

Day 2..... 5799 words. Total words to date..... 18440

Day 3..... 6237 words. Total words to date..... 24677

Day 4..... 5620 words. Total words to date..... 30297

Day 5..... 4877 words. Total words to date..... 35174

Day 6..... 6147 words. Total words to date..... 41321

Day 7..... 0365 words. Total words to date..... 41686 (done)

Total fiction words for February..... 61803

Total fiction words for the year..... 159170

Total nonfiction words for February... 11880

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 37210

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 196489

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [JR Murdock](#), [KillZone Blog](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Kenneth Flowers, Yarmulkes and Tattoos

February 17, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Kenneth Flowers
- * Yarmulkes and Tattoos
- * Wrote an opening
- * The Numbers

Kenneth Flowers

A couple of days ago I was talking a bit about titles. Apropos of nothing, I wanted to remember my friend since high school, Kenneth Flowers. Kenneth was easily the kindest person I've ever known and among the most intelligent. He was one of those folks whom I wish everyone could have known. We lost Kenneth to COPD a few of years ago.

Anyway, Kenneth came up with one of the best titles I've ever heard, though it's a little long: "I Told My Friend I Was Struck by Lightning, and He Said 'Of Course You Were'."

By the way, Kenneth wrote a book about his struggles with COPD. See [BREATHE: Living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease](#). In Kenneth's memory, the ebook edition is free.

Yarmulkes and Tattoos

Reversing The Passive Guy's own technique for blogging on him, today I wanted also to share an excerpt from one of PG's posts, primarily because it's a beautiful bit of writing:

"PG remembers the nice guy who always wore a yarmulke in the shop where he took his dress shirts and dry-cleaning in Chicago a long time ago who also had blue numbers tattooed on his forearm that showed on warm days when he had his shirtsleeves rolled up.

"PG never commented on the numbers since he knew what they represented and thought the nice guy might not want to talk about the experience. The nice guy never made any attempt to hide the blue numbers and had certainly earned the right to show them or cover them a million times over without anyone questioning his choice.

"Some other guys who had fought in World War II or Korea also had tattoos that identified them with their experiences as well and some of them were detailed and colorful and said things like "Iwo" or "Chosin" but seeing those tattoos never effected PG as much as the tattoo that the nice guy in the yarmulke showed on warm days. That's the one PG remembers vividly."

I wrote an opening yesterday for he Journey Home: Part 7, but I didn't like it so I pitched it. So I'm starting at zero again today. I might even set aside the FOH series for another novel and write something else.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Smith's Monthly #46 Out Tomorrow" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/smiths-monthly-46-out-tomorrow/>. He talks about writing a novel in 10 days.

See "Branding. It's Not Just for Cows." at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/branding-its-not-just-for-cows.html>.

See “Update on Comments Issue” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/update-on-comments-issue/>.

See “The Garden” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-garden/>. PG’s take is the excerpt above.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for February..... 61803

Total fiction words for the year..... 159170

Total nonfiction words for February... 12320

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 37650

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 196929

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Solitude, and Openings

February 18, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * On Solitude and Dismissive Attitudes
- * Openings
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

from my Did She Really Say That? file

“Let me tell you this: if you meet a loner, no matter what they tell you, it’s not because they enjoy solitude. It’s because they have tried to blend into the world before, and people continue to disappoint them.” Jodi Picoult (via The Passive Voice)

Note: Whatever the reason, I absolutely LOVE solitude, not that it would do any good to tell Ms. Picoult that, given her self-centered, audacious assertion that “no matter what they tell you,” they are lying and she is correct.

I feel pity for Ms. Picoult in her solitude, but her dismissive attitude sums up why she must endure it. It isn’t the world, Ms. Picoult; it’s you.

I wrote another opening yesterday, this one for a different novel. But like the one I wrote the day before, I didn’t like it either so I trashed it too.

My openings are all 800 to 1200 words, so that’s around 1600 to 2400 words I wrote and then tossed out. No biggie. Words to a writer are like nails to a carpenter. If you find a box of bent ones, you toss them out and get another box.

Really, I think I haven’t been in the mood to write the past couple of days. I’ll keep showing up each day and the story will come when the characters are ready.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Heroes and Anti-Heroes” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/heroes-and-anti-heroes-3/>.

See “Writing In Public” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-in-public/>.

See “AI (Artificial Intelligence) for Authors” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/ai-artificial-intelligence-for-authors.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 280 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for February..... 61803

Total fiction words for the year..... 159170

Total nonfiction words for February... 12600

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 37930

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 197209

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Maybe an Exciting New Source

February 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Note: Gilbert Bassey
- * I'm writing again
- * Dean's at it again
- * Sorry about the snow and ice
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Story is about emotional manipulation.” Gilbert Bassey

“[S]tories are the most powerful creations of mankind.” Gilbert Bassey

“In an era when Woke culture apparently has the power to turn business executives of all sorts into quivering and spineless pools of goo, a morals clause can be dangerous to a traditionally-published author's financial and emotional health, both presently and in the future.” The Passive Guy

and yet another broad statement from someone who obviously hasn't met everyone...

“[Y]ou may not want to admit [it], but you really care about selling books.” David Farland *Sigh*.

Note: Gilbert Bassey is a writer, filmmaker, and story consultant dedicated to telling great stories and helping other writers do the same. I'm hoping he will be an exciting new source for valid writing advice.

You can subscribe to his [free Storycraft newsletter](#) and get a free PDF copy of *the happy-sad ending builder*. I subscribed and I recommend it. Sounds as if there are gems to be mined here if you remember to keep what works for you and toss out what doesn't.

Well, I finally decided to stop whining, get over myself, and start my next novel. As I suspected it might, it will be Book 7 in the Future of Humanity (FOH) series.

Part of my problem was that I'd just finished writing a very different science fiction novel, one in which time travel via portals played a major role.

That's very different than writing all the stories that crop up on a generation ship on a 140-year journey into the future with no time-warp portals included. (grin)

So for a couple of days I was Thinking (oops, conscious critical mind) about maybe writing another time-travel novel in that world, or maybe writing another installment of the FOH series, or maybe writing an installment of the FOH series that included time travel somehow, and on and on and on.

Finally yesterday morning I remembered to stop Thinking and just write. And I had a pretty good first day on the new novel. Shows what can happen when you stop whining and start writing. (grin)

Dean's at it again, chronicling in his blog "How to Write a Novel in Half a Month." If you follow along, you probably will pick up some gems along the way about scheduling and perseverance and especially "keep coming back."

I'll follow along and add the posts to "Of Interest" below.

I realize I've been remiss in not mentioning the plague of snow and ice storms across the US over the past week or so.

Although I don't watch television news, I'm in touch with enough writers from diverse parts of the US to know that much of the nation has been and is currently suffering various outages due to bad weather, specifically snow storms and ice storms.

I am fortunate in that I am not, but I empathize. Been there, done that. I wish you all electricity, warmth, and a return to whatever is normal for you in the nearest possible future.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Day One: Writing a Novel in Half a Month" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-one-writing-a-novel-in-half-a-month/>.

See “Story Resolutions: Mastering the Happy-Sad Ending” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/story-resolutions-mastering-the-happy-sad-ending/>. I recommend clicking through to the OP.

See “Writing a Bestseller Novel in Three Easy Steps” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-a-bestseller-novel-in-three-easy-steps/>.

See “How Getting Canceled on Social Media Can Derail a Book Deal” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-getting-canceled-on-social-media-can-derail-a-book-deal/>. See PG’s very important take.

See “Yesterday’s Absence” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/yesterdays-absence/>. In which PG denigrates false skiiers.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 610 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065

Total fiction words for February..... 67867

Total fiction words for the year..... 165344

Total nonfiction words for February... 13210

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 38540

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 203884

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Not a lot

February 20, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Not a lot
- * A decent-enough day
- * The Numbers

Not a lot to talk about today. Dean posted Day 2 of his series “Writing a Novel in Half a Month,” but there were no gems, nothing spectacular.

I got this from Dave Farland in an email and thought I’d include it here in case anyone’s interested:

Announcement: Very exciting news for writers! This next week starting Monday is Fantasy Writers Week at ProWritingAid! Please do not miss out, put it on your calendar! There will be several guests and so much content for free. If you are interested, click <https://prowritingaid.com/art/1571/prowritingaid-s-fantasy-week.aspx>.

I had a decent-enough day yesterday but I fell a little short of my daily goal. Too much thought-time. This is why I advocate creating a series bible and, if necessary, a spreadsheet that contains at least character names and descriptions. And I haven’t done that for this series yet, and I’m on Book 7 already. Sigh.

One thing I don’t like about writing in a series is the necessary back-checking you have to do to maintain consistency. It almost makes me want to kill off more characters just so I won’t have to go find their descriptions again when they appear in a new book.

And yes, even if you described a character in a previous book, you have to describe him or her again in the current book. It’s called grounding the reader.

Anyway, I’ll post this, then get back to the novel. Hope you have a good day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Original Heinlein’s Rules” at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/the-original-heinliens-rules/>.

See “Lupin, Then and Now...” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/lupin-then-and-now.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 270 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065

Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952

Total fiction words for February.....	71754
Total fiction words for the year.....	169231
Total nonfiction words for February...	13480
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	38810
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	208041
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Critical Voice vs. Creative Voice

February 21, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Critical Voice vs. Creative Voice
- * Dean's put out a call
- * In today's post at the Kill Zone blog
- *
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[N]othing important, or meaningful, or beautiful, or interesting, or great ever came out of imitations. The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.” Anna Quindlen

“I plucked hissing, thrashing, horned tomato worms off the plants and tossed them in a bucket, secretly terrified of their alien aggression. Every Paradise has its serpent.” Patrick Dorn, from his story, “My Father’s House” (To read the full story, visit <https://www.patrickdorn.com/> and subscribe to his newsletter)

Topic: Critical Voice vs. Creative Voice

Ugh. I had an ugly day yesterday. Of course, everything's relative, and I'm only talking about writing here, not digging out from under mounds of snow or putting up with power outages. If you still are, I hope that ends for you soon.

Really there's no reason to mention this, except to maybe show you what can happen.

On Friday, I was writing along fine, but that niggling little voice in my head (creative subconscious) said something didn't feel right. Like I'd taken a wrong turn somewhere. Usually when I hear that voice, I stop writing, back up, and read to see where things started feeling weird. But I didn't.

Note: Be sure that niggling little voice is your creative voice and not your critical voice. There is a distinct and recognizable difference. The critical voice is always loud and always negative, always trying to stop your writing cold.

Consider the example I'm giving you right now. When I let the critical voice in for a second, it caused this temporary stoppage while I dug back, found it, and pitched it and all that came after it.

On the other hand, the creative voice is always quiet and soft, more of a nag, and it will say something's wrong (you took a wrong turn somewhere), but it won't try to stop you writing. I could easily have come back and just kept writing, and the nagging little creative voice would have continued.

So on Friday, instead of stopping, backing up and figuring out where I'd made a wrong turn, I kept going.

So at the end of the day on Friday, I left it as-is, but I left it knowing I'd have to find that wrong turn the next day.

Then yesterday when I came in, I read back through everything, the whole 10,000 words, and the wrong turn leapt out at me. At a particular point, I "thought" (critical voice) about a new direction and took it. Naturally, that affected everything that came after it.

So I started the writing day yesterday by highlighting and cutting around 3300 words. That was almost everything I'd written on Friday. I wrote them, so they count, but to avoid confusion with the word count they're now appended to the end of the story. When the novel ends and before I send it out to first readers, I'll delete those words.

I also added maybe a thousand words of it back in and wrote 3170 words of new stuff. But when the dust and smoke cleared, my net gain yesterday was in reality was only 809 words.

Quite a day, and not one I want to repeat anytime soon. Or ever. Anyway, the story's back on track and racing along on its own again.

Dean's put out a call for more Cave Creek short stories for his upcoming anthologies. If you're part of the Shared Worlds class, you know that.

So I might have to set the novel aside for a day or two to write another story for him. I haven't heard back from him about the first one I sent, which is always a good sign.

But today I'll continue the novel. Then maybe tomorrow I'll revisit the other story I wrote for Cave Creek (or the novel) and write a second short story.

In today's post at the Kill Zone blog, James Scott Bell asks "Who is on Your Writing Rushmore?" Interesting to think about. My own Mount Rushmore of writers, genre aside and for sheer storytelling skill, is hands-down Stephen King.

Ernest Hemingway is a close second, then Mark Twain and Raymond Chandler. Why? Because those writers seldom or never provide me with an excuse to stop reading. Having pulled me into the story, they seldom or never allow me to surface.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Ultimate Guide To Creating Compelling Antagonism In Fiction" at <https://writingcooperative.com/the-ultimate-guide-to-creating-compelling-antagonism-in-fiction-c2888bc5de5d>.

See "Stephen King's Surprisingly Simple Secret To Success" at <http://dyingwords.net/stephen-kings-surprisingly-simple-secret-to-success/>. Please, please, please don't say "I can't learn from King; I don't write horror."

See "Day Three: Writing a Novel in Half a Month" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-three-writing-a-novel-in-half-a-month/>.

See "Who is on Your Writing Rushmore?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/who-is-on-your-writing-rushmore.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065

Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952

Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122

Total fiction words for February.....	74924
Total fiction words for the year.....	172401
Total nonfiction words for February...	14300
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	39630
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	212031
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [Garry Rodgers](#), [James Scott Bell](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Stephen King](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [writingcooperative.com](#)

The Journal: Focus Down and Mentorships

February 22, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Focus Down and Mentorships
- * Update on my writing
- * WMG Workshops Half-Price Sale
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Fiction is a lie, and good fiction is the truth inside the lie.” Stephen King in On Writing

“Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't.” Mark Twain in Following the Equator

“On the focus of a story, she writes ‘...the only remedy is resolutely to abandon the larger for the smaller field, to narrow one’s vision to one’s pencil, and do the small thing closely and deeply rather than the big thing loosely and superficially.’” Debbie Burke in TKZ on Edith Wharton

Topic: Focus Down and Mentorships

In the third quote of the day above, Edith Wharton’s advice to “narrow one’s vision to one’s pencil, and do the small thing closely and deeply rather than the big thing loosely and superficially” is spot on and will always be timely.

In other words, Focus Down, a technique I first learned from reading Stephen King's and Hemingway's and Jack Higgins' work. Think of the never-repaired stair step in *Modern Family* or find your own examples. Great fiction is full of them. The tighter the focus, the more deeply the reader is grounded in and surrounded by the story.

I've been thinking about writing a non-fiction book on the technique, but I don't know whether the thought will ever come to fruition. I'm having too much fun writing fiction.

I've added the technique to all of my [Writing Craft mentorships](#) though. You might consider this as an alternative to the WMG Publishing workshops. No filler in my mentorships.

Man! For some reason, I'm having fits trying to reach my daily word count on this novel. Had a great day the first day, but the next three days I fell short. Thanks to that first great day, my average is still over 4200 words per day, so I'll take it, but I'm hoping today I can break whatever little curse this is and reach my daily goal.

Dean and WMG Publishing are offering the half-price sale on workshops again, and everything is included. For details see "Of Interest." You can also go to <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/> and look around. The code for the half-price sale is AGAIN.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Workshop Sale AGAIN!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/workshop-sale-again-2/>.

See "Workshop Questions and Day Four: Writing a Novel in Half a Month" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/workshop-questions-and-day-four-writing-a-novel-in-half-a-month/>.

See "The first helicopter on Mars phones home after Perseverance rover landing" at <https://www.space.com/mars-helicopter-ingenuity-okay-perseverance-rover-landing>.

See "From Mark Twain to Ray Bradbury, Iconic Writers on Truth vs. Fiction" at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2012/01/27/famous-authors-on-truth-vs-fiction/>. (Thanks to JGV for the tip.)

See "Public Domain Day 2021 and Writing Advice from 1925" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/public-domain-day-2021-and-writing-advice-from-1925.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 460 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065
Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952
Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122
Day 4..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 16984

Total fiction words for February..... 78786
Total fiction words for the year..... 176263
Total nonfiction words for February... 14760
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 40090
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 216353

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Focusing Down, Revisited, Briefly

February 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Focusing Down, Revisited, Briefly
- * I'm in a race
- * The Numbers

Topic: Focusing Down, Revisited, Briefly

Hmm. I think there might be a bit of a disconnect between what I mean and what you hear when I say "focus down."

When I say a writer should focus down, I'm going back to emphasizing that it's the characters' story as described through the physical and emotional senses of the POV character. It isn't what the writer thinks (critical mind) to add-in, but what the POV character sees, hears, smell, tastes and touches and his opinions of all that.

I'm talking about including some of the unusually minuscule details that probably 99.999% of all writers skip over because they, not the characters, are describing the scene. Like 99.999% of all

writers use the sense of sight, but omit the others and then wonder why readers say their work is “thin.”

I’m talking about forcing the reader to focus deeper into the setting and the scene (and therefore become more engaged in the story) because his attention is drawn for an instant to something you didn’t omit.

Just as I recommend using all five (of the POV character’s) physical senses at least once in every major scene, I recommend focusing down with at least one of those senses in every major scene. And more is better.

Not the toast that’s been sliced corner to corner and dropped on your table on a small plate next to the larger one but the slip of butter melting down one side. Not the fluffy yellow scrambled eggs but the overcooked, crusty brown edge. Not *only* the traffic your POV character sees passing by on the busy four-lane road past the chain-link fence and the yellowed grassy slope outside but the police cruiser that pulls up directly beneath your window and the scowl on the driver’s face as he slams the gearshift into Park and hurries out of the car. And what your character does next as a result.

All of this is also part of taking your time with description (depth) as a writer. Which means you allow the POV character to sense whatever he or she senses and then you, as the writer, record all of that. But you don’t intrude; you only record.

Most importantly, when I talk about focusing down and every other craft topic I talk about in the Journal, I’m speaking as a serious, working fiction writer to other serious, working fiction writers who want to improve their storytelling ability. I’m sharing things that will more deeply engage your readers and make them want to come back to you for more stories.

As one well-meaning commenter wrote (paraphrased), “By Focus Down do you mean Leitmotif? Theme? A running gag? Or even perhaps an echoing metaphoric contrast revisited during denouement?”

And my response, “Yes, all of that and more, but not in a reading group or literary discussion or lecture hall. All of that but dripping from the tip of your fingers onto a keyboard or from the tip of your pen onto a yellow legal pad. And all of that from the POV character, not the writer.”

I’m not talking about skimming the surface with catchphrases and nibbling narrow slices of bree on crackers and sipping wine. All of that is fine in its own setting, but not at the keyboard. I’m talking about you as a writer rolling up your sleeves, wiping sweat from your brow with the back of your wrist, and going deep into the writing process in a practical way.

That’s the main reason I mentioned yesterday that I’d included Focusing Down in my [Writing Craft mentorships](#). I can talk all day in these posts or in a nonfiction book on the topic, or I can spend a half-hour actually showing you how to focus down in the context of your actual story.

When you read a nonfiction book on writing, there's a disconnect between understanding and actually doing, between learning and applying.

Likewise, when I write a nonfiction book, I have to disconnect myself with the outcome. I have no way of knowing how much or to what level the writer will understand, or whether or how well a writer will apply what I'm trying to teach. I just toss the knowledge out there, then hope writers pick it up, dust it off, and make it their own.

When I mentor a writer, there is no disconnect on either end. Mentoring increases my understanding, directly through the writer's work, of the writer's ability and what s/he needs, and the writer's understanding of the lesson being imparted. Mentoring erases all those nasty disconnects.

I find myself in a race with time. My next short story for the Cave Creek Shared Worlds class is due in Dean's computer by Sunday at midnight.

But I'm in the midst of a particularly intense part of my current novel.

I want to submit another story, but I don't want to interrupt the flow of the novel to do so. Can I finish the novel by Saturday? I have no idea. Can I set aside the novel, write and submit the short story, and then return to the novel?

Of course. Every time I get up and walk away from the novel I leave a ragged edge that I have to finish smoothing out when I come back. That gets me back into the flow of the story and the novel continues to flow.

So if I want to submit another story (I do) and if the novel doesn't wrap by Saturday, well, I might have a decision to make re the novel. For now I hope it doesn't come to that. On the other hand, it's a nice problem to have.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "28 Journals Seeking Very Short Prose & Poetry" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/35-journals-publishing-very-short-prose-poetry/>.

See "Day Five: Writing a Novel In A Half Month" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-five-writing-a-novel-in-a-half-month/>.

See "Miss Evelyn, R.D. (Root Doctor) and the Grave Robbers" at <https://leelofland.com/miss-evelyn-r-d-root-doctor-and-the-grave-robbers/>.

See "Making Up Words" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/making-up-words.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 970 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065
Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952
Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122
Day 4..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 16984
Day 5..... 3905 words. Total words to date..... 20889

Total fiction words for February..... 82691
Total fiction words for the year..... 180168
Total nonfiction words for February... 15730
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 41060
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 221228

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Minor Glitch

February 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * I'm a little embarrassed
- * I hit a minor glitch
- * The Numbers

I'm embarrassed to say that strictly out of curiosity I spent \$9.99 this morning on a writer's kit that purported to replace outlining with "worksheets." Which is to say, I have now verified, just another form of outlining.

I've been up since 2 a.m. It is now approaching 4:30. I spent roughly five minutes downloading one example of each type of worksheet or form that was included in the package and then perusing them. Then I spent almost two hours writing a review of the product. I assure you, it was scathing.

But every writer is different. So as an act of kindness, I will not publish the review or even mention the name of the author who came up with the writer's kit in question or the name of the kit. And should the author comment, I will not allow the comment through.

I realize I'm beating my head against a wall here, but suffice it to say, it's a simple fact that an outline by any other name is still an outline. That said, if you *need* the safety net of an outline and/or character sketches and/or setting sketches and/or whatever, I'm not saying you're wrong. If you need any of that, by all means do that.

But as a person who used to be in that camp and eventually allowed myself to be led to the light, I personally will never recommend exerting authorial control over character control, or not trusting the characters over trusting the characters. I will never recommend attempting to create fiction with the conscious, critical mind instead of with the creative subconscious. And I will never recommend "preparing" to write, no matter what you call it, over actually writing, actually putting new words on the page.

If you are able to trust yourself, your abilities and your characters and just sit down and write the best story you can at your current skill level, do that. Learning + Practice = Improvement. I strongly recommend it.

I also recommend using reverse outlines to help you keep facts straight as you write your way through your novel or series, but you don't need a form for that. In fact, I've blogged on reverse outlines before. To find those posts, simply go to <https://hestanbrough.com/?s=reverse+outline>.

I hit a minor glitch in the novel yesterday, which is to say my creative subconscious dinged me again but this time I was smart enough to pay attention the first time.

To be certain the glitch was resolved, I had to run back through the whole thing to double-check the timeline. As a result, I had a longer day than usual and a much shorter word count. Still, it's better than no words at all.

And the short story I need to write for Dean's Shared World was nibbling at the back of my mind all day. I probably would have already written and submitted it if it weren't for the archaic required format. There, my grumble for the day.

Back at it today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Future Will Be Monthly: Subscription Models for Authors" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-future-will-be-monthly-subscription-models-for-authors/>.

See "Branding Redux" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/29126.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 7** (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065
Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952
Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122
Day 4..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 16984
Day 5..... 3905 words. Total words to date..... 20889
Day 6..... 2845 words. Total words to date..... 23734

Total fiction words for February..... 85536
Total fiction words for the year..... 183013
Total nonfiction words for February... 16270
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 41600
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 224613

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: I Have a Question

February 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: I Have a Question
- * Non-writing day yesterday
- * No "Of Interest" section today
- * The Numbers

Topic: I have a question.

Why are writers so insanely frightened of writing into the dark?

I don't mean individual writers being frightened to test the waters. I used to be one of those. I'd almost break out in hives at even the idea of sitting down and just writing without a clue as to which characters would appear or what they would do or say or which twists and turns might appear in the story, unbidden, unforeshadowed and un-figured-out.

I know some of you can relate. Want to run a self-diagnosis? If you experience feelings of dread when you think about going to your writing computer, you might have an unreasoning fear. Again, I used to be that guy.

That was scary stuff. Today, though, the same stuff is exhilarating.

I finally figured out all of that was unreasoning fear. I finally figured out that even if I wrote a terrible story, one that sucked canal water from all 50 states, nobody was going to come to my house, honk their horn, and then shoot me when I pulled the curtain aside to see who was out there.

And even if I wrote a terrible story (or novel) it wouldn't "end my career," as so many people believe. What career? I didn't have a career. Hell, I was too petrified to write anything but an outline. (grin)

So if I wrote a terrible story (or even a great story), some readers simply wouldn't like it. They'd put it down and find something else to do. Meh. Or they *would* like it. Didn't matter. I didn't have time to worry about it. I was busy writing the next story.

And that's what happens if you write a bad story (or a great one): Nothing. You just write the next story.

But I'm not talking about individual writers and their unreasoning fears. I get that because I used to be there. I understand it. Some of you are probably going through that right now in your writing "career." Be strong. You'll get through it. I'm living proof.

But in this post, I'm talking about other professional fiction writers, the ones who literally attack me and others, not for writing into the dark, but for *talking about* writing into the dark.

What are they afraid of?

Are they afraid a practitioner of WITD might turn out a story better than one they're capable of writing?

Or are they just annoyed that they will never know their full potential?

How would readers react if those writers just wrote the best possible story they could write, checked it for typos, and then submitted or published it without rewriting and critique-grouping and polishing all the originality off of it?

They'll never know.

And they'll never know that sinking feeling at the end of the year when they realize they've written and published only 8 or 10 novels instead of 12 or 15. Instead they'll relish in the sense that they're "prolific" because they somehow managed to write a novel in only six months.

But I can tell you that WITD practitioners don't care that others take months or years to churn out a novel. For us, that just means less competition. So are they frightened that if they worry only about themselves we might take over the world?

And while I'm on the topic, why are they so quick to assume WITD practitioners are turning out works that "aren't ready" without bothering to read even one? Are they that frightened of a novel that takes only two weeks to write?

One of those types, a real person, once responded to me in a comment, "But I ilke to turn out *quality* work." Seriously? Like what, I'm trying to turn out garbage?

Or are they just afraid some up and coming young writer might find success without jumping through all the same hoops they chose to jump through with their outlining and character sketches and worksheets and all the rest?

As far as I know, I'm one of only two viable resources on the entire Internet who's willing to tell writers it's all right to forget all the crap they learned about writing fiction from people who don't write fiction. And I'm probably the only one who does so consistently.

So I'm here to say, "Individual writers, it's all right to let go of you unreasoning fears and self-doubt.

"It's all right to write a story or novel to the best of your current ability and then let it go and write the next one. (It's called "practice.")

"And it's perfectly all right to believe you can write a great story without the input of critique groups and developmental editors and all the rest.

"Because you can."

Consider, before you were intentionally taught in school that you couldn't possibly measure up, you told stories all the time. You made up stories on the fly before you even knew there was such a thing as an alphabet.

You accessed your creative subconscious and you told stories to your parents and other adults, and probably even to your siblings other children.

Then some teacher in junior high or high school *who had never written a piece of fiction in her life* told you if you wanted to write fiction, you had to learn how to outline "appropriately," and it would be a good idea to run your story through a critique group (the first critique group you probably participated in was in class), and that you had to think it all through very carefully, etc. etc. ad nauseam.

I know. I remember. I was there too. And it's a pile of bovine excrement.

And other professional writers, listen: We who write into the dark understand you think we're doing it all wrong and we're going to Hell in a handbasket. But we don't care, because we know better and have the following and sales to back it up.

And while your readers are waiting for your next novel to come out six months or a year or two from now, they can easily pick up our latest release and know they'll get another one in about a month. Even if we're not writing all that "fast" at the moment.

And while I'm on that topic, we don't write any faster than you do. We just spend time in the chair. It's called a work ethic.

So here I am. A guy like me comes along with over 50 published novels and over 200 published short stories. Or better yet, Dean Wesley Smith and Kristine Kathryn Rusch and Stephen King and Lee Child and countless others come along, all *NY Times* and *USA Today* bestsellers, some having garnered tons of writing and editing accolades and awards, some having written hundreds of novels and probably thousands of short stories—

And young writers consciously choose to believe their English teacher, who has written zero fiction, and all the other baby writers they see on the boards on the internet.

Seriously?

I had a non-writing day yesterday. I was a little under the weather and discombobulated so I basically did nothing all day.

And the novel's at a major turning point, so I think I'm going to set it aside for today and write a short story for the Shared Worlds class and get that sent off.

Talk with you again soon.

No **"Of Interest" section today**. I published this before they all got up and about.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1260 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065
Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952
Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122
Day 4..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 16984
Day 5..... 3905 words. Total words to date..... 20889
Day 6..... 2845 words. Total words to date..... 23734

Total fiction words for February.....	85536
Total fiction words for the year.....	183013
Total nonfiction words for February... ..	17530
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	42860
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	225873
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... ..	1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	215
Short story collections.....	31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Lee Child](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Stephen King](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Why I Write the Journal

February 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A good day
- * Topic: Why I Write the Journal
- * The Numbers

Yesterday was a good day for me and my fiction. I wrote a short story of 4140 words for the Cave Creek Shared World, spell-checked it and sent it off, then took a short lunch break and added another 2480 words to the novel for a total on the day of 6620 words.

Topic: Why I Write the Journal

Note: This is a very long post. I won't apologize for that, and I hope you'll read it to the end.

Slim pickings for items for "Of Interest" lately. And frankly, bluntly, a lot of what's out there in PBS. The P stands for "Pure."

I had looked forward to including links to Dean's posts in his "Writing a Novel in Half a Month" series. But thus far with only two exceptions, those posts have been bland accounts of nothing to do with writing.

In fact, I think he reported actual progress on the novel on only one day. And I had the utter audacity to feel disappointed.

Yet my “Numbers” section below, in which you can follow my own writing progress day by day, is a concept I originally copied from Dean’s blog. Actually, this entire Journal, in all its iterations over the past few years, in one way or another was inspired by my experience with learning from Dean.

I’m an extremely lucky writer. It’s absolutely no exaggeration to say if I hadn’t slipped into orbit around Dean one day in early 2014, I would not exist today as the prolific fiction writer that I am.

Oh, I’d still write a short story or poem or essay or article occasionally. And I’d probably still be fine-tuning the outline I’d been working on for a novel for three or four years before I stumbled onto Dean’s site. But I wouldn’t be the writer I am today. Not even close.

I’d met and chatted with Dean and Kris back in the ’90s at one writer’s conference or another where they were presenting The Kris & Dean Show and I was presenting sessions on writing poetry.

When I rediscovered him through his blog in early 2014, he was halfway through his “Writing in Public” challenge and was writing a LOT in his blog about writing and publishing fiction.

In addition to hungrily absorbing his normal daily posts and the hundreds of gems included in those, I also watched as he wrote the Killing the Sacred Cows of Publishing and Killing the Sacred Cows of Indie Publishing series (<https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/?s=Killing+the+Sacred+Cows>), the Think Like a Publisher (<https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/?s=Think+Like+a+Publisher>) series, and every or almost every nonfiction ebook he wrote. (You can buy all of those for a pittance at your favorite e-tailer.)

As I said, I’m a lucky guy.

If not for Dean, I probably never would have discovered the little afterthought Robert A. Heinlein tacked on at the end of a truly forgettable article on writing in the also forgettable 1948 *Of Worlds Beyond*. It was a minor afterthought that Heinlein dubbed his “Business Habits for Writers,” an appellation we know today as “Heinlein’s Rules.”

Without a doubt I would never have thought as a writer that I should “Dare to be bad,” the challenge shared by Dean and Nina Kiriki Hoffman when they were both brand new baby writers and Dean was both working as a bartender and running a used book shop. Of course, Dean later developed “Dare to be bad” into “Writing Into the Dark.”

In his posts I read with nothing short of awe that to actually enjoy being a writer was not a sin(!), that writing fiction didn’t have to be consigned to melodramatic “drudgery”(!), and that being a “real writer” has nothing to do with any sort of elevated, nonsensical “calling” or eating bree on crackers and sipping wine at launch parties.

To be a real fiction writer was (and still is) to look forward anxiously to writing fiction every day or even more often than every day (Keep Coming Back), and that to truly enjoy being a writer all I had to do was face and overcome my own inane, unreasoning fears.

I'm lucky I was willing to take a deep breath and plunge-in, in the time-honored tradition of "Oh yeah? Hold my beer and watch this." But so many simply won't. Shrug. I guess maybe that's just the way I'm bent. As I said, i'm lucky.

I'm lucky I so readily recognized that all I had to do was let go of all the PBS I'd heard over the years from people who don't even write fiction *yet who are somehow expert* on handing out advice about *how* to write fiction (!). And I'm lucky I realized that all I really had to do was trust myself and my characters.

That it is the characters, not I, who are living the stories and therefore know them exponentially better than I ever could. Wow! Are you kidding me? What an eye-opener! And what a trip it's been thus far.

The job of the critical, conscious mind is to protect us. When we inadvertently start to lean our hand onto the hot burner of a stove, it is the critical, conscious mind screaming "Don't do that!" that causes us to jerk our hand back.

The creative subconscious, in the same situation, would whisper "Go ahead! Might be fun!" It's that tiny, niggling little voice deep inside that makes us wonder what it would be like to really put our hand on a hot burner.

Likewise, the critical, conscious mind feeds our unreasoning fears about writing: Oh, writing is fine, but if we finish something we might let someone else read it and they might not like it and the world as we know it will crash and burn and come to a horrible end.

And again, the creative subconscious says, "Aw, go ahead! Hey, you might actually enjoy it!"

That roughly 4-year streak of Dean writing truly intensive blog posts (I see this as Phase 1) lasted for about five years before he started drifting more toward putting up classes and lectures for money (Phase 2) and finally concentrating most of his efforts on earning more money through venues like Kickstarter.

All of which, I hasten to add, is fine. I've watched and listened to almost every online lecture and workshop he offers. I'd probably make a boatload of money if I wanted to take the time to offer video lectures instead of audio lectures (though I admit I don't quite understand the psychology behind that).

And I'd love to have the desire to put together Kickstarter campaigns and all that. So more power to him. But doing any of that would take time away from my characters and from writing their stories. So....

Still, I truly wish others could experience what I experienced as I learned from a a real fiction writer who isn't afraid to tell the truth about writing.

Then again, I guess you could experience it if you want to.

There's a small search icon (a magnifying glass) on the right side of the menu bar on Dean's site. If you click on that and then put "February 2014" in the search block to the left, you will find "Writing in Public: Month 6 and Half Year Summary." And if you start reading there and keep going, you will learn, as Dean is fond of saying "so much more."

I did a little extra research. I suggest you go to his "Day 0... It's Still July for Me" post at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-0-its-still-july-for-me/>. There, I even gave you the link. Will you click through?

Some of you will. Sadly, I suspect most of you won't. And that's fine. It's all up to you. I've got mine. I'm just saying this is where you can get yours.

I strongly recommend you start reading there and don't stop until things start to flag some three or four years later. Or just don't stop at all.

That's what I'm going to do.

Yes, I'm already a prolific fictionist. Yes, that is thanks to all that I've already read and learned from Dean.

But I'm going to go back and start re-reading his posts, I figure at least two or three or five a day. At that rate it should take me only two or three years to re-earn my masters.

Of course, I'm a far different person and writer now than I was back then. So honestly, there's no telling how much I might've missed the first time through or how much I might understand better.

And I guess that's why I write the Journal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Because They Are Hard" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/because-they-are-hard/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1460 words

Writing of "Rider Jones and the Portal" (short story)

Day 1..... 4140 words. Total words to date..... 4140 (done)

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065
Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952
Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122
Day 4..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 16984
Day 5..... 3905 words. Total words to date..... 20889
Day 6..... 2845 words. Total words to date..... 23734
Day 7..... 2480 words. Total words to date..... 26214

Total fiction words for February..... 92156
Total fiction words for the year..... 189633
Total nonfiction words for February... 18990
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 44320
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 233953

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Professional Writer Series](#),
[The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Random Thoughts

February 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Random Thoughts
- * In today's "Of Interest"
- * Yesterday
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"In my case all painting... is an accident. I foresee it and yet I hardly ever carry it out as I foresee it. It transforms itself by the actual paint. I don't in fact know very often what the paint will do,

and it does many things which are very much better than I could make it do.” Francis Bacon (via The Passive Voice)

“Anything you can make, you make by accident. ... you have to know what you do, not how, when you do it.” Francis Bacon (via The Passive Voice)

Random Thoughts

I started this post yesterday during a break in the novel and was going to finish it this morning. Well, I did finish it this morning, but not in the way I expected to finish it. So here are some random, possibly disjointed thoughts.

Last year for a time I lost the energy for writing. I wrote hardly any fiction for a few months in a row. For me personally, it was a horrible, terrifying time. That’s some distance behind me now, and I hope never to see such a time again.

I was seemingly spurred back to action by a guy who commented that perhaps I could be “smug” about NaNoWriMo when I wrote 50,000 words in a month again.

To be clear, I think NaNoWriMo is fine. IMHO, telling people to “write sloppy” intentionally is not. That’s the part of NaNoWriMo with which I have a problem. I will always advocate that you write to the best of your current ability the first time through. To me, doing anything else just doesn’t make sense. I’m far too lazy to do the same work two, three or more times. I’d rather do it once and be done with it.

Some days I just don’t feel like writing fiction. When that happens, I don’t write fiction. I find something else to do. Or more likely, I already have something else to do.

And I don’t beat myself up about it. That’s because now, by and large, I’m a fiction writer. It isn’t some elevated calling and it doesn’t make me better than anyone else. I feel all right calling myself a fiction writer because on most days I actually write fiction. It’s not only what I do but it’s become what I am.

But (I hasten to add) at the beginning a very short 6 years ago, I didn’t allow myself that luxury. I was learning to trust myself, and when I’m learning, there’s no time for laxity. There’s time only for dedication to the task at hand. It’s just the way I’m put together.

One guy wrote recently in an email that he has “half a dozen” workshops in his queue waiting for him to watch them. That’s fine. I personally couldn’t do that, though. I would have to binge watch while taking notes just in case the person presenting the workshop provided that one spark that turned my life around. Different strokes. Fortunately we are not all the same. Variety, spice, all that.

But back to my own beginning 6 years ago. For the first two or three years, I was determined to write every day. Period. Yes, I missed. And on days when I missed, I felt like a miserable failure. That is not a good feeling. But a miss was quickly filed in the past as my daily word count goal

reset to zero each morning. In fact, I first started using a daily word count goal not to count numbers but to force myself to get to the writing ‘puter every day.

Now when I have a non-writing day, scheduled or otherwise, I just don’t write. But now is different. Now when I don’t write, I know the writing is waiting for me to come back.

Now I’m aware that the stories are ongoing even when I’m not accessing them and looking in on them via my creative subconscious. They’re ongoing and waiting for me to drop in and record them. I’m not making them up. They’re giving me something to do.

Yesterday the same writer who has workshops in the queue also wrote that he “can hardly even comprehend hundreds of thousands of words spilling out of [his] brain.”

My response was easy: neither can I. I just sit down at the keyboard, check in on the story, and write it as it unfolds, one word and sentence at a time. Stephen King and countless others say the same thing. It isn’t about eating an elephant or writing a novel; it’s about taking a bite or writing one sentence. Then another and another. Like that.

My daily word count goal now is 4,000 words per day. At the end of my writing day, when my brain develops a fog, if I’ve written less than 3,000 words I’m annoyed. If I’ve written over 4,000, I feel good. But I don’t live on numbers. I just record them and watch them grow.

In today’s “Of Interest” is a link to a post that asks what you do to recharge your battery or refill your well for writing. It reminded me of back when I used to tell people they needed to do that. Back when I thought the stories and novels I would eventually write would be “my” stories, not my characters’ stories.

As I read that post, I was confused. But again, that’s just me. My first thought was that I get only four to six hours per day to write fiction. That’s a tiny slice of the day that occurs after I write and post the Journal (most days) and before my brain goes foggy.

That leaves me with 18 to 20 hours of time every day when I’m not able to write fiction. So why would I want to interrupt or replace that tiny slice of fiction-writing time with some other activity? But as always, your life and results might vary.

Yesterday I had a more or less slack day with only around 2800 words. I’m a little disappointed, but as Wes Crowley says, that’s why they make tomorrows.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Crash Course in Storytelling” (a FREE online course) at <https://jpcatholic.edu/request/babylon-bee/index.php>.

See “Is a Child Serial Killer Born Bad?” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/young-male-and-female-child-serial-killer/>.

See “8 Facts About Police Detectives You’re Probably Not Getting Right” at <https://leelofland.com/8-facts-about-police-detectives-youre-probably-not-getting-right-2/>.

See “Day Nine: Writing a Novel in Half a Month” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-nine-writing-a-novel-in-half-a-month/>.

See “Hobbies, Activities, and Creative Pursuits” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/hobbies-activities-and-creative-pursuits.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1090 words

Writing of *The Journey Home: Part 7* (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065
Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952
Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122
Day 4..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 16984
Day 5..... 3905 words. Total words to date..... 20889
Day 6..... 2845 words. Total words to date..... 23734
Day 7..... 2480 words. Total words to date..... 26214
Day 8..... 2857 words. Total words to date..... 29071

Total fiction words for February..... 95013
Total fiction words for the year..... 192490
Total nonfiction words for February... 20080
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 45410
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 237900

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 215
Short story collections..... 31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called *Writing Into the Dark*. To be crystal clear, *WITD* is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Gentle Reminder

February 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: A Gentle Reminder
- * Fiction Lengths
- * The Numbers

Topic: A Gentle Reminder

A gentle reminder today not to believe every bit of every article you read about writing. Better to consider each statement and question posed in such articles, then assign each a value.

The values I assign personally range from Valid on the high end to Maybe Useful in the middle to PBS on the low end, and I'm not talking about the television network. In my rating system the P stands for "Pure" and the B stands for "Bat" or "Bull," your choice. Feel free to use my rating system if you wish, or devise your own.

For me, both "Writing to Escape" and "Focus on Short Fiction" in today's "Of Interest" have a Valid point or two and several points that slide quickly to the low end of my personal scale. I included links to the posts here because every writer is different and your test results might vary.

Actually, I was overwhelmed with a flood of topics for blog posts by each of those articles. Most notably from the first, in response to the key question "Do you ever write just to escape?" I left a comment: "Every single day."

I did not elaborate or question or comment on anything else in the article. The target was far too easy, and my time's too valuable to waste verbal bullets. Besides, doing so would be like shooting a real gun into a pile of mush. It would have no visible effect.

I could have argued endlessly with almost every point made in the second article too. But again, I chose one question (because it was so inane I felt as if I'd been slapped) from the article: "[D]o you know anyone your age who has earned a decent hourly wage for a short story?" Again, I left a comment. When I left the site the comment was being held for moderation, so it might get through and it might not:

"If the definition of 'a decent hourly wage' would include the neighborhood of \$100 per hour (in my world, that's a very nice neighborhood), then the answer is a resounding, 'Yes, many.'

“And that includes pretty much every writer I know who sells a short story to a magazine or anthology, then gets the rights back (usually 6 months after publication), and puts the story out independently so it can keep earning more money.”

And I was struck with a personally deflating observation: So very much in life is based on common sense, which today seems an uncommon luxury for so many. Sigh.

But it’s all right. Very soon I will escape back into my current novel.

Fiction Lengths

Because another writer brought up the topic, here are the fiction lengths to which I ascribe personally. They do not fit with traditional publishing’s price-point and folio-driven lengths for pricing. They are more in line with fiction lengths around the world:

Flash fiction is up to 99 words, including the title. (I publish these only as fillers or in collections.)

A short-short story is 100 to 1999 words.

A short story is 2000 to 6999 words.

A novelette is 7000 to 14,999 words.

A novella is 15,000 to 24,999 words.

A short novel is 25,000 to 39,999 words.

A novel is 40,000 to 69,999 words.

A long novel is everything over 70,000 words.

All are a boatload of fun and an enjoyable escape.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Writing to Escape” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/02/writing-to-escape.html>.

See “Focus on Short Fiction” at <https://writerunboxed.com/2021/02/27/focus-on-short-fiction/>.

See “Burning Books: Akram Aylisli on Literature and Cultural Memory” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/burning-books-akram-aylisli-on-literature-and-cultural-memory/>. There are people in America today who advocate burning books and finding other ways to erase thoughts they don’t like.

See “My Publishing Values” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/my-publishing-values/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 620 words

Writing of *The Journey Home: Part 7* (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065
Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952
Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122
Day 4..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 16984
Day 5..... 3905 words. Total words to date..... 20889
Day 6..... 2845 words. Total words to date..... 23734
Day 7..... 2480 words. Total words to date..... 26214
Day 8..... 2857 words. Total words to date..... 29071
Day 9..... 3249 words. Total words to date..... 32320

Total fiction words for February..... 98262
Total fiction words for the year..... 195379
Total nonfiction words for February... 20700
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 46030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 241769

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [writerunboxed.com](#)

The Journal: Reminiscing

March 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Reminiscing
- * In response to my comment
- * A good month
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You are a jigsaw puzzle piece of a certain shape. You could change your shape to fit an existing hole in the world. That was the traditional plan. But there’s another way that can often be better for you and for the world: to grow a new puzzle around you.” Jessica Livingston

“My grandmother was the most important female role model in my life. ... She did what she wanted, and she didn’t care if people thought she was unconventional.” Jessica Livingston

“The right solution is expensive. The wrong one costs a fortune.” from FarnamStreetBlog.com

Reminiscing

I realized this morning that back in the day, when the only way to publication was writing and submitting a manuscript, I became very good at disconnecting myself from Outcome. Basically, I’d stick a manuscript in the mail and forget it.

If I got a rejection, I’d read over the story or article again, clean up anything I found wrong (typos, etc. and often there were none), then mail it right back out to a different venue and forget it again.

When an acceptance and a check came, it was always a happy surprise because I’d forgotten I’d even mailed anything to the venue who’d sent the check. Of course, there were no computers in homes back then, email, all of that.

So I was kind of living by Heinlein’s Rules before I even knew they existed. The only part of the Rules I wasn’t following back then was Rule 1: You must write. I wrote now and then, mailed it off and forgot about it, then wrote something else sometime down the road. Maybe.

In a way, I miss those days. Don’t get me wrong. I’m glad I write as much as I do now and I’m glad my storytelling skills have grown as much as they have. I just miss the heady anticipation of that surprise.

These days, because I’m fortunate enough to be writing so much, what I forget is what I wrote, not that I sent it off or published it. But partly because I’m writing so much, I haven’t been taking time off writing to do the publishing stuff. Well, as you know.

Soon I’ll rectify that, I guess. I’ll take two or three days off from having fun and writing to enter the sheer-drudgery world of Business (the very word almost puts me to sleep), designing covers and publishing what I’ve written since The Ark.

I'm a schedule-oriented kind of guy, so I really wish I had the kind of brain that can just turn off Writing Fiction and turn on Business all in the same day, but I don't. I have to completely leave one behind for days at a time to attend to the other.

So very soon I'll do that. While I'm at it, I'll probably go ahead and brand all the covers for the FOH series (The Ark, et al) so they're readily recognizable.

The first 7 or 8 books will all have a view of the same spaceship (The Ark) and the books that take place after the passengers reach the target planet will all have different views of the planet. Or at least that's what I'm thinking right now. I'll have to look at the photo I used for the cover of The Ark and make sure I can zoom-in on different parts of it for different covers.

So how's your writing and publishing going?

In response to the comment I left yesterday on WriterUnboxed.com that yes, I know several writers my age who make a good hourly rate writing short fiction, the author wrote

“[I]f you can write, revise and market a 4K story in 3 hours then yes, you're getting that \$100/hr rate. Or if you have an established track record a writer can command a higher rate.”

Sigh. Revise? Is that a requirement? Why not write it well the first time through? Seriously, why not? And market? In the same three-hour time period it takes you to write the story in the first place? That doesn't even make sense. Marketing occurs after the story is written. And I won't even address the myth of the “established track record” nonsense.

Whatever. I didn't bother replying again. It's a major source of frustration for me that so many have absolutely no clue what a sheer joy writing fiction can be. And will never have a clue. And don't want a clue.

It's as if they're all facing west and wondering why they've yet to see the sunrise.

I didn't realize until late yesterday that February was over. Wow it went fast.

I had a pretty good month, with two novels and two short stories finished and another novel about two-thirds of the way there in over 101,000 words. Can't complain. I also wrote over 20,000 words of nonfiction in this silly blog.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Grow the Puzzle Around You” at <https://foundersatwork.posthaven.com/grow-the-puzzle-around-you>. Not specifically about writing, but filled with gems you can apply to writing.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 1..... 6065 words. Total words to date..... 6065
Day 2..... 3887 words. Total words to date..... 9952
Day 3..... 3170 words. Total words to date..... 13122
Day 4..... 3862 words. Total words to date..... 16984
Day 5..... 3905 words. Total words to date..... 20889
Day 6..... 2845 words. Total words to date..... 23734
Day 7..... 2480 words. Total words to date..... 26214
Day 8..... 2857 words. Total words to date..... 29071
Day 9..... 3249 words. Total words to date..... 32320
Day 10... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 35589

Total fiction words for February..... 101531
Total fiction words for the year..... 199008
Total nonfiction words for February... 20700
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 46030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 245038

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: I almost didn't post

March 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I almost didn't post
- * Yesterday I mentioned

- * I've always shared
- * The Numbers

I almost didn't post a Journal entry today. Nothing even in "Of Interest" except Dean's post. I included it only because he finally revealed his progress on his new novel, which he's writing as part of a new non-fiction project.

I'm getting more and more frustrated as I visit my regular stops on writing blogs.

One this morning was promising. An author wrote "When you're stuck in your writing, take a step." Then she went on to advise leaving the novel or story where you're stuck: "write a public service announcement" or "write ad copy for a fundraiser for a worthwhile cause" etc. etc. etc.

To be clear, I'm not censoring these people who hand out bad or misleading advice. I couldn't even if I wanted to. There are millions of them, all spewing the same stuff. But I won't enable their poison by linking to it in this Journal.

I literally don't understand how someone can be so right in a premise yet completely miss how to follow through on that premise as a fiction writer. I literally don't understand how anyone can advise leaving a story as a way to advance it.

As I've said probably hundreds of times, "When you're stuck, just write the next sentence."

I can say that because I actually DO that. Yes, it works "for me." But it would also work for anyone who tries it. The thing is, writing the next sentence is all in service to the current story or novel. It's all in service to getting you "unstuck" and putting new words on the page. How in the world can that be a bad thing? And for that matter, how can it possibly *not* work?

Doing what that other person (above) recommends is a way to put off the problem and avoid writing the story or novel. Yet writing the story or novel is exactly what you should be doing if you're, you know, a fiction writer. Hence my frustration as a writing instructor who's constantly swimming upstream in a river so polluted it can barely flow at all.

Which is why I escape so often back into my own novel. Even when the story is stuck or bogged down, I'd rather be immersed in that fictional world writing the next sentence. Or scrolling up to see what went wrong. Or something. Anything other than not writing fiction.

Yesterday I mentioned "back in the day" and the ability to mail off a story or article and then just forget it. More often than not, an acceptance or rejection letter didn't come for three months or so.

I get that waiting and forgetting about a submission is and not stressing over it is easier to do when the editor isn't in your face often, reminding you that he hasn't accepted your story yet. I get that it isn't easy to just wait. But do it anyway. Escape back into your next story or novel or whatever and forget your submission.

Specifically, if you're in the Shared Worlds class and you haven't heard back from Dean yet, please don't email him to ask why not. Just wait. If you email him, you're only taking up time he could be using to read your story and respond.

I've always shared openly here, successes and failures, advances and setbacks. In that vein, my own current novel is bogged down again. I'll come out of it. I always do because I trust the process.

Today, as once before in this novel (every novel writes differently) I'll cycle back and read to see where I took a wrong turn, then cut everything after that. Then I'll write the next sentence and the novel will flow again.

This is nothing new. Nor is it anything I ever expect to happen. Just the nature of writing fiction while fending off the conscious, critical mind.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Chapter Twelve: Day Twelve of Writing a Novel in Half a Month" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-twelve-of-writing-a-novel-in-a-half-month/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 690 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 10... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 35589

Day 11... 2547 words. Total words to date..... 38136

Total fiction words for March..... 2547

Total fiction words for the year..... 201555

Total nonfiction words for March... 1550

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 47580

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 249135

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 3

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 57

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Journey Home: Part 7 Is Finished

March 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Just a reminder
- * Wow. I almost screwed up
- * I was thinking
- * Today, and as I was reading
- * The Numbers

Just as a reminder, the half-price sale on WMG Publishing (DWS) workshops ends on Thursday at 5 p.m. You can use the code AGAIN to get anything on [Teachable](#) at half price. (Note: I am not an affiliate. I pass this along only because I believe it’s a great value.)

Wow. I almost screwed up big time. So here’s another cautionary tale direct from the experience of a prolific writer.

Yesterday, I was feeling a little stuck in the novel. So as is my standard practice at such times, I read back through my reverse outline on The Journey Home: Part 7.

But this time my conscious, critical mind slipped in and intervened. As a result, I almost “decided” (always a bad sign) to cut a major plot point from the novel and write forward from there.

Deleting that plot point and all the ensuing text that played off it would have cost me roughly 10,000 words. But more importantly, it would have cost me the original story. The story my characters had given me. Fortunately, I realized what was happening and stopped myself in time to avert a major tragedy.

As a reader, I wasn’t wild about that particular plot point. It bothered me. Fortunately, just in time, I remembered that was only one opinion of one reader. The opinion carried no more weight than that.

Of course, some other readers won’t like that plot twist either. But many other readers will take it in stride. It will seem a natural progression of the story to them, which it is, having come directly

from the characters. And the thing is, especially in an ongoing series, you never know how a particular plot point might play out or the impact it might have in future works in that series.

And as a Writer, you can't afford to let your reader's critical mind in. So if you spot with your critical mind what you think might be a wrong turn and if you can manage to do so, leave it alone. (But ALWAYS pay attention to the little creative voice if it nags you about a wrong turn.)

If I could think of a way to have my second-guessing critical mind surgically removed, I would do so in half a heartbeat.

So I narrowly avoided paying attention to my stupid conscious mind. Then I took a deep breath and went back to write the next sentence, then the next and the next.

And the novel ended with only 1680 more words. This one turned out to be a short novel at a little under 40,000 words, and I personally believe it's the best story in the series thus far. Again, that's only one opinion, but I'll take it.

Then I stripped away the cuts I'd made earlier, saved it as a PDF document, and sent it to my first readers. So again, just a cautionary tale about the critical mind. Even I am not bulletproof against it, even after 58 novels and over 200 short stories. You must remain on guard.

I was thinking about stopping all this writing nonsense and taking a few days off to work on covers and all that stuff like I said here a day or two ago.

Obviously, that will have to happen eventually, but right now the words are coming fast and furiously and I'm in no mood to stop that flow. So covers and publishing can wait.

Or maybe I'll find a way to do some of that on my shorter writing days. That would be an interesting experiment, though I'm sure I've tried it before.

Today I'll start either a short story or maybe *The Journey Home: Part 8*.

As I was reading PG's comment on "unreliable narrators" (from Reedsy.com) on the last item in "Of Interest" below, I was reminded that what the writer writes is a function of intent; what the reader reads is a function of perception.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Chapter Thirteen: Day Thirteen of Writing a Novel in Half a Month" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-thirteen-of-writing-a-novel-in-half-a-month/>.

See "The Challenge of Writing Humor in Dark Times" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-challenge-of-writing-humor-in-dark-times/>.

See “We might not like the idea...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/we-might-not-like-the-idea-that-we-lie-to-ourselves-every-day-but-our-penchant-for-self-deception-may-have-hidden-benefits/>. See PG’s take. An extended lesson on the “unreliable narrator.”

The Numbers

The Journal..... 730 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 7 (novel)

Day 10... 3269 words. Total words to date..... 35589

Day 11... 2547 words. Total words to date..... 38136

Day 12... 1680 words. Total words to date..... 39816 (done)

Total fiction words for March..... 4227

Total fiction words for the year..... 203235

Total nonfiction words for March... 2280

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 48310

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 251545

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 4

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 58

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [critical mind](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Reedsy](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Mad Genius Club

March 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Thanks to a relatively obscure post

- * I started
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[I]n the [traditional publishing] industry, it’s never about publishing what people want to read. It’s about ‘educating’ the public. Which has taken them from 100K plus printruns for midlist to 10k printruns for high list. The problem is it’s not a business plan. It’s a virtue signaling plan.”
Mad Genius Club

Thanks to a relatively obscure post at The Passive Voice and a little digging, I stumbled across what might be a treasure trove at a place called Mad Genius Club.

You can find the trove with no digging at all by visiting <https://madgeniusclub.com/navigating-from-writing-to-publication/>. As always, I advise you to forget what doesn’t work for you and absorb what does.

As a personal note, I have to say I absolutely love the subhead of their site: “We’re not really mad. We’re just a little miffed.”

There’s no clear link to their blog posts, but if you visit the link in the second post in “Of Interest” below, you’ll see roughly a ton of archives in the sidebar.

I started a new novel yesterday. Numbers below.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Locard’s Exchange Principle for Mystery & Thriller Writers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/locards-exchange-principle-for-mystery-thriller-writers.html>.

See “Time has come to talk of many things” (a new trend in covers) at <https://madgeniusclub.com/2021/03/03/time-has-come-to-talk-of-many-things/>. Thanks to PG.

See “UK Author Unions Launch Investigation Into ‘Partner [Subsidy] Publishing’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/uk-author-unions-launch-investigation-into-partner-publishing/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 250 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891

Total fiction words for March.....	9118
Total fiction words for the year.....	208126
Total nonfiction words for March...	2530
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	48560
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	2566886
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	4
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	58
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Mad Genius Club](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Why I won't write...

March 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Why I won't write...
- * A pretty good day
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Ceasing sales of these books is only part of our commitment and our broader plan....” The business that preserves the author’s (Dr. Seuss) legacy, as reported by CNN (there’s a shock)

Note: Doesn't sound like “preservation” to me. Cancel culture can bite me. Bunch of disgusting brave fighters of blind kittens.....

“PG predicts that, in the long-standing tradition of human nature, one hundred years in the future, someone, somewhere will be loudly condemning the unforgiveable insensitivity and primitive stupidity of the clods and Neanderthals of 2021.”

Topic: Why I won't write a series of "typical day" posts to include in a book on how to write a novel in 9 or 10 or 15 days

Dean finished his "How to Write a Novel in Half a Month" posts yesterday with a 41,000 word novel.

It gave me an idea (duh) for a similar nonfiction book, but I won't write it. 1. Too easy. 2. Too boring.

That's why I don't write a lot of my day-to-day, moment-to-moment nonsense in this blog. It would be a repetition, day after day, of this:

Rolled out at 3:30. Turned on the coffee maker (prepped the day before). Dished up a morning meal of canned food (Purina Shreds, she likes salmon and similar stuff) for my little daughter cat.

While she was distracted with eating, I let the silverback chihuahua dog out of his kennel for a morning constitutional outside. Gave him a treat when he came back in, whereupon he disappeared into the bowels of the house to eat it, then circle three times and curl up for a nap, probably on the big brown fluffy pillow next to the French doors in my bedroom. That pillow will be warmed by the sun when it eventually comes up.

By then the coffee pot had made 4 cups, just right for my first mug. So while the chihuahua was doing chihuahua stuff and the daughter was still eating, I put on my jacket (it was 40° outside this morning) and my ball cap and my slippers.

Then I padded back to the coffee pot, took the lid off my mug and put in a teaspoon of french vanilla creamer and a packet of sweetener and poured the mug full, slapped the no-spill top back on it and let myself out the back door to walk 150 feet to the Hovel. Roughly five minutes had elapsed.

Spent the first hour of my morning sipping coffee and reading and responding to emails, then reading and linking-to items for "Of Interest." Then I wrote this and finished waking up with a few games of spider solitaire, all on my business computer.

Around 4:30 I took a handful of allegedly necessary pills (I took them about 20 minutes late this morning as I re-read this). Now I'll post this, update my spreadsheet to reflect yesterday's fiction words and this morning's Journal entry, then save the post to my ongoing Word doc.

Then I'll make the trek back to the house to wrap a blanket around my daughter, who's usually curled up in the corner of my recliner napping by then. Then I'll attend to needs in the bathroom, then pour a second mug of coffee (and turn off the pot), then head back to the Hovel to move over to my writing computer.

Throw in three or four more trips to and from the house for various reasons, punctuated with a maybe twice weekly trip to the grocery store, and you have my typical day.

See why I won't post my day to day movements for the 9 days to 2 weeks it takes me to write a novel? I was bored almost to tears just writing this.

But the routine remains the same, which is why they call it a routine. So if you want, you can cut and past the above and stick it to your wall with tape and then check my numbers below to follow the progress of the actual writing if you want to know how Harvey Stanbrough writes a novel in however many days. As if.

Had another pretty good day of fiction writing yesterday, though not quite as good as on Day 1.

Talk with you again soon. (Oops. I hit publish before I added my numbers. Apologies to those who get this immediately via RSS. I've updated it now.)

Of Interest

See "Promote your books on Booksniffer" at <https://authors.booksniffer.com/promote-your-books-on-booksniffer/>. Free to sign up.

See "Last Day of Writing a Novel in Half a Month" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/last-day-of-writing-a-novel-in-half-a-month/>.

See "6 Dr. Seuss books won't be published anymore because they portray people in 'hurtful and wrong' ways" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/6-dr-seuss-books-wont-be-published-anymore-because-they-portray-people-in-hurtful-and-wrong-ways/>.

See "11 Techniques for Transforming Clichéd Phrasings" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/11-techniques-for-transforming-cliched-phrasings/>. Not bad advice ("drill down" = focus, "mix up the senses" = use all five of the POV character's senses, etc.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891

Day 2..... 4495 words. Total words to date..... 9386

Total fiction words for March..... 13613

Total fiction words for the year..... 212621

Total nonfiction words for March... 3320

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 49350

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 261971

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	4
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	58
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Booksniffer.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Great Topics Coming

March 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Great Topics Coming
- * Another good day
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If there ain’t a rock in my boots when I pull ’em on in the morning, I know it’s gonna be a good day. ‘Course I make a point of dumping my boots before I pull ’em on.” Wes Crowley”

Great Topics Coming

Again today, I almost didn’t post an entry to the Journal. Today it was for a different reason. I altered my schedule a bit and moved over to the writing computer a little earlier. As a result, I almost forgot to post.

So today’s post isn’t much, but I do have what I hope will be an exciting announcement for some of you. In the next few days, I’ll start a series of topics on Heinlein’s Rules and Writing Into the Dark.

These topics won’t be quite the same thing I’ve posted before. For one thing, they’ll go into a great deal more depth.

I was approached recently by a writer who runs a blog I occasionally feature on here in “Of Interest” (but not today). She proposed I write a guest post on her blog on Heinlein’s Rules.

I assented, but she wasn’t wild about what I sent, so instead she proposed sending me an interview. She would ask questions, and I would answer them.

Again, I assented. But this morning, I received a gracious note from her saying unfortunately the post would run too long, or else she’d have to cut a lot out of it.

So we agreed the post was a no-go. Which is fine. Because many of the questions she asked and comments she made (assumptions, all) are things I typically hear often from around the fiction writing universe, though, I told her I would use her questions and comments, anonymously, to launch a series of topics on the Journal.

So get ready. That’s coming down the pike.

Another good day of fiction writing yesterday. And now I need to get this posted so it will go out in time.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “You Think Dr. Seuss Is Bad?” at <https://babylonbee.com/news/we-must-cancel-hundreds-more-childrens-books—here-are-9-to-start-with>. Satire.

See “Making a Movie With Spider-Man” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/making-a-movie-with-spider-man.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 380 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891

Day 2..... 4495 words. Total words to date..... 9386

Day 3..... 4515 words. Total words to date..... 13901

Total fiction words for March..... 18128

Total fiction words for the year..... 217136

Total nonfiction words for March... 3700

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 49730

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 266866

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	4
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	58
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Babylon Bee](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The upcoming topics and a short tale

March 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * That third quote
- * The upcoming topics and a short tale
- * The Journey Home: Part 8
- * The second quote
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The common denominator of success — the secret of success of every man who has ever been successful — lies in the fact that he formed the habit of doing things that failures don’t like to do.” Albert E. N. Gray

“The courage to take the first step. The discipline to take the next one.” FarnamStreetblog.com

“It is hard to believe that a man is telling the truth when you know that you would lie if you were in his place.” H. L. Mencken

I absolutely love that third quote. It explains a lot about the reaction I sometimes get from others. You know, when I tell someone something that costs me absolutely nothing but my time and will benefit me in absolutely no way, and they react as if they believe I’m lying to them and trying to take advantage. Sigh.

The upcoming topics and a short tale

Sometime today, during a break in my fiction writing, I'll be looking over the myriad topics my anonymous acquaintance handed me. That in preparation for the series of topics on Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark. Stay tuned.

I'm taking my time a little, sneaking up on the idea of writing and posting those topics, partly in the hope that another particular person will subscribe to the Journal.

That person, in an email a month or so ago, mentioned that he might want to write a novel in the world of my current Future of Humanity (FOH) series.

I was flattered and immediately told him that would be fine.

Yesterday, in passing, I asked how the novel was coming along. He wrote back that he'd been thinking about it a lot and would have to see whether maybe he could get something down on paper.

I'm hopeful and pulling for him, so I told him he might want to subscribe to the Journal because I have a series of topics coming up....

His response is something I've heard hundreds of times from writers at various conferences. The utterance comes out after they've approached me in the lobby or bar of the conference hotel and want to talk about their novel. Usually right after I ask how the novel's coming along.

The Journey Home: Part 8 is coming along quite nicely. Yesterday due to a variety of factors, I struggled a little to get to my 4000 word daily goal.

But by "struggled" I don't mean there was any fretting over individual words or scenes. It only means I forced myself (discipline) back into the chair one more time after a break, put my fingers on the keyboard and wrote until I'd surpassed the daily goal.

I also love the second quote of the day, revised a little for writers: To write a novel only takes courage and discipline: the courage to write the first sentence, and the discipline to write the next, and the next, and the next.

And trust your characters as you're writing those sentences.

As I keep saying, the story—what you write—isn't important. It's only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment. As such, it doesn't matter in the slightest. If you're a writer, what matters—what is important—is that you write.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Big Reason Why OJ Simpson Got Off Murder" at <http://dyingwords.net/the-big-reason-why-o-j-simpson-got-off-murder/>.

See “The Common Denominator of Success” at <https://fs.blog/great-talks/common-denominator-success-albert-gray/>.

See “Inkitt raises \$16M led by Kleiner Perkins to publish crowdsourced novels in ‘mini-episodes’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/inkitt-raises-16m-led-by-kleiner-perkins-to-publish-crowdsourced-novels-in-mini-episodes/>. An exciting bit of news. BUT BE SURE TO READ PG’S TAKE.

See “Bat Masterson, Writer” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/bat-masterson-writer.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 630 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891
Day 2..... 4495 words. Total words to date..... 9386
Day 3..... 4515 words. Total words to date..... 13901
Day 4..... 4078 words. Total words to date..... 17979

Total fiction words for March..... 22206
Total fiction words for the year..... 221214
Total nonfiction words for March... 4330
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 503600
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 271574

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 58
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [DyingWords.net](#), [FS Blog](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Awhile Back: An Introduction

March 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Awhile Back: An Introduction to a Series on Heinlein's Rules
- * For an update
- * The Numbers

Topic: Awhile Back: An Introduction to a Series on Heinlein's Rules

Awhile back, I received a note from a writer who wanted to interview me about my adherence to Heinlein's Rules. The purpose was so the writer could put up a blog post on the topic.

Later, the writer decided the post would be too long for their format. I agreed.

But the questions the writer asked, and the incidental comments the writer made, were absolutely typical (usually even word for word) of the questions and comments I've heard from writers at conferences and conventions for the past thirty years.

So I decided to use that writer's questions and comments to post a series of topics here for the benefit of the few who read this Journal. Note: If the writer emails me to ask me to take this post down, I will do so. Then I will paraphrase the questions and comments and continue the series.

Some of this will hit home. Some of it might make you angry. Some of it will sound repetitious. I don't mean any harm. In fact, I've added a disclaimer to the very end of every post now to maybe help satisfy detractors.

In my own experience, I've often found I had to hear something more than once or hear it said in a different way before I finally got it. It is in that spirit that I offer this and the following few posts on Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark, which really do go hand in hand.

First, here are Heinlein's Rules so we're all starting from the same place. As I've said many times, you can download a free PDF copy of Heinlein's Rules (annotated) by clicking <https://harveystanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Heinleins-Business-Habits-Annotated-2.pdf>.

Heinlein first outlined his rules in [Of Worlds Beyond: The Science of Science Fiction Writing](#). Largely as an afterthought to his article, he wrote the following:

"I'm told that these articles are supposed to be some use to the reader. I have a guilty feeling that all of the above may have been more for my amusement than for your edification. Therefore I shall chuck in as a bonus a group of practical, tested rules, which, if followed meticulously, will prove rewarding to any writer."

Then he lists what he calls his Business Habits:

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you start.
3. You must refrain from rewriting except to editorial order.
4. You must put it on the market.
5. You must keep it on the market until sold.”

Note: Heinlein also add that if you follow these rules, eventually you would find some editor (reader) somewhere who would buy your work. Nothing could be more spot-on the money.

Here are some excerpts from the rest of the writer’s introduction, which contain some of those “typical” questions and comments I alluded to earlier and my responses:

Q: “It stands to reason that if we, as writers, spend the bulk of our time writing, we’re only going to improve. And if, instead of hopping from unfinished project to unfinished project or obsessing over a work to the point of ridiculousness, we move on to the next story, we’re going to spend more time writing. Which is the one thing we all need to do a lot of to succeed.”

Harvey: I agree in principle with this point. Instead of “hopping from unfinished project to unfinished project or obsessing over a work” at all, we should write the current story (even the very first) to the best of our ability, then publish it and move on to the next story.

But this isn’t only so we’ll “spend more time” writing. Writing a lot without learning and practice will not help you succeed. Practice (vs. hovering via revisions and rewrites) is what will help you succeed. To practice, you learn and then apply what you learned in the next story.

Never look back. Always look forward to the next technique to learn and the next story to write.

Q: “I have a few concerns with some of the rules to the point that I’ve never been able to embrace the process. ... I’ve always wished I knew someone personally who follows Heinlein Rules so I could talk to them and see what they would say about my concerns.”

Harvey: You came to the right place. I was exactly the same way. Exactly. Which is to say I was filled with unreasoning fear. Unreasoning because there are no real consequences to writing a “bad” (in your opinion) story. The truth is, the world won’t stop if you write a “bad” story and not that much good will happen if you write a “good” (again, in your opinion) story. Your opinion of your work is still only one opinion.

To you, your original voice is boring because it’s with you 24/7. But to others, your original voice is unique and fresh. Given the chance to read your story, some will love it, some will hate it, and the majority will enjoy it—if you don’t polish your original voice off it.

That’s enough for today. Tomorrow, we’ll continue with questions from the interviewer.

For an update on The Journey Home: Part 8, see the numbers below. Still rolling.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “First Page Critique: How To Improve a Compelling Opener” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/first-page-critique-how-to-improve-a-compelling-opener.html>. I don’t often include first page critiques here but this is a good one.

See “Make a Living at Writing?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/make-a-living-at-writing/>.

See “When Brains Dream” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/when-brains-dream/>. Story ideas and some great songs.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 950 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 8** (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891
Day 2..... 4495 words. Total words to date..... 9386
Day 3..... 4515 words. Total words to date..... 13901
Day 4..... 4078 words. Total words to date..... 17979
Day 5..... 4464 words. Total words to date..... 22443

Total fiction words for March..... 26670
Total fiction words for the year..... 225678
Total nonfiction words for March... 5280
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 51310
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 276988

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 58
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: *In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Heinlein's Rules](#), [Interview](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Topic Series](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Post 2 in the Heinlein's Rules Series

March 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Post 2 in the Heinlein's Rules Series
- * For an update
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[B]y pushing productivity, we may actually be creating a generation of better storytellers.”
David Farland

Topic: Post 2 in the Heinlein's Rules Series

Actually, more introductory stuff today, with some specifics on Heinlein's Rules mixed in.

Q: To provide context, how long have you been using this process, how many books/stories have you been able to write, and what kind of success have you achieved?

Harvey: I first discovered Heinlein's Rules and a technique called Writing Into the Dark in February 2014. I made the conscious decision to pull up my big boy pants and give it an honest try. And frankly I was amazed. Since then I've written over 200 short stories, 8 novellas and 58 novels.

That's the real secret to Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark, if there is a secret: You have to dedicate yourself to pushing down your fears and really trying it for yourself. It helps to realize you have absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain. You can always go back to writing the "old" way: outlining, revising, critique grouping, rewriting however many times, etc.

I started with short stories (one a week) and ended that streak with 72 short stories in 72 weeks, all written in accordance with Heinlein's Rules, all written into the dark.

If you look at a mean average, that's just over 8 novels per year for 7 years and just over 28 short stories per year in that same time period, plus 8 novellas scattered in.

But I expect to produce a lot more this year. I finished my 58th novel on March 2, but it was also the 4th novel I started and completed this year. So on average, I'm on track to write 20 novels this year alone. All because I found Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark, pushed my fears down and really tried them. The trust in the process came quickly after that.

My success is because I learn and then I write. I don't hover. I use a process called "cycling" as I write. Some call it revision, but revision is a conscious-mind process and cycling is a creative-mind process. That's the big difference, and it's all-important.

Q: And what is "cycling"?

Harvey: When I return for the next writing session, I read what I wrote during the previous session. But I read as a reader, just enjoying the story, not critically as a writer. And I allow myself and my characters to touch the story as I go. When I get back to the blank space, I'm back into the flow of the story and I just keep writing.

I mentioned that I finished my 58th novel on March 2. On March 3 I started my 59th. I'm not quite 27,000 words into that one. My daily word count goal is 4,000 words of publishable fiction per day, but that's only 4 hours out of the 24 that we are given in each day. In that regard, and measured against the old pulp writers (who wrote on manual typewriters) I am a total slacker.

Q: I've heard many (not all) writers who adhere religiously to Heinlein's Rules poo-poo the things writers often do to improve their craft, such as attending conferences, reading books and blogs, taking courses, etc. I understand, I think, the principle here, that if you spend too much time doing those things, you're not doing the actual writing. But there are some things that writing alone can't fix; sometimes we need direct instruction from people who've been there to identify what's wrong and learn how to address those issues. What are your thoughts on continuing education as an author?

Harvey: Not to be contrary, but on this point I have to disagree. I've *never* heard a writer who adheres to Heinlein's Rules "poo-poo" doing anything to improve their craft. In fact, all of them stress learning as only a very close second in importance to actually writing.

That said, even a decade or so before the CovID panic, actual physical conferences were falling by the wayside, leaving only large, often unaffordable conferences. But I personally have always urged writers to attend conferences and even the much more affordable conventions that interested them, for networking opportunities if nothing else.

Today most of those opportunities are virtual, a concept I have trouble grasping. I need the physicality and the immediate back and forth between actual people. That said, I still recommend even virtual conferences if that's something the writer is interested in.

Re reading books and blogs on writing, of course I recommend those and I don't know of anyone who doesn't. In fact, I often provide links to other resources in my Journal. And my author website at HarveyStanbrough.com is rich with writer resources.

My own personal caveat is that the writer should exercise due caution and check out the author of the book or blog. For example, if that person doesn't write novels, s/he has no business teaching others how to write novels. Would you go to a car mechanic to learn the finer points of carpentry or medicine? And re taking courses, I urge writers to do so, again after investing the time to do due diligence.

The process I recommend is this: The aspiring or beginning or experienced fiction writer should

1. write every story to the best of their current ability, not revise and rewrite their original voice off it, then publish it.
2. take time to attend a class or lecture (online is fine) and then stick one technique they want to practice in the back of their mind when they start writing the next story and practice it as they write that story.
3. then write *that* story to the best of their current ability, not revise and rewrite their original voice off it, then publish it.

Q: How easy is it for you to follow the rules?

Harvey: I find it extremely easy to follow HR1, 2, and 3. I'm dedicated to a daily word count goal of 4,000 words of publishable fiction (no drivel). Re HR1 and 2, I'm a fiction writer, so I write as part of my daily routine.

Re HR3, I don't even allow my own critical, conscious mind into my work, so even the *thought* of allowing someone else to tell me how to "fix" the story that came out of my mind is ludicrous to me. As I've alluded to before, Rule 4 is the most difficult for me to follow because I'd much rather be writing the next story.

Okay, folks, that's around 1000 words, so enough for today. More tomorrow. Stay tuned.

For an update on The Journey Home: Part 8, see the numbers below. Still rolling.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "First Page Critique: She Sees Dead People But We Need To See Them, Too" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/first-page-critiqueshe-sees-dead-people-but-we-need-to-see-them-too.html>.

See "Balancing Productivity and Art" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/balancing-productivity-and-art/>. Shaky start with some myths but some good stuff too.

See "The Artists Dismantling the Barriers Between Rap and Poetry" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-artists-dismantling-the-barriers-between-rap-and-poetry/>. Scroll down to hear some great poetry read aloud.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1180 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891
Day 2..... 4495 words. Total words to date..... 9386
Day 3..... 4515 words. Total words to date..... 13901
Day 4..... 4078 words. Total words to date..... 17979
Day 5..... 4464 words. Total words to date..... 22443
Day 6..... 4040 words. Total words to date..... 26483

Total fiction words for March..... 30710
Total fiction words for the year..... 2297188
Total nonfiction words for March... 6460
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 52490
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 282208

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 58
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Post 3 in the Heinlein’s Rules Series

March 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Post 3 in the Heinlein’s Rules Series
- * It’s no secret
- * For an update
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

Fun quote of the day: “After I saw a bumper sticker that read I’m a veterinarian so I drive like an animal, I realized how many proctologists I see on the roads.” Anonymous meme

Topic: Post 3 in the Heinlein’s Rules Series

Today the topic is mostly about Rule 4: You must put it on the market.

Q: I want to dive right in to some of my questions about the rules, starting with #4: You must put it on market. I can see how this worked prior to self-publishing becoming so common because if your book stunk, you could send it to publishers but it wouldn’t go anywhere. So no harm done.

Q (cont.) But we all have seen writers who self-publish before their stories are ready. And this hurts them because it turns readers off of future books by those authors. So how is it a good idea to publish all of our stories—especially the early ones—in today’s publish-with-the-click-of-a-button world?

Harvey: Well, first, “put it on the market” means “submit it to readers.” Back in 1948, the only readers a writer sent work to were publishers, primarily of magazines. Today, that means all readers. “Put it on the market” means “make it available” to publishers or everyday readers.

Second, re “if your book stunk”: Stunk in whose opinion? There have been at least dozens and probably hundreds of manuscripts (including Harry Potter) that were turned down by multiple publishers before achieving incredible success.

So the thing to remember is that every opinion of a novel (for example) is just one opinion. That includes the author, the agent, the acquisitions editor, the publisher, and every other reader (because all of those are readers with only one opinion) who ever reads the novel.

What one person doesn’t like, another will love. And of course, the reverse is true also. (More on this later.)

Third, re “No harm done,” I constantly hear writers worried that if they turn out a “bad” work or one that “isn’t ready,” it will ruin their career. When those writers seem serious, open-minded, and likely to eventually overcome that fear, I take the time to ask them, “What career?” When they don’t, I just smile and nod or say something like, “Yeah, it’s rough out there,” and go on my way.

Stephen King’s wife Tabitha famously fished the manuscript for *Carrie* (if I remember right) out of the trash can into which he’d dropped it. If she hadn’t, he might still be teaching high school English and working a second job as a janitor.

Closer to home, I wrote a short story titled “Old Suits.” Frankly, I thought (my opinion) it was pretty much a piece of crap. But I’d written it so I published it anyway (Heinlein’s Rule 4).

Maybe a month later, I received an email from a woman who compared it to Hemingway’s works and said it was one of the best short stories she’d ever read. I still don’t see what she saw

in it, but it goes to the point: most readers will enjoy your work if you haven't polished your original voice off it. That said, some few will hate it, and some few will love it.

The point is, writers shouldn't pre-judge their work (as King learned with *Carrie*) and decide nobody will like it. Our job as writers is to write. The reader's job (each individual reader) is to judge whether they like or don't like what they've just read. But nobody will read your work at all if you don't 1) put it on the market by mailing or emailing it to a magazine or 2) put it on the market by publishing it yourself.

Re "we all have seen writers who self-publish before their stories are ready": again, I say according to whom? According to whose opinion? I've never personally seen a writer self-publish before a story is ready, which basically means finished and proofed for typos.

I have, on the other hand, seen a lot of stories in which I knew well in advance how the story will end. That is most often a result of ignoring HR3 (refrain from rewriting).

In most cases, lifeless stories, those in which the writer "figures out" what will happen next, are the result of too much rewriting and polishing. If the writer can "figure out" what's going to happen next, so can the reader. To paraphrase Ray Bradbury, "No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader."

And finally, to your big question: "So how is it a good idea to publish all of our stories—especially the early ones—in today's publish-with-the-click-of-a-button world?"

I'm not saying you have to self-publish every story. But you should either submit or publish every story. Don't prejudge the editor's taste at *Asimov's* or *Ellery Queen* or wherever. You wrote the story. Send it to them and let them judge for themselves. You won't ruin your chances for future success even with that one editor.

Magazine editors receive hundreds or thousands of submissions each month. They often don't remember the names of the authors from whom they buy manuscripts, much less the names of those in the Reject pile.

Editors usually read a story only until they believe they know how it will end. At that point, they set it on the Reject pile and go to the next story. Your first goal is to make an editor read to the end of your story. (The best way to do that is not polish your original voice off of it.) Your second goal is to have your story be just enough better (in the editor's estimation) to beat out another story they read all the way to the end.

And the only way to achieve those two goals is to write a story, send it off (or publish it) and write the next story. Instead of hovering over one story rewriting and polishing, write it to the best of your ability the first time through, then submit or publish it and move on to the next story.

I also recommend having one technique in mind—for example, pacing or dialogue or depth of description, etc.—in mind as you begin each story. That's how you improve. Practice and learning, learning and practice.

All of that being said, the rule I have the most trouble with is Rule 4. I fall off that one regularly because I'd rather be writing than designing covers and jumping through the hoops to put the stories and novels up. At the moment, I have 7 or 8 unpublished novels and probably a dozen or so unpublished short stories. I'll publish them when the writing calms down for awhile.

As a side note, I personally believe Rule 4 was to help writers overcome the fear of failure that keeps them from publishing their work and causes so many manuscripts to be tucked away into drawers (or dropped into Stephen King's trash can). If you don't publish it, nobody can read and reject it. Especially beginning writers never seem to understand if you don't publish it, nobody can read and enjoy it either.

Running a little long, so enough for today. More tomorrow. Stay tuned. There are two more posts coming, each around 1000 words.

It's no secret that David Farland and I do not always see eye to eye. However, he's an excellent storyteller and a very successful professional writer. And every writer is different. So what he offers might well work for others.

From David Farland, "Writers and storycrafters: DON'T miss this bundle!" at <https://infostack.io/stack/wc2/>. An over \$5,000.00 value for only \$49 this week only. I encourage you to at least check it out.

Just please remember that you have to apply what you learn if you want it to work for you.

For an update on The Journey Home: Part 8, see the numbers below. Still rolling.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Qualified Immunity: A Get Out of Jail Free Card for Police?" at <https://leelofland.com/qualified-immunity-a-get-out-of-jail-free-card-for-police/>.

See "A Lot of Research Still Might Not Be Enough" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/a-lot-of-research-still-might-not-be-enough.html>.

See "Foundry Lawsuit" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/foundry-lawsuit/>. See PG's take on literary agents.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1360 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891
Day 2..... 4495 words. Total words to date..... 9386
Day 3..... 4515 words. Total words to date..... 13901
Day 4..... 4078 words. Total words to date..... 17979
Day 5..... 4464 words. Total words to date..... 22443
Day 6..... 4040 words. Total words to date..... 26483
Day 7..... 3078 words. Total words to date..... 29561

Total fiction words for March..... 33788
Total fiction words for the year..... 232796
Total nonfiction words for March... 7820
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 53850
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 286646

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 58
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Post 4 on Heinlein’s Rules

March 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: Post 4 on Heinlein’s Rules
- * Not a great day
- * The Numbers

Topic: Post 4 on Heinlein’s Rules

A lot of this one is about the most controversial of Heinlein’s Rules: Rule 3.

Q: Ok, my next question is about Rule #3: Refrain from rewriting except to editorial order. So, if a story is good enough to be accepted by a publisher, and they give you feedback on what needs to be changed, you should make those changes (within reason). But you shouldn't do revisions on your own.

Q (cont.): I agree with the spirit of this rule: instead of getting caught up in endless revisions, the best thing we can do to improve our craft is to write the next book (and the next one, and the next one...). But I can't see how this works for authors who self-publish, because it's entirely possible that they're publishing work that is sub-par and no one will want to read. I mean, every story needs some editing, right?

Harvey: First, Harlan Ellison added an addendum to HR3: "Refrain from rewriting except to editorial order." The addendum? "And only if you agree." So sure, make the changes your agent or editor or publisher recommend, but only if you agree with those changes.

Second, whether a story is "good enough" to be accepted by a publisher only means the acquisitions editor and/or publisher actually liked it, which means it suited the taste of that particular person at that particular moment in time. What that person likes, another person won't. What one person is in the mood for at this moment in time, another person isn't.

What one person sees as excellent and entertaining, another will see as "sub-par." I personally believe there is no story that "no one will want to read," unless the writer has revised and rewritten and polished until it reads exactly like everything else in the slush pile.

You wrote "I can't see how this works for authors who self-publish." It works for me through what I call "first readers." When I finish a work (remember, I cycle back as I write), I run an automated spell-checker. Then I save the work in a PDF format and email it to my first reader(s). Usually that happens within minutes of writing the last word of the novel. (I don't use first readers for short stories. I read those myself, aloud, make corrections, then submit or publish them.)

My first readers are not necessarily writers. A few are and a few aren't. But the only thing that matters is that they're avid readers. They don't "look for" anything as they read. They just read for entertainment, and if something pops out at them as they read, they make a note. Usually that's a misspelled word or a wrong word (waste for waist, for example) or an inconsistency (a character put on a blue jacket when he got dressed but at lunch an hour later he's suddenly in a brown jacket, or a character has brown eyes in one scene and blue eyes in another).

When I get input back from my first reader(s), I go through the story a final time and apply what I agree with. I ignore the rest. If one of my first readers who is also a writer decides to tell me how I "should" have written something or how they would have written it, I largely ignore that. Especially if that writer is much farther back on the writing road than I am.

As for every story needing an editor, that depends on the skill level and experience of the writer. I don't personally use a copyeditor, but I *do recommend* using one unless you have an excellent grounding in grammar, the appropriate use of punctuation (including when to purposefully break

the “rules”), and the nuances of the language. But I also do recommend *everyone* let a good first reader see their finished work. And again, that means an avid reader, not a writer.

Never under any circumstances do I recommend a “story doctor” or “developmental editor” or any of that. A good copyeditor is worth his or her weight in gold, but all the rest is inviting someone else to change your story, and that’s just wrong.

Q: To piggyback on that, what about stories that have major structural issues? This is especially common for new writers who are still figuring out how stories flow and should be structured. When I look back at my first attempts, they either required serious reworking or just needed to be filed quietly away never to be heard of again. The thought of publishing them makes me twitchy.

Harvey: Again, “major structural issues” according to whom? When you look back at your first attempts, in your opinion now they “required serious reworking” (yet you probably revised and rewrote those, didn’t you?)

But if you keep learning and writing, one year or five years or ten years from now you’ll look back on your most recent writings and believe they “require serious reworking.” But if you had published those stories, some readers would have loved them.

This is true even if you follow Heinlein’s Rules and write into the dark. Especially if you keep learning as you move forward through your writing career. If you look back at earlier works, even your previous novel, you can find something you could have done better.

So the choice is yours: revise, rewrite, etc. for weeks or months or years, or publish the thing and move on to practice more and improve with the next work.

I’m up around 1000 words, so that’s enough for today. More tomorrow. Stay tuned. One more post coming to finish this series.

Not a great day on the novel yesterday, but still rolling. I hope to get back on track today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Why Write Fantasy?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-fantasy/>.

See “A Lot of Learning” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-lot-of-learning/>. Some popups you can get for only a very small donation. Check this out.

See “Two Green Comedians Walk into a Café” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/two-green-comedians-walk-into-a-cafe/>. Read this, and remember that every opinion is only one opinion.

See “The weird long cloud on Mars...” at <https://www.space.com/mars-weird-long-cloud-arsia-mons-secrets>.

See “SpaceX will launch...” at <https://www.space.com/spacex-starlink-20-internet-satellite-launch-webcast>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1040 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 8** (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891
Day 2..... 4495 words. Total words to date..... 9386
Day 3..... 4515 words. Total words to date..... 13901
Day 4..... 4078 words. Total words to date..... 17979
Day 5..... 4464 words. Total words to date..... 22443
Day 6..... 4040 words. Total words to date..... 26483
Day 7..... 3078 words. Total words to date..... 29561
Day 8..... 1258 words. Total words to date..... 30819

Total fiction words for March..... 35046
Total fiction words for the year..... 234054
Total nonfiction words for March... 8860
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 54890
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 288944

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 58
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Post 5 on Heinlein’s Rules

March 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A friend brought a truism home
- * Topic: Post 5 on Heinlein's Rules
- * The Journey Home: Part 8 is finished
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Nine months later, I'd written and published 500,000 words and learned more from that process than I could have imagined.” Cat Sole in the AuthorsPublish article linked to below on writing FanFic (I suspect she was able to write so much so quickly because since it was fanfic it was easy to think of it as unimportant... just sayin')

A friend brought a truism home to me in an email yesterday when he wrote that he's enjoying the Heinlein's Rules posts but that he's also still trying to convince himself that writing is more fun than his favorite distractions.

That's something I tend to forget sometimes. See, for me, writing fiction IS my favorite distraction. I can't imagine doing anything that's more fun than discovering my characters' stories as they live them. I actually feel fortunate that I'm the guy they're willing to let into their world.

But when I'm talking with other writers, and especially when I'm writing this Journal, like most people I tend to assume those other writers (or you all) think along the same lines I do.

But the fact remains, for a lot of folks, my friend's thought hits the nail directly on the head. Writing fiction at a professional level isn't for everyone, whether following Heinlein's Rules or Writing Into the Dark or doing it in some other way.

If you're a hobby writer, that's fine. If you're into writing only haiku and senryu, or if you only want to write a memoir, or if you only write a short story now and then, that's fine. Seriously.

If I've said it once, I've said it at least a few hundred times: If you can find anything you enjoy doing more than writing fiction, chances are you should be doing that instead. Absolutely nothing wrong with that.

Just one caveat: If you really want to write fiction, be sure that nagging “other things are more fun” isn't just your critical mind shutting you down.

That caveat aside, in this Journal, I'll keep treating all of you as if you are already making your living as a writer or want to.

Topic: Post 5 on Heinlein's Rules: The Wrap-Up

Q: With regard to Heinlein's Rule 5, “Leave it on the market,” do you (or did you) ever have to fight the urge to revise or pull a book off the market, etc.?

Harvey: No. I never have (and have never had) the urge to even go back and read what I wrote before. Not because the stories aren't good, but because I've already been there. I already know how it turns out, so for me it's boring.

I'd rather follow a new set of characters around as they live their story and see how that one turns out. (Or in the case of a series, I'd rather follow the same characters around as they live a new part of their story and see how that part of the story turns out.)

Note that I might pull a book down for one day to swap out a cover or change the sales copy, but then it goes right back up.

Q: And the biggie: What would an author need to give up or change (ideas, habits, mindsets, etc.) to fully adopt Heinlein's Rules?

Harvey: Fear. Nothing else. Just fear. And in every case, it's unreasoning fear.

For HR1, give up the fear-driven need to control everything from an authorial ivory tower. Come down from the tower, take off your authorial robes and slip on some jeans. Then roll off the parapet into the trenches of the story and race through the story with your characters.

For HR1 and 2, trust the characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. That's key. When you get stuck, just write the next sentence.

One caveat on this one: Often, if a story "slows" or "bogs down," especially toward the end of a scene, you can often find the reason by scrolling up a few sentences or paragraphs. But again, don't consciously "look for" where things end. Just read. The characters will tell you where the scene ended or where you took a wrong turn.

Often you'll find you've written past the end of a scene or, sometimes, even the end of the story. This has happened to me on more than one occasion. It all boils down to trusting the characters.

For HR3, let go of three things, all fear-based:

1. Let go of the notion that the story is important. It isn't. It's only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for eventual readers. Some will like it and some won't. It's no more important than that.
2. Literally for goodness' sake let go of the notion that someone else can tell your characters' story better than you can. I don't even allow my own critical, conscious mind to intrude on my stories. Much less would I allow anyone else and their conscious, critical mind to intrude. And
3. Let go of the fear that your work won't be perfect. Rest easy in the knowledge that it won't. If you strive to make it perfect, you will try to write like your favorite novelist writes.

But you *aren't* that novelist. You're you. You enjoy that novelist's work because of that novelist's unique, original voice. And others will enjoy *your* work because of *your* unique, original voice if

you leave it alone (if you don't revise, rewrite, and critique your original voice off it because of your fear of being "imperfect.")

And for HR4, let go of the fear of judgement. Some few readers will love what you've written. Some few others will hate it. And the majority will enjoy it and the fact that you've written it in your own unique, original voice.

As J. A. Konrath famously wrote in "Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About," "Someone else's opinion of you and your work is none of your business." He's absolutely right. Your job is to write the stories and put them out. It is the reader's job, not yours, to decide what s/he enjoys.

Q: Any final words, tips, or resources you can share with authors who might be considering Heinlein's Rules?

Harvey: First, I recommend they subscribe to my [almost-daily Journal](#). It's free, and it's pretty much the only blog today where writers can learn about writing with Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark. A lot of big-name writers do it, but very few talk about it, and nobody else talks about it regularly.

Second, there are dozens, maybe even hundreds, of resources on my author site at <https://harveystanbrough.com>. Hover over or click the tab labeled More For Writers. There are services there that I offer, but there are also Free Downloads and Other Resources for Writers. Check those.

Third, I would be remiss not to mention all the lectures and online classes available at WMG Publishing's Teachable page (Dean Wesley Smith). You can find that at <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>.

And finally, look for Dean Wesley Smith's books on Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark. Both are available in both ebook and paper at Amazon and in other outlets.

Okay, that's it for the faux interview on Heinlein's Rules. I hope it helped in some way. More good stuff coming, so stay tuned. And if there are any topics you've wondered about and would like to see me address here, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

The Journey Home: Part 8 is finished. I've said before that every novel writes differently. This is my 59th, but for the first time when it ended I could have kept going.

Well, I could have just kept going in any of the Wes Crowley novels too—after all, like this series, they comprise one long story—but in this one I could have kept going and felt all right about it. I chose not to for a couple of reasons (below).

When I realized I'd reached the end (I actually wrote past it by about 100 words), it surprised me. The ending is strong and it's right. It even has a self-contained denouement.

But I could have added a new chapter header and kept going, effectively writing the next book in the series as an extension of this one.

I don't want to do that for a couple of reasons: One, if I continue, what I would have put in the next book will be truncated as only the ending of this one. And two, if I continue, I still will have written only 59 novels, not 60. And for "discoverability" and a host of other reasons, it's better to have 60 novels out than 59 novels out.

This one wrapped as a short novel at around 32,000 words. That's fine. For several reasons, I suspect the next one will be longer though there are no guarantees. I just write what they give me and stop when the story ends.

If there were six "business habits" in Heinlein's Rules that would probably be the new Rule 3: Stop writing when the story stops.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Five Lessons Writers Can Learn From Fanfiction" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/five-lessons-writers-can-learn-from-fanfiction/>. This article is chock full of quoteable lines you can learn from. In many of them, you'll probably learn the opposite of what the writer says.

See "How Should You Write Emotion?" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/how-should-you-write-emotion/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1580 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 8** (novel)

Day 1..... 4891 words. Total words to date..... 4891
Day 2..... 4495 words. Total words to date..... 9386
Day 3..... 4515 words. Total words to date..... 13901
Day 4..... 4078 words. Total words to date..... 17979
Day 5..... 4464 words. Total words to date..... 22443
Day 6..... 4040 words. Total words to date..... 26483
Day 7..... 3078 words. Total words to date..... 29561
Day 8..... 1258 words. Total words to date..... 30819
Day 9..... 1942 words. Total words to date..... 32761 (done)

Total fiction words for March..... 36988

Total fiction words for the year..... 235996

Total nonfiction words for March... 10440

Total nonfiction words for the year.....	56470
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	292466
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: A Diary Entry

March 13, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

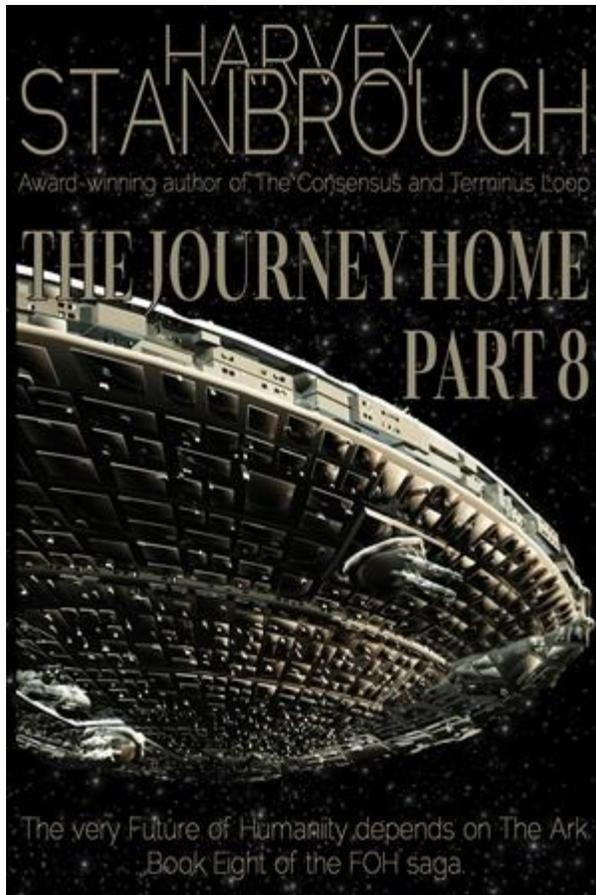
In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A diary entry and a “day off”
- * For goodness’ sake
- * The Numbers

Dean seems to enjoy writing diary entries and some folks seem to enjoy them, so for today I thought I’d post a diary entry: The Diary of Yesterday.

First, I didn’t get up until 4 a.m. yesterday. Guess I needed the rest. Then, for the first time in a long time, I decided to step back from the writing computer. I felt comfortable doing so because it’s necessary and I could use a brief break from the ongoing saga of the FOH series of novels. Sometimes the characters move so fast my ribs start hurting. (grin)

And anyway, I’ve written 372,510 words on that series alone (not counting cuts) since September 22. Plus 41,686 words on The Portals and around 11,000 words on a couple of short stories. So the plan was to take yesterday and the next few days if necessary to do mostly admin stuff. We’ll see how that works out. (grin)



First I looked at the art I licensed, and then I licensed a little more.

Then I chose an illustration and created a cover for *The Portals*, since that was a one-off. That's it on the left.

Finally I settled on an illustration I already had to brand my Journey Home books (the FOH Series).

So by 10:30 a.m. I'd created covers for *The Journey Home: Part 2 – Part 12*. Books 9-12 are not written yet but at least the stinkin' covers are done. (grin)

All of them are identical other than the series sequence number (see below).

I also slightly modified the cover for Book 1, *The Ark: The Journey Home*. I'll swap that out while I'm uploading the other books and scheduling them for release.

Then I took what turned out to be a 2-hour

break for lunch and to watch a little TV.

When I got back, I cycled back through the roughly 2000 words I wrote to end *The Journey Home: Part 8*. Then I ran a spell checker and got that out to my first readers.

Then, finally, I turned to my first readers' comments and began applying them. Once I went through the whole series doing that, I took what was left of the day off.

Today I plan to write sales copy for all of those novels (well, except for 9, 10, 11, and 12 of the FOH Series because I haven't written those yet), and get them uploaded and scheduled for publication at D2D, Amazon, maybe Smashwords and definitely BundleRabbit (as they're released).

This process probably will take today and tomorrow because I'm fortunate in that my son is here for the weekend. So I'll work in the early morning, then spend the day visiting.

I'll let you know how everything goes in tomorrow's post. Then maybe I can get back to writing Book 9 or maybe something else on Monday.

For goodness' sake, see “Canceling My Book Deal Was the Best Career Move I’ve Ever Made” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/canceling-my-book-deal-was-the-best-career-move-ive-ever-made/>. Then see PG’s take.

My own take: Along with PG I wonder “What career?” One book is not a career. And I also wonder how many books could that author have written and published in the 9 years after she “thought it was done.” Never mind this was 11 years after she started writing it. Seriously.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Reading To Buy” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/reading-to-buy/>.

See “MurderCon 2021: The Fabulous Lineup of Classes and Presenters” at <https://leelofland.com/murdercon-2021-the-fabulous-lineup-of-classes-and-presenters/>.

See “Cleaning up the Story Trail for Beta Readers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/cleaning-up-the-story-trail-for-beta-readers.html>.

See “Mandatory Ebook Licenses for Public Libraries” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/mandatory-ebook-licenses-for-public-libraries/>.

See “Know thy reader” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/know-thy-reader/>. See PG’s take.

See “Scientists Say a Physical Warp Drive Is Now Possible” at <https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/a35718463/scientists-say-physical-warp-drive-is-possible/>. Thanks to KC for the tip. (As I told KC, I wish they’d just start working on a magnetic pulse drive propulsion system, by which the ship is pulled rather than pushed. But first they’ll have to change their current mindset. At the moment, there is no adequately descriptive antonym for *propulsion*.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 670 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for March..... 36988

Total fiction words for the year..... 235996

Total nonfiction words for March... 11110

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 57140

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 2931366

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [PopularMechanics.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Diary Continued

March 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Diary Continued
- * Rules for Dealing with Traditional Magazine Editors
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“A year from now you will wish you had started today.” Karen Lamb

Diary Continued

Yesterday I got quite a bit done. I designed (or redesigned) 13 covers for novels (I cheated in that 11 of those used the same art for branding), wrote sales copy for 9 novels, republished two to D2D and Amazon, published one new one to D2D and Amazon (The Journey Home: Part 3) and scheduled one for preorder to be released on March 30 (The Portals) at the same two places.

Today I already made and sent off a few recommended minor additions and adjustments (that I agreed with) to one of the stories I sent Dean for the Cave Creek shared world anthologies. Still waiting to hear back on the other one.

Update: Heard back on the other one. Not surprisingly, he said that one didn’t end. (grin) That was really no surprise because I tried to force an ending just short of the word count limit. That’s the story I turned into a novel (The Portals), the one that will be released on March 30.

For the rest of today I'll upload The Journey Home: Parts 4 through 8 for preorder and release. Because I'm fairly prolific and am playing catch up, I'll probably release them every two weeks or so. And that will be that. I'll spend what remains of today visiting with my son, then start the new novel tomorrow.

Rules for Dealing with Traditional Magazine Editors

There are only two rules, really, aside from sending them your best work at your current skill level in the first place:

1. Never keep an editor waiting.
2. Be patient while they keep you waiting.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Period is Your Friend" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/the-period-is-your-friend.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 310 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for March..... 36988

Total fiction words for the year..... 235996

Total nonfiction words for March... 11420

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 57450

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 293446

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: All Caught Up

March 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * All Caught Up
- * Topic: The Pulp Writers
- * Turns out I'm lazy
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"I write for the joy of writing. It is the air I breathe and the joy of my life." Charlene Iverson

"There is in writing the constant joy of sudden discovery, of happy accident." H.L. Mencken

"In Sarasota, Florida, Stephen King reminded me of the joy of just writing every day." Neil Gaiman

All Caught Up

I went ahead and published Book 8 of the FOH series too, early this morning. If I get additional significant first-reader input I can always make the changes and upload a new manuscript for any books past 3 (and The Portals). I have a new book releasing every two weeks (15th and 30th) now through June 15. By then I should have written at least a few more novels. (grin)

I think God would like me to keep telling my characters' stories the same way He keeps telling mine. Note that He doesn't control what I say, think or do. He only reports on it.

Topic: The Pulp Writers

Y'know, what I'm doing here with regard to writing and publishing novels is not exceptional. Compared with the old pulp masters, many of whose works are exceptional and still being turned into films, I'm a slacker. On many days Erle Stanley Gardner wrote 10,000 words or more. He dictated, but still.

Many, many of the pulp writers were hyper-efficient, often writing well over a million or even two million words of fiction per year. And they didn't have computers and word processors.

They wrote that much to put food on the table. They were paid by the word, so they churned out the words, and they did it all on manual typewriters. And they didn't rewrite much because they knew they were paid for the words on the page, not those plus the words they had replaced on the page.

In other words, what we know today as Heinlein's Rules was just common sense back then. If you wanted to be a writer, you had to write and finish. Writing into the dark wasn't a thing yet, but they did it every day.

Harlan Ellison famously once set up a table and chair and his trusty typewriter in a department store window and typed short stories while people gathered on the sidewalk opposite the window to watch. He taped each finished page to the window so they could read along. Now *that's* writing into the dark.

If you wanted to *make a living* as a writer, you had to not waste time with rewrites. You had to write a clean draft the first time through. Retyping the 250 or 300 words on a page that contained an error took time, and time literally was money. If they wrote a clean first draft, then the time they would have spent retyping a page could be spent on the next story or novel instead.

Same with revisions and rewrites. Every day that a manuscript languishes with members of a critique group, that's one more day an editor (or two or three) could be reading and deciding whether to buy that manuscript. And it's one more day the writer could be turing out another story.

They had to send off what they finished when they finished it, then sit down and write the next story or novel or installment of the series. They would have marveled at this world in which we have the choice of submitting to magazine markets or instant publication.

It really is that difficult and, for us, that ridiculously easy. We're spoiled. If we make a mistake we don't have to retype a whole page. We can just edit on screen, then run a spell checker, change what we agree with, and send it off or publish it. We have the luxury of doing "whatever works" for us. We don't have to write every day or depend on finishing the next story or novel for food.

Still, the extra money comes in handy, doesn't it? You know, if you actually write the stories.

Turns out I'm lazy. Above I wrote that I'm "all caught up." Well, I am, sort of.

I have around a dozen or so short stories that have never seen the light of day languishing in a folder on my computer. I didn't create covers or promo docs for them, and I didn't upload any of them in my current publishing frenzy.

And I've decided it takes far less effort to submit those electronically to magazine markets than it does to create a cover and a promo doc and publish them. That, coupled with the fact that individual short stories sell fewer copies than anything else (novels, novel series, and short story collection) has convinced me to submit at least some of them to magazines.

Because who knows what the editors might buy? So I'll do some of that today. And then I'll kick out of the stirrups of Rule 4 and decide what to write next either today or tomorrow. Because therein lies the joy.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A Dictionary of Science Fiction" at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/dictionary-science-fiction-runs-afrofuturism-zero-g-180977224/>. Thanks to KC.

See "The Fey Returns Kickstarter" at <https://www.deanwesleymag.com/the-fey-returns-kickstarter/>.

See "The Joy Of Writing Quotes" at <https://www.wisefamousquotes.com/quotes-about-the-joy-of-writing/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 890 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for March..... 36988

Total fiction words for the year..... 235996

Total nonfiction words for March... 12320

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 58350

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 294346

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Smithsonianmag.com](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: On Getting Paid in Copies

March 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * On Getting Paid in Copies
- * Speaking of writing
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“People on the outside think there’s something magical about writing, that you go up in the attic at midnight and cast the bones and come down in the morning with a story, but it isn’t like that. You sit in back of the typewriter and you work, and that’s all there is to it.” Harlan Ellison

“I get so angry about [people expecting writers to work for nothing] because you’re undercut by all the amateurs.” Harlan Ellison

Yesterday I passed a pleasurable day reading back through some of the short stories I’ve written but haven’t published. Of course, I also spent part of the day poking around on the Internet looking for markets that are less known than the big names but still pay professional rates (6¢ per word or higher), which was a horrible experience because it was so bo-ho-ho-ho-horing. I’m just not a business guy.

Anyway, eventually I gave up on that silliness, found appropriate markets for four of them and sent them off.

In the death throes of my search I almost bought the *2020 Novel & Short Story Writers Market* (around \$20 if you go through Amazon). I didn’t because my astute wife remembered I’d bought the 2019 edition.

So I asked her to comb through the short story markets and line out any entries in which the ‘zine paid less than pro rates, then provide me with a clean list. Which she readily agreed to do, bless her little business heart.

To put all of this in perspective, other than the couple of stories I recently sent to DWS for possible inclusion in the Cave Creek anthologies, the last time I submitted a short story to a magazine or anthology it went by US mail. There was no email yet or online submission forms. There were no personal computers. (grin) I was still in the Marine Corps. It was probably the early to mid-1980s.

On Getting Paid in Copies

By the way, when you submit your stories to magazine markets, submit first to those who pay pro rates. Then either publish yourself or work your way down the scale.

And whatever you do, don't submit EVER to those markets who "pay in copies." Seriously. And don't fall for the old bat guano about "building your name" or "gaining experience" or "adding to your credits."

If you want to build your name or your portfolio of writing credits, you have to licence your work to magazines that have an actual readership outside of the publisher's family and friends. And when you give your work away, the only experience you gain is in letting cheap, unprofessional publishers take advantage of you.

Think about it: Magazines who pay you in copies are paying you by showing you copies of your own story. That's like taking a photo of your toilet or your pipes or whatever the plumber fixed and mailing or emailing him that instead of a check.

Like any other craftspeople or artists, writers deserve to be paid. If you're a writer, that includes you.

Speaking of writing, the bug really started tugging at me around noon yesterday, but it was too late in the day to start something new, so I didn't. I took the rest of yesterday to do nothing, and today I'll start writing fiction again.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Harlan Ellison — Pay the Writer" (short video) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj5IV23g-fE>.

See "Tightening Your Focus" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/tightening-your-focus/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for March..... 36988

Total fiction words for the year..... 235996

Total nonfiction words for March... 12920

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 58950

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 294946

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Harlan Ellison](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Started a New Novel

March 17, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Started a new novel
- * From David Farland (Dave Wolverton)
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Substitute ‘damn’ every time you’re inclined to write ‘very’; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be. Mark Twain (via The Passive Voice)

“This is what Stephen King would write like if Stephen King could really write.” One reviewer of a Richard Bachman novel

“‘Master your instrument,’ Charlie Parker once advised. ‘Master the music and then forget all that and just play.’” Michael Hall in Texas Monthly

Got started on the new novel yesterday. Not a big start, but a start. A little under the weather and it’s bitter cold in the Hovel, so I worked a couple of hours then took the rest of the day off.

I received this notice from David Farland (Wolverton) in my email yesterday. Just passing it along:

Senior Editor Wanted:

Small publisher seeks a senior editor to help create biographical books with strong political content. This person will lead a team of writers in gathering and verifying information, then craft an elegant narrative to engage and entertain a national audience. The successful candidate needs to be highly intelligent and capable, able to recall facts and work with people, with strong writing and editing skills.

Full time, salary negotiable.

To apply, send a brief resume to Dave Wolverton at mystorydoctor@gmail.com.

That's it for today. Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Crowdfunding Your Fiction" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/crowdfunding-your-fiction/>.

See "Known Alias: How Stephen King Was Outed as Richard Bachman" at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/502166/how-stephen-king-was-outed-richard-bachman>.

See "Self-Employed Freelance Taxes: Everything You Need to Know" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/self-employed-freelance-taxes-everything-you-need-to-know/>.

See "Trigger: The Life of Willie Nelson's Guitar" at <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/trigger/>. Something for guitar players.

See "Fun Hunting A Killer" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/fun-hunting-a-killer.html>. Nothing about writing but maybe fun for people who enjoy games.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 310 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019

Total fiction words for March..... 39007

Total fiction words for the year..... 238015

Total nonfiction words for March... 13230

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 59260

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 297278

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Stephen King](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Second Novels and Mentorships

March 18, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * When I originally pointed to
- * And re the first item
- * Still a little under
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[I]f PG were to hypothetically consider using a Social Media Assistant, he might explore the college population. They’re likely to be intelligent and very familiar with the various platforms and the unwritten norms that govern interaction on those platforms.” The Passive Guy

When I originally pointed to “Twenty Authors Talk About the Second Time Around” (“Of Interest”) I did so because I had in mind the thought that maybe someone had found twenty authors who had hit rock bottom or burned out and stopped writing, then made a comeback.

I was disappointed to see it was all about making one’s novel “important,” from the first-novel “debut” when a “new star bursts on the scene” etc.

I decided to leave the post in “Of Interest” even though it disappointed me. Perhaps other will be interested. But don’t make any individual novel important, folks. The fear that your second novel won’t be as “good” as the first is often exactly the reason that it isn’t.

And until you tame that fear and kick it out of your mindset, every novel you write will be subject to the same decline. You only progress as a storyteller when you release the fear and just enjoy the process and the story your characters are telling you.

Your conscious, critical mind is a good monster. It keeps you from doing stupid things, like walking out in front of a speeding bus or putting your hand on a hot burner.

But it also does its best to protect you from rejection by shutting down your writing. If you don't write, you can't finish and publish and be criticized.

So unless you're about to walk across a busy street or do something else that has Real Consequences, don't let it in. Just have fun being entertained by your characters. Then the characters will have fun and the readers will have fun too.

And re the first item in "Of Interest," I would be remiss not to mention that I'm still offering paid, directed mentorships focused down on your individual work. You can find the levels at <https://harveystanbrough.com/mentorships/>.

For a limited time, I'm offering The Writing Craft III mentorships (any one topic from the list at the top of the page) for only \$96, a 25% discount. The regular price is \$129.

Of course, in this Journal I offer a free mentorship pretty much every day.

Still a little under the weather yesterday, so the second day on the novel was not a great day, but it was significantly better than the first.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Mentoring For Writers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/mentoring-for-writers.html>.

See "Tips for Working With a Social Media Assistant" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/tips-for-working-with-a-social-media-assistant/>. See PG's take.

See "Twenty Authors Talk About the Second Time Around" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/twenty-authors-talk-about-the-second-time-around/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 490 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019

Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669

Total fiction words for March..... 42657

Total fiction words for the year..... 241665

Total nonfiction words for March... 13720

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 59750
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 301415

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
 Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
 Short story collections..... 31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: I’m a Fortunate Guy

March 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: I’m a Fortunate Guy
- * If you haven’t pulled the trigger
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.” Maya Angelou

“In writing, the critical voice always makes the wrong decision. Readers don’t read safe, easy, dull books. Just like no one watches the perfectly behaved child walking beside their parent and doing nothing. Nope, people watch with laughter or shock or stunned amazement or horror the out-of-control funny child. Your book needs to be that child, not the dull, quite one. Critical voice is always wrong in creative things.” Dean Wesley Smith, as quoted by Garry Rodgers of Kill Zone blog

Topic: I’m a Fortunate Guy

As a writer, I’m a fortunate guy, timing wise. I’ve said here many times before that if it weren’t for Dean Wesley Smith, and me stumbling on his website back in February 2014, I probably wouldn’t have written even one novel, much less be working on my 60th right now.

Yesterday, I left a comment over on Garry Rodgers' post at the Kill Zone blog. He asked about mentors, and I was only too happy to sing Dean's praises.

This morning I read his response. A writing friend pointed him to DWS and Kris Rusch "a few years ago, and their influence in indie writing/publishing was game changing." No surprise there.

Then he wrote, "'Writing Into The Dark' is news to me, so I Googled it." Then he posted a quote from Dean, which I copied and pasted as the second quote of the day above.

I was astounded to hear that my friend had been sent to Dean and Kris a few years ago, but that WITD was news to him. Literally astounded. How can you know of Dean Wesley Smith and NOT have heard about writing into the dark?

I guess I just happened on Dean's site at the right time. He hadn't been teaching formally in online lectures and workshops very long at that point. He was still talking about Heinlein's Rules and WITD in his blog a lot.

And about the new world of publishing. And about killing the sacred cows of publishing. And more about WITD. A lot more.

Thank God I stopped by that day.

But early on, in an exchange of emails about WITD, Dean told me I shouldn't talk about my writing process with anyone. "They won't believe you," he said. "And if they do believe you, they won't buy your books because they'll think they're all trash because you wrote them so quickly. Which is to say, because you have a work ethic and actually spend time in the chair writing."

He was right. Today I get comments from other writers like "Well, I *would* try writing into the dark but I want to turn out *quality* work." Meaning, of course, it would be all but impossible for anyone who doesn't outline, revise, rewrite, etc. to "turn out quality work." (That quote was the parting shot of the woman who left PPW in the lurch and started its eventual demise when she departed for greener, less-threatening pastures.)

And of course, she and others like her judge me and my work without bothering to actually pick up even one of my short stories or novels and actually read it.

But I just shake my head and go on. Hey, it's their loss. Because there's no saving someone who's so frightened of a new process that they won't even try it.

As I've also said here many times before, I Don't Care How You Write. If you try WITD and it doesn't work for you for whatever reason, that's fine. In fact, if you are unable to let go of your fears enough to even try it, that's fine too. It makes no difference to my bottom line. I only labor at this Journal every day to pay it forward.

But those who want to learn can read my blog. If they want to learn more quickly and with a focus on their own work, they can take one of my [mentorship programs](#).

I have to admit, when I find someone who's so frightened of something that has Zero Consequences that they won't even try it, I do get a little disgusted. If you're in that camp, please continue to write drab, lifeless books. Continue to revise and rewrite and polish your original voice off the book until (you think) it sounds like a Hemingway or King or Whomever book.

But it doesn't. Because Hemingway or King or Whomever didn't write it.

Still, I'm all about paying it forward. Really, that's the only reason I talk about Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark.

So finally, let me pass on one final bit of Dean's wisdom: To those few of you out there who write into the dark, meaning you spend more time in the chair actually WRITING and PRACTICING and IMPROVING YOUR CRAFT, keep doing it. But don't tell any other writers except the select few who also WITD.

If you do, they'll attempt to beat you to death with their own fears.

If you haven't pulled the trigger yet on trying WITD (and if you want to), I recommend Dean's [Writing Into the Dark](#), his [book on Heinlein's Rules](#) and my own [Writing the Character-Driven Story](#).

Soon, I'll be back with a series of topics focused on various writing techniques. For now, I have a novel to write.

Talk with you again then.

Of Interest

See "Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction" at <https://sfdictionary.com/>. I also recently added this to Writers' Resources under Dictionaries and Translators.

See "Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction" at https://www.amazon.com/Brave-New-Words-Jeff-Prucher/dp/0195387066/ref=sr_1_1.

See "Isaac Asimov's Law of Robotics" at <https://sfdictionary.com/view/2283/law-of-robotics>. SF Grand Master Jack Williamson wrote a novella titled "With Folded Hands" based on Rule 1.

See "Character Growth" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/character-growth/>.

See "What if Planet Nine is a baby black hole?" at <https://www.space.com/planet-nine-little-black-hole.html>. A writing prompt?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 980 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019

Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669

Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429

Total fiction words for March..... 46417

Total fiction words for the year..... 245425

Total nonfiction words for March... 14700

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 60730

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 306155

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates it both regularly and publicly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Get a Beverage and Settle In

March 20, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * First, there are a lot
- * Slow day yesterday
- * Just out of curiosity
- * Of her current Kickstarter
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The writing courses taught me how to trust my characters even more than I had been – to let them lead me through the story.” Rachel Amphlett

“There’s a term I like, coined by author Dean Wesley Smith over on his blog, called ‘writing into the dark.’ This means writing without an outline, without an overall plan, without a safety net, and without much by way of process aside from sitting your ass down and pecking away at the damn thing.” Duncan Ralston

You might want to get a beverage and settle in.

First, there are a lot of links in “Of Interest” today. All of them are pertinent, strong articles. In fact, these are all great articles, and most of them deliver more than they promise.

I encourage you to take the time to at least begin reading each. Then, if it takes you to a place you need to be, keep reading.

VERY slow day yesterday. (Have I ever mentioned every novel writes differently?)

Early in the writing things were going really well when I type a particular word. And my character yelled, “Hey!” at me. Then he called me a dumb*ss, and of course he was absolutely right.

It didn’t upset me. Actually, I sat back and laughed, then shook my head and described myself the same way he had described me, although I muttered instead of yelling.

I’d written a major SNAFU with the security team (and I’m former military), so I stopped, took a break, then went back through the whole document and corrected all the little instances of that error.

Suffice it to say I let my critical mind seep in day before yesterday and it had me give a guy a line-up he would never have chosen for himself for an initial security team in a particular location.

This wasn’t the sort of thing you can fix with Word’s Find & Replace feature. I had to read every word.

So that ate up a lot of the time in the chair yesterday. But far better to catch it now and slog through 10,000 words or so than to have a first reader point it out later and have to go through the whole novel.

After all of that was over (and in “death hour” after lunch) I did still manage to knock out a few more major scenes, though, so it’s all good.

After my friend mentioned to me in a comment on another blog yesterday that WITD was “news” to him and that he’d googled the term, just out of curiosity I googled it too. Honestly, I just wanted to see how far down in the results my input appeared.

Of course, the whole first page was Dean (as it should be). Turned out my first bit was #5 on the second page of results. I figure that's not too shabby, given that Google returned "about 621,000 results" in just under a half-second. (grin)

Interestingly, I also found a couple of entries on the topic by other writers. I looked them over and linked to them in "Of Interest" below. One thing I noticed is that both of these writers are fairly prolific and very successful. And I hadn't heard of either of them. Go figure. But I'll buy at least one novel from each of them just to read an original story that hasn't had the unique voice polished off it.

I've also been getting a lot of TalkWalker alerts recently (I have alerts set up for my name and my websites) about Writing the Character-Driven Story and Quiet the Critical Mind and Write Fiction. So all in all, I'm a pleased pup.

Of her current Kickstarter, Kris Rusch writes "You'll get all seven existing books of the Fey, the new novella, the only Fey short story (at the moment), four other fantasy novels, and \$600 in online writing workshops (at the time of this writing), all for your \$30." (See "Of Interest")

Something to consider. Just sayin'.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "On 'Writing Into the Dark'" at <https://www.duncanralston.com/post/2019/06/20/on-writing-into-the-dark>.

See "Writing into the dark... and other leaps of faith" at <https://www.rachelamphlett.com/behind-the-scenes/writing-into-the-dark-and-other-leaps-of-faith/>.

See "Jim Butcher On Writing" at <https://blog.karenwoodward.org/2012/10/jim-butcher-on-writing.html>. I have not yet checked these out, but they were mentioned on Reddit in a response that also mentioned me and my book on quieting the critical voice.

See "Karen Woodward" at <https://blog.karenwoodward.org/>. I wasn't able to find a link to her blog posts, but in the right sidebar (scroll down) you'll find a ton of archives and topics. Invest a little time in yourself. Explore.

See "Why Extraterrestrial Life May Not Seem Entirely Alien" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/arik-kershenbaum-on-why-alien-life-may-be-like-life-on-earth-20210318/>.

See "The Zoologist's Guide to the Galaxy" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-zoologists-guide-to-the-galaxy/>.

See “Appeal to the Senses” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/appeal-to-the-senses/>.

See “Losing Your Identity” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/losing-your-identity.html>.

See “Surprises in the New World of Publishing” at <https://kriswrites.com/2021/03/17/business-musings-surprises-in-the-new-world-of-publishing/>. Thanks to PG.

Just for fun, see “Dialogue” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/dialogue/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 850 words

Writing of *The Journey Home: Part 9* (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263

Total fiction words for March..... 49251
Total fiction words for the year..... 248259
Total nonfiction words for March... 15550
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 61580
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 309839

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Duncan Ralston](#), [Karen Woodward](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [Rachel Amphlett](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A “New” Computer and Logging a Day

March 21, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Free Hour-Long Lecture
- * A “new” computer
- * Logging a Day
- * The Numbers

Free Hour-Long Lecture

I updated yesterday’s Journal a little late. So in case some of you missed it yesterday, to register for a free hour-long lecture titled “The First Twenty Pages — How to Win Over Agents, Editors, & Readers in Just Twenty Pages,” click <https://authorspublish.com/free-author-lecture-the-first-twenty-pages/>.

It’s free, so it’s worth checking out. I registered, and I’ve also since learned the lecture will take place on Wednesday, March 24, at 2pm ET and 11am PT.

But just as a reminder, you really do have to win over your reader in the first page and in the first few paragraphs of each chapter/scene opening throughout the novel.

As a reader, if the first page of a novel doesn’t entice me to keep reading—if the writing doesn’t pull me into the setting—I close it and drop it into the box of books to be donated. If the opening few paragraphs of a short story in a magazine doesn’t pull me into the setting, I flip through to the next story.

A “new” computer

Wow. I never moved over to the writing ‘puter yesterday morning. Usually I’m there shortly after 7 at the latest, having taken care of all the admin stuff for the day by then. But yesterday everything felt just a little off.

Also it was Saturday, and also I knew my wife and I needed to make a trip to Sierra Vista sometime in the next few days. So I shut everything down, took a day off, and headed up to the house.

We did go to Sierra Vista, took care of the reason for the visit, then noticed an estate sale sign and turned on that street on a whim. There I bought a hefty one-volume encyclopedia about the English language and—an old Compaq Presario 1200 laptop computer.

Talk about a blast from the past!

The thing is a monster at almost 2" thick. It actually has a square (not rectangular) screen. It probably weighs 10 pounds or more. The last time it was opened was in 1999. (grin) It still uses a wired mouse leading to a PS/2 port and has zero USB ports (but it does have both a 3.5" floppy drive and a DVD drive), so we had to order a PS/2-USB adapter. (I don't use touch screens very well, and they annoy me.)

But the computer came loaded with DOS and with Windows ME (millennium edition) and Microsoft Word 2000. Great fun to play with. As an added bonus, the keyboard is so stiff it actually clacks like an old electric typewriter. (grin)

But I won't be playing with it today. Today it's back to the novel, a cycling session and writing new chapters. (Wrist to forehead, melodramatically.) Alas, I must pour my soul forth onto the page for the enlightenment of all humankind. (grin)

Logging a Day

Sometimes I'm not at all sure where the day went, especially when I spend several hours in the Hovel and turn out only two or three thousand new words in the novel. And time really is our most precious commodity.

Years back I logged a typical day in 15-minute increments just to see where my time was going. The revelation of glaring gaps and wastes of time were amazing. Maybe I'll do that again soon.

If you, too, find yourself wondering where your time went and you've never logged a full day, I recommend doing so.

To start, break out a full day (of waking time) in 15-minute increments. Then, as you move through your day, take a few seconds to note what you're doing and write it down. If you'd rather, set up your log to cover a whole 24-hour period.

If you normally go to bed and get up at a particular time, you can automatically block out that time. If you prepare meals at a certain time each day or have other "chores" you accomplish at a particular time each day, you can also block out those times.

What you're really after here is to learn how you spend the time that is not blocked out.

Try it. You might be surprised.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Maniac Murders at Lovers Lane" at <http://dyingwords.net/the-maniac-murders-at-lovers-lane/>.

See “Learning from The Maltese Falcon” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/learning-from-the-maltese-falcon.html>. Not so informative but entertaining.

See “Copyright Is A Question of Control” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/copyright-is-a-question-of-control/>. Someone else will have to tell me whether the article is any good. I couldn’t get past the melodramatic, wrist to the forehead, bree cheese and wine second line: “You spend countless hours pouring your soul on the page....” I was laughing too hard to continue reading.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 780 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263

Total fiction words for March..... 49251
Total fiction words for the year..... 248259
Total nonfiction words for March... 16330
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 62360
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 310619

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Statement by the ALA

March 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Oof. The novel
- * Topic: Freedom to Read Statement
- * The Numbers

Well, no Journal yesterday (my novel and I were arguing) and not much of one today. Sorry about that.

Oof. This novel's being difficult. This one is writing harder than any since way back in the Wes Crowley series when I wrote Book 3 as a bridge between Books 2 and 4. That one was difficult for a reason, though. I had to merge two timelines. Honestly, I'm not sure why this one's being difficult.

Anyway, I haven't hit my daily word count goal of 4,000 WPD since I started this one. In fact, at almost 19,000 words in, I'm thinking about scrapping this one, just tossing it out, and recasting it from the beginning. That might work out better. We'll see. I'll give it another day or two.

And there are only 9 days left in March. I'm gonna have to do some kicking to finish this one this month, and that's one of my short-term goals. But I'm not feeling any pressure in that regard either.

It would be nice personally to finish the first three months of the year with 6 novels in the can, all started and finished this year. But it isn't like anything bad will happen if I miss it by a day or two. It's fun to think of being on pace to write 24 novels in a year. (That is not a goal.)

Anyway, I'm not looking for advice, just whining a little. I'll get over it and the characters will get me back on track. I posted this one mostly to get "Of Interest" out to you today.

Topic: Freedom to Read Statement

If you read nothing else today, please read "The Freedom to Read Statement" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-freedom-to-read-statement/>.

A few years ago I never would have believed I'd be reading a statement like this, or the unfortunate necessity of it. IMHO, this statement is no less important than the Declaration of Independence was over 240 years ago.

Now, as others have said, it will be interesting to see whether the ALA and other signatories will walk the walk. But regardless, it is first up to writers—us—to refuse to bow to censorship of any kind, to refuse to let anyone tell us what we can or can't include in a short story or novel.

I've bookmarked the OP and linked to it on the home page of my main site. It strikes me that this statement might as easily have come directly from the freedom-dreaming opposition in the pages of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* or Huxley's *Brave New World*.

If you'd like to see the OP, click [The American Library Association \(et al\) joint Freedom to Read Statement](#).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Beware of Books!" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/beware-of-books/>. It's what we've allowed to happen. And be sure to see PG's take. One more reason I'm independent.

See "New True Crime Book + Exciting Opportunities" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/new-true-crime-book-exciting-opportunities/>.

See "Post Just For Writers" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/post-just-for-writers/>.

See "What We Can Learn From Movies About Failed Writers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/what-we-can-learn-from-movies-about-failed-writers.html>.

See "How To Write A Cozy Mystery" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-write-a-cozy-mystery/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 520 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616

Total fiction words for March..... 55604
Total fiction words for the year..... 254612
Total nonfiction words for March... 16850
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 62880
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 317492

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [American Library Association](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Freedom to Read Statement](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Internet, blah blah blah

March 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * The Internet, blah blah blah
- * I won’t be trashing
- * The Numbers

My internet was down earlier today. Add to that the fact that I was under the weather last night and didn’t wake up until after 5 this morning, and I’m just not in a good mood.

But the internet—well, the wind blew a little, and it rained a little (less than a half-inch spread out over 8 or 10 hours). Of course, neither wind nor rain have anything whatsoever to do with electricity and the signals it carries as long as the latter never comes into direct contact with either of the former. Which, at my house, it doesn’t.

Nonetheless, at my house the internet dropping is the number one indicator that the wind is blowing harder than 5 mph or that the sky is drizzling or that a gnat farted in Nebraska somewhere. My internet service is just that fragile.

Of course, I shouldn’t complain. After all, we get to enjoy the ultimate privilege of paying a massive corporation every month for service. As long as we receive said service now and then, well, that should be good enough. And especially these days, you can’t really call the corporation to complain. If you do, they might be ‘offended’.

For anyone who cares either way, I won’t be trashing and recasting the novel. I cycled through the whole thing again yesterday (see the minuscule word count below), and the story is sound. I guess this is just how this particular novel’s going to write, so I’ll keep plugging away at it and see what happens.

The best part of being a fictionist is getting to escape the ugly, silly little realities of the world we live in. I'm going there now.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Preposition 'Amid'" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-preposition-amid/>.

See "Peter S. Beagle and Ownership Group Regain Control of Rights..." at <http://file770.com/peter-s-beagle-and-ownership-group-regain-control-of-rights-to-his-work-following-sale-approved-by-bankruptcy-court/>. Thanks to KC for the tip.

See "The Mystery of Harriet Cole" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-mystery-of-harriet-cole/>. Story ideas abound. Also, an interesting, well-written article.

See "Mars is leaking water into space..." at <https://www.space.com/mars-water-escapes-to-space-in-dust-storms>. Exciting news for any who might get to live there someday. I won't be allowed, though I would welcome the opportunity. For one thing, the internet's probably better there.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 380 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343

Total fiction words for March..... 58331
Total fiction words for the year..... 257339
Total nonfiction words for March... 17230
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 63260
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 320699

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: *In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Update on Heinlein’s Rules Stuff

March 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Update on Heinlein’s Rules Stuff
- * From B&N Press
- * Nothing in “Of Interest” today
- * The Numbers

You’ll remember my recent 5-post treatise on Heinlein’s Rules, which was based on the actual responses I provided to a series of questions from another writer. If you missed it, you can find the first post at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-awhile-back-an-introduction/>.

I provided that series while maintaining the author’s anonymity, but now she’s outed herself.

Becca Publisi, the person who interviewed me about Heinlein’s Rules and then decided not to use (most of) the interview emailed me again yesterday. She needed a post for her blog, so she’d decided to use a bit of what I told her.

She emailed to give me the opportunity to read what she’d written (the part that included my quote) and correct it if I wanted to. I read it, but I didn’t bother to correct anything. I’d already responded once and she chose to take my response out of context. It’s fine. I’m not annoyed. It’s what I’m used to.

In the interest of the transparency you will *always* find here in the Journal, you can find her post—“One Path to Success: Heinlein’s Rules of Writing”—at <https://writershelpingwriters.net/2021/03/one-path-to-success-heinleins-rules-of-writing/>. She was at least gracious enough to link to my author site and to the HR series on this Journal, so that’s something.

One note: As you will know if you read my series, my comment re “having one technique in mind as you begin each story” (her Amendment 1 under HR 3) was all about learning and practice. It had *nothing to do* with revision or shortening the revision curve. I felt a need to add

this note even though the bit about learning and practice is right there in the quote—where of course it was ignored as she turned the topic back to revision. Sigh.

As you also know, I don't revise or rewrite—those are both functions of the conscious, critical mind—and I don't recommend doing so. Revision and rewriting are a result of bending to the fear that your own unique voice isn't good enough. Which is bullshit.

You can be the first to leave a comment on the post if you want. Again, I didn't bother. I've been in this war for a long time. I've learned when to cut my losses.

From B&N Press—I also received this in an email yesterday. Thought I'd pass it along. I've included their original links.

FREE Marketing Webinars! Our partner, [Inkubate](#), is hosting two more FREE webinars in April. Learn how to identify and connect with your target audience. It's only an hour of your time to learn these valuable marketing insights. Register now for one of two upcoming free webinars:

* Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 12:30 pm Eastern Time ([register here](#))

* Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 4:00 pm Eastern Time ([register here](#)).

Nothing in “Of Interest” today. The more I read from my usual sources, the more depressed I got. Especially in this new world, it seems that whether lightning strikes is a matter of who you know more than it's about studying and learning the craft and working to be rewarded with what you want.

That's it for me today. My escape awaits. I'm going back to the writing 'puter. Pretty good day yesterday. I'm hoping for more of the same today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada

The Numbers

The Journal..... 530 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222

Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343
Day 8..... 3436 words. Total words to date..... 24779

Total fiction words for March..... 61767
Total fiction words for the year..... 260775
Total nonfiction words for March... 17760
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 63790
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 324565

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [B&N Press](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [the writing life](#), [writershelpingwriters.net](#)

The Journal: The world is chock full

March 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The world is chock full
- * Free lecture
- * A recent lightning strike
- * A good day of writing
- * The Numbers

The world is chock full of people who are willing to teach you how to write fiction but have never written so much as one short story or novel themselves. Think about that.

The same people who smile smugly and would never sign up for an international money transfer from an obscure Nigerian Prince rush out to buy books on how to write fiction from people who've never written fiction. It's exactly the same thing.

I think it's safe to say most of these folks don't consider themselves scam artists. They're probably good people who are simply ignorant. They simply don't know how much they don't know. Because they've never put into practice all the crap they're talking. In street parlance, they can't walk the walk. And even the talk they talk is nothing original.

But the fact remains, running a scam even unintentionally is still running a scam. And running a scam makes one a master of nothing but running a scam.

Many of them describe themselves as "author and editor." But when you look up their name on Amazon or Google, chances are you won't find even a short story, much less a novel. Chances are you'll find only books about how to write fiction.

Some few will have published a few short stories or a novel or two. Which makes them beginning, Stage 1 writers at best.

It's safe to say those "how to write fiction" books are only regurgitations of the same old crap that's been going around since roughly the 1960s.

Still, buy them if you want. Believe them if you want. But don't express surprise afterward that somehow you still don't know your posterior from your elbow about writing fiction.

Of course it's easy for me to talk. I was a very lucky guy. From the time I started writing short fiction, it made sense to me not to listen to advice from anyone who had never written fiction. Nor would I expect a lawyer to teach me plumbing or automobile engine repair. But that's just me.

If you're interested in the free lecture "The First Twenty Pages: How to Win Over Agents, Editors, & Readers in Just Twenty Pages" you can watch it at <https://authorspublish.com/free-author-lecture-the-first-twenty-pages/>.

Yesterday I read (unfortunately) about a recent lightning strike. A former federal bureaucrat wrote a novel. The novel was immediately picked up by two big-deal political cronies who made themselves wealthy at taxpayers' expense and today own a production company.

Fake reviews (reviews written by people who never bothered actually reading the book) raved about how wonderful the book was. Naturally, a film is now in progress.

Because of the bureaucrat's former affiliation with the cronies, she's now rolling in dough despite never having had to negotiate anything. Her affiliation did all the negotiating for her.

I have no doubt that soon she'll be teaching others how to write fiction. I am happy to report that I am not a big enough person to be happy for the bureaucrat. Frankly, the whole thing makes me want to puke. Sigh. And in case you're wondering, if lightning like that ever tried to strike near me, I would run. I'd rather be clean than rich. Or be affiliated with people who can be favorably compared with the south end of a northbound horse.

I had a pretty good day of writing yesterday. For the first time on this novel, I even hit my daily word count goal (barely). And I got most of the writing done before noon. Then I took about an hour to update StoneThread Publishing, mostly to add pages and covers for my Future of Humanity (FOH) series. Then I took the rest of the day off.

You can see the whole SF page at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/science-fantasy/>. I think there will be 10 titles in this series. I even added the cover for the book I'm writing now, given that it will be up for pre-order in another week or so. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A Cautionary Tale (Hollywood Part 1)" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-cautionary-tale-hollywood-part-1/>.

See "A Single Word Can Change the Tone" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/a-single-word-changes-the-tone.html>. Some good points, some stupid points, all wrapped around words, not Story.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 720 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 9** (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343
Day 8..... 3436 words. Total words to date..... 24779
Day 9..... 4043 words. Total words to date..... 28822

Total fiction words for March..... 65810
Total fiction words for the year..... 264818
Total nonfiction words for March... 18480
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 64510
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 329328

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Scams](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Nothing Much Today

March 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Nothing much today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The power of accurate observation is commonly called cynicism by those who have not got it.”
George Bernard Shaw

Nothing much today in the Journal. I’m kind’a concentrating on getting the novel done and out. So nothing bad going on, just writing. If I’m not here for the next day or two, that’s why.

Well, the novel’s writing a little slower again and I’m a little nervous about it because the end is nowhere in sight. I guess that’s all right.

With five days left in the month I’m almost certain to hit my goal, so it’s all good. After that I won’t have to worry about it until I come up with another short-term goal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Fossil Discoveries Challenge Ideas About Earth’s Start” at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/fossil-discoveries-challenge-ideas-about-earths-start-20180122/>. Story ideas?

See “And Old Projection Brought Forward For Fun...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/and-old-projection-brought-forward-for-fun/>. Not as good as I thought it would be, but I’d already posted it, so

The Numbers

The Journal..... 180 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343
Day 8..... 3436 words. Total words to date..... 24779
Day 9..... 4043 words. Total words to date..... 28822
Day 10... 2558 words. Total words to date..... 31380

Total fiction words for March..... 68368
Total fiction words for the year..... 267376
Total nonfiction words for March... 18660
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 64690
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 332066

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Do Poets Outline?

March 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Do Poets Outline?
- * A great day of writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Do Poets Outline?

The short answer will probably be a snort and “No.” But of course there are some very long poems out there too. I’ve personally written some very long poems. For me, the answer was still no.

This question came up because a long-time writer, personal friend, and fellow adherent of Heinlein’s Rules and writing into the dark is as stymied as I regarding why some folks depend on outlines.

In addition to novels, like me, my friend also writes poetry, essays and short stories. In a recent email, in an effort to explain to himself why WITD seems so natural, he posed an interesting question. He wrote

The other day I was thinking about folks who outline... and I wondered if they were going to write a poem, would they outline first? That never occurred to me... I just wrote what came out of me (and the characters that populated my poetry). In my mind that’s why WITD seemed so natural... because I’d been doing it for years.

I have to admit, when I read his email, it caused me to wonder too.

Generally, I would say no, those who outline novels probably don’t outline poetry. Or shorter short stories, for that matter.

But then the question becomes why. And I think I know the answer to that too.

As I’ve said here often, outlining is a safety net. It’s a way to help mitigate the fear of failure (and maybe the fear of success).

Outlining helps mitigate the fear of failure by providing sign posts along the way so the writer who outlines always knows the next thing that’s going to happen. (Never mind that if the writer can think of what will happen next, so can the reader, which of course leads to books being slammed closed and hurled into the donation pile.)

The writer feels safe because he's in complete control of the characters as well as the twists, turns and plot points. No possible way will he go astray. And if he does, well, he just thinks (conscious mind) it through, figures out (conscious mind) a new direction for the story to go, updates the outline (conscious mind) and goes back to work.

Never mind that the actual writing becomes sheer drudgery because he's walking such well-trod ground, having already written the story once or twice or a dozen times as he figured out the outline. At least he knows he won't fall of the tightrope because he has that safety net strung beneath him. The safety net gives him the confidence not to fall in the first place.

And outlining helps mitigate the fear of success (finishing a novel, submitting or publishing it, and someone out there possibly not liking it) by putting off the actual writing. The longer it takes the writer to think through every twist and turn and plot point of the story, develop character sketches, build the world in which the story will take place, etc. etc. ad nauseam, the longer he can put off the actual writing and possibly finishing and publishing and—the ensuing rejection.

I know whereof I speak. I once worked on an outline for three straight years. I still haven't written that novel, and I won't. Too boring.

But back to whether these folks outline poems. No, I think, probably not. And as I mentioned most of them, if they also write short stories, probably don't outline those either, at least not the ones that run shy of say 3,000 words or so.

Why? Because from the time they sit down at the computer with an idea for a poem or a short story, they have the entire poem or story in mind. The idea is born of whole cloth. They already know where it will start, where it's going, and how it will end. I occasionally get an idea for a short story like that. When I do, I don't bother writing it. I already know the whole story, so why write it down? Bo-ho-ho-horing. I think it was Bradbury who said (paraphrasing) "No surprise for the writer; no surprise for the reader." And if a reader isn't surprised, folks, he's bored.

Those outlining writers who don't outline poems or short stories will still rewrite, of course. Because their words are precious and nothing short of absolute perfection will do. How terrible it must be for them, after all that work, when someone—anyone—actually doesn't like what they've written.

But then, the same fears plague those who write novels. Despite outlining, then sticking to the outline during the writing, then revising, then shopping the work around their critique group, and then rewriting however many times—someone out there still won't like the novel. Probably a lot of someones, because the writer polished his original voice off it. But they don't think about that. They only think about the rejection. It must be devastating.

And just think—had the same writer written the novel once, beginning to end, and cycled back as he wrote to clean things up, then published, some readers still wouldn't like the story. But a lot more *would* like it because at least it held the writer's unique, fresh, original voice.

Wow. When this novel runs, it really runs. Yesterday I had the first or second best day of fiction writing I've ever had with slightly over 7,000 words.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing Tasty Fiction" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/writing-tasty-fiction.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 930 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 9** (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343
Day 8..... 3436 words. Total words to date..... 24779
Day 9..... 4043 words. Total words to date..... 28822
Day 10... 2558 words. Total words to date..... 31380
Day 11... 7097 words. Total words to date..... 38477

Total fiction words for March..... 75465
Total fiction words for the year..... 274473
Total nonfiction words for March... 19590
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 65620
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 340093

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: On Ernest Hemingway

March 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Prompted by the first post
- * 10 Steps to Becoming a Writer
- * Another good-enough day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The best way is always to stop when you are going good and when you know what will happen next. If you do that every day when you are writing a novel you will never be stuck.” Ernest Hemingway

“I learned not to think about anything that I was writing from the time I stopped writing until I started again the next day. That way my subconscious would be working on it and at the same time I would be listening to other people and noticing everything.” Ernest Hemingway

“What did I know best that I had not written about and lost? What did I know about truly and care for the most? There was no choice at all.” Ernest Hemingway

Prompted by the first post in “Of Interest” below, I started looking for quotes on writing by Ernest Hemingway. The best few I found appear above.

In another one, he mentioned that he never drank after supper or before he wrote or while he was writing. Kind of destroys the myth that he often wrote while drunk or drinking, doesn't it?

You can gain a full mentorship on writing by reading Hemingway's works (at first for pleasure, then reading them again to study them) and by reading what he has to say about writing and by then PRACTICING what he says about writing. The three quotes above are three of those. But there are many others.

You can't learn to be a writer without writing. Without practice you can only learn to be a student of writing.

But don't pay much attention to “Hemingway said” or “Hemingway meant” quotes by others. Like the “Heinlein meant” quotes, most of them are either severely diluted or bullshit. Go straight to the source whenever possible.

As I searched for quotes from Hemingway this morning, at the second link in “Of Interest” below, a pop-up made available to me a “free book” titled *10 Steps to Becoming a Writer*.

Out of curiosity, I downloaded it. Primarily because I know of only one step: If you want to become a writer, You must write (Heinlein’s Rule 1). Knowing my own sometimes snarky soul, I might ridicule parts (or all) of that book in upcoming posts.

Then again, should you download it too, and should something you read in it spark your writing, more power to you. Anything that leads you to Heinlein’s Rule 1 is a good thing.

I had another good-enough day of writing yesterday, but with only three days left in the month I’m wondering whether the novel will wrap in time for me to boast having written six novels in the first quarter of the year.

Not that I won’t boast anyway, but it would be nice for me personally to know I had done it in 90 days rather than 91 or more. That prospect makes that non-writing day on March 20 loom large.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Man Behind the Hemingway Myth” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-man-behind-the-hemingway-myth/>.

See “23 Essential Quotes From Ernest Hemingway About Writing” at <https://thewritepractice.com/hemingway-quotes/>. A pretty good article before the quotes.

See “Light at the end of the Tunnel” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel.html>. Yeah, she asked us to share, so I shared. (grin)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 560 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343
Day 8..... 3436 words. Total words to date..... 24779
Day 9..... 4043 words. Total words to date..... 28822
Day 10... 2558 words. Total words to date..... 31380

Day 11... 7097 words. Total words to date..... 38477
Day 12... 4077 words. Total words to date..... 42554

Total fiction words for March..... 79542
Total fiction words for the year..... 278550
Total nonfiction words for March... 20150
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 66180
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 344730

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Heinlein's Rules](#), [Hemingway](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [thewritepractice.com](#)

The Journal: Conscious Mind

March 30, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Conscious Mind
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“We can't solve poverty or hunger, but we're going to solve global warming. Think about that.”
Anonymous, from a meme

Well, sometime or other I slipped from thinking it would be nice personally to finish 6 novels in the first quarter of the year to “trying” to make it happen. That's conscious mind crap. And as a result, I had a non-writing day yesterday, the second one for this novel.

I actually wrote probably 5,000 words yesterday in fits and starts (“trying”) and ended up deleting them all. I knew while I was writing them they were coming from me instead of the characters.

Today I’ll back up and start again, just running through the story with the characters, watching and listening to them as the story unfolds. And the story will end when it ends.

Watch out for the conscious mind. It’s a killer.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Last Thirty Hours...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/last-thirty-hours/>. I mention this only because you can get a lot of pop-up classes and books for a very small donation.

See “34 Manuscript Publishers with Geographic Restrictions ” at <https://authorspublish.com/34-manuscript-publishers-with-geographic-restrictions/>.

See “Emotional Research” (Guest Post) at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/03/guest-post-by-agatha-winner-leslie-budewitz.html>.

See “A mission to Uranus and Neptune could act as massive gravitational-wave detector” at <https://www.space.com/ice-giant-missions-could-catch-gravitational-waves>. The title alone causes me to wonder whether they’re secretly working on developing a magnetic drive.

See “Using Novel Writing Techniques in Your Memoir” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/using-novel-writing-techniques-in-your-memoir/>. Posted for the insight on memoir for those interested. I don’t ascribe to or recommend some of their “novel writing techniques” though.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 270 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343
Day 8..... 3436 words. Total words to date..... 24779
Day 9..... 4043 words. Total words to date..... 28822

Day 10... 2558 words. Total words to date..... 31380
Day 11... 7097 words. Total words to date..... 38477
Day 12... 4077 words. Total words to date..... 42554

Total fiction words for March..... 79542
Total fiction words for the year..... 278550
Total nonfiction words for March... 20420
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 66450
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 345000

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Recognizing the Critical Voice

March 31, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I expect the novel will wrap today
- * Topic: Recognizing the Critical Voice
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I had a pretty good day of writing yesterday once I pried my head out of my butt and realized what was screwing me up: the conscious, critical mind. It's always the conscious, critical mind. Always. Every time.

As an added bonus, I think the novel's going to wrap today. All that was required was that I stop worrying about it. Can't believe I made such a rookie mistake. (grin)

I even wrote a book titled [Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)](#).

But notice I said “quiet” the critical voice. You probably won’t ever shut it out completely. At least I haven’t, obviously.

In light of this time-sucking faux pas (I lost two whole days to it), I decided to post the following excerpt from the introduction of my book. I hope it will help:

Topic: Recognizing the Critical Voice

if you find yourself being critical (negative), that’s the critical voice.

You’ve been taking in Story (and telling stories) since you were too young to even be aware there *was* an alphabet, so a long time before you began to commit words to paper. What you learned from taking in Story and from telling stories seeped into your subconscious. It’s waiting there for you to tap into it.

Consider, later, in school at various levels, you were taught to capitalize the first word of sentences and to dot the lower-case I and cross the T and put a period or a question mark at the end of a sentence.

So you do those things automatically. Without “thinking” about it. Which means without evoking the conscious, critical mind.

Likewise, once you learn to trust yourself and let go of all the negative thoughts and delaying tactics, you can engage your creative subconscious and Just Write.

Don’t focus on how many times you used “that” vs. “which” (they aren’t interchangeable anyway).

But wait. You say capitalizing the first word of a sentence and putting a period at the end DOES come naturally but the various parts of telling a story don’t?

That’s because you were taught that they don’t. You were taught to double-check yourself and second-guess your work. You were taught to not trust your creative subconscious.

Now, if you want to be a writer—and more importantly, if you want to actually *enjoy* being a writer—you have to let all that negativity go.

You have to learn to trust yourself.

And you have to learn to quiet your critical voice.

In every case, the urgings that come from the critical mind are based on fear. They are always, always negative.

The simplest fears are stated bluntly by the critical voice: “I can’t do this” or “Writing a novel is overwhelming” or “What was I thinking?” or “Maybe someday” or “No way can I get published anyway.” (These thoughts are often accompanied by the aforementioned sweaty palms and/or hives.)

The majority of would-be writers are stopped cold by these fears alone.

But the more common fears lie in wait for writers who get beyond those simplest ones and decide to actually write. These critical-mind stumbling blocks are a little more complex and a lot less straightforward.

Most of the time they’re difficult to recognize because they’re disguised as delays (as opposed to outright refusal to allow you to write or reinforcement of the outright certainty that you “can’t”).

But the result is the same: Your manuscript remains in your mind, unwritten.

Or you’ve started it and it lays in a drawer or remains in your computer, unfinished.

Or you’ve finished it but it remains unsubmitted and unpublished.

The critical voice has new tricks for each level of this journey. I’ll look at each level and help you recognize as many of the tricks as possible.

But let’s start at the beginning. Let’s say you want to write a novel. And let’s say you’ve gotten past all the “I can’t do this” stuff. You actually sat down at your computer and put your fingers on the keyboard.

Now you’ve entered the realm of the “Prep Delays.” What are those?

I’ll be back with Chapter 1 to tell you.

But fair warning—your own critical voice will pop up from time to time as you continue reading. And it will always have negative messages, mostly reasons not to keep reading.

* This is way too easy. It has to be BS. All I have to do is let go and trust myself? No way will that work.

* Well sure, maybe this works for him, but look at how long he’s been writing! Look how many books he’s written! And I’m only a beginner. This could never work for me.

* And so on.

All I can tell you is this: I had exactly the same thoughts when I first learned some of the techniques I’ll mention later in this book. The thing is, I didn’t dismiss them out of hand. I tried them.

And they worked.

Just remember, your critical mind isn't protecting you from new ideas. It's protecting you from learning ways to shut it up.

Okay, that's the excerpt. Now I'm gonna go play with my characters.

By the way, nothing in "Of Interest" again today. In my daily rounds, I found only things that have nothing to do with writing or (in one case) horrible advice.

And I vow, in this Journal, first to do no harm. I'll never write or pass along any information that I believe will harm your writing craft in any way.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 950 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343
Day 8..... 3436 words. Total words to date..... 24779
Day 9..... 4043 words. Total words to date..... 28822
Day 10... 2558 words. Total words to date..... 31380
Day 11... 7097 words. Total words to date..... 38477
Day 12... 4077 words. Total words to date..... 42554
Day 13... 4953 words. Total words to date..... 47507

Total fiction words for March..... 84495

Total fiction words for the year..... 283503

Total nonfiction words for March... 21370

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 67400

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 350903

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	5
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	59
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called *Writing Into the Dark*. To be crystal clear, *WITD* is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates *WITD* both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Critical Voice Book](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Six Novels in 90 Days? Almost...

April 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Six Novels in 90 Days? Almost...
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday, just before this Journal went live at 10 a.m., the last chapter of the novel wrapped. But something (that tiny little creative voice) was still nagging at me. So I decided to take a break. I went up to the house and announced the last chapter was finished, the novel was finished, and the series was finished.

And the nagging voice welled up. The series was finished—but not quite. I’d always thought this would be at least a 10-book series, but it just wasn’t. But there was still something missing. And the little voice finally told me what that was.

The characters weren’t quite through. They needed me to write an epilogue—a series epilogue—not only to put a cap on the series, but to provide a bridge to the next series.

Talk about getting input directly from the characters! These particular characters told me (loudly) they still have a lot of stories to tell, and they aren’t ready to let me go.

The only difference between this series and the next is that the major setting was the first-ever generation ship from Earth—a ship called The Ark—and in the new series the setting will be the new world, a planet the general herself named Terra 2. Should be interesting. There, I anticipate older characters will move into new roles (as we all do in life) and new characters will move to the fore.

Anyway, after the break I moved over to my business computer to write this, and then I headed back to the story to write the series epilogue.

Update: At 11:35 a.m. I ran the spell check and sent the new novel off to my first readers.

I don't usually celebrate endings. I usually celebrate only beginnings. But for me, this one is a little special personally. It's the last novel in a series, my 60th novel overall, and... I THOUGHT it was my 6th novel started and finished all in the first 90 days of this year.

Nope. For all the noise I made about it recently, in actuality I screwed up. I *thought* I had written Journey 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 since January 1, plus The Portals.

But spreadsheets and numbers don't lie. Actually, I wrote the first 18,655 words of Journey 5 in Decemeber. What screwed me up was that I had also finished Journey 4 in December, but then chose to write a 21,873-word recast of it in January.

So I wrote enough words to have started and finished 6 novels during the first quarter, but in reality I started and finished only 5 novels: Journey 6-9 and The Portals. Oh well. It was a nice feeling while it lasted.

But no, in case you're wondering, it isn't important enough to set a goal of writing 6 novels in a quarter. Besides, the idea of it is overwhelming. The idea of even writing "a novel" is overwhelming. As I always have, I'll write one sentence at a time and see what happens. I wish the same for you.

But I'm still excited despite my unintentional self-deception. Everything will change tomorrow morning, but at this moment...

* with my novel count, I'm on track to write 24 novels this year,

* with my fiction word count, I'm on track to write 1,134,102 words of publishable fiction this year, and

* with my overall word count, I'm on track to write 1,403,612 words of fiction and nonfiction this year.

I've never made 1,000,000 words of fiction in a year, so that would be cool.

In fact, all of that would be wonderful. It probably ain't gonna happen (grin), but it's great that 'at this moment' it's possible.

If you haven't pulled the trigger on writing into the dark yet, that's fine. You do have a choice: you can control the characters from an ivory tower, or you can take off the robes, slip into some jeans and a t-shirt, roll off the parapet into the trenches and race through the story with the characters. I chose the latter. For me it's more fun that way. I'm not responsible for the characters. I just report what they do and say. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Writing Into The Dark” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/writing-into-the-dark.html>. Good article, but WITD on Kill Zone? Could’a knocked me over with a feather.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 720 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 9 (novel)

Day 1..... 2019 words. Total words to date..... 2019
Day 2..... 3650 words. Total words to date..... 5669
Day 3..... 3760 words. Total words to date..... 9429
Day 4..... 2834 words. Total words to date..... 12263
Day 5..... 2959 words. Total words to date..... 15222
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 18616
Day 7..... 2727 words. Total words to date..... 21343
Day 8..... 3436 words. Total words to date..... 24779
Day 9..... 4043 words. Total words to date..... 28822
Day 10... 2558 words. Total words to date..... 31380
Day 11... 7097 words. Total words to date..... 38477
Day 12... 4077 words. Total words to date..... 42554
Day 13... 4953 words. Total words to date..... 47507
Day 14... 3574 words. Total words to date..... 51081 (done)

Total fiction words for March..... 88089
Total fiction words for the year..... 287077
Total nonfiction words for March... 21370
Total nonfiction words for April... 710
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 68110
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 355187

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: *In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever*

say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: On Writing “Fast”

April 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Yesterday
- * An Epiphany from a Friend
- * Topic: On Writing “Fast”
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Well, yesterday morning I started writing Terra 2. But it still has to do with the future of humanity, so Terra 2 will be Book 10 in the FOH series.

The covers going forward will be different, of course, depicting some view of the planet, but that’s all to worry about in the future. This book won’t go ‘live’ until July 15. (I’m releasing one novel every two weeks from now through then.)

An Epiphany from a Friend

A friend sent me another one of those ‘thank God the disruption of our lives is almost over’ pandemic-update emails.

In my typically flippant style I wrote back, “What is this ‘pandemic’ that you speak of? (grin) Yesterday I finished my 60th novel and the 9th in a series and the 6th in the past 95 days. And this morning I started novel #61. Pandemic? I don’t need no stinkin’ pandemic.”

But as a good friend often will, he brought me back to Earth. Actually he called me a “writing machine,” and said that’s “the only explanation for an output that in a scant 95 days rivals the lifetime total of many (most?) human authors.”

And that did it. That put my feet back on the ground.

Because the only difference between me and those other authors is Heinlein’s Rules, specifically Rule 1. I actually write.

I am blessed that I can put as much time in the chair as I want. Writing fiction has become my day job.

Still, if you do the math, over the first 90 days of this year, I've only written, on average, less than 3200 words of fiction per day. I write about 1000 words per hour (a 'blazing-fast' 17 words per minute) so I 'work' about three hours a day. Tough gig, ain't it?

And that was my epiphany: My output as a writer isn't unusual because I show up and write every day. My output is only unusual because others don't.

Topic: On Writing "Fast"

I revisited the Kill Zone blog this morning to glance over comments from others on Garry's post re WITD. To one, who wondered about the "secret" to writing so "fast," I responded with this:

Debbie, I type about 1000 words per hour on average, or a "blazing fast" 17 words per minute.

Over the first 90 days of this year, I wrote an average of 3 hours per day. Not a bad gig.

What makes my production unusual is not that I show up and put time in the chair, but that so many others do not.

I agree with Terry [Odell] and Jim [James Scott Bell] that story and structure are important. But the characters are actually living the story. We only have to trust them. I would personally no more tell my characters how to live their lives than I would tell my neighbors how to live theirs.

And our creative subconscious has been absorbing story structure all our lives from film, books, and television, since before we even knew there was an alphabet. Again, we only have to trust the subconscious to know what it knows. Study, yes. Learn more, absorb it, yes. But then trust it. That's the secret.

Of course, this incredibly freeing process is what works for me. I never have and never will say it's the "only way" to write, only that if you're able to pull the trigger on it, it's incredibly freeing.

And the thing is, we always have a safety net. If we try it and don't like it, we can always go back to the way we were doing things before.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Am Mayhem Excerpt [Video]" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/i-am-mayhem-excerpt-video/>.

See "A Dip Into the Past..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-dip-into-the-past/>.

See "What's the Difference Between a Thriller and a Mystery? Pacing." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/whats-the-difference-between-a-thriller-and-a-mystery->

[pacing/](#). A pretty good article, minus the suggestion that you can too often have a cliffhanger at the end of a chapter.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 660 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535

Total fiction words for April..... 3535

Total fiction words for the year..... 290612

Total nonfiction words for April... 1370

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 68770

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 359382

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Waxing Philosophical

April 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Waxing Philosophical
- * One more comment
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self.” Ernest Hemingway

“When asked [by a journalist] about drinking while working, Hemingway once responded, ‘Jesus Christ! Have you ever heard of anyone who drank while he worked? You’re thinking of Faulkner. He does sometimes—and I can tell right in the middle of a page when he’s had his first one.’” Nicholas Mancall-Bitel at Thrillist

Forgive me for waxing a little philosophical, but I still haven’t quite let go of that personal epiphany I shared in yesterday’s Journal entry. It was so calming, so relaxing, so anti-burnout:

My output as a writer isn’t unusual because I show up and write every day. My output is only unusual (by comparison) because so many others who profess to be writers don’t.

Others would have me believe my own prodigious, prolific output as a writer is unusual, but that would mean it’s unusual that I show up and write every day, and that’s just wrong.

Doesn’t a cop put on the uniform every day? Doesn’t the wood craftsman or mechanic pick up his tools and go to work every day? Is a plumber who tends to plumbing problems every day unusual? No. All of those are considered ‘usual.’

My output is only unusual only by comparison with others, and that’s only because so many others who profess to be writers don’t show up every day.

But then it follows that I’m not responsible for what those others do or don’t do. I’m responsible only for what I do or don’t do (hence the first Hemingway quote above) and what I share with others in an effort to pay it forward.

In that effort to share, I can only drop the seeds and hope someone else will recognize their worth and pick them up. But again, I am not responsible for, or the beneficiary of, any windfalls resulting from them bothering to pick up the seeds.

In other words, in my personal life, I’m responsible only for bettering my own previous best, not anyone else’s.

And to those of you who are at least trying to write into the dark, a frightening process to say the least, I wish you much success and much trepidation and exhilaration as you race off into the dark after your characters. As you have already guessed, it’s their story, not yours, and there will be a surprise at almost every turn.

One more comment on the Kill Zone blog post about WITD: A commenter wrote that in rewriting, you “cull out the parts that will please the reader,” etc.

Just a thought: You as the writer don't know what will please a reader. You only know the parts that please YOU as a reader. Stop being a control freak. Not your job. Just write and let the readers decide for themselves what pleases them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Cells Form Into 'Xenobots' on Their Own" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/cells-form-into-xenobots-on-their-own-20210331/>. Story ideas?

See "Master Business Class Officially Online" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/master-business-class-officially-online/>. Huh. I thought when you got the vaccine, you were given a card to prove it. And I thought when you got the vaccine, you were then immune to the disease. Seems to me a simple matter of checking cards at the door.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535

Day 2..... 4660 words. Total words to date..... 8195

Total fiction words for April..... 8195

Total fiction words for the year..... 295272

Total nonfiction words for April... 1950

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 69350

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 365622

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [the writing life](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Willie Nelson wrote a song

April 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Short announcement
- * Willie Nelson wrote a song
- * Topic: A Few Myths About Writing Into the Dark
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If we take man as he is, we make him worse, but if we take him as he should be, we make him capable of becoming what he can be.” Viktor Frankl quoting Goethe

A short announcement—Dean posted today that the surveys for the Return of the Fey Kickstarter should go out this week. So if you donated anything to that, you should be getting a survey (where to send your rewards) sometime this week.

But if there's a glitch and you have questions, please email Dean, not me.

Willie Nelson wrote a song that perfectly delineates the frustration I often feel when dealing with duplicitous or suspicious people. I think the title is “I Never Cared For You.”

He starts with “I know you won't believe these things I tell you” and warns the listener to “pay heed, and disbelieve.” Then he relates a series of ridiculous lies:

“The sun is filled with ice and gives no warmth at all; the sky was never blue. The stars are raindrops searching for a place to fall, and I never cared for you.”

The song makes a valid point. Mark Twain put it more succinctly when he made an astute observation: “It's easier to fool people than it is to convince them they've been fooled.”

So it is with WITD versus whatever. And really, as far as I'm concerned, there is no “versus.” I don't care how others write. And why would I? It makes no difference to my own bottom line.

My frustration stems from one simple fact: The person who is not willing to lie, who is not willing to deal lavishly and liberally in half-truths and innuendo, can never out-shout the person who is willing to do those things. And frankly, I believe only a complete and utter moron, one who at least appears to be steeped in naiveté, would believe he can. Or else doesn't care that he can't.

That would be me. You may consider me Exhibition A. As such, for either your enlightenment or amusement—either is fine with me—here I go again.

Topic: A Few Myths About Writing Into the Dark

The myth: WITD is fine for experienced fiction writers, but. Ahh, the inimitable “but,” the shortest word in the English language that quickly and effectively negates everything that came before it. “But” is a personal favorite of those who deal in half-truths and innuendo, and of those who would rather create excuses than manuscripts.

The fact: Actually, the more “experienced” you are when you begin WITD, the more myths you will have to overcome. Stephen King, James Lee Burke, Lee Child, Ray Bradbury, Dean Wesley Smith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, I, and countless others write into the dark, and many of us have done since we started writing seriously. My very first novel, which I wrote in 28 or 29 days back in 2014, was lauded by a reviewer as “meticulously plotted, an excellent novel.” The review was since removed by Amazon, who apparently thought I knew the reviewer. I didn’t.

The myth: I would try WITD but I want to put out quality work. (The implication is that you can’t turn out quality work while WITD.)

The fact: I assume this means the writers on the aforementioned list do not put out quality work. Alrighty then. The reader never knows in advance where the stories of those writers are going because the writers themselves never know where the stories are going. If Only They Would Outline and Plot! Then their work could be boring and predictable.

The myth: You have to rewrite and polish to be sure to include what the reader will like and to cut what the reader won’t like.

The fact: You. Don’t. Know. What. The. Reader. Will. Like.

And it’s haughty, pretentious, and irresponsible of you to think you do. The writer’s job is to write, to record the story the characters are living, not to prejudge on the reader’s behalf what he or she might or might not like. Seriously, get over yourself.

The myth: You have to know where the story is going.

The fact: Yes. Exactly like you have to know where your neighbors’ story is going when you look in on their lives, right? It’s none of your business where your characters’ story is going. Your job is to run through the story with them, trying to keep up and recording what they say and do. Just as you don’t always know why your neighbor did that weird thing that you were certain would never work out well, your characters will do things that you’ll think will never work out well. Oddly, if you trust your neighbors to live their own lives (and your characters to live theirs), it all works out in the end.

The myth: People who WITD don’t care about structure.

The fact: People who WITD actually study and apply structure and, like everyone else alive, have been absorbing structure from stories, novels, films and TV shows since before they even knew there was such a thing as an alphabet. The fact is, people who WITD simply trust what they know of structure and allow their creative subconscious to apply it as they write. They don't flit from Someone's nonfiction book on structure to their novel and back as they're writing. They don't allow the conscious mind to take over.

The myth: People who WITD eschew reading and attending conferences and learning various craft techniques.

The fact: This one's so incredibly stupid I won't even bother commenting.

The myth: People who WITD claim it's the only way to write.

The fact: Again, this is insanely stupid. But really, that's fine. If you can't tell the truth and let people decide for themselves, just make it up as you go along.

The myth: Writing is hard work.

The fact: Ever been on the business end of a shovel for 8 hours a day? But really, writing probably *is* hard work if you first outline, then write, then revise, then shop your manuscript to critique groups, then rewrite, then polish. I get tired even thinking about doing all that. How bone-weary such writers must be of the story by the time they're on even the first rewrite. The fact is, if you WITD, writing is the most fun you can have with your clothes on.

That's enough for now. If you've heard any other pompous, self-righteous proclamations regarding WITD and why it's a bad idea, why it will make you go blind or possibly even lead to all your children being born naked, please email me and I'll stomp out those fires too.

In the meantime, as much as I enjoy chatting with my friends, I'm gonna be selfish and go do that now.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Viktor Frankl — Why to Believe in Others" at <https://fs.blog/2012/01/viktor-frankl-why-to-believe-in-others/>.

See "Writing Hardboiled Fiction" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/writing-hardboiled-fiction.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1190 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535
Day 2..... 4660 words. Total words to date..... 8195
Day 3..... 3739 words. Total words to date..... 11934

Total fiction words for April..... 11934
Total fiction words for the year..... 299011
Total nonfiction words for April... 3140
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 70540
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 369551

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Farnam Street](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Off for a Few Days

April 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Thanks
- * Off for a Few Days
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

First, thanks to Kelley for her amazing, candid [comment on yesterday's post](#). What a ringing endorsement of WITD! And congratulations to Kelley for her ability to set aside her fears and go for it. Bravo!

Second, I'm writing this on Sunday evening. Cox internet, in their infinite wisdom, refused to believe my modem was going out despite me telling them over the past couple of months. Tonight, it went out permanently and we won't get a replacement until sometime this week.

So if you don't hear from me for a few days, that's what's going on. Tonight I'm jumping on my WiFi hotspot (data, don'tcha know) to send this. When I get back, hopefully I won't still be in the mood to chew wheels and spit nails.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada

The Numbers

The Journal..... 170 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535
Day 2..... 4660 words. Total words to date..... 8195
Day 3..... 3739 words. Total words to date..... 11934
Day 4..... 3638 words. Total words to date..... 15572

Total fiction words for April..... 15572
Total fiction words for the year..... 302649
Total nonfiction words for April... 3310
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 70710
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 373359

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not "the only way" to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#)

The Journal: It's Good to Be Back

April 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quick Diary of Days
- * A Very Pleasant Surprise
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

It's good to finally be back. Incredible how being without the internet for a few days disrupts a schedule. Since I've been gone, I thought I'd toss out a quick diary of those few days.

Monday: I wrote some (Day 5), messed around some, went to the grocery, wrote some more, moved the cactuses from the Hovel where they were stored for the winter back to their normal places in the yard, wrote a little more, and set up my portable swamp cooler for the coming hotter days.

Tuesday: I wrote some (Day 6), took a few breaks up at the house, wrote some more, and remembered to update my Annual Production spreadsheet. Sometime in the past few days I topped 300,000 words of fiction for the year.

The story's in a really good place and running right now. When I stopped on Tuesday, I already knew I had a couple thousand words cued up for Wednesday. Not that I knew what they were or even where the scenes would go, but I knew they would have to be addressed. And my characters have another big surprise queued up. I can feel it.

Wednesday: Wrote some (Day 7), had a fairly good day, but stopped an hour or so prematurely because the Internet's up again and I have some catching up to do.

I coasted over the internet for a while to update myself on the sites I usually visit. There were so many good articles at The Passive Voice that I listed only one in "Of Interest." But I do encourage you to visit <http://www.thepassivevoice.com/> and browse a while to see whether anything strikes your fancy.

Thursday (today): It's good to be back into my usual routine, browsing the internet as I sip coffee and wake up. I added a few more items to "Of Interest" for you.

I also had a very pleasant surprise when one avid reader (who also happens to be one of my first readers) bought 29 of my books all at one time. He opted to pay me directly via PayPal instead of giving Amazon their cut. His lips to God's ear, eh? And to think, as a first reader, he could have requested any book(s) he wanted and I would have sent them to him free. But he wanted to pay me for my work. (Thanks, Russ.)

If any of you are interested in reading any of my stuff, I encourage you to visit <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/> and take advantage of the reader discounts we offer there.

Now it's back to the novel for me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Avram Davidson And Closure" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/avram-davidson-and-closure.html>.

See "When Opposites Attract" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/when-opposites-attract.html>.

See "What Kind Of Writer Are You? Wild Cook Or Precise Baker?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/what-kind-of-writer-are-youwild-cook-or-precise-baker.html>. As much for the recipe as anything.

See "What Every Writer Needs to Know About Email Newsletters (They're Not Going Away)" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-every-writer-needs-to-know-about-email-newsletters-theyre-not-going-away/>.

See "How Much Money Do You Need?" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/it-takes-money-to-make-money/>. Some valuable advice if you read between the lines.

See "Forensic Psychiatry, Murder, LAPD Lipstick, and Memorable Characters" at <https://leelofland.com/forensic-psychiatry-murder-lapd-lipstick-and-memorable-characters/>.

See "70 Publishing Challenge" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/70-publishing-challenge/>.

See "Out With Them!" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/out-with-them.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535
Day 2..... 4660 words. Total words to date..... 8195
Day 3..... 3739 words. Total words to date..... 11934
Day 4..... 3638 words. Total words to date..... 15572
Day 5..... 2882 words. Total words to date..... 18454
Day 6..... 4777 words. Total words to date..... 23231
Day 7..... 3531 words. Total words to date..... 26762

Total fiction words for April.....	26762
Total fiction words for the year.....	313839
Total nonfiction words for April...	3850
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	71250
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	385089
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	6
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Point of View

April 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * A lighter day
- * Topic: Whose Point of View Is It?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Had a lighter day yesterday. I wanted to break 30,000 words but didn’t quite get there. I found a glitch I had to work out.

This series has a cast of dozens of main characters, so I get confused with some of the names and assignments every now and then. (grin) When that happens, it’s better to slow down and work out glitches when I find them than to wait and hope for the best. But the story’s still running, so it’s all good.

Topic: Whose Point of View Is It?

You are the center of your own universe. You can only see, hear, smell, taste, touch and feel (emotionally) your surroundings—the setting in which you are currently acting out your scene—

from that perspective: from the center out. Literally everything in the immediate world of which you are aware is either situated or happening directly around you or in your mind.

Right now, please, take a moment to look around at that immediate world. Taste the air with your nose and your tongue. Note how you feel. Listen for any ambient sounds. Not only of the fan in the background or the sound of your computer running, but the more hidden sounds, the ones your mind typically filters out as non-threatening or non-alarming.

Now imagine for a moment you're coming through the door or window into this setting. Which of those sounds and smells and sights would you notice in the daytime? Which would you notice after dark and before you flick-on the light switch? Which would you notice immediately afterward?

All right, that was all you. Everything you noticed was from your point of view.

Now be a character. Pick any one of your characters and be that character. Don't have the character walk into the room or crawl in through the window. Be the character as he or she walks into the room or crawls in through the window. Now record what the character sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels—physically and emotionally—as he or she enters.

Note that you can't do this realistically as a writer. You can only do this realistically as the character. Just as you can only sense the immediate world from the center out, the character can only sense the immediate world from the center out. You are not allowed to impose your sensory input on your character anymore than you are allowed (or able) to impose your sensory input on anyone else.

Okay, now pick a situation. The character is either walking, barging, rushing or breaking through the door. Or she's creeping, crawling, or crashing through the window. For what purpose is the character entering the room? And under what circumstances?

Maybe she's walking in to sit down and write or to browse the internet. Maybe she's breaking in to stop a suicide. Maybe she's coming in through the window because she's a cat burglar. Maybe she's coming in through the window because the house is on fire and that one window is the only logical, safe way into the house to rescue her pet. Maybe the window explodes, glass shards flying everywhere amid billowing plumes of smoke as she reaches to open it. In any situation, maybe it's too late. Maybe it's not.

Intent is tied to sensory perception. Or maybe sensory perception is tied to intent. What sights, sounds, smells etc. does the person going in to write or browse the internet notice? What sights, sounds, smells etc. does the person going in to stop a potential suicide notice? Or to arrest a suspect? Or to borrow a book? Or to burgle the house? Or to rescue a pet?

Sensory perception also is tied to emotional state. And the character's history. And the character's baggage. Are history and baggage the same thing? Can be.

What is the character's background? In every case who we are is informed by who we've been and what we've done, our experiences and our baggage. What we've done to others and what has been done to us.

Who we are is informed by whether we take action because we believe it's the right thing to do or strictly for appearances. But even given the same situation (i.e., burning house, browsing the internet, saving someone, burgling someone, etc.), each different person (and each different character) will notice different sights, smells, sounds etc. depending on who he is and who he's been and his or her current emotional state.

One person will break through a door to prevent a suicide. Another will break through a door to witness it. Another will break through a door to make what ensues appear to be a suicide.

A civilian homeowner will have a different sensory and emotional response than will a firefighter or a cop, and each of those will have a different sensory and emotional response than will their fellows who are on exactly the same scene.

One character passing a burning house will do whatever she can to gain access and save the occupants. Another will pull her head back through the window, close the curtains and go to bed. A third, believing others might be around to notice her faux bravery, will make a half-hearted attempt at entry only to collapse on the front porch, thereby making it all about her.

I'm not suggesting you draw up character sketches or decide in advance who your characters are (and what type of people they are) and plan everything, or even anything.

But if you think about all of this (and much, much more) with your conscious mind here, in this safe, virtual classroom environment, it will inform your subconscious.

And when you sit down to actually write a story, your subconscious will fill in the necessary sensory details for the given POV character in a given situation. And by necessary I mean necessary to that character. According to that character's history and/or baggage. And the character's state of mind and intent. At the time.

In other words, now that you're forearmed with whatever you took away from this brief lesson, when you start a story, stop thinking, trust yourself and your POV character, and simply record what happens.

Happy writing. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing with Authority" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-with-authority/>.

See “Smith’s Monthly #48” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/smiths-monthly-48/>. Anyone else ever think about doing this?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535
Day 2..... 4660 words. Total words to date..... 8195
Day 3..... 3739 words. Total words to date..... 11934
Day 4..... 3638 words. Total words to date..... 15572
Day 5..... 2882 words. Total words to date..... 18454
Day 6..... 4777 words. Total words to date..... 23231
Day 7..... 3531 words. Total words to date..... 26762
Day 8..... 2785 words. Total words to date..... 29547

Total fiction words for April..... 29547
Total fiction words for the year..... 316624
Total nonfiction words for April... 4930
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 72330
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 388954

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Point of View](#), [POV](#), [POV Character](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Standard Manuscript Format, Sort Of

April 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Standard Manuscript Format (certain silly rules)
- * Yesterday
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.” Peter Marshall et al down through the ages

“It’s easy enough to stand for something if you don’t have a personal stake.” Wes Crowley

So anyway, awhile back I posted a link in the Journal to the new “standard” manuscript format. It’s what writers are supposed to follow now when they submit manuscripts to magazines for consideration.

The basic format itself is the same old typical stone-age crap from back when manuscripts were typed or printed on dot-matrix printers: Times New Roman or Courier, 12 point font, double spaced, text beginning 1/3 to 1/2 of the way down page 1 (for some inane reason), the first line of each paragraph indented by a half-inch, and so on. Same format I learned way back in high school.

But now there’s a new twist. After the author name in the upper left-hand corner of the first page, now you’re supposed to add, in parentheses, your “preferred personal pronouns.” So after my name, I’m supposed to add (he/him) or I suppose (she/her) or maybe even (it/can of soup) if I want. No word on whether one is expected to indicate which particular kind of soup.

I have lived entirely too long. I have somehow managed to outlive common sense, which, even in my younger years, seemed more a luxury to many than something we all had in common.

Anyway, a writer emailed me to ask what he should put in the parentheses.

I told him I have no suggestions. I formatted one manuscript that way, complete with (he/him) following my name, and I still haven’t gotten the sour taste out of my mouth. But that’s just me. I’m not that wild about capitulating to some dweeb sitting in a safe space trying to decide what to be offended by today.

So in the future when I submit a manuscript to a magazine, I will omit the parentheses and whatever the editor expects to see inside them. For one thing, it’s none of their business.

Either that or maybe I’ll play with them a bit:

Harvey Stanbrough (it/Campbell’s Tomato) or
Harvey Stanbrough (I/me) or
Harvey Stanbrough (bite me/go pound sand).

But I'll probably just leave that space blank. I'd rather spend what little creative talent I have writing fiction than bowing to some spoiled, pretentious moron. Besides, frankly, I couldn't begin to care less what someone else "assumes" are my "preferred pronouns."

Assumptions don't change facts. And I'm just not the kind to get "offended" by such a trivial event as someone I've never met (and probably never will) losing sleep over which pronouns to use to refer to me in a conversation they will never have. Or crying themselves to sleep because I refuse to do as I'm told.

But wait—if you're a director or a producer and you want to paying me a ~~sh~~-boatload of money to stand in a certain place on a stage or in front of a camera and say certain words in a certain way, that's fine. Otherwise, uhh, no. You've got the wrong guy.

So to that writer and anyone else faced with this existential dilemma, either follow your name with parentheses and stick your preferred personal pronouns between them or don't. Doesn't matter either way to me.

If an editor exists out there who would reject a submission without even reading it because I choose not to inform him, her, or it of my preferred personal pronouns, then he, she, or it doesn't deserve to read my work anyway. (To that editor—grow a backbone already.)

I'll be back in the next day or two with an actual topic, probably something on the most important grouping of words in any language.

Yesterday I rolled out before 2 a.m., but I was in such a lousy mood I didn't even move over to the writing computer until almost 10. I don't like taking the world's (well, the United States') inane BS to my writing computer with me. Ugh.

I finally wrote just over 1000 words. Couldn't get my head into a running story. Bizarre. Finally around noon I decided to take a day doing other things. Back to the novel today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Top 10 Success Tips from Prince" at <https://writersinthestormblog.com/2021/04/top-10-success-tips-from-prince/>. Thanks to Sam for the tip.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 740 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535

Day 2..... 4660 words. Total words to date..... 8195

Day 3..... 3739 words. Total words to date..... 11934
Day 4..... 3638 words. Total words to date..... 15572
Day 5..... 2882 words. Total words to date..... 18454
Day 6..... 4777 words. Total words to date..... 23231
Day 7..... 3531 words. Total words to date..... 26762
Day 8..... 2785 words. Total words to date..... 29547
Day 9..... 1005 words. Total words to date..... 30552

Total fiction words for April..... 30552
Total fiction words for the year..... 317629
Total nonfiction words for April... 5670
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 73070
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 390699

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Writers in the Storm](#)

The Journal: The Question Rules

April 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Fairly good day
- * Topic: The Question Rules
- * Followup
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

I've talked here before about having a specific skill in mind when you sit down to write, for example pacing or dialogue or whatever. That's how you practice and improve. Today's topic will help you practice a particular technique. HS

“Deliberate practice is what turns amateurs into professionals. ... Deliberate practice means practicing with a clear awareness of the specific components of a skill we're aiming to improve.”
Farnam Street

I had a fairly good day yesterday, and frankly, I was due. The story's still running.

Topic: The Question Rules

He or she who asks the questions controls the conversation. This is true of people in “real life” and it's true of characters in fiction.

I first learned that truism long before I started writing fiction seriously when I was a student in a Dale Carnegie sales course that was part of Marine Corps Recruiter School. But it's applicable to fiction.

In fact, this is a fantastic technique to apply in fiction. You can use it for light comic relief, to indicate the relationship between two characters, to hint at deception (or playfulness, etc.), to indicate a back and forth battle for control or for any number of other effects.

If you've ever talked with any competent salesperson, and if you paid attention, you'll remember that the salesperson asked a lot of questions. In fact, often, if you asked a question, they would respond with another question. That was strictly an attempt on their part to control the conversation and eventually lead or guide you to a successful sale.

And of course, as a fiction writer you are also a salesperson. Your ultimate goal is to make the reader lean into your work, to make him become so engaged that he hungers to know more. In that regard especially, the question rules.

Yesterday I mentioned that the question is the most important grouping of words in any language. That's true. Not because it leads to answers, but because it tends to lead to more questions. And it doesn't hurt anything that the question also evokes the characters' and the readers' curiosity.

I encourage you to look for instances of this technique in the works of your favorite novelists and short-fiction writers. And when you find an example, study it. Ask yourself why the writer used the technique and how well it worked on you.

But for now, as an example, here's an exchange between two people (female and male, wife and husband) from my current novel, Terra 2.

As this mini-scene opens, the husband (Rob) has just met his wife (Rebecca) for supper in a lounge. As he approaches the table, he leans down to kiss her on the cheek before taking his seat. He's hoping to get some information from her:

Rebecca looked at Rob and frowned. “What was that for?”

“What?”

“That peck on the cheek?”

“Sorry. It’ll have to do for now.” He made a show of glancing around. “After all, we’re in public.”

She laughed. “That isn’t what I meant and you know it. What’s going on with you?”

Rob said, “So you changed tables?”

She jerked one thumb over her shoulder. “I was sitting with Mark and Amanda when you called. I figured you’d wandered off to play with your friends again.”

He grinned. “Nah, nothing like that.”

“Right. I can see that now because you’re here. So where were you?”

“The doc mentioned that you and I have some special circumstances. What circumstances?”

She arched her eyebrows. “The doc? You were at the infirmary?”

“Don’t change the subject.”

“That *is* the subject. I asked you hours ago whether you were wounded. Were you wounded, Rob?”

He shrugged. “Just a little scratch. What special circumstances? I asked the doc, but he said I should ask you. Said it wasn’t his department, whatever that means.”

“Where?”

“Where what?”

“Where were you *injured*, you dweeb?”

“Oh. About five miles north of—”

“Damn it, Rob. Where *on your body* were you injured?”

“Oh. Just a little scratch on my left shoulder. So what are our special circumstances?”

As the waitress came up with their drinks and set them on the table, Rebecca plucked her folded napkin from the table, smiled up at the waitress, then fluffed the napkin and gentled it over her lap.

The waitress smiled. “Your supper will be right out.”

Rebecca said, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, ma’am.” The waitress turned away.

As the waitress receded back toward the bar, Rob said, “Rebecca.”

She looked up, her eyes wide with an innocent look. “What?”

“What are our special circumstances?”

“I’m not sure I want to tell you.”

He straightened in his chair. “What? Why?”

“I assume you’re probably not really interested. At this very moment, you’re probably dreaming of getting back to the ship and hunting bugs. Aren’t you?”

“What? No. I mean I have a job to do, yes, but I’m here right now and—”

“Are you certain you want to know?”

“What? Of course I’m certain I want to—”

A grin burst across her face.

Followup

And finally she did tell him.

As you read the excerpt, were you interested? Possibly even guessing at the “special circumstances”? Did you want to know what those were?

If you use this technique, you can have the same effect on your reader.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Practice Guide: How to Be the Best” at <https://fs.blog/2021/04/deliberate-practice-guide/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 850 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535
Day 2..... 4660 words. Total words to date..... 8195
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Day 7..... 3531 words. Total words to date..... 26762
Day 8..... 2785 words. Total words to date..... 29547
Day 9..... 1005 words. Total words to date..... 30552
Day 10... 3272 words. Total words to date..... 33824

Total fiction words for April..... 33824
Total fiction words for the year..... 320901
Total nonfiction words for April... 6520
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 73920
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 394821

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
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Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Farnam Street](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Using questions in dialogue](#), [Writing Dialogue](#)

The Journal: Questions 2: Dialogue Tags and Interruptions

April 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Another pretty good day
- * Topic: Questions 2: Dialogue Tags and Interruptions
- * Followup
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

I've talked here before about having a specific skill in mind when you sit down to write, for example pacing or dialogue or whatever. That's how you practice and improve. Today's topic will give you two more techniques to practice. HS

“Deliberate practice is what turns amateurs into professionals. ... Deliberate practice means practicing with a clear awareness of the specific components of a skill we're aiming to improve.”
Farnam Street

I had another pretty good day yesterday. The novel's still running, still with no end in sight.
Yay!

Topic: Questions 2: Dialogue Tags and Interruptions

If you missed yesterday's Journal, you might want to go read it before you read today's edition.
[You can find it here.](#)

In the excerpt from Terra 2 that I posted yesterday (posted again below so you don't have to switch back and forth), you can also pick up some tips on dialogue tags and interruptions.

Dialogue tags are important to let the reader know which character is speaking (duh).

Interruptions are important because question scenes are intense when they're written well. It's a rapid volleying, back and forth, and if they go very long it's important to provide a place for the reader to rest.

In the excerpt, notice that when I use a true tag (a name or pronoun plus a verb that indicates a form of utterance), the verb is always the unintrusive “said.” That verb is all but invisible to the reader. Most often the reader flies through “said” and gets back to the dialogue.

And contrary to what some really horrible writing instructors will tell you, you don't want dialogue tags to “stand out.” You want them to be unintrusive. You want the reader to get back to what was said.

The story is in the dialogue, not the tags. A dialogue tag that calls attention to itself will pull the reader out of the story.

Most of the time, I don't use true dialogue tags. I prefer brief descriptive narratives. Those both describe a bit of the scene (usually a look on the character's face or a sound the character makes that indicates mood) and let the reader know which character is speaking. I do this throughout my fiction.

As you read over the excerpt again, you can easily spot dialogue tags and brief descriptive narratives, and you'll spot the difference immediately. You'll also notice that most of the time dialogue tags and brief descriptive narratives appear *before* the actual dialogue. It's important to let the reader know up front which character is speaking. This is especially important when there are more than two people in a scene.

If the reader reads, "'No, let's not do that,' John said" and the reader thought the dialogue came from a character other than John, the reader will stop and re-read the line of dialogue with the proper voice in mind. And your number one job as a writer is to keep the reader reading forward, not going back to re-read something.

The interruption begins with the waitress suddenly appearing at their table and engaging in a brief conversation with Rebecca (and Rebecca's actions with her napkin). That goes on for three very short paragraphs, then segues back into the question exchange as the waitress leaves and recedes back toward the bar.

Note in the second paragraph after that ("She looked up") I force-fed the reader a little with "with an innocent look." I usually don't do that. Most often I would have written "She looked up, her eyes wide" and left it at that. But "with an innocent look" attached itself so I left it alone. In a future cycling pass that modifier might disappear.

I'm reminded of Hemingway's admonition to "write the truest sentence you know." This passage is filled with "true sentences."

Here's the excerpt again:

Rebecca looked at Rob and frowned. "What was that for?"

"What?"

"That peck on the cheek?"

"Sorry. It'll have to do for now." He made a show of glancing around. "After all, we're in public."

She laughed. "That isn't what I meant and you know it. What's going on with you?"

Rob said, "So you changed tables?"

She jerked one thumb over her shoulder. "I was sitting with Mark and Amanda when you called. I figured you'd wandered off to play with your friends again."

He grinned. “Nah, nothing like that.”

“Right. I can see that now because you’re here. So where were you?”

“The doc mentioned that you and I have some special circumstances. What circumstances?”

She arched her eyebrows. “The doc? You were at the infirmary?”

“Don’t change the subject.”

“That *is* the subject. I asked you hours ago whether you were wounded. Were you wounded, Rob?”

He shrugged. “Just a little scratch. What special circumstances? I asked the doc, but he said I should ask you. Said it wasn’t his department, whatever that means.”

“Where?”

“Where what?”

“Where were you *injured*, you dweeb?”

“Oh. About five miles north of—”

“Damn it, Rob. Where *on your body* were you injured?”

“Oh. Just a little scratch on my left shoulder. So what are our special circumstances?”

As the waitress came up with their drinks and set them on the table, Rebecca plucked her folded napkin from the table, smiled up at the waitress, then fluffed the napkin and gentled it over her lap.

The waitress smiled. “Your supper will be right out.”

Rebecca said, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, ma’am.” The waitress turned away.

As the waitress receded back toward the bar, Rob said, “Rebecca.”

She looked up, her eyes wide with an innocent look. “What?”

“What are our special circumstances?”

“I’m not sure I want to tell you.”

He straightened in his chair. “What? Why?”

“I assume you’re probably not really interested. At this very moment, you’re probably dreaming of getting back to the ship and hunting bugs. Aren’t you?”

“What? No. I mean I have a job to do, yes, but I’m here right now and—”

“Are you certain you want to know?”

“What? Of course I’m certain I want to—”

A grin burst across her face.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “I Need a Scorecard” at <https://trace-evidence.net/2021/03/16/i-need-a-scorecard-by-robert-lopresti/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1060 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 10... 3272 words. Total words to date..... 33824

Day 11... 3439 words. Total words to date..... 37263

Total fiction words for April..... 37263

Total fiction words for the year..... 324340

Total nonfiction words for April... 7580

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 74980

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 399320

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: *In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever*

say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Brief Descriptive Narrative](#), [Dialogue Tags](#), [Interruptions](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Questions](#), [Robert Lopresti](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Trace Evidence](#)

The Journal: Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist

April 13, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A relatively short post
- * Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist
- * Toxic Productivity
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Be careful to apply your poetic sensibilities to every line.” David Farland

A **relatively short post** today to give you (and me) a break. The novel's still racing right along.

Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist

I included the quote of the day to make a point: Apparently I'm not the only writer who believes learning and applying poetry techniques can enhance your fiction, or your nonfiction for that matter.

That's because they aren't specifically “poetry” techniques so much as a “language” techniques.

And I included the quote of the day to hawk my book and audio lecture. You can find the audio lecture at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/audio-lecture-series/>. Just scroll down to Course 10 — Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist.

You could also choose Course 9 — Writing Poetry, but if you write mostly fiction, Course 10 will do just fine.

And finally, you could also check out Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist (ebook) at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00LU4QXVK>.

Toxic Productivity

Apparently there's a new thing now called "toxic productivity." The last item in "Of Interest" will tell you all about it. I linked to it strictly for comic relief.

My first thought on reading the article was "Oh great. Now I have toxic masculinity *and* toxic productivity."

Of course, people like me could always appease people like those who wrote or contributed to the article *and* make them feel endlessly better about them(smug)selves if we simply stopped doing anything at all and sat off to one side, our [expletive deleted] hands folded in our [expletive deleted] lap.

Or we could just ignore them, or glance over quickly to say "Go [ahem] yourselves" and then go back to doing what we want. I recommend the latter.

Of course, as I'm often reminded, whatever works (or doesn't) for everyone else is fine. I'm okay with that. Just don't come around my camp slinging stupid advice. I prefer to defend what's mine and work for what I want. I'm just that toxic.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Where to Submit Your Haiku and Other Japanese Poems in English" at <https://authorspublish.com/where-to-submit-your-haiku-and-other-japanese-poems-in-english/>. Because I know I have at least one excellent writer of Japanese forms.

See "Writing Hyper Realism" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-hyper-realism/>.

See "Some Fun" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/some-fun/>.

For fun, see "What Is Toxic Productivity? Here's How To Spot The Damaging Behavior." at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/toxic-productivity-work_1_606655e7c5b6aa24bc60a566.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 410 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 10... 3272 words. Total words to date..... 33824

Day 11... 3439 words. Total words to date..... 37263

Day 12... 4266 words. Total words to date..... 41529

Total fiction words for April..... 41529

Total fiction words for the year..... 328606

Total nonfiction words for April... 7990

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 75390
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 403966

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6
 Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
 Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Huffington Stupid Post](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: “Info Dumps” vs. POV

April 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Microsoft Flight Simulator
- * Topic: “Info Dumps” vs. POV
- * Post Tags and Different Strokes
- * Another pretty good day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Has anyone out there ever used (played) the Microsoft Flight Simulator? Apparently it’s a game, but an extremely realistic one. I’m not a gamer, but I’m thinking it would be a great tool or aid in writing.

One of the magazines I subscribe to is Air & Space Smithsonian. The May 2021 issue contains an excellent article on the Flight Simulator. You can read it at <https://www.airspacemag.com/flight-today/flight-box-180977303/>.

In my case, the operatives in my Blackwell Ops series often fly off to exotic locations to rescue people and/or do harm to bad guys. If it isn’t cost prohibitive, I’m thinking the Flight Simulator would be invaluable to add realistic details. Just thought I’d mention it.

Topic: “Info Dumps” vs. POV

In TKZ in “Of Interest” today is a link to a post. The person who wrote the post thought it was about info dumps and author intrusion. The writer even asks how much is too much.

Gosh, as a writer I don’t think I’ve heard that question more than probably half a million times over the past few years.

Fortunately, the answer is easy: Any info dump and any author intrusion is too much.

That’s why in my own writing, I have one rule: Every word in the story is filtered through the POV character’s physical and emotional senses and slathered with his or her opinions of the setting or the other character(s). Every word. Period.

Every Single Time, info dumps are a result of author intrusion, the author providing his or her own description of the setting or his or her own opinion of what’s going on. And as I keep saying, there’s no room for that in good fiction.

Fortunately, there’s an easy solution. If you remember this is your characters’ story, the one that they (not you) are living, you won’t write any info dumps. To do so would be impossible.

That’s right. Actually the TKZ writer’s post is about POV. The author’s POV (author intrusion, info dumps) has no place in the story, because the author is not a character in the story.

Imagine you’re a court recorder. How much of your own opinion goes into the court record?

Right. Because it isn’t your story. It’s the story of what’s happening in the courtroom.

If you can remember that you are not the POV character of the story, you should have no problem with author intrusion.

Likewise for the scenes you look-in on as a writer. It isn’t your story. It’s the story of what’s happening in the various settings as your characters’ story unfolds.

Post Tags and Different Strokes

I forget the context, but one of my writer friends (and a reader of the Journal) wrote to tell me one time she doesn’t care for the post tags that appear on the Journal. As a result, I moved those from wherever they were (probably in the sidebar) to the bottom of the screen.

I didn’t stop using them completely because I personally like them, and as a reader I personally use them. If I go to a blog and want to find all the posts on a particular topic, I look for the post tags first. If they’re available, I click the one that interests me and blam! I’m taken to all the posts on that topic.

And that's why I keep using them here. If you ever want to see every post I've written on a particular topic, scroll to the very bottom of the screen and click the tag for that topic. It isn't a foolproof system. I sometimes forget to add a tag. For example, today's post is tagged "POV" and "Author Intrusion" and "Info Dumps" and "Topic." But I don't always remember.

Fortunately, I've also included a search box over in the sidebar. You can type a keyword or phrase from the topic into that search box and a new page with posts on that topic or keyword will appear. (You can do the same thing over on HarveyStanbrough.com.)

I had another good writing day yesterday. The novel is sitting at 46,000 words and still no overall end in sight. I don't expect this one to round out at around 50,000 words. Two new possibly hostile species recently introduced themselves. Not that I'm complaining. This is not a bad problem to have. I only hope my characters will come up with a way to wrap all the major issues (though not *all* the issues) in this one soon.

I'd like to keep the individual books in the series at around 50-60,000 words. But either way, when this one wraps I should have a good start on Book 11 of the FOH series.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Enough Already" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/enough-already-2.html>. A rare good post. As I wrote here a few days ago,

See "The Hollywood Murders" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-hollywood-murders/>.

See "Total Recall Technologies v. Luckey" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/total-recall-technologies-v-luckey/>. I posted this mostly for its reference to IP and because I enjoy reading opinions of judges who have had enough.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 10... 3272 words. Total words to date..... 33824

Day 11... 3439 words. Total words to date..... 37263

Day 12... 4266 words. Total words to date..... 41529

Day 13... 4449 words. Total words to date..... 45978

Total fiction words for April..... 45978

Total fiction words for the year..... 333055

Total nonfiction words for April... 8850

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 76250
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 409305

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6
 Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
 Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Author Intrusion](#), [Info Dumps](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [POV](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Trip, Feedburner, Refreshers and Hemingway

April 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Coming up on a trip
- * Note from and about Feedburner
- * Refreshers?
- * Ernest Hemingway
- * The novel’s still unfolding
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It’s none of their business that you have to learn how to write. Let them think you were born that way.” Ernest Hemingway

Coming up on a necessary trip to New Mexico. I probably will write while I’m gone, unless the current novel wraps before we leave, although probably I will be heavily prompted to consider the time a brief vacation. But either way, I might or might not update the Journal during that few days. Just so you know.

Note: This will not affect most of you, but Feedburner (owned by Google) is changing their platform. I don't know how to jump through all the hoops they require me to jump through to fix this, and I have zero inclination to learn, so I'm not going to.

Most of you are subscribed to receive this Journal every morning at 10 a.m. Pacific (Arizona time) via MailChimp. You'll be fine and you'll continue to receive the Journal as usual.

If any of you are subscribed via Feedburner, you might want to unsubscribe from that and re-subscribe through the hosted signup form on the site at <https://hestanbrough.com>.

All you have to do is click Subscribe in the menu, then fill out your information. Thanks, and on behalf of megalomith Google, sorry for any inconvenience. After that we should be okay until Google buys MailChimp.

I've heard a few times over the past few days that my recent topics are "refreshers." Hmm. I thought they were completely original pieces that might shed light on some things some of you haven't considered. If they're only refreshers and you already knew the information, I'm kind'a wasting my time writing them.

If any of you have any topics you'd like me to talk about or explain here, or maybe something you heard from some faux writing instructor who "can't explain it but I know it when I see it," email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Gracias.

There's an article in today's "Of Interest" titled "Why do we still care about Ernest Hemingway?"

Whatever you think about the article, do yourself the favor of reading PG's take. I personally agree wholeheartedly. The comments are pretty good too. And to answer the question posed by the title: Um, because he was (and remains, in my opinion, along with Stephen King) the master.

If you're a writer, regardless of your political or personal opinions or beliefs, you can learn a ton about writing by reading Hemingway's works. When we slip off the writing to talk about the personality and personal foibles of ANY writer, especially compared with social values of a different time, we miss the point as writers. Back in the old days we would say such a writer was cutting off his nose to spite his face. There's a lot of that going on these days.

I had a less-than-good day of writing yesterday. I wrote in fits and starts (I think I let thoughts of wrapping the story creep in) and ended up with a less-productive day than usual. However, the novel is running again now.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Why do we still care about Ernest Hemingway?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-do-we-still-care-about-ernest-hemingway/>.

See “Scamming Nigerian Funds to Build Your Time Machine” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/scamming-nigerian-funds-to-build-your-time-machine.html>. With my personal apologies to Nigerians who do *not* attempt to scam people.

See “60 Commonly Misspelled Sound-Alike Words” at <https://jodierennerediting.blogspot.com/2021/04/those-dang-homonyms-commonly-misspelled.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 590 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 10... 3272 words. Total words to date..... 33824

Day 11... 3439 words. Total words to date..... 37263

Day 12... 4266 words. Total words to date..... 41529

Day 13... 4449 words. Total words to date..... 45978

Day 14... 2757 words. Total words to date..... 48735

Total fiction words for April..... 48735

Total fiction words for the year..... 335812

Total nonfiction words for April... 9440

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 76840

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 412652

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 6

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Ernest Hemingway](#), [Feedburner](#), [Jodie Renner](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Five Most Important Things

April 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: A Question
- * Thanks
- * The novel
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

First, a shout-out to Bob B for his continued support (as verified by almost daily TalkWalker alerts) of my nonfiction books *Quiet Your Critical Voice* (and *Write Fiction*), *Writing the Character-Driven Story* and this Journal. Thanks, Bob. I appreciate it.

Topic: A Question

Or maybe a test, I dunno.

I was going to make a list (in my opinion, of course) of the Five Most Important Things writers should know, but instead I decided to ask you.

So in your experience as a writer, what are the Five Most Important Things writers should know?

A few caveats. I'm looking for five things...

1. Aside from a good grounding in grammar and punctuation. If you don't have it, get it. This is fundamental to everything else.

(I almost added "and the nuances of the language" after "punctuation," but I think recognizing the nuances depends on the development of each person's "ear," on his or her sensibility to the rhythms of the language. The nuances are why a reader or another writer can be wowed by some writers and not understand why.)

2. Aside from Heinlein's Rules, and especially (because this is about writing) Rule 1.

3. Aside from having a dedicated workspace/writing computer.

4. Aside from the freedom afforded by WITD.

5. Aside from the trust required to let the characters tell the story that they (not you) are living and the patience to let that story unfold. (And no, this isn't quite the same as WITD, though in my experience trust and patience should be part of it.)

So aside from those five things, in your experience as a writer, what are the Five Most Important Things writers should know?

You can list fewer or more than five things, and you may either leave a comment [on this post on the website at https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-the-five-most-important-things](https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-the-five-most-important-things) or you may

send them to me via email at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. (Hint: I suggest you go with what pops into your head.) I look forward to reading your responses.

As I so often am, I was wrong about the novel. I suspect it will wrap today. Maybe tomorrow, but probably today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Is My Novel Too Long?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/is-my-novel-too-long/>.

See “Updates On Some Classes” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/updates-on-some-classes/>. I apologize for his repeated use of the P word.

See “Censorship Competition Heats Up” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/censorship-competition-heats-up/>. The virtual book burning continues.

See “Kindle Vella Royalties, Content Guidelines and Publishing Process” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/kindle-vella-royalties-content-guidelines-and-publishing-process/>. Just in case any of you are interested in a new way of publishing.

See “How the romance genre found its happily ever after” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-the-romance-genre-found-its-happily-ever-after/>. Interesting trivia.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 10... 3272 words. Total words to date..... 33824

Day 11... 3439 words. Total words to date..... 37263

Day 12... 4266 words. Total words to date..... 41529

Day 13... 4449 words. Total words to date..... 45978

Day 14... 2757 words. Total words to date..... 48735

Day 15... 4729 words. Total words to date..... 53464

Total fiction words for April..... 53464

Total fiction words for the year..... 340541

Total nonfiction words for April... 9890

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 77290

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 417821

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	6
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called *Writing Into the Dark*. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Censorship](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Virtual Book Burning](#)

The Journal: Forgetfulness—Blessing or Curse?

April 17, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Pulp Speed
- * Topic: Forgetfulness—Blessing or Curse?
- * The novel wrapped
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Pulp Speed

There’s an item in “Of Interest” today on writing at what DWS terms “Pulp Speed.” I encourage you to read it, even if you’ve seen it before. It was one of the first few posts of Dean’s that I read, and I’ve read it again all three times he’s dusted it off and brought it forward.

Writing at any pulp speed is the ultimate challenge for writers who just like to tell stories. Writers who, like me, love to feel the keys of the keyboard moving beneath their fingers. There are pulp speed levels 1-6. For comparison, I’m currently limping along at Pulp Speed 2.

The term pulp speed itself is a little misleading. Writing at pulp speed has nothing to do with speed. It has do do with spending the time in the chair, writing. But as DWS mentions, you can’t even attempt this until you’ve cleared out the myths we were all taught about writing.

And you can’t attempt it if your work is “special,” written specifically to impress the brie-and-wine literary set. If that’s where you want to be, of course, that’s perfectly fine. Every writer is different.

As an aside, there's also an article in "Of Interest" titled "Achieving Immortality Through Fiction." I just want to note that these two ideas are not opposed to each other (another mythi). Many pulp writers achieved immortality through their fiction.

I suppose the difference is that the brie-and-wine crowd *seek* immortality and the rest of us just wanna tell stories. (grin)

To attempt writing at pulp speed, you only have to love to tell stories, one after the other. And you have to adopt a mindset I've talked about here before: THAT you write is important; WHAT you write, the individual story or novel or series, is not.

Which is not a bad transition into today's topic. See you on the flip side.

Topic: Forgetfulness—Blessing or Curse?

The ability to forget, or maybe the inability not to, is a benefit. It's an important aspect of being a professional fiction writer.

You can't hold an entire novel in your head while you're writing it. This is why writers who are less sure of themselves and their characters write character sketches and outlines. It is also why I force myself (yes, every single time) to trust my characters, buckle my seat belt, write off into the dark.

It naturally follows that you can't hold something you've already written and published in your head either. And really, why would anyone want to?

But forgetfulness isn't something a writer can develop so much as something that just happens.

In my humble opinion, if you can remember in any detail what your previous short story or novel was about, you aren't writing enough stories or novels.

Part of this is a mindset: to always look forward, not back. And part of it is the ability and desire to practice, to keep moving forward and not back.

Of course, part of that goes to Heinlein's Rule 3: You must not rewrite except to editorial order (and then only if you agree).

But part of it also goes to HR 1: You must write.

If you're living with your characters in your current story, or if you're anticipating your characters in the next story, chances are you won't remember in any detail the scenes you wrote yesterday, much less the short story or novel you wrote previously.

I'm always stymied when a reader emails me to ask what I "meant" with a particular ending of a story. Before I can respond (and I always personally respond), I have to go back and read the ending.

And of course, because endings don't exist in a vacuum, I most often have to read the entire short story again, or I have to read the reverse outline and the last few chapters or scenes of the novel.

I admit reading my own work is usually a pleasurable experience for me (other than spotting things I could have done better), but even then I get a little twinge of nausea because in those moments I'm looking back instead of forward.

Then again, that same "forgetfulness factor" is why keeping the characters and facts straight from novel to novel (or story to story) is so difficult when writing a series.

Reverse outlines help a lot, but in a series with recurring characters and in which those characters are developing, it can still be a challenge. So with every new novel I write in a series, yes, I refer back to the reverse outlines from earlier novels, but I often find myself having to bring up the original Word document and using the Find feature to locate specific characters or other details. Even while I'm writing the current novel.

So I suppose in that way forgetfulness is a curse rather than a blessing. But on the whole, I'd rather forget and have to scroll back to refresh and update my memory than to have all that weird stuff jumbled up inside my head.

The novel wrapped yesterday as I thought it might at about 10 a.m., and the next one in the series is queued up. Once I spell checked Terra 2, I saved a PDF copy and sent it off to my first readers.

A few other ideas are floating around in my head too. I'm gonna take a few days off (if I am able to do that). With my upcoming trip, it seems an appropriate time. Still, the writer in me wants to check in with my characters to see and tell the next story.

I also might or might not post anything to this Journal for those few days. I'm fine, just taking a breather between novels, and then I have that trip coming up.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Pulp Speed Flashes To The Present" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/pulp-speed-flashes-to-the-present/>.

See "Achieving Immortality Through Fiction" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/achieving-immortality-through-fiction.html>.

See "Top Two Anathemas" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/top-two-anathemas/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1010 words

Writing of Terra 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 3535 words. Total words to date..... 3535
Day 2..... 4660 words. Total words to date..... 8195
Day 3..... 3739 words. Total words to date..... 11934
Day 4..... 3638 words. Total words to date..... 15572
Day 5..... 2882 words. Total words to date..... 18454
Day 6..... 4777 words. Total words to date..... 23231
Day 7..... 3531 words. Total words to date..... 26762
Day 8..... 2785 words. Total words to date..... 29547
Day 9..... 1005 words. Total words to date..... 30552
Day 10... 3272 words. Total words to date..... 33824
Day 11... 3439 words. Total words to date..... 37263
Day 12... 4266 words. Total words to date..... 41529
Day 13... 4449 words. Total words to date..... 45978
Day 14... 2757 words. Total words to date..... 48735
Day 15... 4729 words. Total words to date..... 53464
Day 16... 2264 words. Total words to date..... 55728 (done)

Total fiction words for April..... 55728
Total fiction words for the year..... 342805
Total nonfiction words for April... 10900
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 78300
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 421105

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Pulp Speed](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Pulp Speed Revisited

April 18, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Today
- * Pulp Speed Revisited
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“My novels are what is known as popular and sell very well, but I am not a critic's favorite; indeed I am generally dismissed with a sneer as a bestseller and not reviewed at all.” Daphne du Maurier

“Sometimes I wonder what the difference is between being cautious and being dead.” Sue Grafton

“When fiction writing isn't fun, you are doing something wrong. And that is usually a myth or critical voice....” Dean Wesley Smith

“The enjoyment is in the writing of the story, the fun of the puzzle, the thrill of creating something.” Dean Wesley Smith

And a bit of pure gold, from Dean to a writer who's snagged at 300-500 words per hour:

“Time how fast you write emails. If you write them faster than your fiction rate, you have a critical voice problem that is making fiction more important than an email to a friend or a business email. Should be the other way around. Fiction is just made up. It should be faster than emails.” Dean Wesley Smith

“I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking.” Joan Didion

Today

I'm here, so I figured I'd send out a Journal edition today. After I post this, I'll open The Journey Home: Part 9 and let my characters tell me about some of the animals and other creatures they saw or heard in passing when they first started exploring the new planet (Terra 2).

As I'll still be here in the early morning tomorrow too, I'll probably post an edition of the Journal tomorrow too. Then there will probably be a lag.

Pulp Speed Revisited

This is a rare time when Dean's bringing back some of his earlier, excellent posts.

There are some good comments on Dean's post from yesterday. You can find that post and those comments at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/pulp-speed-flashes-to-the-present/#comments>.

There's also a second "brought back" post from Dean in today's "Of Interest." I urge you to read it. I've added both those post links to my Writer Resources under two or three categories over on my main site at HarveyStanbrough.com. That's how important I think they are.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Pulp Speed Writers (Take Two)" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/pulp-speed-writers-take-two/>. Not to be repetitive, but again, this is sheer gold.

See "Five ways artificial intelligence can help space exploration" at <https://www.space.com/artificial-intelligence-for-space-exploration>. Minus the bulky backpack, the astronaut in the illustration appears to be wearing a stipplesuit. (grin)

See "How To Be A Successful Digital Age Writer" at <http://dyingwords.net/how-to-be-a-successful-digital-age-writer/>.

See "Writing for a Brighter Day" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/writing-for-a-brighter-day.html>. As hope is a universal emotion among humans and others, I "hope" it occurs naturally in your writing, along with all the other emotional senses. Not something you should have to "think about" or force.

See "Minds Without Brains?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/minds-without-brains/>. Story ideas. I submit that most AI is as trustworthy as are most humans. And where AI is not trustworthy, that's because there's a human mind behind it.

See "How Much Does It Cost to Self-Publish a Book in 2021?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-much-does-it-cost-to-self-publish-a-book-in-2021/>. I list this link as a foil to common sense and a willingness to learn and work. Aside from time and less than a dollar for cover art, it costs the writer nothing to self-publish a book. See PG's cautionary take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 560 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for April.....	55728
Total fiction words for the year.....	342805
Total nonfiction words for April... ..	11460
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	78860
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	421665
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	7
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... ..	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Pulp Speed](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Origins of Rider Jones

April 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * The Origins of Rider Jones
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The Origins of Rider Jones

Well, I hadn’t planned to write anything while I’m “off.” But it’s difficult to plan not to do something you do pretty much every day.

And Dean exacerbated things. In his introduction to my short story, “Rider Jones and the Portal,” in the forthcoming (May 2021) Cave Creek anthology *Bitter Mountain Moonlight*, he wrote in part

“Harvey Stanbrough is giving me a run at being a top productive writer in this modern world. And he might be as nimble across genres as I try to be. Maybe better.

“In this wonderful pure western story, Deputy Marshal Rider Jones (If that’s not a series character name, I don’t know what is) follows someone he has been chasing for a very long time. And for a very personal reason.”

And that “If that’s not a series character name, I don’t know what is” got me. So I started what I expected to be a new short story titled “The Origins of Rider Jones.” I like origin stories.

Only thing is, as often happens when writing into the dark, now I’m not sure whether the thing will wrap as a short story, or maybe continue to be my first novella of the year, or maybe continue to be my 8th novel of the year and my 62nd overall. Whee!

I just know it’s a great story and it’s exciting to run through it with the characters as it unfolds.

So a heads-up to my first readers: if it wraps as a short story, I’ll send it to you (and my donors) as sort of a gift. And if it continues and wraps as a novella or novel, well, then I’ll be begging your able eyes once again as first readers.

Either way, I’m glad my plan to not write anything fell through. I’m having a ball.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Interrobang” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/interrobang/>.

See “Writing Wisdom from Gary Provost” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/writing-wisdom-from-gary-provost.html>. Every writer is different. I can see how this might work for some writers as an outline. I can also see how any of these might work as story starters. I believe I could literally write a short story based on any of these.

See “The Power of Writing by Hand” at <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/benefits-writing-by-hand/>.

See “What to Say When Someone Is Gaslighting You” at <https://lifehacker.com/what-to-say-when-someone-is-gaslighting-you-1846703809>. Story ideas, mystery, psychological suspense.

See “The runaway digital subscription train shows no sign of slowing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-runaway-digital-subscription-train-shows-no-sign-of-slowng/>.

See “Naming Fictional Characters: 10 Tips to Avoid Pitfalls” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/naming-fictional-characters-10-tips-to-avoid-pitfalls/>. Maybe of value to some.

See “How to Write Science as Entertainment” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-write-science-as-entertainment/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 440 words

Writing of **The Origins of Rider Jones** (short story, maybe longer)

Day 1..... 4293 words. Total words to date..... 4293

Total fiction words for April..... 60021

Total fiction words for the year..... 347098

Total nonfiction words for April... 11900

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 79300

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 426398

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Bitter Mountain Moonlight](#), [Cave Creek](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [LifeHacker.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Catching Up

April 22, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welp, I'm back
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The writer who thinks the whole purpose of writing is suffering isn't one I'm much interested in. The one that tells a story for the joy of telling it is the one I'm interested in.” Joe Lansdale

“All I want is a story. If you want to send a message, call Western Union.” Samuel Goldwyn

Writing this yesterday (Wednesday) about an hour and a half after I got back to get a jump on the Journal for tomorrow.

Got back from a tiring, emotional trip yesterday afternoon and caught up as well as I could on emails. Still some to go through but mostly stuff I have to read this morning before I post the Journal (Passive Guy, David Farland, et al).

I took a computer with me on the off-chance I would add to the story about The Origins of Rider Jones while I was gone, but I didn't. Monday was all driving. Only 8 hours, but there's nothing “only” about it anymore. Straight to the hotel for a little TV and then sleep.

Tuesday was filled (other than a very nice “visiting” lunch with my daughter, son-in-law and two granddaughters over excellent Mexican food) with going through my mother's house and taking what we didn't want to lose to anyone else. We were the last to show up, which was fine. What we wanted was still there.

And yesterday was another 8 hours of driving, then unloading the back seat and bed of my pickup after we got back.

Anyway, it's good to be back (as it always is) and after I file this edition of the Journal I plan to spend the balance of the day writing. That will feel very good too.

I listed no links today from The Passive Voice <http://www.thepassivevoice.com/> but there are a lot of articles there that might be of interest to some of you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Shut Up And Write Stories” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/shut-up-and-write-stories.html>. GREAT article.

See “Writing Quote From Joe Lansdale” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-quote-from-joe-lansdale/>. Several great quotes in fact. Almost made me want to get back on Facebook if only to read more from Joe Lansdale.

See “Joe R. Lansdale on Austin Liti Limits” at <https://vimeo.com/527039659>. About a 25-minute video.

See “Here Are The Words You Need To Kill, She Advised Ruthlessly” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/here-are-the-words-you-need-to-kill-she-advised-ruthlessly.html>.

See “The Day Uneducated Men Fell From the Sky: A Writing Faux-Pas” at <https://leelofland.com/the-day-uneducated-men-fell-from-the-sky-a-writing-faux-pas/>.

See “Jim Steinman” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/jim-steinman/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 410 words

Writing of The Origins of Rider Jones (short story, maybe longer)

Day 1..... 4293 words. Total words to date..... 4293

Total fiction words for April..... 60021

Total fiction words for the year..... 347098

Total nonfiction words for April... 12310

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 79710

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 426808

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Joe R. Lansdale](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Working and Having Fun

April 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quotes of the Day

* Yesterday

* Topic: About Writing as “Work”

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[P]eople pay good money to get on a rollercoaster to be stressed and thrilled and have fun. That’s writing every novel for me.” Dean Wesley Smith

“I enjoy writing as well as having written. I enjoy finding my story as I go, figuring it out, and putting it down for myself, and no one else.” Joe R. Lansdale

Yesterday quickly turned into a non-writing day as my wife and I (mostly my wife) filtered through, cleaned and put away all the stuff we brought back with us. That’s all right. A minor life roll, which is fine. I still have a little underlying exhaustion from the trip too, so spending a couple hours doing that and the rest of the day doing nothing was fine.

Rider Jones counts patience among his many attributes, so he’ll be waiting when I’m ready to check in on his story again. And if that story decides not to keep running or doesn’t run long, I always have the next book in the FOH series to write. And I’ve been wanting to check in on a new operative for Blackwell Ops too.

Topic: About Writing as “Work”

I was thinking about what DWS said in his post about Joe R. Lansdale: “Joe calls his writing work, I call my writing pure entertainment and fun.”

I know where Dean’s coming from, and I kind of agree with both of them.

In my own practice, I say every morning that I’m “going to work,” meaning I’m heading out to the Hovel to browse the internet, post the Journal and write or “work on” the latest story.

Both Dean and I were raised in homes with lower middle-class incomes, so I understand his take. “Work” is a place you don’t want to be and while you’re there you’re doing something you don’t want to do. To get the right mindset, for the first couple of years after I started writing novels, I was very careful to never refer to that as “work.”

Then again, I’ve been a working cowboy on a cattle ranch, a dishwasher in a truck stop, an oilfield roustabout, a Marine, a cop, a truck driver, a proofreader in a major house and a laborer in a landscaping company (I think that’s all of them), and none was a job I didn’t enjoy to one degree or another. I never stood at an assembly line 8 hours a day sticking widgets on gadgets.

So today, I think of my writing as “my work” though it’s still a lot of fun for me. I leave my home, sort of, and go to a specific place—the Hovel, my workplace—to do it. I set it up that way intentionally.

Thinking of my writing as my work or my job lends it just enough credibility to make me show up every day, even on some days when I just don't feel like it.

I could say searching the internet and writing the Journal is a kind of actual work, but really it's fun too. I learn, and learning is fun. And the fiction writing itself when I move over to the writing 'puter is sheer excitement and joy. The kind of joy you get from being on that roller-coaster Dean mentions above.

There's the underlying sense that I'm safe enough, that nothing bad will happen if I "fail." But that's coupled with the overall excitement of going to a place I've never been before and experiencing things I've never experienced before. I think that's what Dean is talking about.

And if it weren't for that fun and joy and the excitement of not knowing what will happen next in the story, I would no doubt stop telling stories and "work" at something else. Like fishing.

So if you can call your writing work without it causing your subconscious mind to think of it as something you don't want to do (or your subconscious mind doesn't want to do), then that's fine.

If you can't do that, then just think of writing as your fun-time escape from work.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Not Your Usual Blog Tour" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/not-your-usual-blog-tour-newrelease/>.

See "Simon & Schuster and Political Books" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/simon-schuster-and-political-books/>. See TPG's well-reasoned comments. GAWD I'm glad I just tell stories.

See "Joe R. Lansdale's Bio" at <http://joerlansdale.com/bio.html>. Especially the interview section where he talks about writing.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of The Origins of Rider Jones (short story, maybe longer)

Day 1..... 4293 words. Total words to date..... 4293

Total fiction words for April..... 60021

Total fiction words for the year..... 347098

Total nonfiction words for April... 13060

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 80460
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 427558

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7
 Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
 Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Joe R. Lansdale](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Lansdale, Orwell, and Farland

April 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Lansdale and Orwell
- * Farland
- * Wholeness
- * Yesterday
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Here are keys: Relax and write. It’s not a root canal. It’s writing and you should write something you care about. It can be light, or insightful, or whatever, but it always works best when you come at it with enthusiasm. That way, if it’s hard, you still have fun. Otherwise, it’s just hard.” Joe R. Lansdale

“The point is, are you holding your attention? If so, you just might hold the reader’s attention.” Joe R. Lansdale

“Entering a scene late and leaving early is a good rule of thumb.” Joe R. Lansdale

“We are all part of cultural shifts, but I don’t worry about it if the story requires the use of certain language. It is not the word, it is the intent. ... [I]f you get your feelings hurt by language there’s always Doctor Seuss.” Joe R. Lansdale

“I write as if someone else is telling me the story and I’m writing it down for them. That someone else is my subconscious. ... Most often if I write out an outline, I no longer want to write the story.” Joe R. Lansdale

“I don’t wait for inspiration, since it’s me doing the inspiring.” Joe R. Lansdale

Yeah, a LOT of quotes from Joe R. Lansdale. There are a lot more (and a ton of wisdom) in the Q&A segment of his bio, which I linked to both yesterday and today in “Of Interest.” I strongly recommend you read it.

I especially like his quote (admonition) about treading lightly when it comes to the use of certain language: “It is not the word, it is the intent.” In other words, if you want to convey the character’s intent, you have to let the character use the appropriate word or words.

Around 30 years ago I hosted a critique group in Roswell New Mexico. One “everybody’s grandma” little old lady had written a story about a 14 year old inner-city gangsta wanna-be in Chicago.

The character was unbelievably polite as he violently ripped a purse off an elderly woman’s shoulder and shoved her through a plate glass display window. He said, and I quote, “Gimme that purse, you darn old lady.” (Not kidding.)

When I mentioned that the antagonist’s language wasn’t realistic, the writer said she couldn’t possibly use the words the character probably used during the assault. And I told her, as gently as I could, “Then you can’t write this kind of story.”

If you’re a fiction writer, you have to be willing to allow characters to speak as they do, to commit violence if they do, and to be who they are. Anything short of that, you’re cheating the reader.

Whatever some folks would have you believe, the real world is not made up of butterflies and fairies and fireflies and lace. Of course, you have every right to believe holding hands and singing Kumbaya will solve all the world’s ills.

Just be aware that, as George Orwell once wrote, “One can only abjure violence because others are prepared to endure violence on their behalf.” That is the real world.

There are also a pair of good posts from David Farland in today’s “Of Interest.” Primarily they’re about using the POV character’s physical and emotional senses, but it might make more sense coming from someone other than me. Give ’em a read.

Wholeness

Years ago, I taught a three-day retreat and a shorter course on Observation for Writers. The purpose was to help writers sense the world around them and their place in it, not from a perspective “above” the rest of creation but on a par with it. I finally gave up teaching that course.

The human ego, supported by the underlying collective human insecurity (we get our “stature” by deriding everything else as being below us) was simply too much to overcome. The thought that humanity might be on a par with other creatures on Earth was a trigger long before I’d ever heard of triggers other than those on firearms.

The thought at the base of that concept of Wholeness originated from a word which, in both Greek and Old Hebrew, could as easily have been translated “wholeness” as “holiness.” Of those two concepts, the former is all-inclusive and the latter is exclusive to whatever group is using it/defining it at the time. I’ve often wondered how different the world would look today if only the translation of that one word in all the religious texts had gone the other way.

Boiled down to its lowest common denominator, the concept of Wholeness illuminates that there is no such thing as humanity vs. nature, but rather that humanity is an integral *part* of nature. Only our collective insecurity as a species causes us to think of ourselves as “above” everything else rather than an equal but different and integral part of everything.

The concept still intrigues me, has always and always will. So imagine my thrill when I read “Make whole that which is broken” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/make-whole-that-which-is-broken/>. Especially the last two-thirds of the last sentence: “[T]he repair we are asked to accomplish requires that we see the sacred hidden within the ordinary — the wholeness that exists in all things, everywhere.” If only.

Yesterday I finally got back to Rider Jones. I’d been away only four days, but it seemed like roughly half of forever. Still not sure whether it will wrap as a long short story, a novella or what. It seems to want to wrap as a short story. I expect I’ll find out today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Joe R. Lansdale’s Bio” at <http://joerlansdale.com/bio.html>. Especially the interview section where he talks about writing.

See “Appealing to the Senses” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/appealing-to-the-senses/>.

See “Appealing to the Senses Part 2” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/appealing-to-the-senses-part-2-2/>.

See “Grammar-Nerd Heaven” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/grammar-nerd-heaven/>.

See “Twelve Years” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/twelve-years/>.

See “Shoot to Kill or to Wound? The Answer May Surprise You” at <https://leelofland.com/shoot-to-kill-or-to-wound-the-answer-may-surprise-you-2/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1000 words

Writing of **The Origins of Rider Jones** (short story, maybe longer)

Day 1..... 4293 words. Total words to date..... 4293

Day 2..... 2458 words. Total words to date..... 6751

Total fiction words for April..... 62479

Total fiction words for the year..... 349566

Total nonfiction words for April... 14060

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 81460

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 431016

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [George Orwell](#), [Joe R. Lansdale](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Wholeness](#)

The Journal: Fiction Lengths and Much More

April 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Brief Introspection
- * A reminder
- * A heads-up
- * Fiction lengths

- * Fairly good day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.” Marilyn Strathern

If you set a solid goal, chances are you will fall short. You want something to reach for, not something to obtain.

“Most readers will subliminally appreciate the specificity even if they don’t know the reference.”
James Scott Bell

“No pressure, no diamonds. Little pressure, little diamonds. Great pressure, great diamonds.”
Matshona Dhliwayo

“Books do tend to end up the length they want to be.” Lincoln Michel

A Brief Introspection

Yesterday I talked a little here about Wholeness vs. holiness and how I used to teach a retreat and course called Observation for Writers based on that concept.

While teaching that concept, I soon realized I had over estimated humans’ ability to be open minded. Many humans (if not most) will revert to the tried and untrue (what doesn’t work) rather than strike out in an exciting, possibly minimally frightening new direction that challenges what passes for common wisdom. One more flaw that can be dismissed as “human nature.”

Anyway, after I posted the Journal yesterday I began to wonder why I still talk about and try to teach writing into the dark. Humans will resist anything that threatens their preconceptions. And who am I to try to get them to resist?

Don’t get me wrong. I’m not going anywhere, and I’m not going to stop spreading the joy of WITD. I’m not a “I’ve got mine, you go find yours” kind of guy. But it’s an interesting idea to ponder.

Just a reminder to all of you who support this blog with your generous contributions each month: You have rewards due if you want them according to which tier you signed up for. To check, take a look at <https://hestanbrough.com/become-a-patron/>.

But you have to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and let me know each month which rewards, if any, you want. I wouldn’t presume to guess which genres you like, which nonfiction books you don’t have yet, and so on.

So let me know what you'd like (and please indicate whether you want them in Kindle, Apple/Nook or PDF) and I'll ship them straight out to you. And the same goes for my first readers. Pretty much anything you want, any time you want it. Thanks for your support! Harvey

A heads-up: Lee Child will have a conversation with Laurie R. King on Facebook Live about How to Write a Mystery to promote their new book by the same name.

That event will happen on Monday, April 26 at 8 p.m. CDT. According to the screenshot my friend Robert S. sent me, it's free for anyone "on or off Facebook." But there was no URL listed on the screenshot, so you'll have to do a little research.

There's a post in "Of Interest" today about the lengths of novels, novellas, etc. Because my books sell around the world where such lengths fluctuate, I'll stick to my tried and true method of gauging length.

Short-short story: Up to 1199 words

Short story: 2000 to 7999

Novelette (long short story): 8000 to 14,999

Novella: 15,000 to 24,999

Short novel: 25,000 to 44,999

Novel: 45,000 to 79,999

Long novel: over 80,000 words

And yes (taking genre into account) there are price points associated with all of those.

Had a fairly good day of writing yesterday, and it looks like The Origins of Rider Jones will be at least a novella. It's already a novelette (long short story), so it's looking good.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The 2021 Guide to Manuscript Publishers" at <https://authorspublish.com/free-book-the-2021-guide-to-manuscript-publishers/>. From AuthorsPublish.com.

See "A Long Post about Short Stories (and Magazines)" at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/a-long-post-about-short-stories-and>.

See "New Workshop Sale" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-workshop-sale/>.

See "Using Pop Culture References in Fiction" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/using-pop-culture-references-in-fiction.html>.

See "Novels and Novellas and Tomes" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/novels-and-novellas-and-tomes/>.

See “Outcry over book ‘censorship’ reveals how online retailers choose books — or don’t” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/outcry-over-book-censorship-reveals-how-online-retailers-choose-books-or-dont/>. From the Washington Post, so severely slanted. But see PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 670 words

Writing of The Origins of Rider Jones (short story, maybe longer)

Day 1..... 4293 words. Total words to date..... 4293

Day 2..... 2458 words. Total words to date..... 6751

Day 3..... 3722 words. Total words to date..... 10473

Total fiction words for April..... 66201

Total fiction words for the year..... 353278

Total nonfiction words for April... 14730

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 82130

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 435408

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Countercraft](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Wholeness](#)

The Journal: The Missing Days

April 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* The Missing Days

* Just dinging along

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The Missing Days

Well, I think the matter with the Journal subscriptions is resolved. I ran a validity check on my RSS feed and found it was broken and why. So once I got rid of the problem (about 9:30 yesterday morning), the Journal posted at 10.

To make it a little easier to read the issues you might have missed, here are the links:

Apr 19: [The Origins of Rider Jones](#)—Bragging just a little and why I’m writing about Rider Jones in the first place (440 words)

I didn’t post on April 20-21.

Apr 22: [Catching Up](#)—Some good quotes, etc. (410 words)

Apr 23: [Working and Having Fun](#)—Topic, quotes, etc. (750 words)

Apr 24: [Lansdale, Orwell, and Farland](#)—The headline kind’a speaks for itself. (1000 words)

Apr 25: [Fiction Lengths and Much More](#)—Quotes, something for patrons, etc. (670 words)

Just dinging along on the Rider Jones story. I could have wrapped it as a novelette at a little over 11,000 words, but it *sort of* wanted to keep going and I *sort of* wanted to continue exploring the character.

So I went back to the front and typed Part One, then went back to the end and typed Part Two and kept going. (grin) We’ll see what happens.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See the comments on “Using Pop Culture References in Fiction” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/using-pop-culture-references-in-fiction.html#comments>.

See “Character Name Crisis!” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/character-name-crisis.html>. Help a pro writer figure out a name for her character.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 250 words

Writing of The Origins of Rider Jones (short story, maybe longer)

Day 1..... 4293 words. Total words to date..... 4293
Day 2..... 2458 words. Total words to date..... 6751
Day 3..... 3722 words. Total words to date..... 10473
Day 4..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 12617

Total fiction words for April..... 68345
Total fiction words for the year..... 355422
Total nonfiction words for April... 14980
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 82380
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 437802

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: IP Valuation

April 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: IP Valuation
- * Rider Jones
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Intellectual property is the oil of the 21 century.” Mark Getty

“He who receives an idea from me, receives instruction himself without lessening mine; as he who lights his taper at mine, receives light without darkening me.” Thomas Jefferson

Topic: IP Valuation

I was going to talk in-depth about IP valuation this morning. To that end, I did a Google search for “IP Valuation,” downloaded a promising-looking PDF document, and clicked a button on the document labeled “Enable Editing” so I could move through the document.

And my monitor went blank. To recover, I had to do a “hard restart” on my computer, then wait until it started, then download Norton Power Eraser and run a full system scan. It quickly identified the culprit and quarantined it, after which I was able to safely delete it. So I’m just saying, be careful what you click on out there.

Then I decided to talk about IP Valuation anyway.

This topic arose in my brain-housing group because a few days ago I assigned a value to my IP. Even knowing that I most often undervalue my own work (always have) I based the value on what I personally consider the fair market value (i.e., the value of each piece of IP over the life of my copyright: the rest of my life plus 50 years).

In other words, how much money would I require if I were asked to sell all rights to each novel, each series, and each short story I’ve written? At best, it’s an objective call and one you’ll have to make on your own.

But when you do, you have to consider the possible value of your copyright over your lifetime plus 50 years. (That’s in the US. Outside the US, the length of copyright might be different.)

Consider, your short story or novella or novel or series will possibly

- * become a bestseller
- * be made into a movie or television show or series
- * spawn a series of games or character dolls or stationery or greeting cards or F&%\$#(&*G masks or

The sky truly is the limit, so take all of that and a lot more into account.

Then, determine how much money you would charge to forego all of those possibilities and sell them to someone else (in WriterThink, i.e., a traditional publisher). How much would it take for you not to feel bad if the person or company you sold your copyright to made millions on it?

In my own case, I assigned a particular, very low dollar value to each of my short stories. Then I multiplied that amount times the number of short stories in my portfolio.

I also assigned a particular monetary value to each novella and novel separately. And then—because I have so many different series and a series is an entity unto itself—I assigned a separate value to each series as a whole.

So for my novels and novellas, I have two valuations: one for my cumulative novels and novellas (my price for each times the number of novels and novellas I've written), and one for the price of each series plus all the one-off novels and novellas I've written.

I won't talk specific numbers here (as I said, value is objective), but suffice it to say a series taken as a whole is worth more (to me) than the cumulative total of the individual novels within that series.

Fun with Basic Math

For an abstract example, if I valued each novel at X and if there are ten novels in a given series, the value of the individual novels would be 10X. But the value of the overall series, taken as a whole, would be worth well above that, maybe $10X + X$ or $10X + 5X$ or $10x(2)$. (Substitute the value of each of your novels for X.)

At the moment, I've written 69 novels and novellas (so 69X) and 217 short stories (so 217Y). But among the novels, I've also written 6 different series. The series are different lengths so I can't assign a single abstract value for those. Each has its own value.

All of this would be much easier if we could get a glimpse at a traditional publisher's spreadsheet and see what value that publisher would assign to our copyright if the publisher bought all rights and then added it to their spreadsheet to increase the value of their company. (That value, not publication, is the primary use of IP for traditional publishers today. If they can buy all rights to your novel for a \$10,000.00 or even a \$50,000.00 advance but it adds millions to their bottom line, what do they care?)

But that ain't gonna happen, so we're basically on our own. So again, to come up with your own IP Valuation, I recommend you value each novel and novella and short story and series based on how much you would require to watch all rights to that bit of IP go bye-bye.

Disclaimer for Detractors

Of course, as always, this is what I do and what I recommend. It is not the only way to value IP or necessarily the best way, but it's the best and most honest way for me.

If someone offered my asking price tomorrow for one short story or one novella or novel or one series, I would sell in a heartbeat. And if they offered to buy my whole portfolio on condition that I stopped writing... well, I would sell, buy a boat and go fishing. And put a lot of effort into hiding my new pen name.

Rider Jones is still riding. His story is at least a novella now and probably will wrap short of being a short novel, which is fine. Finally had a pretty good day of writing on this one yesterday. I continue to learn that every story writes differently.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Books Don’t Spoil” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/books-dont-spoil/>.

See “Introducing Audiobook Narrator Eve Passeltiner” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/introducing-audiobook-narrator-eve-passeltiner.html>.

See “This Will Help You Grasp the Sizes of Things in the Universe” at <https://nautil.us/blog/-this-will-help-you-grasp-the-sizes-of-things-in-the-universe>.

See “NASA’s bold bet on Starship for the Moon may change spaceflight forever” at <https://arstechnica.com/science/2021/04/five-reasons-why-nasas-starship-award-is-a-watershed-moment-in-spaceflight/>.

See “How Maxwell’s Demon Continues to Startle Scientists” at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/how-maxwells-demon-continues-to-startle-scientists-20210422/>.

See “Jack and the Bean Counters: A Woke Children’s Story” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/jack-and-the-bean-counters-a-woke-childrens-story/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1020 words

Writing of **The Origins of Rider Jones** (novella or novel)

Day 1..... 4293 words. Total words to date..... 4293

Day 2..... 2458 words. Total words to date..... 6751

Day 3..... 3722 words. Total words to date..... 10473

Day 4..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 12617

Day 5..... 4134 words. Total words to date..... 16751

Total fiction words for April..... 72479

Total fiction words for the year..... 359556

Total nonfiction words for April... 16000

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 83400

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 442956

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [ArsTechnica.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Nautilus](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Rider Jones Wrapped

April 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Rider Jones wrapped
- * Took a day off
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I didn’t write what I thought people wanted to read. I didn’t research what might be popular — what might sell — and write that. I wrote stories that felt personal to me, that I enjoyed completely from writing to reading.” Kristen Ashley

Yes. This is how you set trends rather than following them.

“Scene is where the pace of the story slows to ‘real time,’ and we’re privy to every word, gesture, and sensory detail.” Susan DeFreitas

Rider Jones wrapped even sooner than I thought it would as a novella with a little over 17,000 words. I could have extended it, but I’ll leave that for other stories (possibly) in the future.

I have a feeling the full story of Rider Jones will be told in short stories and novellas as the mood to write westerns (albeit strange, SF westerns) strikes me.

I used to enjoy writing westerns a great deal, but I’m pretty sure I scratched most of that itch with the 11-volume Wes Crowley series.

After I said adios to Rider, I took a day-off sort of. Originally I thought it might be a few days or maybe even a week. We decided to effect a major change in the Hovel, which we’re turning into a “real” office, and then in my former office in the house, which we’re turning into a guest room.

As it turned out, I dismantled the makeshift desk I was using in the Hovel, took the small-desk base of it up to the house for use in the guest room, and brought my big writing desk out to the Hovel. And by the time we'd done that (and cleaned up the Hovel, more or less) that was enough for awhile.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "An Obvious Topic" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/an-obvious-topic/>.

See "The Secret To This Romance Author's Success? Breaking All The Rules." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-secret-to-this-romance-authors-success-breaking-all-the-rules-3/>.

See "3 Key Tactics for Crafting Powerful Scenes" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/3-key-tactics-for-crafting-powerful-scenes/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 340 words

Writing of *The Origins of Rider Jones* (novella)

Day 1..... 4293 words. Total words to date..... 4293
Day 2..... 2458 words. Total words to date..... 6751
Day 3..... 3722 words. Total words to date..... 10473
Day 4..... 2144 words. Total words to date..... 12617
Day 5..... 4134 words. Total words to date..... 16751
Day 6..... 0558 words. Total words to date..... 17309 (done)

Total fiction words for April..... 73037
Total fiction words for the year..... 360114
Total nonfiction words for April... 16340
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 83740
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 443854

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Rider Jones is back

April 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Rider Jones is back
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” Winston Churchill

“Fear is a reaction. Courage is a decision.” Winston Churchill

Well, that was a quick hiatus. Rider Jones is back. Apparently the guy wasn't finished telling me his story.

This is a little like *deja vu*. Before I wrote my first novel, *Leaving Amarillo* (chronologically Book 4 in the Wes Crowley series), I'd never imagined writing a western novel of any kind.

But I'd written a western short story titled “Adobe Walls.” That's where I met Wes, in a saloon in [Charleston](#) in southeast Arizona along the San Pedro River. [Another website](#) said “In their heyday, Millville and Charleston had a lawless reputation.”

But a short while after I wrote that short story, Wes tugged on my sleeve and asked why I didn't tell the rest of the story. So I wrote *Leaving Amarillo*, then *Longing for Mexico*, then *South to Mexico* and thought that was the end of it.

But Wes wasn't finished. He wanted to tell me the first part of his story. So I wrote three prequels to *Leaving Amarillo*. Later, the story continued, and I wrote five more novels in that series. The whole thing spanned 60 years or so and it was all about Wes and his friends and antagonists.

And now Rider Jones is starting the same old stuff. Maybe. As always, we'll see. I can only write what I'm given, and frankly I'm a little annoyed. I expected to start the second novel set on the new planet of Terra 2 this morning, the eleventh novel overall of the FOH series.

But when I went looking for now-President Amanda Lowrey (on Terra 2) this morning, she glanced through her window at me, then closed the curtains. Mark Hanson was standing just behind her with his shirt off, so no telling what's going on there right now.

And there was Rider Jones, almost 20 years old, sitting astride his horse Charlie and waving his left hand side to side over his head as he rode north from Agua Oscuro, Sonora, Mexico.

So I saddled up. I have a nice roan stallion I keep in the back of my mind for such occasions. When I caught up, all Rider would tell me is he's going to meet Wes Crowley in this part of his tale. If he does, there's no telling what might happen. But then again, that's what makes this gig so much fun.

Update: Rider did meet up with Wes. For those who have read that series, Rider met Crowley in a saloon in Palominas, Arizona when Wes was headed south in South to Mexico.

Funny how one thing can lead to another. I first met Wes back in 2014. Flash forward to 2021, where I met Rider Jones and wrote a story about him encountering a portal to a different time ("Rider Jones and the Portal"). Dean accepted that story for an anthology and expressed interest in Rider Jones, and now Rider is getting together with Wes. Head shaking.

Here we go again.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Ethics, Integrity & Trust for Writers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/04/ethics-integrity-trust-for-writers.html>.

See "Five Writing Tips We Love to Hate" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/five-writing-tips-we-love-to-hate/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 550 words

Writing of Rider Jones and Wes Crowley (novella or novel)

Day 1..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 3288

Total fiction words for April..... 76325

Total fiction words for the year..... 363402

Total nonfiction words for April... 16890
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 84290
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 447892

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Audio—It’s Not What’s for Breakfast

April 30, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: Audio—It’s not what’s for breakfast.
- * Anything Goes
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Audio—It’s not what’s for breakfast.

I’m gonna go out on a limb here and say that audio, at least in its current iteration, is a fad. I understand it’s all the current rage. Everyone’s talking about how to do it, or how to have it done. But I think it’ll pass.

Not only because I don’t personally listen to audiobooks (I don’t), but because people far more expert and attuned to business than I believe it isn’t cost effective.

Also, this is not the new technology everyone purports it to be. I recorded some of my short stories myself onto CD back in the 1990s. I am not an actor (voice-over or otherwise) and I have not endured professional voice training.

And today I can tell you, if you aren't one or the other and if you're recording your own stories or novels to audio, that's roughly the same thing as an attorney representing himself in court. Except that the attorney probably has a better chance of success.

My own belief in this regard is go big or stay home. I don't do royalty splits (I very zealously defend my copyright) and I would have to be independently wealthy to afford the narrators I'd like for my books. And even if I were, the resulting audio sales wouldn't recoup my investment even in the narrator, much less give me a return on that investment.

Nor has any data shown that audio books drive sales of print books. Ebooks can drive sales of paper books and vice versa, and for a small percentage of readers (or listeners) ebooks and paper books can drive sales of audio. But it doesn't work the other way around.

Of course, as always this is just me thinking out loud. My own reasons for my own decision not to go down that path. Your results might vary.

Anything Goes

Aw crap. Yesterday afternoon I realized I've been doing this writing thing all wrong.

I read about a guy who wrote his very first novel. Got that? A novel. So fiction. Yet he "worked on his manuscript for 33 years."

That's fine. As everyone keeps reminding me, there's more than one way to write a novel. Anything goes. But apparently averaging 16 words per day for 33 years is the right way.

Because his novel was a bestseller right out the gate.

Well, good for him. Lightning strikes do exist, right? But somewhere out there, I absolutely, positively know someone's thinking, "Well if he worked for 33 years on it, of course it's going to be a bestseller." Sigh.

Also yesterday while I was writing along, some 7000 words into the current Rider Jones story, I realized it really is just a straight continuation of the previous one.

I'll continue writing this one as separate since that's how I started it, but when I'm through with it there's a good chance I'll just append it to the end of the other one and make it all one novel.

But when it's time to publish, I think I might tell people I started it back in 1956 or something. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Five-Car Metaphor Pile-Up” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/the-five-car-metaphor-pile-up>.

See “Taskforce set up to tackle Disney’s attempts to weasel out of paying its genre authors” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/taskforce-set-up-to-tackle-disneys-attempts-to-weasel-out-of-paying-its-genre-authors/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of Rider Jones and Wes Crowley (novella or novel)

Day 1..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 3288

Day 2..... 5145 words. Total words to date..... 8433

Total fiction words for April..... 81470

Total fiction words for the year..... 368547

Total nonfiction words for April... 17460

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 84860

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 453407

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Audiobooks](#), [Countercraft](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Standard Writer Think

May 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Standard Writer Think
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

From [The Passive Voice](#), “I try to write two pages a day, every single day until that first draft is done, no matter how terrible those pages are. I rarely use any of those pages later, but it feels good to fill up a blank page.” Author Anjali Enjeti

Yeah, I’m just gonna take off on that quote above. Because unfortunately, it’s Standard Writer Think. If you don’t believe me, look at some of the comments at “[Reader Friday: Your First Novel](#).”

The link is to the actual “article,” because it’s only a paragraph. After you read James Scott Bell’s ridiculous quote and then the paragraph below it, you can click the little comment bubble to the right to read the comments.

But back to the quote above.

“[T]wo pages a day, every single day until that first draft is done, no matter how terrible those pages are.” Seriously?

Okay, first, is [preferred personal pronoun] Enjeti actually BRAGGING about writing two pages per day? That’s only about 500 words, about a half-hour’s work. And this successful author is *bragging* about that? All I can say is I sincerely hope s/he is lying.

Now don’t get me wrong. If you have a day job and kids and a life and two pages per day—around 500 words per day, a half-hour’s effort—is what you can manage, then do that. There’s nothing wrong with that. If you show up every day, or regularly, I applaud you.

But if you’re only going to write two pages a day, surely you could go ahead and make those two pages clean. Then you won’t have to “endeavor to persevere” through numerous rewrites, right?

Everyone knows I have a set daily word-count goal of 4,000 words per day. In “standard page” parlance that would be around 16 pages per day.

But more important than the word count is enjoying the story and writing cleanly as I go. I cycle back after every session to make sure the session is cleanly written.

And on days when I miss my goal (like yesterday) it’s usually because I read over one or more sessions more than one time. Maybe a sentence was bugging me, something about it was just not right. I go over each session until it not only reads the way I want it to, but until it conveys to the reader exactly what I want it to convey. All while keeping my conscious, critical mind *out* of it.

And “I rarely use any of those pages later.” Again, seriously? Then why write them? Simply because “it feels good to fill up a blank page”? Hell, I can fill up a blank page with gibberish like this.

By the way, I added this extra little paragraph just to bring the total of this post up to 500 words.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “In Praise of the Antikythera Mechanism!” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/in-praise-of-the-antikythera-mechanism.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500 words

Writing of Rider Jones and Wes Crowley (novella or novel)

Day 1..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 3288

Day 2..... 5145 words. Total words to date..... 8433

Day 3..... 2732 words. Total words to date..... 11165

Total fiction words for April..... 84202

Total fiction words for the year..... 371279

Total nonfiction words for May... 500

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 85360

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 456639

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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[Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: How Do You Get So Many Ideas?

May 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * PQ Topic: How Do You Get So Many Ideas?
- * The current story
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Anything is possible if you’ve got enough nerve.” J.K. Rowling via The Passive Voice

“The best way to improve your ability to think is to spend time thinking.” Farnam Street blog, in an article titled “How to Think: The Skill You’ve Never Been Taught.”

It dawns on me that at one time, university was where one went to be taught how to think. Now university is where students are taught what to think.

PQ Topic: How Do You Get So Many Ideas?

Today I’m presenting the first in what will probably be a series of PQ Topics. The PQ stands for Prevalent Questions, those questions writers ask that never seem to go away.

In these posts, I’ll discuss how I respond to PQs from writers and would-be writers and/or how I handle the question in my own writing. I hope some of you will find this interesting. If you’d like me to talk about a particular PQ, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

The prevalent topic question for today is “How do you get so many ideas?”

Cause: This is a direct result of thinking ideas are golden. And it’s silly.

I’m not going to presume anything. I’m going to start with a big IF:

IF you write regularly—IF “writer” is who you are, meaning writing is what you do—then story ideas really are a dime a million. You’re probably overwhelmed with them. And if you are, good for you. Like me, you probably stopped writing them down long ago (mostly) because you know another one’s coming along the queue.

Story ideas often occur to me even while I’m actually clacking away at the keys, writing the current story. And this is not something that is unique to me. Every professional writer I know or know-of has written about being deluged with ideas.

In fact, while I was working on my current project yesterday or the day before, I an idea for the 12th novel in the Wes Crowley series occurred to me.

I've long wanted to round out that series at a dozen novels, but I couldn't figure out what to write about. Meaning I felt in my bones (the quiet little creative voice) the story wasn't quite complete, but I wasn't sure what was missing.

Well, it simply wasn't time for me to know, I guess. But the idea came to me a day or two ago. And yes, I scribbled a note about it (at the bottom of the reverse outline for my current WIP), something I don't usually do.

Usually when ideas occur, I hardly notice them. If I do notice, I think Oh, that would be cool, and then I let it go. Because chances are there will be a dozen more right behind it. That happens to me pretty much all day every day. Again, because "writer" is who/what I am and writing is what I do.

In fact, if you are NOT overwhelmed with ideas, if I were asked to guess (and if I cared) I would assume you are either a would-be writer or a writer who hasn't yet established a regular writing routine. That or you're trapped deep in the myths, still wondering where other writers get all those ideas.

And I have to talk a little about writing into the dark here, because WITD requires me to trust my creative subconscious. But that's how I exercise my idea muscle. Every single day. Just as I trust my creative subconscious, my creative subconscious also trusts me.

See, my creative subconscious KNOWS if it gives me an idea, there's a good chance I'll actually write the story or novel from it. So it keeps the ideas coming.

Yet I regularly see even professional writers at various places on the internet asking "How do you get so many ideas?" or "Where do you get all those ideas?" or some other version.

And my honest response—when I feel I can BE honest with them (which, frankly, is not often), when I don't suspect I'll get dogpiled on and shouted down because I'm not parroting the same old timeworn crap—is always, "How do you not?"

Seriously. If you read and if you write, how do you not get flooded with story ideas?

But let me try to be helpful: If you are not flooded with story ideas, and if you want to be, just trust me on this: Establish a regular reading and writing habit. The ideas will come. Tons of them. I guarantee it. If they don't, write me and I'll give you some of mine.

The current story is writing along just fine. For me personally it's a blast meeting and getting to know the young Rider Jones. Despite his youth, he's intelligent and attentive of older, wiser people around him. He reminds me a lot of Wes Crowley, and that can only be a good thing.

I should be back tomorrow with another PQ: "How do you know which story idea to write?"

Talk with you again then.

Of Interest

See “Tips For Formatting Your Book” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/tips-for-formatting-your-book.html>. Take this with a grain of salt. Formatting and publishing needs cost you nothing but a little time.

See “Moore’s Law for Everything” at <https://moores.samaltman.com/>. Long, but maybe worth the time. A thoughtful look at the future.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 910 words

Writing of Rider Jones and Wes Crowley (novella or novel)

Day 1..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 3288

Day 2..... 5145 words. Total words to date..... 8433

Day 3..... 2732 words. Total words to date..... 11165

Day 4..... 4092 words. Total words to date..... 15257

Total fiction words for May..... 4092

Total fiction words for the year..... 375371

Total nonfiction words for May... 1410

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 86270

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 461641

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Farnam Street](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: How do you know which story idea to write?

May 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * PQ Topic: How do you know which story idea to write?
- * The novel continues
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There’s nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein.” Ernest Hemingway

“It is only when you open your veins and bleed onto the page a little that you establish contact with your reader.” Paul Gallico

“Writing is easy. You just open a vein and bleed.” Walter Wellesley “Red” Smith

“Writing is easy. All you do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood from on your forehead.” Gene Fowler

“No wonder so many writers spew the ‘sweating blood’ line. Of all the jobs in the world, we have one of the cushiest and certainly one of the most personally rewarding. Hence, the emotional need by so many of us to be ‘tormented’ by our work. It’s a justification.” Dan Baldwin

PQ Topic: How do you know which story idea to write?

Today’s Prevalent Question fits hand in glove with yesterday’s [How Do You Get So Many Ideas?](#): How do you know which story idea to write? I’ve seen this question a lot lately. But like yesterday, I know the reason behind this one too.

Cause: This question is a direct result of writers thinking everything we write has to be “special.”

Let me talk briefly about that myth first.

As I’ve said here many times, if you’re a writer, THAT you write is all-important. But WHAT you write is not important at all.

To you, what you produce might be anything from your special baby to just another story or novel. But to the reader, it’s nothing more than a few minutes’ (short story) or a few hours’ (novel) entertainment for your readers. That’s all. Nothing else.

Yet all over the internet, from Kill Zone blog to Writer Unboxed to Writers Helping Writers and elsewhere, I see the question pop up: Which story idea do you write? Or How do you choose which story idea to write?

My answer is simple: Write the idea that comes. Just sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write it. Yes, unless your fingers are in casts, it really is that easy.

I also hear a variation on the question: How do you tell a short story idea from a novel idea?

I know the result of the particular story idea I had a couple of days ago about the 12th book in the Wes Crowley series will turn into a novel.

But in my experience, knowing what form the story will take (short or long) is a rare occurrence. Most often in my own practice, I don't have a clue how long the story will be when I start it. I simply let it unfold and trust it and let it be whatever length it's going to be. Stories are very good at determining their own length. Your job is to trust it and go with it.

In fact, harkening back to yesterday, one very good way to both become deluged with story ideas AND choose which ones to write is to get in the habit of writing a story at least once a week. If you want to write two a week, or three, or five, even better.

Again, if you trust your creative subconscious it will also come to trust you, and it will give you more story ideas.

Why is writing one or more short stories per week a good practice? Because if you start writing short stories, some of them will want to become novellas or novels.

And really, the only difference is that a short story is about One Event. The novella is about a few events, and the novel is about more than a few. That's it. That's all.

Even when a particular short story doesn't take off and run to a novella or novel, it might inform a novella or novel, and lead to it in that way.

I mentioned a few days ago how a stand-alone short story I wrote called "Adobe Walls" soon led to a novel, then a trilogy, then three prequels, then five sequels and eventually became the (currently) 11-volume Wes Crowley saga. That approximately 600,000 word saga all started with a little 6,000 word short story. It all came about because I trusted my creative subconscious and wrote "Adobe Walls."

And I've had other short stories that either turned into novels or led me to write novels. The novella I recently finished and the novella or novel I'm working on right now came from the 4,000 word short story "Rider Jones and the Portals."

And so it goes. Not only does the creative subconscious make the story work (if you trust it to do so), it makes YOUR life-story as a writer work from story to story to story.

This is the truth, folks. This isn't the same old regurgitated crap you read all across the internet on the "boards" (whatever those are) and the more popular writer websites.

The novel continues to run. I had a couple of necessary interruptions yesterday, so I didn't get quite as much done as I wanted to. But that's why they make tomorrows.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Hospice: Heartbroken" at <https://leelofland.com/hospice-heartbroken/>. Please give if you are able.

See "Two Days Left in Workshop Sale" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/two-days-left-in-workshop-sale/>.

See "Titles and Comp Titles — How To Find the Best Ones For Your Book" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/titles-and-comp-titles-how-to-find-the-best-ones-for-your-book.html>. Just so you know up front (from about halfway through the article), "Comp titles are books that are similar to yours."

See "10 Tips for Choosing the Right Title for Your Book" at <https://annerallen.com/2016/10/book-titles-10-tips-choose-right-title/>.

See "The Appeals and Perils of the One-Word Book Title" at <https://themillions.com/2012/05/the-appeals-and-perils-of-the-one-word-book-title.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 970 words

Writing of Rider Jones and Wes Crowley (novel)

Day 1..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 3288
Day 2..... 5145 words. Total words to date..... 8433
Day 3..... 2732 words. Total words to date..... 11165
Day 4..... 4092 words. Total words to date..... 15257
Day 5..... 2537 words. Total words to date..... 17794

Total fiction words for May..... 6629
Total fiction words for the year..... 377908
Total nonfiction words for May... 2380
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 87240
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 465148

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	7
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Million](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: On the Use of “Blue” or “Bad” Language

May 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The novel continues, combined
- * Topic: On the Use of “Blue” or “Bad” Language
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
 Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
 Is my destroyer.
 And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
 My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.” Dylan Thomas

Appropos of nothing, this is probably my favorite poem of all time.

“It is a good rule in life never to apologize. The right sort of people do not want apologies, and the wrong sort take a mean advantage of them.” P.G. Wodehouse

The novel continues, combined

I decided to go ahead and combine the earlier (unpublished) novella with the novel I'm writing now since the first leads directly into the latter and since combining them has been nagging at me for a few days.

You'll see that reflected in today's numbers below and in the list of days. The novella took 6 days to write, so I started the renumbering with Day 7. I necessarily lost maybe 100 words during the transition.

Topic: On the Use of "Blue" or "Bad" Language

In "Of Interest" today is an article on the pros and cons of using profanity in fiction.

I didn't leave a comment. As a writer, my first thought was If you're still controlling what your characters do and say, you have bigger problems to worry about than what what specific words are used.

(By the way, I use the quotation marks around "blue" and "bad" because I personally believe language as a whole is there to be used. In other words, I think the whole argument is silly.

Especially in this day of "triggers," whether and what language is considered "blue" or "bad" is determined by the reader, and in my world, intent carries a great deal more weight than perception.)

In fiction, language is either appropriate to the situation or it's unnecessary and gratuitous, and which it is is not a matter of opinion. If I stumble across gratuitous "bad" language as a reader, I usually laugh, then close the book and find something else to do. But I do the same thing when the writer hasn't done the work to pull me into the fictional world.

There are no "blue" words or "bad" language in my narrative, even when I use first person narration. In dialogue—well, among its many uses, dialogue also reveals the character of the character, doesn't it?

My characters don't curse often, but when the situation is appropriate they might. If they do, I write it down. By way of example,

Say a Texas Ranger in the 1880s finds he's arrived a moment too late to get his love interest off the street during a Comanche raid and finds her arrow-riddled body lying face down (scene). I'm not going to apologize to some reader because the Ranger dismounts and, as he walks over to lift her lifeless body in his arms, he quietly mutters, "Damn it."

In the article, the author wrote, "I was sort of impressed that she took the time to count all the bad words."

My immediate thought was that if a reader is counting the number of times I use "damn" (or "that" or "which" or any other word) in my story, I should have written the story better. I should

have written the story in such a way that it pulled the reader irretrievably into that world, a place where she might have said or thought “damn” herself.

If you’re attuned to such triggers and if you write into the dark, I suggest doing what I do. During cycling I read for pleasure. If any word—or construction, for that matter—draws attention to itself so strongly that it pulls me from the story, I replace it or fix it.

Of course if you use some other technique for writing, then during the critique-group stage or editing or revision or during one of however many rewrites, you can sanitize everything.

As a writer, I simply write what I’m given. But even as a reader about to step into a garden, I’d much rather go into the garden knowing there at least might be a rattlesnake lurking (and one that’s allowed to rattle and hiss when he feels like it) than one in which only butterflies and beautiful flowers reside.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “27 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://authorspublish.com/27-themed-submissions-calls-for-may-2021/>.

See “The Pros and Cons of Using Profanity In Your Stories” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/the-pros-and-cons-of-using-profanity-in-your-stories.html>.

See “The difference between children’s and adult books” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-difference-between-childrens-and-adult-books/>.

See “The Candidate from Yale” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-candidate-from-yale/>. Elegantly written.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790 words

Writing of Rider Jones (novel)

the novella brought forward..... 17309 words

Day 7..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 20597

Day 8..... 5145 words. Total words to date..... 25742

Day 9..... 2732 words. Total words to date..... 28474

Day 10... 4092 words. Total words to date..... 32566

Day 11... 2537 words. Total words to date..... 35103

Day 12... 2813 words. Total words to date..... 37916

Total fiction words for May.....	9442
Total fiction words for the year.....	380721
Total nonfiction words for May...	3170
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	88030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	468751
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	7
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Bitter Mountain Moonlight

May 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Bitter Mountain Moonlight is out!
- * The novel continues
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Bitter Mountain Moonlight is out!

Not a lot to talk about today. But hey, if anyone out there would like to see Bitter Mountain Moonlight, the Cave Creek anthology containing my short story, “Rider Jones and the Portal,” you can read about it at <https://www.wmgpublishinginc.com/project/bitter-mountain-moonlight-a-cave-creek-anthology/>.

Amazon’s Cave Creek series page is at <https://amzn.to/3gW3tyO>.

You can also find links to every book retailer where the ebook is available using this universal link: <https://books2read.com/u/4ERdXz>. (Amazon wasn’t there yet as of this morning.)

If you couldn't tell, I'm very proud of this story. Not to mention it's the story that spawned the novel I'm working on now. (grin)

The novel continues to go well, plugging along at a few thousand words per day. No end in sight, yet I feel like it might wrap in the next few days. At the moment I'm thinking of writing the 12th and final volume of the Wes Crowley saga when this one is finished. That will take a major time leap forward in the life of Rider Jones. And of course leave a lot of room for more novels about his life between the two events.

For some reason I dropped off of David Farland's subscriber list to his writing tips. I've corrected that and am playing catch-up in "Of Interest" below.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "THE 2021 WRITE STUFF STORYBUNDLE" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-2021-write-stuff-storybundle/>.

See "Appealing to the Senses" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/appealing-to-the-senses/>. (I added this one to put the series together.)

See "Appealing to the Senses, Part 2" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/appealing-to-the-senses-part-2-2/>.

See "Appealing to the Senses, Part 3" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/appealing-to-the-senses-part-3/>.

See "What Makes A Good Author Newsletter?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/what-makes-a-good-author-newsletter.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 290 words

Writing of Rider Jones (novel)

the novella brought forward..... 17309 words

Day 7..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 20597

Day 8..... 5145 words. Total words to date..... 25742

Day 9..... 2732 words. Total words to date..... 28474

Day 10... 4092 words. Total words to date..... 32566

Day 11... 2537 words. Total words to date..... 35103

Day 12... 2813 words. Total words to date..... 37916

Day 13... 3925 words. Total words to date..... 41841

Total fiction words for May.....	13367
Total fiction words for the year.....	384646
Total nonfiction words for May... 3460	
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	88320
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	472966
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	7
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	60
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Bitter Mountain Moonlight](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [WMG Publishing](#)

The Journal: Nada

May 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Nada
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Wow, really nothing to talk about today.

I mentioned yesterday that I believe the novel is nearing completion, though the end is not yet in sight. That might also be wishful thinking. Not that I’m tired of it at all, but my creative subconscious has become accustomed to novels wrapping in about two weeks, so....

And sometimes, when a novel’s running but getting close to the end, the other stuff in the Journal seems to dwindle.

Anyway, I posted today mostly to get the “Of Interest” items below out to you. So here they are.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Building Your Mailing List” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-building-your-mailing-list/>.

See “On Editing Your Novel ” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/on-editing-your-novel/>.

See “How to Make Aliens and Robots Fight Better” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-make-aliens-and-robots-fight-better/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 140 words

Writing of Rider Jones (novel)

the novella brought forward..... 17309 words

Day 7..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 20597

Day 8..... 5145 words. Total words to date..... 25742

Day 9..... 2732 words. Total words to date..... 28474

Day 10... 4092 words. Total words to date..... 32566

Day 11... 2537 words. Total words to date..... 35103

Day 12... 2813 words. Total words to date..... 37916

Day 13... 3925 words. Total words to date..... 41841

Day 14... 4212 words. Total words to date..... 46053

Total fiction words for May..... 17579

Total fiction words for the year..... 388858

Total nonfiction words for May... 3600

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 88460

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 477318

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 60

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Rider Jones Wrapped

May 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Rider Jones Wrapped
- *
- *
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“PG suggests that electronic books and digital commerce in physical books (for people who still want them) is inherently superior to the business model of the physical bookstore.” The Passive Voice

Rider Jones Wrapped

Well, the novel wrapped yesterday, and it wrapped so hard I could barely see there for a little while. Does a scene in your writing ever sneak up on you emotionally like that? I both hope so and hope not, and both for your sake.

And yes, I'm as surprised as anyone else that it wrapped so soon after I was unable to sense the ending at all at the start of the day.

To say that things happen quickly and often unexpectedly in my head is an understatement. And that understatement is only exacerbated by the fact that it's the characters' (not my) story and that they (not I) are the ones living it and making good (and bad) decisions in that world.

I'm not exaggerating when I say that often it's all I can do to keep up as I and the characters race through the story. More often, I fudge and play catch up during the cycling session when the characters take pity on me and languish, waiting for me to finish recording what's been done so far.

Anyway, after the novel wrapped I took a break, then cycled through the last few chapters. Then I ran a spell check, sent it out to my first readers and took the rest of the day off. I might take today off too, and maybe tomorrow. I need to think a little about what I want to write next.

I could continue the Rider Jones series (not probable at the moment). Or I could return to Terra 2 to write Book 11 in the SF Future of Humanity (FOH) series. Or I could check in on Blackwell Ops and write Book 8 in that series. Or I could write Book 12 in the Wes Crowley saga and finish that one off. Or I could write something else.

If you're stuck for ideas for some reason and any of the above appeal to you, I'm amenable to letting others write in my worlds. If you're interested, just email me.

Oh. My wife asked yesterday whether this novel was the start of a new series. My only answer is probably.

This novel spans the first 21 years of Rider Jones' life. But Rider's already in his late 30s or early 40s in the short story included in [Bitter Mountain Moonlight](#), so that leaves a lot of room for adventures in the time span between those two writings and after the short story. So I guess we'll see.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "5 Paying Literary Markets to Submit to in May 2021" at <https://authorspublish.com/5-paying-literary-markets-to-submit-to-in-may-2021/>.

See "14 Ways Authors Express Gratitude" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/14-ways-authors-express-gratitude/>.

See "What's in a Bookstore?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/whats-in-a-bookstore/>. See PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500 words

Writing of Rider Jones (novel)

the novella brought forward..... 17309 words

Day 7..... 3288 words. Total words to date..... 20597
Day 8..... 5145 words. Total words to date..... 25742
Day 9..... 2732 words. Total words to date..... 28474
Day 10... 4092 words. Total words to date..... 32566
Day 11... 2537 words. Total words to date..... 35103
Day 12... 2813 words. Total words to date..... 37916
Day 13... 3925 words. Total words to date..... 41841
Day 14... 4212 words. Total words to date..... 46053
Day 15... 4083 words. Total words to date..... 50136 (done)

Total fiction words for May.....	21662
Total fiction words for the year.....	392941
Total nonfiction words for May... 4100	
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	88960
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	481901
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

***Disclaimer:** In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.*

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Cycling](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A New Writing Process to Try

May 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * A New Writing Process to Try
- * The Reviews Begin
- * I wish I could share
- * Yesterday
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A New Writing Process to Try

A writer (and a reader of the Journal) sent me an email I wanted to pass along:

“I just came across the approach/process of method writing as taught by Jack Grapes and would like to share it with you, if you haven’t heard of it already. It seems quite interesting and worth considering. I have included two interviews he has on the FilmCourage YouTube channel below.” (Thanks, Bob B.)

You can see the first video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vpd9DJLz7hA>.

You can find the second at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1AK1Vd9kfU>.

As I told Bob B. in my response, I'll probably take a look over the next few days to see whether I can glean a few gems that hadn't occurred to me before. I'm pretty constantly learning.

Originally, at this point, I wrote the following. I've since listened to the first video, will listen to the second today, and be back tomorrow with my honest assessment:

But what really matters is not what I think of the process but what all of you who are reading this think of it. If you don't have a process that works for you—and by that I mean if writing is anything from an unenjoyable, labor-intensive process to sheer drudgery for you—and if you don't want to try writing into the dark, then I suggest you try this. But if you try it, really try it. Give it a chance to work for you.

Not to sound like a snot, but I'm certain I won't be interested enough to actually try it myself. After all, with my own current process I enjoy my own possible best of two worlds. I write into the dark, so for me fiction writing is nothing short of exciting, ecstatic fun of the kind you get when you ride a roller coaster. And with WITD I can turn out a high-quality short story in a few hours and a high-quality novel in two weeks. So I have no reason to look for or experiment with another way to write.

But if you do try Mr. Grapes' process and it works well for you, be sure to let me know and I'll help spread the word. What works for you really is all that matters.

If it doesn't work for you, no need to email me. I'm not recommending Mr. Grapes' process. I'm only forwarding the information so you can try it and see whether it works for you.

UPDATE: As I wrote above, I've listened to the first video. I'll listen to the other one as well, and I'll be back tomorrow with my honest assessment.

The reviews begin for Rider Jones, the novel.

One first reader, who read the novel in one sitting (woohoo!), wrote that Rider Jones is

“a very interesting, very engaging, and very well-crafted story [and] that's what I've come to expect of your work.

“[Y]ou have a most impressive talent for describing not only what [the characters] do but also where they do it. [E]ven if I weren't already familiar with the look and feel of the landscapes of the Sonoran desert (or, for that matter, the backwoods of southern Louisiana: I read The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place just last night before reading Rider Jones tonight), I believe your descriptions pertaining to them would still have evoked mental images every bit as accurate as I know them to be from my own personal observations. There is ... a cinematic quality to your writing, and I particularly like that the final frames do not say 'The End'.”

Thank you, Russ J. I appreciate it. I have got to have a beer with this guy someday. (grin)

When I put Rider Jones up on Amazon and Draft2Digital later this month (in a week or so), I'll run a sale on it for the first month, and I'll announce that here. If you enjoy westerns with a time-travel twist and being in the story with the characters, you'll enjoy Rider Jones. Please let your friends know.

I wish I could share, but I can't.

By the way, I've had several folks mention they would love to see "Rider Jones and the Portals," the short story I wrote for Dean's anthology, Bitter Mountain Moonlight.

Under the contract, I can't openly share the story for three months (so sometime in August), but the anthology is only \$5.99 at Amazon (<https://amzn.to/3gW3tyO>) and other retailers (<https://books2read.com/u/4ERdXz>).

I urge you to support WMG Publishing and the other authors in the anthology. And there are two other anthologies and a short novel in the Cave Creek shared-world realm too. You can read about all of them at the Amazon link above.

Yesterday I didn't write at all. Well, I didn't write fiction. Well, I *did* clean up the Rider Jones novel just a little and tied up one minor loose end, but I counted those words in the totals from the day before yesterday. The novel is now just over 50,100 words.

But with my wife's help, we cleaned out the large open bay next door to the Hovel, and then I worked the rest of the day rearranging and straightening the Hovel. Originally I wrote here that I hope to finish moving and placing furniture, etc. today and get back to my day job of writing fiction on Sunday. But there's a lot left to do, and it isn't going to happen in one day. So more than likely I'll start the next novel today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Announcing Plot to Publication – Young Adult Novel Writing" at <https://authorspublish.thinkific.com/courses/plot-to-publication-young-adult-novel-writing-with-emily-colin-may-2021>.

See "How Gravity Is a Double Copy of Other Forces" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/how-gravity-is-a-double-copy-of-other-forces-20210504/>.

See "Vella and Serialized Fiction – What Do You Think?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/vella-and-serialized-fiction-what-do-you-think.html>.

See "Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 1" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-1/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 980 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for May..... 21662

Total fiction words for the year..... 392941

Total nonfiction words for May... 5080

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 89940

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 482881

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Reader Taste vs. Writer Skill

May 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Well, Not a New Writing Process
- * Topic: Reader Taste vs. Writer Skill
- * If anyone else encountered a problem
- * Yesterday
- * I've decided
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Well, *Not* a New Writing Process

Sorry about that. I labeled what I passed along to you yesterday “a new writing process.” It wasn’t.

I watched/listened to both videos. Well, all of the first one and the first few minutes of the second one. I want to say the videos contain a lot of filler, among which the “real” information is scattered. Unfortunately, I can’t even go that far. There was no “real” information. It was all fluff.

As a writing instructor, I’m a nuts and bolts kind of guy, not a “teaser” kind of guy. I respect writers who look to me for information, so I don’t pad my instruction to draw it out, and I don’t like it when others do. If this sounds negative or even harsh, well, so be it.

My takeaways:

1. I didn’t learn anything I didn’t know before, and it wasn’t because I made my writing bones as a poet. It’s because I’m a human being with ears, lips, vocal chords, lungs and a tongue. I listen and I speak (write), and in speaking and writing I use all the different “voices” or “tonalities” Mr. Grapes mentions in his discussion. And maybe a few others too.

2. What he deems all-important (“Writers Only Have To Know These 5 Basic Voices”), I see as just another aspect of writing. And really it’s a minor aspect at that. It’s far from the only thing writers have to know. These voices or tonalities are not even aspects in their own right really so much as lesser parts of other aspects of writing (characterization, setting, dialogue, narrative, etc.).

3. “Method writing” (a play on method acting) is not a writing process at all. It isn’t a way in which to go about putting new words on the page. It’s a focus on one aspect of writing, and really, a fairly minor aspect. It’s primary focus is to attract those who are addicted to learning about writing instead of actually writing.

These “5 Basic Voices” are also things of which you should already be aware, in fact if not in name, and I’m betting most of you are. You might not know his labels for them and you might not have called them “tonalities,” but so what?

Here they are: your own voice (whatever that means); chit-chat (seemingly unending dialogue); an elevated, “poetic” voice; the use of repetition; and stream of consciousness. Did any of you not already know about these?

The bottom line: Based on how the guy strung me along in the first video alone, I would not buy his book. I would expect only more of the same.

A quick note here: In my opinion, the fact that I didn’t hang around for the full second video was the fault of the speaker. He was spewing more of the same old stuff, so I left. Had he gotten into specifics, and if I hadn’t had to dig those specifics out of the weeds of verbiage, I might have hung around.

I hold myself (and all other instructors) to a certain standard: that we are attempting to teach something of actual use. My non-fiction is all nuts-and-bolts, with no filler and no fluff. If you want to learn the things I teach, you can trust that you won't find an excess in my books and audio lectures.

Which leads me to a brief topic.

Topic: Reader Taste vs. Writer Skill

I also hold myself and all other fiction writers to that same standard and responsibility in fiction.

If my short story or novel is in your chosen genre, yet you can voluntarily put it down and go find something else to do, that's my fault as the author, not your fault as the reader. Either I didn't pull you deeply enough into the fictional world or I didn't do so quickly enough and then hold you there. Shrug. So you left.

Some believe this effect goes to reader taste. I do not.

I believe "the reader put down my book because it wasn't to his taste" is a copout. I believe reader taste goes to things like genre. Beyond that, if a reader sets aside a story or novel for which he has already paid good money, that's the writer's fault. Otherwise, what incentive do you have to improve? You can remain a Stage 1 or Stage 2 writer and complain that your stories simply aren't to anyone's "taste." Likewise, if the readers continue to read, that's also the writer's fault. The writer has drawn the reader into the story and held him there.

I also believe all writers are (or can be) at different skill levels in different genres and subgenres (like "hard" science fiction vs. science fantasy or "soft" science fiction, for example).

For example, I see no reason why any reader who enjoys westerns would ever put down any of my westerns. Likewise with my action-adventure books, especially those that involve combat or a war.

On the other hand, some readers might put down some of my mystery stories because they might not hit all the buttons for mystery readers. (Strictly my fault—the buttons are there to study, but I haven't mastered the form yet. Sometimes I hit the buttons for some readers and sometimes I don't.)

Some others might put down my SF because, for example, I didn't remain strictly true to the laws of physics (when I'm writing science fantasy) or the scenes/settings/descriptions weren't "science fictiony" enough. (I get that sometimes, and I'm not offended in the slightest.)

The point is, it's up to the writer to do everything he can to draw the reader into the story and then hold him there. It is not the reader's responsibility to "hang in there" when the writer repeatedly allows him to surface from the story or never pulls him into it in the first place.

Here's the generic, works-every-time formula for a successful story of any length:

1. To begin a story, you need only a character with a problem in a setting. The problem doesn't have to be "the" problem of the story. It might be something as simple as an untied shoelace or a locked door the character expected to be unlocked.

2. To pull the reader into the story or "ground" him, you only need to invoke the reader's empathy by recording the POV character's physical and emotional senses.

3. To keep the reader in the story and keep him reading, you need a cliffhanger of some sort at the end of each major scene or chapter and a corresponding hook at the beginning of the next.

4. And then ground the reader again with the POV character's physical and emotional senses and continue the story to the next cliffhanger/hook combination. Rinse and repeat.

Naturally, you also have to fulfill the reader's expectations by hitting the appropriate buttons or touchstones of your genre or subgenre along the way. But you can NEVER add too much sensory detail from the POV character, even aside from the initial grounding at the beginning of the major scene or chapter.

In just the sense of hearing alone, the western POV character won't notice the sound of his own saddle creaking as he rides, but he will definitely notice the sound of another saddle creaking nearby unexpectedly.

The action-adventure (or other) POV character usually won't notice the sound of his own weapon being cocked as he cocks it, but he will definitely notice the sound of his opponent's weapon being cocked. And so on.

In the midst of action, any POV character will notice tightly focused sights, smells, sounds, etc. that he might not notice if he was only walking through the room. These are some of the sensory details the writer includes not to ground the reader in the scene but to keep him grounded in the scene, to enable him to experience the scene along with the character.

If you begin with a character with a problem in a setting, if you ground the reader with sensory detail from the POV character, and if you employ cliffhangers and hooks, you will be successful as a fiction writer. Well, if you do those things and trust your characters.

That's probably enough for today.

If anyone else encountered a problem trying to leave a comment on Steve Hooley's "Serialized Fiction and Vella – What Do You Think?" (in yesterday's "Of Interest"), that problem has now been rectified. And there are some good comments at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/vella-and-serialized-fiction-what-do-you-think.html#comments>.

Yesterday I took another day off, sort of. I spent most of the day reading the 11th novel in the Wes Crowley series, titled *In the Cantina at Noon*. I wanted to get it fresh in my mind in case my next novel is the 12th in the series. A thoroughly enjoyable experience. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “7 Tips For Producing More Words” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/7-tips-for-producing-more-words.html>. You know my take. This is a maybe valuable alternative for those of you who do not WITD.

See “99 Additional Bits of Unsolicited Advice” at <https://kk.org/thetechnium/99-additional-bits-of-unsolicited-advice/>.

See “An Apology from the Desk of Duncan Ralston” at <https://www.duncanralston.com/post/an-apology-from-the-desk-of-duncan-ralston>. Or “Why Harvey Uses First Readers” (grin).

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1550 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for May..... 21662

Total fiction words for the year..... 392941

Total nonfiction words for May... 6630

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 91490

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 484431

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Duncan Ralston](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Technium](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Analysis Paralysis

May 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Wes Crowley Rides Again
- * Topic: Analysis Paralysis
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

When you doubt your importance as a writer compared with editors and publishers, remember this brief one-sided conversation I had with a major NY acquisitions editor who seemed a little full of himself a few years ago at the Tucson, AZ writers' conference:

I said, "Know what writers would do if there were no editors or publishers?"

He shook his head.

I said, "We'd write. But do you know what editors and publishers would do if there were no writers?"

Again he shook his head.

I grinned. "Want fries with that?"

Wes Crowley Rides Again

This morning I started the 12th novel in the Wes Crowley saga. It was a slow start, not because it was difficult (At All) but because I'm enjoying it so much, savoring it.

I was telling a friend this one probably will take longer than my usual two weeks or so to write because I won't want it to end. So while I'm writing this one I won't be worrying as much about my daily word count goal and all that. Just loving the process.

Topic: Analysis Paralysis

Another writer friend used a term I hadn't heard in awhile. Said he had to get over his analysis paralysis.

Initially I told him a lot of us have been there. I certainly have. And the only way I got over it was to hold my breath and just type whatever came. Then I wrote the next sentence and the next and the next. I'm aware that sounds too simple to work, but it does. Forcing yourself to take the leap and trust yourself is the hard part.

But I didn't really 'learn' to trust myself over time, and I don't really think that would work. I mean, consider—in order to 'learn' to trust yourself over time, you have to accept that you don't trust yourself over that same period of time. And really, why?

So in order to give WITD a real test, I 'decided' to trust myself, come what may.

i had to beat back various fears more times than I can count, but I always clung to that decision, and now WITD (trusting myself and knowing THAT I write is far more important than WHAT I write) is second nature to me.

But my friend's email caused me to think about something else. Most writers I know have been hugely successful in other endeavors. Doctors, lawyers, police officers. University professors, carpenters. One guy in Tucson owned a successful carpeting and flooring store.

In all of those endeavors, with one misstep the person could have lost everything. They could have lost their license and/or the right to practice. They could have even gone bankrupt, etc. Yet they trusted themselves to rely on what they'd learned in the past as if it were instinct. And that's key.

As I wrote my friend, the point is, you've probably trusted yourself and been successful in other areas of life, so why not trust yourself in writing? Especially since in writing there are no repercussions. Zero. You have absolutely nothing to lose.

Writing is Just Writing. Stories are Just Stories. What one reader likes another reader won't.

And what a reader likes or doesn't like is none of your business anyway. You can't control who likes your stories and who doesn't. You can't control how many people buy your novels. The only thing you can control is 1) whether you write and 2) whether you keep learning and improving at storytelling. Because as a writer, your business, your sole focus, is to tell stories.

Then another thought occurred. I'm always talking about writing being fun, and it is. As I wrote earlier, it isn't that I don't have any fear of the unknown; it's that I repeatedly overcome that fear by trusting myself to write the next sentence. (And reminding myself that there really are no real repercussions.)

But I know at least one person (a Stage 1 writer) who literally labors over every word and sentence. She was a student who actually walked out of one of my live seminars on WITD. She literally put up her hands, said, "I'm sorry, I can't do this," and walked out.

When I talked with her later, she dismissed out of hand my notion that what's 'perfect' to her will be flawed to another reader.

Whereas most of us write around 1000 words per hour (17 words per minute), she writes maybe 100 or 200 words per day, if that. But according to her, they're perfect words, perfect sentences.

I never was able to convince her to trust herself, to know that she could reach that same level of ‘near perfection’ by WITD and letting the characters tell the story.

To her, laboring over every word is how she likes to spend her day. Or at least she’s convinced herself it is. And that’s fine. Hey, whatever works.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The New Holy Grail of Traditional Publishers: Direct-to-Reader Relationships” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/holy-grail-grail-of-trade-publishers-direct-to-reader-relationships/>. Hmm, sounds familiar. Oh yeah. Like indie publishing. (grin)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089

Total fiction words for May..... 24751

Total fiction words for the year..... 396030

Total nonfiction words for May... 7490

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 92350

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 488380

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Jane Friedman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Again I got a question

May 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Traditional Publishing Sometimes?
- * Again I got a question
- * The novel
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Traditional Publishing Sometimes?

A few days ago, Dan Baldwin mentioned in his weekly blog that sometimes traditional publication is preferable. You can find his Tips of the Week on his website at <https://fourknightspress.com/>.

If I'd written a children's book, I might want to go the traditional route. If that's you, if you write children's books, you might want to check out "57 Children's Book Publishers that Accept Direct Submissions" at <https://authorspublish.com/57-childrens-book-publishers-seeking-submissions/>. As always, of course, read the fine print carefully.

There are also a couple of first-page critiques offered over at the Kill Zone blog (in "Of Interest"). Though I don't generally recommend submitting work to critique groups, I recommend glancing over these to glean any gems they might drop that you might find useful in your own writing.

Again I got a question about why I talk so much about writing into the dark, especially when it flies in the face of so much conventional "wisdom."

Well, because it's freeing. It enables the practitioner to stop living with unreasoning fear, or at least to repeatedly overcome that fear. Aside from that, I can only say I'm an excited convert.

I used to do all that other stuff: outlining, consciously thinking my way word by word and sentence by sentence through what I was writing, submitting partial manuscripts or outlines to critique groups, etc.

I can't honestly say I ever really rewrote any of my fiction, though I did revise outlines as if my life depended on it. But I never rewrote because I never produced anything in the first place. By the time I got to the point of actually writing the story I was bored with it because I'd already written it in the form of an outline.

I don't know what else to say except that WITD works for me and I know it can work for anyone else who decides to try it and then resolves to stick to that decision. I guess I am to fiction writing and WITD what Saul/Paul was to christianity.

I am also honest, and melodramatic as it might sound, I can only profess what I know personally to be true.

That said, everything's up to the individual writer.

The novel is racing right along, even with me having to check back in earlier novels to be sure I have the right name or a character's correct physical attributes, age, etc. I think I've never had more fun writing a novel than I'm having in writing this one. And that's going some. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Gabagool and Malpropisms: Dialogue Lessons from The Sopranos" at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/gabagool-and-malpropisms-dialogue>.

See "First Page Critique – A Jealous God" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/first-page-critique-a-jealous-god.html>.

See "First Page Critique: The Meaning of Life" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/first-page-critique-the-meaning-of-life.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 480 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089

Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960

Total fiction words for May..... 28622

Total fiction words for the year..... 399901

Total nonfiction words for May... 7970

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 92830

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 492731

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: If I May Share

May 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * If I may share
- * A Special Treat
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

If I may share something near and dear to my heart and on the edge of personal, this will pertain especially to those of you who enjoy reading or writing (or both) westerns. It will also be suitable for dreamers, like my friends Russ J, Robert S and Dan B.

In the original Wes Crowley novels, Wes rode on horseback from Amarillo Texas to Agua Perlado, a fictional fishing village in the state of Guerrero, Mexico. Although I have a detailed map of Mexico, while I was writing those novels I eyeballed the map from time to time (for Wes' stops, etc.) but I never figured out the distances involved. I chose to ride along with Wes on my gut instincts. In the end, I had him make the trip in a vaguely defined "two months."

Yesterday during a break, strictly as a fun exercise, I did some math.

Many towns in the west and in Mexico are situated at about 20 miles apart. That's because back in the day, a loaded wagon could travel about 20 miles relatively comfortably in a day. (There was nothing "comfortable" about traveling in any kind of wagon, hence the modifier "relatively".)

I don't know for sure—I haven't done the research—but if you're interested I suspect water stations and stage stops were probably situated about 20 miles apart for the stage lines for the same reason. I do know of two stage stops near where I live that are about 20 miles apart.

Now, a man on a strong, healthy horse could travel as far as 40 miles in a day if he was pushing it. Of course, that would not take into account stops for any length of time. Most often, the average of an extended trip on horseback would be closer to 25 to 30 miles per day. That pace would include some galloping, but also some periods of loping and walking, so it would strain neither the rider nor the horse beyond their physical limits.

The fictional village of Agua Perlado lies right at 100 miles west-northwest along the coast of Mexico from the modern resort town of Acapulco.

From Amarillo TX to Agua Perlado on a more or less straight shot on modern roads is right at 1400 miles. So with an average of 24 miles per day, Wes made the trip in 60 days.

In the current novel, I expect Rider Jones will make a similar trek, also on horseback, from his current location, which is Reno Nevada. That distance is 2300 miles, again, on a more or less straight shot over modern roads. I can only barely wait to see what happens, and I can wait at all only because I have to.

So here's the math I mentioned earlier:

2300 miles, Reno to Agua Perlado
92 days on horseback at 25 miles per day
76 days on horseback at 30 miles per day

1400 miles, Amarillo to Agua Perlado
46 days on horseback at 30 miles per day
60 days on horseback at 24 miles per day

Even if ol' Wes added a mile per day to his average to bring his trek up to 25 miles per day, he would still make the trip in 56 days, which I think still counts in the vague "two months" time period. (grin)

A Special Treat

For a limited time, and in a blatant, bald-faced advertising stunt, I'm giving away a Kindle, Nook/Apple or PDF electronic copy (your choice) of the first book in the Wes Crowley saga.

There are 11 books total and soon there will be 12. When I've finished Book 12, this special offer will end.

Rise of a Warrior is the first book in the series. And it's yours free in exchange for emailing me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Be sure to let me know which version you want.

Here's the description:

What would you give to ride wild on a good horse in a just cause?

That's just what you'll do in the Wes Crowley series.

Witness the interlocking fates of three young men:

Four Crows is a rising young war chief, born of blood and battle. Young Wes Crowley and Otis "Mac" McFadden, bored teenagers in the small town of Watson in north Texas, are determined to become Texas Rangers.

Where fate will lead the three of them will leave you breathless.

The entire saga is a 12-volume tale in which the lines between right and wrong are often blurred—but never for Wes Crowley.

In *Rise of a Warrior*, come along to witness the advent of Wes and Mac as Texas Rangers, and the rise of a Comanche warrior, Four Crows.

Regularly \$5.99, but free to you for the next few days.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “THE CHASE Hit First Stretch Goal” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-chase-hit-first-stretch-goal/>.

See “Why Bookshop.org is not the saviour the book world needs” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-bookshop-org-is-not-the-saviour-the-book-world-needs/>.

See “Character Descriptions – Part 2” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/character-descriptions-part-2.html>. I added this link only as an example of what not to do. This is, hands down, some of the worst advice I’ve ever read concerning character descriptions. In fact, I found at least two big new PQ (persistent question) topics. I’ll be covering those soon.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089

Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960

Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162

Total fiction words for May..... 33824

Total fiction words for the year..... 405103

Total nonfiction words for May... 8830

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 93690

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 498793

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Yesterday and Bundlerabbit

May 13, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday, I wore out a mouse
- * Yesterday, also
- * Yesterday, III
- * By the way
- * Bundlerabbit
- * A very short PQ Topic: Less Can Be More
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday, I wore out a mouse. (Microsoft Mobile Wireless Mouse 3500 in Lock Ness grey)

Over the past several years of writing fiction, I've always had the same mouse with my writing 'puter. Over the past six-plus years I've gone through probably three or four writing 'puters, but whenever I changed from one to the other, that mouse went with me. I considered it my “writing mouse.”

A couple days ago, it finally stopped working. That mouse and I clicked our way through over 60 novels, 8 novellas, and well over 200 short stories. But I finally wore it out. So I ordered two more copies of exactly the same mouse, and they arrived yesterday. But I think I'm gonna frame the old one and hang it in my office somewhere.

Yesterday also, during a break from writing, I designed a cover for Rider Jones: The Marshal (formerly Rider Jones), created a promo doc and put it up for pre-publication sales on D2D and Amazon. That's the cover over on the left.

Finally, yesterday III, I was writing along when I realized I had no idea what day it was. In the story, I mean. And back when I was writing the earlier titles in the Wes Crowley saga, I hadn't kept up a reverse outline.

So I stopped writing and spent the last two hours of the day scrolling back through Book 11. Fortunately the sequence of days in the timeline were correct. I patted myself on the back and waded into the beginning of Book 12, the work in progress.

I discovered a few glitches, repaired them, and was surprised to learn the entire story from the beginning of Book 11 through the first 10 chapters of Book 12 took place in a scant two weeks. Actually, the newly constructed reverse outline (well, timeline really) itself is interesting reading.

Now I'm thinking I might extend the timeline all the way from the beginning of Book 1 and maybe publish it as a companion volume to the series as a whole. After I've finished the current WIP, of course. What fun!

By the way, if you missed yesterday's post, and if you would like a free copy in Kindle, Apple/Nook or PDF format of the first book in the series, *Rise of a Warrior*, you have only to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. This special promo will end when I finish the current book.

Bundlerabbit

I had a question about whether I use Bundlerabbit, whether I like it and so on.

I do use it. It has a great user interface that isn't clunky at all. With a little practice, you can upload a new title there in only 2 or 3 minutes, and it provides yet one more sales venue for your work.

The idea of Bundlerabbit is to allow curators to "bundle" your work with similar works in an anthology of short fiction or an omnibus of longer works. You can also choose to be a curator if you want.

To get an idea of the possibilities of using Bundlerabbit as a writer, visit my Deals! page at <https://harveystanbrough.com/bundles/>. As you can see there, my work currently appears in eight different bundles.

One caveat: If you own the Apple-friendly publishing program Vellum, they prefer you use that. If you do not, you can still upload an .epub file. Bundlerabbit doesn't accept any other file types. BUT if you use Draft2Digital (or Smashwords) you can upload the .epub file you get from there to Bundlerabbit, so it really isn't a hassle at all.

A very short PQ Topic: Less Can Be More

I found at least two new PQ (persistent question) topics in an article I posted a link to in yesterday's "Of Interest."

One is that in description Less Can Be More. What a silly, inane thought.

Okay, let's just clear the decks on that one. No lengthy discussion required. No, less cannot be more. Less can only be less. You can have too much of something, or too little, but neither of those is addressed by the nifty, cool-sounding but inane "less can be more."

The other one, which the author of the article tied to "less can be more," is that Readers Like to Fill-In the Blanks. I'll address that one in much greater depth as the PQ topic for tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 3" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-3/>.

See "Making Magic Systems Better, Lesson 2" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-magic-systems-better-lesson-2/>. In case I didn't post it earlier.

See "The Power of Quirky-Smirky Assonance and Alluring Alliteration" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-power-of-quirky-smirky-asonance-and-alluring-alliteration/>.

See "Moving My Internet and Writing Office" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/moving-my-internet-and-writing-office/>.

See "Do You Need Hygge?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/do-you-need-hygge.html>. It's a slow news day.

See "(Writing) Each Book Is A Different Story" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-each-book-is-a-different-story/>. A very slow news day.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089

Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960

Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162

Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062

Total fiction words for May..... 36724

Total fiction words for the year..... 408003

Total nonfiction words for May... 9650

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 94510

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 502153

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Readers Like to Fill-in the Blanks (Uh, No)

May 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * PQ Topic: Readers Like to Fill-in the Blanks
- * This morning I left a comment
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

PQ Topic: Readers Like to Fill-in the Blanks

Actually this isn’t a Persistent Question so much as a Persistent Misbelief. A myth. Something even writers sometimes pass along to other writers. And it’s male bovine excrement.

My immediate response to “Readers like to fill in the blanks” is a pair of arched eyebrows, a head shaking slightly side to side, and “So?”

As a writer, do you really care what some faceless, nameless reader wants other than what you owe them for the money, which is a good story?

I don’t.

Besides, in the first place, umm, wrong. Readers do NOT like to fill in the blanks. Even if they think they do. If they did, then it would follow that the “perfect” novel would be one of those blank journals for which you pay like thirty bucks at your local Barnes & Noble.

Then the reader could open to Page 1 and start filling in the blanks. Exaggeration? Not really.

The truth is, people who read, just like people who watch films and listen to music, want to be entertained. THAT is what they like.

I'll even go out on a limb and say they want to be manipulated.

They want to be transported to your fictional world, and while they're in it, they want to believe it's real. If your POV character sneezes, they want to feel the mist strike his palm. They want to notice the tiny bit of mucus draped for a second over his bottom lip, even if the other characters don't notice it.

They want to see what your POV character sees, hear what he hears, smell what he smells and so on. They want to experience his emotional ups and downs.

And they want to know what the POV character and the other characters in the book look like. Even the so-called minor characters and those who only stop by to foreshadow something else. (I say "so-called" because you never know what level of prominence a "minor" character will achieve later in the book or series.) The reader wants you to put a picture of the characters in their head.

And no, they don't want to wait until sometime later in the story to get that picture. Or rather YOU don't want to make the reader wait.

Why? Because if you don't provide at least a partial description of your character the first time the reader meets him, the reader WILL start filling in the blanks. The reader will get an image in his head of his neighbor or the clerk down at the cleaner's or the convenience store or her former lover or her boss or a subordinate.

And then later, when you DO finally get around to providing a description of the character that YOU see in YOUR head as you're writing, the reader will be conflicted. And if your story isn't otherwise extremely strong, he might put your book down and go find something else to do.

As the editor of the author who wrote the article told her, "[T]here should be something here to help the reader connect with [the character] right away."

To that, I can only say, "Duh."

The story, including the setting, the characters, and the situation is in YOUR head. Your job as a writer is to transfer all of that—all of it—to the reader's head. Again, the reader didn't buy your book to do the work of filling in the details himself. He bought your book to be entertained, period.

And all of this goes to another of my favorite short topics about writing: Take Your Time. I've talked about that here before, but at the risk of running a little long, here's a bit more:

I never recommend rewriting, but if you have to go over a complex scene two or three or four times to be sure you included everything the POV character is giving you, do it.

I do that almost every day, and I still write around 1000 words per hour. It isn't rewriting and it isn't revision. It's making sure you haven't omitted something the characters want included. And in that, it's making sure the story flows and is complete.

Take the time to convey to the reader on paper what's in your mind: the characters' appearance, the setting, and the scene as it unfolds.

And for goodness' sake, if you're one of those writers whose characters are talking in the middle of a second-floor parlor and suddenly BLAM! they're outside on the balcony, hey, slow down. Go back and write a little more so the readers SEES them moving from the room to the balcony. As I've written here before, you cannot add "too much" description from the POV character's point of view.

Yes, I know, some say every bit of description should be "germane to the story." But the thing is, when you're describing a scene, you don't know what might be germane two or three chapters down the line. The best rule of thumb is "If the POV character notices (sees, hears, smells, thinks, remembers, etc.) it, then you should put it on the page. Don't stifle your characters. They know what they're doing. After all, it's their story.

Back to the parlor-to-balcony move, at least have one character say something like, "Hey, it's a beautiful day and the roses are in bloom. What say we take this discussion out on the balcony?"

And then you STILL have to let the reader see them physically open the curtains and the sliding glass door (or whatever) and step out onto the balcony.

Or if you want, you can end the chapter or scene with the bit of dialogue above and then start the next chapter or scene (after a divider) out on the balcony, where first you will ground the reader with what the POV character sees, hears, smells, etc.

My point is, don't have them just suddenly appear someplace where they weren't before without having crossed the intervening space.

Because chances are, your characters are not quarks.

Tomorrow, I'll talk a little about writing sales copy (descriptions) so your books will sell or sell better.

This morning I left a comment over on TKZ in response to yet another question about the #S%^&* pandemic and how it's affecting readers and writers:

I must be the luckiest guy on Earth. I just write what the characters give me.

In the past two months alone I've been from a generation ship in the 24th century to a habitable planet, met an alien who enabled a time jump, and watched as colonists established a community a billion billion miles away from this silly little rock with its infestation [of humans].

Back on Earth, I've watched a young western marshal make the fateful decision to step through a time portal and learn things most humans don't know, and I've joined an old friend, a Texas Ranger, riding wild on a good horse in a just cause.

Of course, in reality I'm a lesser player—a Recorder, really—living vicariously. I race through the story with the characters, try to keep up, and record the story that they, not I, are living. It's a great gig. I'm happy they invited me along, and not so much as a sneeze in sight unless it was caused by dust wafting up from the trail.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 4” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-4/>.

See “U.S. Copyright Basics for Authors” at <https://authorspublish.com/u-s-copyright-basics-for-authors/>.

See “Doing a Live Chat” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/doing-a-live-chat/>. Don't miss this.

See “Reader Friday: Did Your #Reading Habits Change?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/reader-friday-did-your-reading-habits-change.html>. Are humans really so maleable?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1300 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089
Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960
Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162
Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062
Day 5..... 2530 words. Total words to date..... 17592

Total fiction words for May..... 39254
Total fiction words for the year..... 410533
Total nonfiction words for May... 10950

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 95810
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 506343

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8
 Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
 Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
 Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Characterization](#), [copyright](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Writing Your Story Description

May 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * A Favor to Ask
- * Topic: Writing Your Story Description
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A Favor to Ask

Apparently my posts from HarveyStanbrough.com (author site) no longer go out, which means nobody on that large mailing list received my special promo announcement about the ebook giveaway.

It will take me some time to figure out what happened and why and how to fix it. I’m also no longer on Facebook. So if you don’t mind, please share this link with your friends and on social media. It would be a big help. Thank you: <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-if-i-may-share/>.

To see the offer, they should scroll down to *A Special Treat*.

Thanks again, those of you who decide to share. Now back to our regularly scheduled program.

Topic: Writing Your Story Description

You know the one I mean. The description you upload to D2D or Smashwords or Amazon or Bundlerabbit or wherever to entice the reader into buying your short story or novel.

The description is different from the “blurbs” that go on the back cover of the paper version of your book. Those are primarily one- to few-line hooks. Of course, your description should be filled with hooks too.

Here’s an example of a cover blurb. It’s from a first reader and it’s about the Wes Crowley series as a whole:

“I only very rarely encounter books or movies so appealing that I want to read or see them time and time again, but like the movie *Casablanca* and Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, the Wes Crowley story is among the very few that I don’t think I would ever tire of experiencing no matter how many times I had already done so.”

Will I put that on the cover of the Wes Crowley series when I repackage it in two volumes with six novels in each? Oh yes.

Journal reader and writer K.C. recently wrote that my description for *Rise of a Warrior* made her want to read the book “right now.”

Perfect. That’s exactly the reaction you’re hoping for when you write your description. And of course, I sent it to her just about that fast. (grin)

Of course, I’m not being altruistic with giving away the first novel of the series. My hope is that the ending of the first novel will “sell” the second novel, and so on through the series.

Remember that old saw? The opening sells the current book; the ending sells the next one. (I’m paraphrasing.)

Likewise, the purpose of the book description is to sell the current book.

I’m not a master of writing sales copy (the description). My own best advice is to stay away from plot points in your description. You want to talk in vague but exciting terms to entice the reader to learn the plot for himself. By buying and reading your book. Then you cross your fingers and hope the story and characters are engaging enough to make the reader want the second one, and so on.

I once read a description of *36 Righteous Men*, a then-new novel by none other than Steven Pressfield. But the description was so filled with plot that when I was through reading the it I felt no need to buy the book. I had learned the whole story in the description.

So in that case, the description actually kept me from buying the book. You can read that particular description at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1324002891>. Read it to understand what I mean.

The description for Pressfield’s next novel, *Gates of Fire*, is considerably better (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0038AUYGO>). But in the description for his latest, *A Man at Arms*, he (or whomever is writing descriptions for him) reverts to giving away far too much. You can see that description at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0393540979>.

If you want to write truly great descriptions (and yes, you do), I recommend you buy Dean Wesley Smith’s book *How to Write Fiction Sales Copy*, which you can find at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0178MQVX2>. I believe he also teaches a 6-week workshop on the topic, but I found the book more than adequate. I even bought a paperback copy, which is now dog-eared.

I recommend you read it cover to cover first—you will be amazed—and then keep a copy handy. You’ll refer back to it often.

And I recommend you don’t wait until you have a boatload of stories and novels under your belt, for which you have to go back and change the sales copy.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 5” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-5/>.

See “A New Brain Implant Translates Thoughts of Writing Into Text” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-new-brain-implant-translates-thoughts-of-writing-into-text/>.

See “Live Chat Was Fun” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/live-chat-was-fun/>.

See “Falling but Not Failing” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/falling-but-not-failing.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 780 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089
Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960
Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162
Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062
Day 5..... 2530 words. Total words to date..... 17592
Day 6..... 3543 words. Total words to date..... 21135

Total fiction words for May..... 42797

Total fiction words for the year..... 414076

Total nonfiction words for May... 11730
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 96590
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 510666

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Sales Copy](#)

The Journal: No

May 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * No Topic
- * No Blog
- * Welcome
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

No Topic

Browsed the internet this morning for items of interest. I added those links to my Journal notepad document, then scrolled up to see what I'd written for a topic. I've written so many topics lately, I just assumed I'd written one for today and had it ready to go.

I didn't. So no topic for today. I usually write those the day before, then add the “Of Interest” items and “go to press.”

No Blog

I haven't solved the problem of the blog over on my author site and why its lost the connection with MailChimp, but at this point it really doesn't matter to my current promotion.

By the time I could get a new “campaign” set up with Mail Chimp’s new strange, jump-through-hoops interface, or by the time I could make the switch to a new provider, the promo would be over. So I’ve decided simply to not worry about it for now.

And that’s too bad, because I was really hoping that giving away the first novel while writing the 12th and final novel in the series would give the series itself a really big boost. Oh well.

Welcome

By the way, welcome to new subscribers. The past few days have some really good topics. And if you ever think of a topic on writing or publishing you’d like me to address, feel free to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Otherwise I usually just wait until I hear some other writer pass along really stupid, myth-laden information, gird my loins, and do a little battle. It usually does no good, but it’s there for those who want it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Free Lecture: How to Write a Book That Will Keep Readers Up All Night” at <https://authorspublish.com/free-author-lecture-plot-character-story/>. I’m not endorsing this. Just passing it along.

See “Elvis Presley – What Really Killed the King of Rock ‘n Roll?” at <http://dyingwords.net/elvis-presley-what-really-killed-the-king-of-rock-n-roll/>.

See “The End of Editing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-end-of-editing/>.

See “CHOICES” at <https://www.etymologynerd.com/blog/choices>.

See “Using Your Own Dreams in Fiction” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/using-your-own-dreams-in-fiction.html>. I feel a little like I’m dreaming right now.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 360 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089
Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960
Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162
Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062
Day 5..... 2530 words. Total words to date..... 17592

Day 6..... 3543 words. Total words to date..... 21135
Day 7..... 3563 words. Total words to date..... 24698

Total fiction words for May..... 46360
Total fiction words for the year..... 417639
Total nonfiction words for May... 12090
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 96950
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 514589

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [Etymology Nerd](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Sigh. Regarding “Deep” POV

May 17, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Sigh. Regarding “Deep” POV
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It’s easier to fool people than to convince them they’ve been fooled.” Mark Twain

“It’s far easier to talk about doing something than to actually do it.” Harvey Stanbrough

Topic: Sigh. Regarding So-Called (for now) “Deep” POV

In today's "Of Interest" there's a link to a long article about writing in "deep POV." If I've ever heard an academic term, it's that one. (However, I listed the link and left it there. If you get something out of it, more power to you.)

And here by "academic" I mean "mental gymnast," one who exercises mentally and orally with groups of similar elites because what they're saying sounds—oh, gosh, Ma—REALLY good but does nothing to advance the technique. So "academic" in this context also includes "writers" who never seem to write but have read all the books and can intelligently discuss simply ALL the latest trends.

In other words it's the same old, same old in a bright, shiny new package. And whatever it's called, it entails far too much thinking and not enough (or any) doing.

"Deep POV?" Seriously? So then, do some people set out intentionally to write in "Shallow POV?" And how many levels of POV are there? I mean, does "Basement POV" exist (yet)? What about "Top" or "Penthouse" POV? For that matter, what about "Medium POV"? Or maybe that's a whole other thing. Maybe that's a POV used only by people who contact the spirits of the departed.

All this verbiage reminds me of watching a soccer game among 5 year olds. You know, one kid kicks the ball, and then the entire field of kids rush in a herd to wherever the ball's going. Then another kid kicks the ball and the same thing ensues.

I first heard of this "deep POV" (by that particular moniker) a few years ago. But the thing is, calling something by a new, made-up name does absolutely nothing to enrich the technique. It only gives academics more ways to dissect it and talk about it.

"Deep POV" faded in as a fad about the time "First Person POV is more 'immediate' [whatever TF that means]" was fading out.

And a few years from now some other academic or "writer" who never writes will come up with some new term—"immediate POV" maybe or "intense POV" or something equally inane—and the children will all race off after the ball once again.

I could easily stand around the water cooler chatting BS about "deep POV" and all the other nifty sounding verbiage, but I don't want to insult your intelligence. I'd rather give you something straightforward, something that has neither aroma nor texture in common with bovine excrement. Something that will enable you to write a story from the first word forward.

So at the risk of repeating myself, here's what you should do if you want to be a real fiction writer:

First, understand that Writing is Just Writing. Stories are Just Stories. What one reader likes another reader won't, and your opinion of your work as the author is still only one opinion. So if you want to write fiction, get over yourself, sit down at the keyboard, and write.

Second, trust the characters to tell the story that THEY, not you, are living.

And third, follow this generic, works-every-time formula for a successful story of any length:

1. To begin a story, you need only a character with a problem in a setting. The problem doesn't have to be "the" problem of the story. It might be something as simple as an untied shoelace or a locked door the character expected to be unlocked.
2. To pull the reader into the story or "ground" him, you only need to invoke the reader's empathy by recording the POV character's physical and emotional senses. Everything is filtered THROUGH the POV character. (Duh. This is what the academics currently call "deep POV.")
3. To keep the reader in the story and keep him reading, you need a cliffhanger of some sort at the end of each major scene or chapter and a corresponding hook at the beginning of the next.
4. And then ground the reader again with the POV character's physical and emotional senses and continue the story to the next cliffhanger/hook combination. Rinse and repeat.

Naturally, you also have to fulfill the reader's expectations by hitting the appropriate buttons or touchstones of your genre or subgenre along the way. But you can NEVER add too much sensory detail from the POV character, even aside from the initial grounding at the beginning of the major scene or chapter.

In just the sense of hearing alone, the western POV character won't notice the sound of his own saddle creaking as he rides, but he will definitely notice the sound of another saddle creaking nearby unexpectedly.

The action-adventure (or other) POV character usually won't notice the sound of his own weapon being cocked as he cocks it, but he will definitely notice the sound of his opponent's weapon being cocked. And so on.

In the midst of action, any POV character will notice tightly focused sights, smells, sounds, etc. that he might not notice if he was only walking through the room. These are some of the sensory details the writer includes not to ground the reader in the scene but to keep him grounded in the scene, to enable him to experience the scene along with the character.

If you begin with a character with a problem in a setting, if you ground the reader with sensory detail from the POV character, and if you employ cliffhangers and hooks, you will be successful as a fiction writer. Well, if you do those things and trust your characters.

Okay, end of stupid lecture. Probably nobody's listening anyway. Well, except people who already know and employ these techniques. Now I'm going to escape back into my fictional world and write the story I'm given.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “.22 LR Firepower: The MGV-176 Submachine Gun” at <https://www.gunpowdermagazine.com/22-lr-firepower-the-mgv-176-submachine-gun/>. If you write stories with high-volume weapons, this might be a good article to browse.

See “True Crime Investigation Unmasked” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/true-crime-investigation-unmasked/>. Want to write true crime? Here you go.

See “Tips for Deepening the POV in Your Fiction” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/tips-for-deepening-the-pov-in-your-fiction.html>. Do all of this if you want. I’m good.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089
Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960
Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162
Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062
Day 5..... 2530 words. Total words to date..... 17592
Day 6..... 3543 words. Total words to date..... 21135
Day 7..... 3563 words. Total words to date..... 24698
Day 8..... 3961 words. Total words to date..... 28665

Total fiction words for May..... 50321
Total fiction words for the year..... 421600
Total nonfiction words for May... 13170
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 98030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 519630

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Deep POV](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Appreciate and Be Loyal to Your Creative Subconscious

May 18, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Appreciate and Be Loyal to Your Creative Subconscious
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Appreciate and Be Loyal to Your Creative Subconscious

Maybe one of the worst things about the myths of writing is that they cause otherwise perfectly good storytellers to make tons of mistakes.

Chief among those mistakes is placing too much importance on any one reader's opinion. Especially when the writer then changes the content of a story because of that opinion.

I'm not talking about wrong-word usages or other typos here. I'm not talking about missing periods at the end of sentences.

I'm talking about a reader stating an opinion about a story (or part of a story) and the writer taking it to heart and changing the content of the story. Especially when the writer has several sources of input on the same story and changes it each time to suit every opinion.

Don't do that. Some readers will 'get' your story (or that part of it) and some won't. And if you keep changing it the story will still have your name on it but it will no longer be your story. And it will no longer be your characters' story, the story they told you.

And that is what matters.

Every time you change the content of your story, you're teaching your own creative subconscious that you don't trust it. That's the worst possible thing you could do.

By way of direct example of this weird phenomenon, please read "On Murdering 22,000 Darlings" in "Of Interest" very carefully, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph. It is an excellent primer on what not to do.

Read it with the thought in the back of your mind that maybe this is what happens when you do not understand what I wrote in yesterday's Journal:

Writing is Just Writing. Stories are Just Stories. What one reader (or editor or agent) likes another reader (or editor or agent) won't, and (even) your opinion of your work as the author is still only one opinion.

Seriously, folks. Just write the story, publish it, and let the readers decide. How hard is that?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 6" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-6/>.

See "On Murdering 22,000 Darlings" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/on-murdering-22000-darlings/>.

See "Give A Writer Enough Trope And They'll Hang Themselves" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/give-a-writer-enough-tropeand-theyll-hang-themselves.html>. I found it difficult to get past the title. Wouldn't it have been easy to write "Give Writers" (plural)?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 410 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089
Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960
Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162
Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062
Day 5..... 2530 words. Total words to date..... 17592
Day 6..... 3543 words. Total words to date..... 21135
Day 7..... 3563 words. Total words to date..... 24698
Day 8..... 3961 words. Total words to date..... 28665
Day 9..... 3880 words. Total words to date..... 32545

Total fiction words for May..... 54201
Total fiction words for the year..... 425480
Total nonfiction words for May... 13580
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 98440
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 523920

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: I love a good argument

May 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I love a good argument
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I love a good argument, and I have two to report today.

Re a point made in the first item in “Of Interest” today, I am an indie publisher, and I don’t believe traditional publishers make the lion’s share of book sales. The author of the article points out (correctly) that “The majority of the cover price of a book goes to the retailer—the book store—and the distributor.”

I agree. The assertion is indisputable. So I would never say the publisher takes the lion’s share of book sales. However, I will say (also accurately) that the traditionally published author does not *get* the lion’s share as the indie published author does.

But what’s far worse, traditional publishers buy all rights to the work for the life of the copyright. And for that reason alone, I would never go back to a traditional publisher.

If any of you know of a traditional publisher who does not buy all rights and/or offers a reasonable (or any) rights-reversion clause, please enlighten me.

And in reply to my comment on “On Murdering 22,000 Darlings” (at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/on-murdering-22000-darlings/>), one respondent wrote

“That’s like saying ‘just cross the road. If you don’t get run down, you’re safe’.

“Many times readers reach the end of such a book and say, sometimes in reviews, that 22,000 (or however many) words could certainly have been eliminated and made it a much better book.

...

“Thus, just as with mechanical systems and software, the book should be ‘tested’, and perhaps by someone who does this for a living and is aware of the needs involved.”

I replied:

“With respect, first, you are laboring under possibly the most prevalent myth of all the myths about writing fiction: That all potential readers will like what a particular agent or editor or publisher likes.

“Second, your comparison doesn’t stand up. A mechanical system or software are ostensibly important. A novel, on the other hand, is just a story, nothing but a few hours’ entertainment.

“What about all the readers who do NOT believe those words should be cut? Or who might have enjoyed the story in its original form back before it was rewritten so much to please other people that the original authorial voice is gone?

“Anyone who sets out to ‘find’ something in any story that needs to be ‘fixed’ will do so. But most readers don’t do that. Most readers simply expect to be entertained. Those, not some critic, are the audience for my westerns, SF, crime and action-adventure stories and novels.

“Then again, if you’re a writer, do whatever works for you. Won’t affect my bottom line.

“I will continue to tell the story my characters give me. After all, they, not I, are living it. I trust my creative subconscious enough not to second guess it with my own critical mind, never mind allowing others’ critical minds into the mix.

“And I’m just not arrogant enough to pre-judge what other readers will like or dislike or to force my personal tastes on them. If readers are involved in actively considering how many words should be cut (or any other writing considerations), then they aren’t engaged in the story anyway, and that is the writer’s fault.”

As I said, I enjoy a good argument.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How Much Money Do Authors Actually Earn? ” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/how-much-money-do-authors-actually>.

See “Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 6” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-6/>.

See “What’s In A Name?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/whats-in-a-name.html>.

See “Talked to Southwest Writers Tonight” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/talked-to-southwest-writers-tonight/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089
Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960
Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162
Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062
Day 5..... 2530 words. Total words to date..... 17592
Day 6..... 3543 words. Total words to date..... 21135
Day 7..... 3563 words. Total words to date..... 24698
Day 8..... 3961 words. Total words to date..... 28665
Day 9..... 3880 words. Total words to date..... 32545
Day 10... 4022 words. Total words to date..... 36567

Total fiction words for May..... 58223
Total fiction words for the year..... 429502
Total nonfiction words for May... 14180
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 99040
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 528542

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Novel and the Free Ebook

May 20, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The Novel
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The Novel

Well, as I reported several days ago, I planned to take my time with this one. But I seem unable to do that. On days when I reined myself in, I still wrote a lot of words. And so far I have zero cuts included in that word count.

So it looks like this one could wrap as early as today, and probably no later than a few days from now. I'm hoping the characters will throw in a new twist or two. I'm very much enjoying spending time with Wes again.

Anyway, when the novel wraps, so will the offer of a free copy of the first book in the series, [Rise of a Warrior](#). If you'd like to have a free copy of that novel in Kindle, Nook/Apple or PDF, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Please share this information with your friends and on social media. Thanks.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 8" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-8/>.

See "Putting Together Issue #50" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/putting-together-issue-50/>. Quite an accomplishment.

See "Procrastination for Writers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/perfect-procrastination-for-writers.html>.

See "Your Final Responsibility to Your Story: Creative Stewardship" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/your-final-responsibility-to-your-story-creative-stewardship/>. Not my cuppa, but whatever works for you.

See "The Passenger: Lost German novel makes UK bestseller list 83 years on" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-passenger-lost-german-novel-makes-uk-bestseller-list-83-years-on/>. An uplifting story.

See “The Filing Cabinet” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-filing-cabinet/>. Silly but interesting.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 230 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089
Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960
Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162
Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062
Day 5..... 2530 words. Total words to date..... 17592
Day 6..... 3543 words. Total words to date..... 21135
Day 7..... 3563 words. Total words to date..... 24698
Day 8..... 3961 words. Total words to date..... 28665
Day 9..... 3880 words. Total words to date..... 32545
Day 10... 4022 words. Total words to date..... 36567
Day 11... 4477 words. Total words to date..... 41044

Total fiction words for May..... 62700
Total fiction words for the year..... 433979
Total nonfiction words for May... 14410
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 99270
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 533249

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Not Much Today

May 21, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Not Much Today
- * I almost wrote a topic
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Not Much Today

I'm publishing this issue of the Journal mostly to get the "Of Interest" items below out to you.

I almost wrote a topic for this one, which I would have titled "Get Your Facts Straight."

It was the result of reading a pure puff-piece I read on the Authors Publish blog. The article was ostensibly about whether self-publishing was a good idea.

The upshot of the article was "self-publishing isn't for everyone, but when it is done right, it can be a great experience."

On her way to that startling revelation, the author mentioned two sources for stock images (for covers), ignoring even the fact that several others exist.

She also mentioned "Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), Barnes & Noble Press, Smashwords, Apple iBooks, and Kobo Writing Life" as "free ebook publishers."

One: Two of those are publishers, one is strictly an aggregator (and there was no mention of another major aggregator, Draft2Digital), and all are book stores.

Two: None of the above are "free." They all take a cut of your sales.

Then I reached the end of the article, where the author was described (self-described, presumably) as "a poet, aspiring novelist, and the author of a self-published poetry collection."

Ah. Okay. Now I understand. The author has not one clue what she'd talking about. I'd have referred her to my daily Journal, but there was no Comment function.

The problems I listed above could easily have been avoided. It's all common knowledge in the world of publishing. But don't worry. I chose not to subject you to the article.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 9" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-9/>.

See “Spanish-Language Digital Publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/spanish-language-digital-publishing/>.

See “Would You Pay to Turn the First Page of this Bestseller?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/would-you-pay-to-turn-the-first-page-of-this-bestseller-2/>.

See “How Much Do Authors Earn? Here’s the Answer No One Likes.” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-much-do-authors-earn/>. A great article.

See “Chekhov’s Gundam” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/chekhovs-gundam>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 10... 4022 words. Total words to date..... 36567

Day 11... 4477 words. Total words to date..... 41044

Day 12... 2356 words. Total words to date..... 43400

Total fiction words for May..... 65056

Total fiction words for the year..... 436335

Total nonfiction words for May... 14740

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 99600

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 535935

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 61

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [David Farland](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: David Farland and Dan Baldwin

May 22, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * David Farland
- * Dan Baldwin
- * The end of the novel
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It’s been my belief from the beginning that there is virtually nothing an author can do to significantly impact sales. The best way for an author to sell books is to write more books.” John Gilstrap

David Farland

I’ve been linking to a series of posts by David Farland in “Of Interest.” So far he’s posted ten lessons. There might be more.

I don’t agree with everything Farland says about writing and especially publishing, but the man is a bestselling fantasy writer. So if you write fantasy (or if want to) I strongly recommend you read his series on “Making Better Magic Systems.” Couldn’t hurt, right?

Dan Baldwin

My friend and professional writer Dan Baldwin has an interview coming up on the program Midnight Society with Tim Weisberg. It will air live on June 2 from 7 – 9pm Pacific Time (10pm – 12am EST).

Dan and Tim will be talking about the paranormal, so if that interests you, email Dan at baldco@msn.com for more information. I assume the interview will be recorded. If so, I’ll share that link in “Of Interest” after the fact.

Dang. I graduated high school in Tatum, New Mexico fifty-one years ago today. Well, actually yesterday, but I forgot to mention it. And tomorrow my dad would have been 93. I only mention it because 51 years ago he called my graduation a birthday present.

The end of the novel and personally significant dates, apropos of nothing

The end of the novel is drawing nigh. If anyone wants a free copy of Rise of a Warrior, email me at harveystanbrough.com. This offer ends when the current book ends.

Fifty-one years ago yesterday I graduated high school in Tatum, New Mexico with about 38 other students.

Tomorrow, my dad would have been 93 if he had lived past 59. I mention this only because 51 years ago my graduation was a birthday gift to my father.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Making Better Magic Systems, Lesson 10” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/making-better-magic-systems-lesson-10/>.

See “The Super Flower Blood Moon lunar eclipse is coming May 26” at <https://www.space.com/super-flower-blood-moon-lunar-eclipse-2021-coming-soon>.

See “How Can a Star Be Older Than the Universe?” at <https://www.space.com/how-can-a-star-be-older-than-the-universe.html>. Now that’s some SF story fodder if ever I saw any. What might be going on in the planetary system around the oldest star in the universe?

See “TKZ Marketing Survey” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/tkz-marketing-survey.html>.

See “Amazon Publishing, DPLA Ink Deal to Lend E-books in Libraries” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-publishing-dpla-ink-deal-to-lend-e-books-in-libraries/>. Another reason not to go exclusive. My ebooks, which are “also” available at Amazon, have been available at around 1200 libraries around the world since 2011 through Smashwords and D2D.

See “Who deserves a book deal?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/who-deserves-a-book-deal/>. One more reason to indie publish. The day someone else can dictate what I write is the day I stop writing.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 480 words

Writing of Wes Crowley (novel, tentative title)

Day 10... 4022 words. Total words to date..... 36567

Day 11... 4477 words. Total words to date..... 41044

Day 12... 2356 words. Total words to date..... 43400

Day 13... 3634 words. Total words to date..... 47034

Total fiction words for May..... 68690

Total fiction words for the year..... 439969

Total nonfiction words for May... 15220

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 100080

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 540049

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	8
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	61
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dan Baldwin](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Novel Wrapped

May 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Novel Wrapped
- * Reverse Outlines Again
- * Publishing Schedule
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[F]ocus your thoughts only on what you can act upon, and forget the all the rest. ... On a daily basis, it’s you and the page. You control what words you put down, and how many.” James Scott Bell

“[A]nyone touching your work will dumb it down. Try being an artist and standing up for your own work.” Dean Wesley Smith

“I can publish a novel indie for around \$5.00. And that is for the art.” Dean Wesley Smith

Well, try as I might to slow the process, the novel wrapped at around 10 a.m. on Writing Day 14, which in this case was also calendar day 14. Oh well, onward and upward.

Apparently, my “normal” time for writing a novel has settled in at about two weeks. And that’s to turn out a “first draft” that’s free of all but a few typos, if that. Works for me. My second draft

is an automated spell check. My third is applying my first-readers' recommendations if I agree with them. Then I publish.

Because there's a great article on traditional publishing in today's "Of Interest," I thought I'd add this bit: I've just finished my 62nd novel, and it will publish on July 30. Had I been tied to a traditional publisher, in the same timeframe I would have just finished my 6th novel, and its publication would be six months to a year from now. And I would have given up all rights to all six novels for the life of the copyright. Just something to think about.

Reverse Outlines Again

Time for me to practice what I preach. Earlier yesterday, I was talking with a friend. He's written a short series (3 books, I think, maybe 4) with a recurring character. He mentioned that writing the latest installment gets frustrating at times.

He'll write a few lines. Then, when his recurring character adjusts his pinkie ring, he has to stop and scroll back through his earlier novels to figure out which finger the guy wore that ring on.

He could probably cheat and add a few lines somewhere alluding to the fact that the character switches fingers with the ring now and then. But what I recommended is that he go back through the series (while it's short) and create a reverse outline for each book (and hence, a series bible). As part of that, of course, he would mention on which finger the guy always wears that ring.

Then, on our way to town to go shopping awhile ago, I was talking with Mona a little about the Wes Crowley series. She said, "But aren't you going to miss those characters?"

Well, yes. Yes I am.

But the series spans around 50 years of the main character's life. So there should be some holes in the overall story, gaps that might beg a few short stories, if not a novel or two. (grin)

I also remembered I wasn't writing reverse outlines back when I wrote most of the books in that series. So I decided what better way to enjoy the series again AND find gaps that need to be filled than going through the whole series, book by book, chapter by chapter, and creating a reverse outline for each book?

So that's what I'll be doing over the next two or three days. Maybe longer. At this point, I don't really care. I love these characters and the overall storyline. I love how it all started with a 15 year old Wes and 16 year old Mac joining the Texas Rangers, and I love the culmination Wes just conveyed to me in the 12th book.

Should be interesting. And fun. And I hope to come out of it eager to write another novel in the Crowley tradition. Woohoo! Here we go again.

Publishing Schedule

I received an email from a person who publishes a newsletter for a writers' group. She asked whether I had publication info and a buy link yet for *Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter* (Book 12). Of course, I don't yet. But then, I only finished writing the book yesterday.

But as a result of that conversation, I thought I'd share my publishing schedule from now forward for the next couple of months, just in case you're interested:

[Rider Jones: The Marshal](#) will go live on May 26.

[The Journey Home: Part 7](#) will go live on May 30.

After that, every two weeks another novel will go live:

[The Journey Home: Part 8](#) on June 15;

[The Journey Home: Part 9](#) on June 30;

Terra 2 (Book 10, FOH) on July 15 (No buy link info yet); and

Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter on July 30 (No buy link info yet).

Of course, if you're interested in purchasing any of my novels, short story collections or nonfiction or poetry books, the best way to do that is to go to my publisher website at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/>, make your selections, pay me directly through PayPal at a significant discount, and email me. Be sure to let me know what eformat you want and I'll send your books right out.

But as writers, you might be more interested that at my current rate of production I can easily continue this schedule well into the future. And it's both easy and fun to do. If you want to learn how to be that productive while thoroughly enjoying the process (no drudgery, guaranteed) email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. I'm happy to share.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Traditional Book Publishers" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/traditional-book-publishers/>. This is a great article. I recommend you bookmark it and reread it from time to time.

See "Advice for the Demoralized Writer" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/advice-for-the-demoralized-writer.html>. Good article. Once I learned to focus on my specific goals and detach myself from Outcome I was free to fly. I haven't looked back. I added to that the knowledge that I can't please all readers all the time, another way of letting Outcome go its own way. Now I just write, publish, and let the readers decide. Very freeing.

See “5 Quick Dialogue Tips” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-quick-dialogue-tips/>. Take this with a grain of salt.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1030 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter (novel)

Day 1..... 3089 words. Total words to date..... 3089
Day 2..... 3871 words. Total words to date..... 6960
Day 3..... 5202 words. Total words to date..... 12162
Day 4..... 2900 words. Total words to date..... 15062
Day 5..... 2530 words. Total words to date..... 17592
Day 6..... 3543 words. Total words to date..... 21135
Day 7..... 3563 words. Total words to date..... 24698
Day 8..... 3961 words. Total words to date..... 28665
Day 9..... 3880 words. Total words to date..... 32545
Day 10... 4022 words. Total words to date..... 36567
Day 11... 4477 words. Total words to date..... 41044
Day 12... 2356 words. Total words to date..... 43400
Day 13... 3634 words. Total words to date..... 47034
Day 14... 3206 words. Total words to date..... 50240 (done)

Total fiction words for May..... 71896
Total fiction words for the year..... 443175
Total nonfiction words for May... 16250
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 101110
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 544285

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Yesterday, and Computers

May 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday, and Computers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday, and Computers

Well, I planned to spend the day yesterday reading Wes Crowley 1-12. I decided I didn't need to create a separate reverse outline for each book—that would just be silly—but I *will* create a series bible as I go and maybe publish it as a “companion” book to the series. It will contain all the names, locations, physical descriptions of places and characters, etc.

Don't worry. I'm not going to offer to let anyone else write in the Wes Crowley world. For one thing, most people don't write westerns nowadays, and for another, the characters are my friends. I can't just shove 'em out the door. (grin)

Writing in Crowley's life/world is the only thing I love writing more than action-adventure or crime or “soft” SF. So as I do read through the series (as I said yesterday), I'll watch for time gaps, opportunities for me to write more stories and novellas and novels in that world. And that's really why I want to create the series bible, for my own reference.

Anyway, I didn't start that process yesterday as I had planned. My business computer has been going doowacky for the last several days, with the text on documents and even internet web pages jumping from one size to another as I type, etc. (I even switched to a brand-new mouse. Didn't make a difference.)

So I decided to make some changes. To keep from having to buy another SSD computer (the only SSD computer I currently own is my 13" HP ProBook writing 'puter), at first I switched my writing 'puter to my business computer.

And for my “new” writing 'puter, I hooked up an old Compaq Presario 1200 that I bought a while back in an estate sale for around \$10. The feel of the keyboard is almost like an old IBM Selectric. But it has Word 2000 on it, and that's all I really need for a writing 'puter.

And then something went south with the Compaq (go figure), so I spent the rest of the day restoring my original writing 'puter to its original place and brought another 14" HP ProBook down from the house to use as my business computer. So everything's back to some semblance of normal.

Not the kind of day I'd wish on anybody, but I guess things happen.

Today I'll sanitize my old business computer so I can get rid of it. Then I'll probably start scanning through the Crowley series looking for time gaps I can fill. And tomorrow or the next day I should be able to start writing again. Man will that be a relief.

So that's how I spent the balance of the day yesterday. We'll see how everything else goes.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See the comments on "Traditional Book Publishers" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/traditional-book-publishers/#comments>.

See "Why Are There 5,280 Feet in a Mile?" at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/25108/why-are-there-5280-feet-mile-making-sense-measurements>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 490 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for May..... 71896

Total fiction words for the year..... 443175

Total nonfiction words for May... 16740

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 101600

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 544775

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Mental Floss](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Mentorships vs. Nonfiction Books

May 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Mentorships vs. Nonfiction Books
- * The Fiction
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Q: I WROTE LESS THAN 200 WORDS TODAY. DO I STILL DEPOSIT THEM IN THE WORD BANK?”

A: Yes, because every word counts... (and you have written more than 99% of writers today).”

FAQs at [“THE 200 WORDS A DAY CHALLENGE.”](#) *Can this be true?*

Topic: Mentorships vs. Books

I'm looking for feedback here.

As I was looking over all the topics in [The Writing Craft I mentorship](#), it dawned on me that I could write at least a short nonfiction book about each of those topics. Some shorter, some longer.

The books would all be branded The Craft of Writing Fiction, and then titled with each topic. (You can see all the topics at the link above.)

The books will be general in nature, of course. They can't drill down into a particular writer's story or current skill level. Except that in each book I would offer at least one assignment on which I would offer feedback via email.

But even if writers didn't take advantage of the assignments, the books would still be useful for those who choose to purchase them. And they would increase the skill level of anyone who chose to actually put into practice what they learned. And best of all, there would be no large, up-front, out of pocket expense.

Finally, I'm thinking about doing a Kickstarter campaign to fund this idea.

Just off the top of my head, in the Kickstarter I would offer both ebook and paper versions of the books. I would also offer “package” deals with similar books packaged together, up to and including the entire collection. And finally, I would offer a reduced rate (only through the Kickstarter campaign) for the actual mentorships.

The only downside I can think of is that writing all those nonfiction books would take time away from writing fiction for a while.

So is this an idea you find interesting? If so, please let me know via email at harveystanbrough@gmail.com, or leave a comment on the website at <https://hestanbrough.com/mentorships-vs-nonfiction-books>.

Gracias!

The Fiction

Right now I'm enjoying reading through the Crowley Series and building a series bible (and The Wes Crowley Companion Guide) as I go.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Agent Perspectives on First Pages" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/agent-perspectives-on-first-pages.html>. But remember that even an agent's opinion is only one opinion. It isn't special, and it isn't necessarily "right" for anyone but that one person.

See "23 Mystery Publishers that Accept Direct Submissions" at <https://authorspublish.com/23-mystery-publishers-that-accept-direct-submissions-no-agent-required/>.

See "Discovery Writing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/discovery-writing/>. There you go. One more vote for WITD.

See "TKZ Marketing Survey – Part 2" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/tkz-marketing-survey-part-2.html>.

See "Me Talking On Another Podcast" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/me-talking-on-another-podcast/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 460 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for May..... 71896

Total fiction words for the year..... 443175

Total nonfiction words for May... 17200

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 102060
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 545235

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Opportunities, and Misinformation

May 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * StreetLib
- * Misinformation
- * Listening to Dean
- * Mentorships Revised
- * The Reading
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Our lives are but specks of dust falling through the fingers of time. Like sands of the hourglass, so are the days of our lives.” Socrates

Today’s Journal is filled with opportunities, and there’s a note to clear up some misinformation.

Opportunity: StreetLib

If you’re still looking for an aggregator or distributor for your books, you might check out StreetLib. I’ll be taking another look at them.

StreetLib recently announced new features to make both ebook and paper book creation easier. You can find the article at <https://blog.streetlib.com/streetlib-write-develops-new-features-for-the-creation-of-ebooks-and-paper-books-in-print-on-demand/>.

Misinformation

Yesterday I came across a post titled “20 Hidden Costs of Publishing.” I didn’t include it in “Of Interest” because it’s misleading and I wanted to comment on it.

To my mind, the article is misinformation at its finest. In it, the author defends publishers for all the legitimate costs they bear. In that way, it appears to defend, ardently, the minuscule amount publishers pay writers. But the author failed to talk about a few very important points. It’s almost as if the author is receiving kickbacks from a traditional publisher.

* The article says nothing about publishers taking all rights for the life of the copyright.

* It says nothing about publishers binding the hands of the writer by requiring the writer to write no “competing” books, which might mean anything from books with the same characters to books in the same genre to books by the same author. (If you go traditional, please have an IP attorney, not an agent, read the contract carefully.)

* It also fails to mention the value of the IP itself and that it adds hundreds of thousands of dollars (or even a million or more) to the publisher’s spreadsheet while the publisher pays writers a mere pittance. This is why publishers don’t “push” books with money for promotion. It makes no difference to them, really, whether the book is even published. They made their money when they bought the IP.

Opportunity: Listening to Dean

Along the same lines, listening to Dean on the podcast I posted in yesterday’s “Of Interest,” and then listening to the two Marks talk about it afterward, I was stymied.

Why is it so difficult to get people to simply trust themselves and their own creative voice?

The only answer I can come up with is social engineering. It’s been engrained in all of us so deeply and thoroughly NOT to trust ourselves that many of us simply march in lockstep and even defend our masters.

Most writers, unless they just happen across someone like DWS or me, never even think about overcoming that that instruction and thinking for themselves. But the lessons in self-doubt are deeply engrained. Even among those who do finally hear about the freedoms afforded by Heinlein’s Rules and writing into the dark, most either never try it or succumb to one fear or another.

And that's just too bad. Neither DWS nor I nor any other advocate of HR or WITD receive any "payment" for spreading the word other than the satisfaction of knowing one more writer has broken the chains.

Opportunity: Mentorships Revised

Yesterday, as some of you might already know, I revised my mentorships. All [Writing Craft mentorships](#) are now \$49, and all are offered on an ala carte basis.

All [non-writing mentorships](#) are now \$39, again offered on an ala carte basis.

Please pass the word.

I've also gotten rid of the "big" mentorship that included all the craft topics for one price.

I hope this will help other writers cherry-pick topics that will be specifically useful to them in their writing life.

The Reading

The reading and slow compilation of The Wes Crowley Companion Guide is going well, but I'm jonesing to write fiction again. I hope before I get through the first 6 books I will have hit on a gap in the story so I can write a novel to fill it. (grin)

In the meantime, the next book in the FOH series and the next book in the Blackwell Ops series are both hovering in my mind, beckoning me.

Also, [Rider Jones: The Marshal](#) came out yesterday. (grin)

Yesterday

Yesterday I asked your opinion about nonfiction books vs. mentoring. To those who responded, thanks. The responses were helpful.

I'm still thinking about it, but I'll probably go ahead with at least some of the books. If I do a Kickstarter, it will be a couple of months down the line.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Last Day on the Writing Bundle" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/last-day-on-the-writing-bundle/>.

See “8 Tips on How to Write a Good Fight Scene” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-the-fight-scene/>. I personally advise against “caution,” but advocate “with care” (first sentence of the article).

See “Tips for Dealing With Character Names” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/tips-for-dealing-with-character-names.html>.

See “Protecting an Informant’s Identity: Who’s in Their Fireplace?” at <https://leelofland.com/protecting-an-informants-identity-whos-in-their-fireplace/>.

See “Care, Handling, and Storage of Works on Paper” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/care-handling-and-storage-of-works-on-paper/>. If you have important documents, reading this might be worth your while.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 850 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for May..... 71896

Total fiction words for the year..... 443175

Total nonfiction words for May... 18050

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 102910

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 546085

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: More Good Input

May 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * More good input
- * Thanks to Maggie King
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I’ve never followed the tide of popular opinion in the way I write my novels. I’m not going to start now. ... I just make an effort not to write anything into my stories that would hurt or show contempt for someone because they’re male or female.” Haruki Murakami

“Our job is to give new meanings and special overtones to absolutely ordinary words.” Haruki Murakami

“When I’m writing, I write every day. It’s lovely when that’s happening. One day dovetailing into the next. Sometimes I don’t even know what day of the week it is.” Raymond Carver

More good input from my readers on the mentorship vs. non-fiction books topic. Thanks everyone.

One person suggested I write nonfiction after I finish writing fiction each day. I wish I could do that. It would probably be ideal, especially for my situation, but my head doesn’t function like that.

When I stop writing fiction for the day, I stop because the words are getting cloudy, my fingers are miscuing on the keys, etc. My brain’s done. (grin) Every day, I leave the Hovel wishing I could have written more and longer.

I’ve also thought about writing one or two nonfiction books after I finish a novel. I could do that, if I can stay away from fiction long enough. That’s probably what I’ll try to do. We’ll see. After all, some of the topics will take only a few hours or a day to write.

By the way, if you still want to contribute your opinion, the other day I posted an erroneous link to do so. The correct link to leave a comment is <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-mentorships-vs-nonfiction-books/>. Or you can email me.

Thanks to Maggie King, a prolific author of teen romance, for her question in a comment on character descriptions. I responded briefly at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-opportunities-and-misinformation/#comments>.

But this is an involved question, so I'll respond more fully in a topic or maybe a series of topics on Character Descriptions in the next few days. Also, for now, see my topic "Readers Like to Fill-in the Blanks" at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-readers-like-to-fill-in-the-blanks-uh-no/>.

In the meantime, I'm offering another free book: *Creating Realistic Characters*. It's a pamphlet, really, at under 2700 words, and I wrote it way back before I'd written even one novel (or learned to do a decent cover, as you will find out). But it's chock full of good information that might help, including lists of character traits, etc. To get your free copy, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

I've also added four links in today's "Of Interest" on the topic. Note: I have not read all of the articles referenced in the links (yet), but they were written by authors I generally trust.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Raymond Carver's greatest writing advice." at <https://lithub.com/get-in-get-out-dont-linger-go-on-read-raymond-carvers-greatest-writing-advice/>. Thanks, KC.

See "Haruki Murakami has 'never thought about' changing the way he writes female characters" at <https://lithub.com/haruki-murakami-has-never-thought-about-changing-the-way-he-writes-female-characters/>. Thanks, KC.

See "Here's a list of everything Haruki Murakami has ever compared to writing." at <https://lithub.com/heres-a-list-of-everything-haruki-murakami-has-ever-compared-to-writing/>.

See "The 6 Ways We Judge People When We First Meet Them" at <https://www.aconsciousrethink.com/4894/6-ways-judge-people-first-meet/>.

See "How to Describe Your Main Character" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2019/10/how-to-describe-your-main-character.html>.

See "Do You See Your Character the Way Readers Do? First Page Critique: Rabya" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2018/02/do-you-see-your-character-way-readers.html>.

See "Several post on characters" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/?s=Characters>.

See "Amazon Buys MGM Film Studio" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/amazon-buys-mgm-film-studio/>.

See "Rethinking and Book Wars" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/rethinking-and-book-wars/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for May..... 71896

Total fiction words for the year..... 443175

Total nonfiction words for May... 18630

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 103490

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 546665

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Characterization](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [LitHub.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: An Epiphany

May 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * An Epiphany
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

An Epiphany

In an effort to help with your writing career, I've always tried to be up front and honest with you guys with both my blunders as well as my achievements. Boy do I have a doozie for you today.

You know how I'm always saying Take Your Time with your writing? Bear with me here.

Sixty-some novels into my fiction writing career as I wrote the final chapter of the Wes Crowley saga, I decided to see whether there was room for more Wes Crowley novels in the series.

To that end, I started reading through the series. Books 1 ([The Rise of a Warrior](#)) and 2 ([Comanche Fire](#)) are great stories (my opinion, I know, but check them out for yourself). So I expected the same when I started reading Book 3 (*Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger*).

Uhh, not so much. As I read through it, I was almost embarrassed by it. But that wasn't right. After all, it was the seventh novel I'd written. It should be at least AS well written as the novels that preceded it.

But Book 3 reads erratically at best. Reading as a writer, it's not good. Okay, so then I needed to figure out why.

There was only one answer: It sucked because as I was trying to span the chronological time-distance from Book 2 (Comanche Fire) to Book 4 ([Leaving Amarillo](#)), I allowed my conscious mind to intervene. Ugh.

Of course, I would never do that now. I'd get up and walk away first. But as I said, it was only the 7th novel I'd written. And I allowed myself to get in too big a hurry. (This is not an excuse; it's an effort at explanation.)

Here's what happened: In Book 4, which was the first novel I'd ever written, my two main characters, Wes and Mac, were already corporals in the Texas Rangers. And in that book as the saga opened, they'd been in the Rangers for about 16 years.

Then ol' Wes tugged on my sleeve and said, "Why don't you tell folks about our early years?" So I wrote a three-book sequel.

This is where Take Your Time comes in, something I set aside when I wrote the third prequel to *Leaving Amarillo*. For some stupid reason (probably because the original series was only three books), I got hasty. I tried to write those early years in only 3 more books. Had I taken my time and worked my way through those 16 years with short stories, novellas and novels, the Crowley series might well be over 20 books instead of only 12.

In my haste to bridge the gap between Book 2 and Book 4, I opened Book 3 with Wes and Mac being corporals and then employed flashbacks to a couple of fairly major events that had happened during that 16-year gap.

But now, I know better. Now I know to take my time. And as a happy coincidence, now I also am looking for more stories to tell about Wes, Mac and the others. And I can do that, but first I have to clear the clog in the pipes.

So first comes some actual work. For the first time since I started following [Heinlein's Rules](#), I'm going to break Heinlein's Rule 3. I'm going to rewrite Book 3. It's all right. Even Heinlein said he occasionally broke his own rules.

The new story will open about 6 months (instead of 16 YEARS) after Book 2 ends. I say I'm rewriting because I will use much of what's in the current version of Book 3. I'm not going to throw it out and start over (recast). (Really, I'm just cutting, cycling, and writing new stuff.)

Once that work is done—and once I've taken down the old Book 3 and published the new Book 3—I'll move ahead through that 16-year gap with more stories and novels.

And when I finally reach the last book of that “gap” series, it will tie-in naturally to the current Book 4, *Leaving Amarillo*.

Instead of going through and renumbering the entire series, I'll probably call the new books, collectively, a “gap” series. The series will be titled *Wes Crowley, the Missing Years* or something like that.

When I'm through rewriting Book 3, I'll send it to my first readers, then publish it and start the all-new “gap” series books. Folks, if you couldn't tell, I am STOKED! (grin)

I started the rewrite yesterday and will continue until it's finished. I don't expect it to take more than a few days.

And a well-earned Thank You to my chicky-chicky wife, Mona Stanbrough (who prefers to remain anonymous) who puts up with my whining and helped me talk through to the epiphany. Thanks, dollface. (grin)

Update: I got through the old Book 3 and identified what I could keep and what I needed to cut (the stuff that happened 16 years later). I cut 11,087 words from the original Book 3. No doubt some of what I cut will end up in the final book in the gap series.

Below, under The Numbers, I'll display my progress on the revision. Notice I brought forward 31,122 words, so as it stands it's already a short novel. I have only to cycle through it and then write whatever new will lead to the next book (the first book in the gap series). Once the cycling is finished, this is gonna be fun!

I wish all of you this much fun with your writing. But, you know, without the work of rewriting. Oh, and the post(s) including the topic on Characterization is coming.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Maximize Virtual Event ROI” (free book in exchange for a subscription) at <https://www.conversica.com/resources/ebooks/maximize-virtual-event-roi/>. They wanted my phone number. That was TMI, and for me personally virtual events are not that important, so I didn't download this, but it sounds like it might be a good opportunity for some.

See “Copyright Tips and Traps ... Don’t Trust Your Intuition!” at <https://authorspublish.com/copyright-tips-and-traps-dont-trust-your-intuition/>. Good article. But buy a copy of the NOLO Press Copyright Handbook.

See “What Does Your Vacation Smell Like?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-does-your-vacation-smell-like/>. Interesting take on the sense of smell (for your POV character).

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1010 words

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (novel rewrite)

Words brought forward..... 31,122

Day 1..... 0773 words. Total words to date..... 31895

Total fiction words for May..... 72669

Total fiction words for the year..... 443948

Total nonfiction words for May... 19640

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 104500

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 548448

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Cycling](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Wes Crowley saga](#)

The Journal: Character Descriptions

May 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Wow. Lately
- * I'd be remiss
- * Topic: Character Descriptions
- * Yesterday, and Memorial Day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Wow. Lately “Of Interest” seems a feast or famine prospect. Today it's famine.

I'd be remiss if I didn't pass along the info on “David Farland's Advanced Fantasy and SF Writing Workshop” (at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-advanced-fantasy-and-sf-writing-workshop/>).

I'd also be remiss if I didn't remind you of [my mentorships](#) and recommend a comparison. But that's up to you.

Topic: Character Descriptions

It's difficult to point to a “good” book on characterization. Not because they aren't out there, but because there are so many out there. Pretty much any advice you read or hear regarding how to describe characters will be good advice.

Well, unless the instructor brings up that old false saw about [readers wanting to imagine the characters for themselves](#). They don't. Just trust me on that.

Anyway, the idea is to take on board any advice on characterization that feels right to you, absorb it, and let it seep out of your subconscious as you write.

That being said, there are no easy answers for how to write character descriptions except to include them (vs. omitting them). Readers can only see what you show them. That said, for me, character (and setting) descriptions come in phases.

In Phase 1, when your reader or another character first meets the character, they (like humans) will see (hear, smell, etc.) a stereotype. We're hard-wired that way. Seeing and reacting to people as stereotypes isn't your fault and it doesn't make you a bad person. It's a wholly instinctive protective response housed in your brain.

So when you first introduce a character, whether or not you consciously want to, you'll introduce a stereotype to put an initial picture in the reader's mind. (Often the expectation of a particular stereotype is already cemented in place by genre.)

This is usually either a brief sentence (or two or three) of straight narrative or another character's opinion as s/he sees/senses the character you're describing. Neither way is “right” or “wrong,” and I often use both throughout my stories, usually working in concert.

In Phase 2, which usually comes quickly (maybe even the same sentence or the next sentence) you'll add something unusual that makes the character unique and more real: a scar, the form of a moustache, the vibrant color of the hair, a bit of spittle on the bottom lip, an odor, etc.

All of this happens very quickly when the character first comes on stage, and it's usually mixed with action. (Note: The first action below is "protruded." You can find the others.)

* * *

A thick mop of dirty brown hair protruded from beneath Ralph Lawson's dusty off-white hat as he crossed the dusty main street of Dalton, Texas. In his left hand was a beat-up double-barrel 10-gauge shotgun with a worn wooden stock.

He barely noticed as a wagon laden with sacks of wheat passed in front of him. He walked through the dust cloud that followed the wagon down the street.

He didn't notice the surrey with a laughing couple that passed behind him as he pushed past a rusty sorrel mare and a palomino stallion tied to the hitching rail. The palomino nervously fidgeted to one side.

Beneath a scowl, he clomped heavily up onto the boardwalk. The slight jarring caused pain to shoot through the left side of his jaw.

The angry red wound started below his ear. That's where they'd placed the tip of the running iron. It ended near his chin. The wound was almost healed but still tender. He could still smell the flesh sizzling and taste his helplessness as the other two men, laughing, held him down. The shame might never heal.

That same laughter filtered out through the batwing doors on the back of the sounds from the piano and the quiet buzz of conversation.

He pushed through, followed the laughter to a table just inside on the right, and raised the shotgun.

Both men looked up. He took it in, wanting to remember that final image.

The man on the left, his hat dangling over his back from a chin strap. His glass at his lips in his left hand, liquid pouring through a grin. Then his right palm coming up, warding off his fear. "Now Jim, we was drunk. We didn't mean to—"

The man on the right, reaching for his glass, but stopping, looking up. A sneer crossing his face. "Well, I'll be. If it ain't—"

The plaintive sound of the cocking of two hammers. The squeeze on one trigger, then the next. Then the explosions.

The first man's hand slapping back, becoming part of his face before the face disappeared.

The second man scrambling up from his chair, reaching with his right hand for his revolver. The second blast taking him full in the chest.

Two chairs overturned, out of sight behind the table, both still occupied but with only dead meat.

The bar fell silent. Jim Parsons lowered the shotgun, looked, nodded and walked out.

* * *

Phase 3 (in my experience) is additional specific description as noticed by another character. It's usually a nuance, or a series of them. Add this later, when the character makes another appearance or appears in a different way or from the perspective of a different character or while the character is taking another action.

Following the scene above, maybe there will be an interaction with a local lawman. Or maybe he was in the saloon, frozen by the moment, but follows "Jim" out. Et cetera.

Maybe the character's stepping out of a car or down from a stagecoach. Maybe he's turning for a final look at a devastated city on a planet that's destroying itself before he steps up on the ramp of the starship that will take him off the surface. Or maybe he's exiting a swimming pool to find a man with a gun crouched and waiting, a smirk on his face. Or maybe he's trying frantically to escape the pirhanas someone slipped into the pool.

Is this helpful at all? I hope so. Imagine this sort of thing applied to your own writing.

Yesterday I finished cycling through the text I kept from the old version of Book 3. I have visitors over the next few days. I'll write or not as I am able.

I hope you and yours have an enjoyable and thoughtful Memorial Day weekend.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Unintentional Writer" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/the-unintentional-writer.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080 words

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (novel)

Words brought forward..... 31,122

Day 1..... 0773 words. Total words to date..... 31895
Day 2..... 2162 words. Total words to date..... 34057

Total fiction words for May..... 74831
Total fiction words for the year..... 446110
Total nonfiction words for May... 29720
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 105580
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 551690

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Characterization](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Saguaro Cactus

May 30, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Actually, no
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

A little misinformation from an article a friend sent me, featured on Yahoo News:

“Saguaro are considered to be a ‘symbol of the American west,’ yet they are rare, NPS officials say. ‘These majestic plants, found only in a small portion of the United States, are protected by Saguaro National Park’ near Tuscon.”

Actually, no, saguaros aren't ‘rare’.

1. Saguaros are protected in Arizona, but so are almost every desert plant. If you don't believe me, be observed trying to dig one up or even retrieving one that is already dug up.

As an aside, years ago, I rescued an ocotillo that had been bulldozed out of the ground to widen a road. I wrapped it in a blanket (spines), loaded it into my pickup, and took it home to plant it in my yard. A few days later (a neighbor informed on me), park service officials showed up and took the plant away to be destroyed. All of which makes perfect sense in today's world but was completely nonsensical when it happened.

But back to the mighty saguaro. Saguaros grow throughout the Sonoran desert, which extends from deep in Mexico up into southeast Arizona. They also grow in the western- and northern-most parts of the Chihuahua desert.

2. Saguaro National Park is actually two separate parks (NE and SW of Tucson) and saguaros grow hundreds of miles outside the boundaries of the park.

Of course, there was no place on the article to leave a comment. We mustn't correct the party line.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Now Free: The 2021 Guide to Manuscript Publishers" at <https://authorspublish.com/free-book-the-2021-guide-to-manuscript-publishers/>.

See "Deadly Problems For Writers" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/deadly-problems-for-writers/>. This is a great post.

See "Write Like You're in Love, Edit Like You're in Charge" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/write-like-youre-in-love-edit-like-youre-in-charge.html>. To this one I can add only one caveat: Don't be a bully. Let your love be who he/she/it (the story) wants to be.

See "Should we censor art?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/should-we-censor-art/>. See PG's sensible take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330 words

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (novel)
Words brought forward..... 31,122

Day 1..... 0773 words. Total words to date..... 31895
Day 2..... 2162 words. Total words to date..... 34057
Day 3..... 2642 words. Total words to date..... 36699

Total fiction words for May..... 77473
Total fiction words for the year..... 448752
Total nonfiction words for May... 21050
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 105910
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 554662

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Great Advice from DWS

May 31, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Dean's current and previous posts
- * Meanwhile
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[T]he advantage of writing 40,000 word novels. Readers can read them faster.” Dean Wesley Smith

“[Fiction] implies the action of making, or rather, giving form. It is not inventing something that is not true, but giving shape to something that was already there.” Valeria Luiselli, Mexican author

Well, I’m gonna add Dean’s current and previous post to my writers resources pages on my main website. Great, great stuff.

The first post in today’s “Of Interest” below (plus the comments) sets up the second post. The second one is exactly what I personally needed to hear. Still learning from Dean after all these years.

Meanwhile, the recast (now) of Book 3 of the Wes Crowley series is racing right along. It should be finished and out to my first readers in no more than a few days.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See the comments on “Deadly Problems For Writers” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/deadly-problems-for-writers/#comments>.

See “Following Up on Yesterday’s Post” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/following-up-on-yesterdays-post/>.

See “Deepen Characterization by Mining Your Own Reactions” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/deepen-characterization-by-mining-your-own-reactions/>.

See “How to Get Your First Freelance Byline (and Why Even Fiction Writers Should Freelance)” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-to-get-your-very-first-freelance-byline/>.

See “Don’t Tease Your Reader. Get to the Tension and Keep It Rising” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/dont-tease-your-reader-get-to-the-tension-and-keep-it-rising/>.

See “Find Your Readers with SparkToro with Rand Fishkin, June 4 (Free!)” at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QhEORYFeSvO03FR8MBifdA. (If my info is filled in, just replace it with your own.)

See “Twin Peaks and Embracing Artistic Accidents” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/twin-peaks-and-embracing-artistic>. Or you can just write into the dark where essentially everything is an accident. (grin)

See “How and Why Reading Improves Writing” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/05/how-and-why-reading-improves-writing.html>. I would add only, Read for Pleasure. Enjoy the story. Then, if something blows you away, go back and reread (as Sue says) “with a writer’s eye”).

See “Without books, we would not have made it” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/without-books-we-would-not-have-made-it/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 320 words

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (novel)

Words brought forward..... 31,122

Day 1..... 0773 words. Total words to date..... 31895

Day 2..... 2162 words. Total words to date..... 34057

Day 3..... 2642 words. Total words to date..... 36699

Day 4..... 3021 words. Total words to date..... 39720

Total fiction words for May..... 80494

Total fiction words for the year..... 451773

Total nonfiction words for May... 21370

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 106230

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 558003

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CounterCraft](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Four-Book Give-Away

June 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quote of the Day

* A give-away

- * StreetLib
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“In Heinlein’s Rules, Product Focused writers have trouble with Rules #1, #2, and #3. Process focused writers have a horrid time with Rules #4 and #5.” Dean Wesley Smith, in his reply to my comment. Another of those gems I talk about.

In honor of Dean’s previous two excellent posts, I’ve decided to do another give-away.

For a limited time, you can get [*Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)*](#) and [*Writing the Character Driven Story*](#) free. To get either or both, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Please be sure to tell me your preferred eformat: Kindle, Nook/Apple, or PDF.

And yes, [*Creating Realistic Characters*](#) and the first book in The Wes Crowley Series ([*The Rise of a Warrior*](#)) are both still available free as well. ‘Cause why not?

A short time ago, I mentioned the aggregator and distributor StreetLib. As you have time, I suggest you stop by the StreetLib blog and browse some of the topics there. You can find it at <https://blog.streetlib.com/>. If you scroll to the bottom of that page, you can subscribe to their newsletter.

One note: As an aggregator/distributor, StreetLib is a little different than D2D or Smashwords. Instead of taking a percentage of your royalty per sale, StreetLib asks for payment up front. Not a bad way to go if you have a lot of sales. They also have a free option you can try.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “28 Sci-fi and Fantasy Fiction Markets That Pay” at <https://authorspublish.com/28-sci-fi-and-fantasy-fiction-markets-that-pay/>.

See “Authors to earn royalties on secondhand books for first time” at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jun/01/authors-to-earn-royalties-on-secondhand-books-for-first-time>. Thanks to Bill S for the tip.

See “The Woman who walked around the world” at <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20210527-the-woman-who-walked-around-the-world>.

See “First Page Critique: What Is The Key To Rebecca?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/first-page-critique-what-is-the-key-to-rebecca.html>.

See “Only Two Days Left” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/only-two-days-left/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 310 words

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (novel)

Words brought forward..... 31,122

Day 1..... 0773 words. Total words to date..... 31895

Day 2..... 2162 words. Total words to date..... 34057

Day 3..... 2642 words. Total words to date..... 36699

Day 4..... 3021 words. Total words to date..... 39720

Day 5..... 2716 words. Total words to date..... 42436

Total fiction words for May..... 80494

Total fiction words for the year..... 454489

Total nonfiction words for June... 310

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 106540

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 561029

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [BBC.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [theguardian.com](#)

The Journal: Absorbing Story

June 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Topic: Absorbing Story

* The novel

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

a brief conversation between bestselling authors John Gilstrap and Jeffrey Deaver

John Gilstrap: “What are you doing right that I’m doing wrong?”

[Jeffrey Deaver] answered without pause, “Last time I counted, I was sixteen books ahead of you.”

Yeah, okay. Fine. Perspective.

Then he went on to say, “You know you have to keep writing. Stopping isn’t an option.”

“What if I can’t sell anything?” I whined.

“Nobody says you have to do it fulltime.”

Topic: Absorbing Story (A Cautionary Tale)

Writing is not just a matter of buying and reading all the right how-to books. Much more than that, it’s a matter of trusting what we already know. It’s a matter of trusting all the Story we’ve absorbed during our lives.

Interesting too that absorbing story isn’t a matter of choice. It’s something we all do in almost every waking moment.

Telling stories is natural to human beings. If you don’t believe me, listen to yourself the next time you come home from a shopping trip because some idiot cut you off in traffic. Listen to yourself as you explain to your significant other why you’re upset.

Or listen to yourself when you spot a particularly lovely flower or cloud formation and run to tell your favorite other about it. Know what you’re doing? You’re telling a story, that’s what you’re doing.

And wonder of wonders, you don’t have to run it past your neighbors first to see whether they think you should change parts of it. You just tell the story.

But let’s backtrack a couple (or three or several) decades. Do you remember?

Do you realize you were telling stories long before you even knew there was such a thing as an alphabet?

But let me ease your mind and put this in perspective: that includes EVERYONE, even little Willie Shakespeare, young Ernie Hemingway, little Stevie King and any other human being you've ever heard of (or not).

And even after they were introduced to the alphabet, at some point little Willie S and Ernie H and Stevie K had to learn (consciously) how to draw two longer lines at just the right angle, then span them with a shorter one to create the capital letter A. And once they learned it, they forgot about it. They never had to concentrate on how to construct a capital letter A again.

Or to put a period at the end of declarative sentence. Or a question mark after an interrogative. Or to capitalize the first letter of the first word of a sentence. Or even to put the words in the right order so they made sense.

And so their journey started. Just as yours and mine did.

And a little later, they started Absorbing Story. They listened to tall tales from their rowdy uncles, listened to the friends in elementary and junior high and high school who said sometimes truly stupid things they thought would make them seem more impressive. Oh, and they read (and absorbed Story) from books, assigned or not.

And in the case of Hemingway (later) and King and you and me, they watched films and television shows. (Some listened to radio dramas and later watched films and television.) And today, some also play interactive video games, role-play games, etc. And without even realizing they're doing so, they're absorbing Story.

And all of what they absorbed went into their conscious mind and resided there. And what they absorbed that they particularly liked also became part of their subconscious. It came out creatively in dreams and re-tellings around the water cooler or over a stock tank or a branding iron or an assembly line.

And some of them became writers and the Story they absorbed came out in short stories and novellas and novels. And for those who learn it's all right to trust themselves and shove aside all the "can'ts" it continues to do so.

You are not alone, my friends, and you are neither dense nor stupid. You've been absorbing story your entire life. Trust that, and tell a few.

The novel continues racing toward the end. It might end today. It will almost certainly end either today or tomorrow. How do I know?

It's not because I go for a certain length. And it's not because I don't "allow" a story to exceed a certain word count. It's because my westerns generally like to end at between 40,000 and 55,000 words.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Stay In The Fight” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/stay-in-the-fight.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 770 words

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (novel)

Words brought forward..... 31,122

Day 1..... 0773 words. Total words to date..... 31895

Day 2..... 2162 words. Total words to date..... 34057

Day 3..... 2642 words. Total words to date..... 36699

Day 4..... 3021 words. Total words to date..... 39720

Day 5..... 2716 words. Total words to date..... 42436

Day 6..... 3935 words. Total words to date..... 46371

Total fiction words for June..... 3935

Total fiction words for the year..... 458424

Total nonfiction words for June... 1080

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 107310

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 565734

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Story Idea

June 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * A Story Idea
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Well, yesterday, finally, I took a few minutes to upload the slightly revised editions of *The Rise of a Warrior* and *Comanche Fire*, the first two novels in the Wes Crowley series.

Nothing major. As I was reading through them, I spotted and corrected a few typos. Anyway, anyone who would like a “clean” copy of *The Rise of a Warrior*, you only need to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

A Story Idea

For those of you who enjoy reading or writing dystopian tales...

Imagine a world in which a nation is rapidly approaching an untrusting, disease-rampant society. What happens?

You might roll back the clock a couple of decades and start with “anti-bacterial” products of every kind. Seems to me the most recent I’ve heard of is anti-bacterial paint. I’m not kidding.

If you use this part, remember that “anti-bacterial” products target all bacteria, even necessary, helpful and benevolent ones.

Remember too that as children are treated with these products and no longer allowed to play in the dirt, etc., their body’s natural defense against disease rapidly wanes.

Toss in a bat-borne virus that quickly circles the globe. Take special note of the new “elbow bump” greeting that quickly develops. Note too that it promotes mistrust among the citizens. (I know I washed my hands, but did s/he?) Probably you can ignore the fact that your society skipped right over the fist-bump in favor of the elbow-bump. But include it if you want to.

You might even expand on all of that. Maybe the elbow bump actually eradicates the need, in some people’s minds, to wash their hands often, or at all. (i.e., Why bother when you will never shake hands again?)

Add to that the certainty that any virus, bacterium, etc. can live on elbows as well as hands.

Or skip over that fact and maybe take your story in a wacky direction. Maybe instead of preparing meals with our hands, we do so with our elbows. Maybe some company even develops a line of new, elbow-controlled kitchen implements.

Of if you’re a science-fictiony kind of writer, maybe humanity speeds up the development of robots to prepare and serve our food. Maybe food companies work to make the feeding process

easier. Maybe even to bags of food pellets that can easily be emptied onto a plate or into a bowl. The human could then sit at a table, lower his face to the dish, and realize his dog and cat had it right all along.

Ideas cannot be copyrighted, and I know I won't write any of the above anyway. So if any or all of it appeals to you, dig in.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How to Write Spaceships" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/how-to-write-spaceships/>.

See "Why Detective Fiction Is So Popular" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/why-detective-fiction-is-so-popular.html>.

See "Another 'Kryptonite' Issue: who vs whom" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/another-kryptonite-issue-who-vs-whom/>. A little more on the dumbing down of America and that it's fine.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500 words

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (novel)

Words brought forward..... 31,122

Day 1..... 0773 words. Total words to date..... 31895

Day 2..... 2162 words. Total words to date..... 34057

Day 3..... 2642 words. Total words to date..... 36699

Day 4..... 3021 words. Total words to date..... 39720

Day 5..... 2716 words. Total words to date..... 42436

Day 6..... 3935 words. Total words to date..... 46371

Day 7..... 3307 words. Total words to date..... 49678

Total fiction words for June..... 7241

Total fiction words for the year..... 461731

Total nonfiction words for June... 1580

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 107810

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 569541

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Novel Finished

June 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Welcome
- * How to Write Fiction Sales Copy
- * More Boring Talk About My Own Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome to Kelley and Anitha and any others who have joined our little community lately. If I can ever do anything to help with your writing, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

You know those writers you meet at writers’ conferences who deliver their lecture or class and then disappear into their room in the hotel for the duration?

Yeah, that’s not me. I was the guy hanging out in the lobby or the lounge, waiting to talk and share. So anything at all, write me.

Hey, listen, seriously, if you don’t have a copy of Dean Wesley Smith’s *How to Write Fiction Sales Copy*, buy one. You won’t regret it. You can find both ebook and paperback (recommended) at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0178MQVX2>.

More Boring Talk About My Own Writing

Wow, was my head ever all over the place yesterday. I had almost finished the new version of *Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger* when I realized something.

If I ended the current novel where I wanted to end it (Chapter 44, to lead into the first book of the “gap” series), it would be a completely “new” Book 3.

Oh oh. That would mean I'd have to renumber the entire series (covers, etc.) I'd also have to renumber the series again every time I finished another novel. AND I'd have to keep track of what I cut out of the old Book 3 to add back in at the end of the gap series. And who knows when that'll be or how many books will be in that series? I certainly don't.

So I bit the bullet. I brought back over 10,000 of the words I originally cut from the old Book 3 and added them back in to the new Book 3. This edition of the book still contains almost 22,000 new words.

I also added an "Important Note to Readers" at the end and just before the "About the Author" section:

"If you enjoy reading about Wes Crowley and his adventures as a Texas Ranger, you still have 9 more books to go in the main series.

"HOWEVER, between Book 3 (this one) and Book 4 (*Leaving Amarillo*) there's a gap of about 15 years. I filled part of that gap in this book.

"But I'm also writing a new series of books called Wes Crowley: The Gap Series.

"The first of those, in which Wes and another Ranger are on loan to the Ranger company in Brownsville, will begin where Chapter 44 of this novel leaves off. I hope you will join Wes, Charley and the rest of the gang as they continue their exploits. And I hope you enjoy reading the stories as much as I enjoyed writing them."

Naturally, I'm hoping this is good news for fans of Wes Crowley. (grin)

The book finished, and it came in at a little over 62000 words. Now I can feel free to write the books that will fill the "rest" of the 15-year gap between Books 3 and 4.

The covers for those books will read

WES CROWLEY: THE GAP SERIES
stories to fill the 15-year gap between Books 3 and 4 of the Wes Crowley series

Then the Title of Each Book in the Series.

Who knew back in October 2014 when I finished a short story called "Adobe Walls" today I'd have 12 novels and counting about the same character? Amazing.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "10 mind-boggling things you should know about quantum physics" at <https://www.space.com/quantum-physics-things-you-should-know>.

See “The Dream Pedlar” at <https://www.thedreampedlar.com/>. A truly beautiful blog.

See “It Was A Day” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/it-was-a-day/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger (novel)

Words brought forward..... 31,122

Day 1..... 0773 words. Total words to date..... 31895

Day 2..... 2162 words. Total words to date..... 34057

Day 3..... 2642 words. Total words to date..... 36699

Day 4..... 3021 words. Total words to date..... 39720

Day 5..... 2716 words. Total words to date..... 42436

Day 6..... 3935 words. Total words to date..... 46371

Day 7..... 3307 words. Total words to date..... 49678

Day 8..... 2341 words. Total words to date..... 52019

10,087 words added from old version..... 62106 (done)

Total fiction words for June..... 9583

Total fiction words for the year..... 464072

Total nonfiction words for June... 2180

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 108410

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 572482

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [The Dream Pedlar](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Day Off and Writing Sales Copy

June 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Day Off
- * Search the Journal
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The less promise and potency in the self, the more imperative is the need for pride. The core of pride is self-rejection.” Bruce Lee

Self-esteem is at the core of the ability to trust yourself and write into the dark.

Yesterday I mostly blew off the day. I had to get labs (fasting) at 7 a.m. so I had no coffee etc. until after that. It's only pure luck that yesterday's Journal was coherent. Well, if it was.

After labs I enjoyed breakfast, a cigar and a large mug of coffee. Then I decided to take the day off. My wife and I went to an estate sale in Sierra Vista. Before I left I knew it was only about a 40-minute trip each way, but by the time we got back I felt as if we'd been gone for three days.

Anyway, I say I only “mostly” blew off the day. I did get first-reader input back from one first reader. I applied the fixes, then uploaded the new Book 3 to D2D, Amazon and Smashwords.

Then I prepped the template for the next novel, the FIRST in what will be the Wes Crowley: The Gap Series. And today I get to start on that story! Am I a lucky guy, or what?

Eventually I'll return to the FOH series (probably) and I've felt a lot of pressure from Nick Spalding to write more in his series now that I know more about (purely fictional) time warps. So as I told him, we'll see. And then there's always more to write in the Blackwell Ops series.

Oh, what terrible drudgery it all is! (grin)

Search the Journal

A writer and I talked about sales copy yesterday too. But I remembered I'd recently (I thought) written a post about writing sales copy. So almost as an afterthought, I typed “writing sales copy” into the search box in the sidebar at <https://hestanbrough.com> (the Journal).

And voila, the post popped up. I was amazed to see that I'd posted it almost a year and a half ago. I thought it was much more recent than that.

But the point is, there's a search box on the sidebar. If you wonder what I've written about a particular topic, type-in a few keywords and see what comes up. In fact, you can do the same thing at Dean's website.

Anyway, most writers believe they can easily write book descriptions (sales copy). It's just an extended elevator pitch, right?

Wrong. If you're pitching to an agent or someone, chances are you'll hit the plot points, etc.

But when you write sales copy, you want to AVOID including plot points. To learn why, read "Writing Sales Copy (Book Descriptions)" at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-writing-sales-copy-book-descriptions/>.

Then go buy Dean's book on the subject. (grin) It will be an invaluable go-to book for you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How to Break into a Library" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/how-to-break-into-a-library.html>. A very informative post. Recommended. I'll be adding this to the writers' resources on my author site.

See "Investigating Crimes in Indian Country" at <https://leelofland.com/investigating-crimes-in-indian-country/>.

See "Bruce Lee on Self-Actualization and the Crucial Difference Between Pride and Self-Esteem" at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/12/18/bruce-lee-artist-of-life-self-esteem/>. Self-esteem is at the core of the ability to trust yourself and write into the dark.

See "170 Hypothetical Questions That'll Give Your Brain a Workout" at <https://parade.com/1211362/marynliles/hypothetical-questions/>. Maybe some writing prompts.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for June..... 9583

Total fiction words for the year..... 464072

Total nonfiction words for June... 2760

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 108990

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 573062

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [BrainPickings.org](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Parade.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Alison Naomi Holt and Robert J. Sadler

June 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Thanks for the input
- * Alison Naomi Holt
- * Robert J. Sadler
- * Yesterday
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Thanks to everyone who gave me input re my fairly recent announcement that I was considering writing nonfiction books on all my mentoring subtopics. I even thought about doing a Kickstarter for the series.

I appreciate the input, but I’ve decided against doing that, at least for now, and at least as a series. It would take too much time away from my fiction, and really, that’s where I live and breathe.

Besides, the mentorships, personalized to drill down into your own fiction, are still available and at a reduced price (see <https://harveystanbrough.com/mentorships/>).

Plus I’ve written on most (if not all) of those topics in my blog either at the Journal at HESTanbrough.com or over on my author site at HarveyStanbrough.com. And both of those have a search box in the sidebar.

If you like what I have to say about writing and how I say it, and if you aren't ready yet to take advantage of a personal mentorship, I encourage you to use those search boxes to find more information.

My friend and writer Alison Naomi Holt has a new, very professional author website. If you want to see an excellent author site, check it out at <https://alisonholtbooks.com>. For a blast from the past, check out her blog too while you're there.

My friend and writer Robert J. Sadler emailed to say he'll be participating as a panelist in a Zoom talk on the True Crime genre. If you're interested, check out his announcement at <https://www.robertjsadler.com/post/a-true-crime-discussion-on-zoom>.

Yesterday I started writing the first book of the Wes Crowley Gap series. The title of Book 1 will be *Assignment: Brownsville*. With any luck, it'll be ready for my first readers in a couple of weeks.

But it almost didn't happen. In about the third paragraph, I had Ranger Crowley going on assignment with a Ranger whom I thought for a moment hadn't joined the company until about 15 years later. If that was true, I'd have to go back into Book 3 again, make a change, upload the new-new version, etc. Initially, I thought *Well, at least I caught it early rather than late*.

I took a break, confused and disgusted.

But when I got back, I remembered the character in question WAS in the right timeline. Whew! Crisis averted.

But the incident caused me to realize I need to do some serious internal research. So I set aside *Assignment: Brownsville* for a little while and went back to scanning through the whole original series to at least delineate which characters served during which timeframes so I wouldn't confuse them again.

All of which adds up to a cautionary tale: MAN, I wish I'd kept a reverse outline for those books as I wrote them!

Learn from my mistake, folks. You never know what individual novel you write might take off and become a series. Keep a reverse outline on every novella and novel that you write. If you don't, I can pretty much guarantee you'll regret it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Colin Pitchfork Murders – The Birth of DNA Forensic Evidence" at <http://dyingwords.net/colin-pitchfork-murders-the-birth-of-dna-forensic-evidence/>.

See "Find Your Readers with SparkToro" at <https://youtu.be/OtoKrGAf75w> (free video).

See “A True Crime Discussion on Zoom” at <https://www.robertjsadler.com/post/a-true-crime-discussion-on-zoom>.

See “Ten Years In” at <https://russellblake.com/ten-years-in/>. A fortunate writer.

See “THE LAST SALE” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-last-sale/>.

See “Avoid the Bait-and-Switch Opening” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/avoid-the-bait-and-switch-opening.html>. A couple of pieces of good advice.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890

Total fiction words for June..... 12473

Total fiction words for the year..... 466962

Total nonfiction words for June... 3340

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 109570

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 576532

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Alison Naomi Holt](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Robert J. Sadler](#), [Russell Blake](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Short Post Today

June 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * A Short Post Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A Short Post Today

and I guess it's a little negative. Well, not negative so much as indifferent.

First, if you're interested at all, see "Where Gender-Neutral Pronouns Come From" at <https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2021/06/gender-neutral-pronouns-arent-new/619092/>.

I was going to write a bit about this, but then I realized I don't really care. People have a right to call themselves whatever they want. How someone else "identifies" doesn't affect my bottom line or my time off, so what do I care?

By and large, aside from a few family members and close friends who basically force themselves to appear momentarily impressed, people really don't care how others identify or what personal pronouns they prefer. And even those friends and family members will generally roll their eyes the moment the self-absorbed person's back is turned after proclaiming his or her plea for attention. But again, that's their life to put up with, not mine.

Really, I don't see what the fuss is all about. We don't have this problem where I come from. We have long used an all-inclusive, non-gender specific singular pronoun: ya'll. And we also have an all-inclusive, non-gender specific plural pronoun: all'a ya'll. So there. Problem solved.

Still, in our never-ending attempt to be "inclusive" of every character type, you can always insert a character or two like this for various reasons. Comic relief being one and pity being the other that immediately spring to mind.

Then we move on to the seemingly never-ending choice all writers have: to succumb to unreasoning fear in the pursuit of "perfection" or set it aside and just enjoy the process of storytelling. There's a lesson here. The lesson is, perfection is in the eye of the reader. What works for one won't work for another. Which is why I write into the dark. I allow the characters to tell their story. They live or die of their own accord.

For this one, take a look at "Troubleshooting Plot Issues" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/troubleshooting-plot-issues.html>.

The fear in the post is palpable. It drips so heavily off the author I was a little surprised my screen didn't get damp or fog up.

This is a momentary glimpse into what would be, for me, Writer's Hell. If I had to go through anything remotely resembling the process outlined by the author of this post, I wouldn't write at all.

Even with all my recent whining about the tribulations of “rewriting” Book 3 of the Wes Crowley series, all I really did was add several chapters (around 22,000 words), and the characters themselves gave me those. There was no real work involved.

GAWD I’m glad I just let the characters tell the story that they, not I, are living.

Now I’m gonna go do exactly that while wishing all’a ya’ll a great day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Bruce Lee on Self-Actualization and the Crucial Difference Between Pride and Self-Esteem” at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/12/18/bruce-lee-artist-of-life-self-esteem/>. I thought this one bore repeating.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 460 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890

Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068

Total fiction words for June..... 15651

Total fiction words for the year..... 470140

Total nonfiction words for June... 3980

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 110210

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 580350

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Silliness](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: There Are Five Physical Senses

June 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: There Are *Five* Physical Senses
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“When you find a writer who really is saying something to you, read everything that writer has written and you will get more education and depth of understanding out of that than reading a scrap here and a scrap there and elsewhere.” Joseph Campbell

Topic: There Are *Five* Physical Senses

Not one. Five.

One of the most obvious signs of a beginning writer is that in description, the writer focuses on Sight as the dominant, and often only, physical sense.

This morning I saw a post by such a writer, and more importantly, a writing *coach*. Unfortunately, in the post, she quoted from three celebrated works. Here I almost wrote “It’s difficult to argue with Emma Donoghue, Sylvia Plath, and Wallace Stegner.” And it is. Success is success.

But honestly, it isn’t difficult at all to argue with Ms. Verducci, especially given that she cherry-picked the passages to illustrate her point.

As you read the quoted passages in “3 Beautifully Descriptive Novel Passages” (Of Interest), ask yourself:

How much more alive might the scene from Wallace Stegner’s *Angle of Repose* have been had we been able to feel the cold cheeks and nose of the character or the cold, damp window under her fingers as she rubbed the circle on the window? How much more alive might it have been had we been allowed to hear the wind that was blowing the snow and the river rushing in the background?

All of that was going on in the background, but for whatever reason those senses didn’t make it onto the page in this particular excerpt. (That isn’t to say those senses didn’t appear before or after the excerpt, and I suspect they did.)

In the excerpt from Plath's *The Bell Jar* at least we get to hear the figs "plop" to the ground. And that's in a passage in which the setting is not physical but a metaphor. Yet in the OP (I clicked through), Ms. Verducci focused only on the sense of sight.

Likewise in Donoghue's *Room* the author invoked not only the sense of sight but also tactile touch ("my eyes nearly melted off") and sound ("a thing in the night nnnng nnnng nnnng biting me"). Ms. Donoghue also wrote what I'm certain is an original sentence: "One minute they were alive and the next minute they were dirt." Yet again, Ms. Verducci cites only the author's use of Sight.

I'm certain all three of these celebrated authors included all five of the POV character's physical senses in different ways in their books. If they hadn't, chances are the works wouldn't be "celebrated." (Then again, there's James Patterson, so....)

Yet Ms. Verducci, in her coaching of writers exactly like you and me, would have us believe only the sense of sight exists or matters to the reader. (I wanted to leave a comment on the OP, but comments were closed. I would love to have given her the opportunity to tell me I'm wrong. Few things annoy me more than a Stage 1 writer holding forth on a topic and so sure of herself that she doesn't allow comments on her post.) I'm so very glad I never worked with her, at least not as a student of her very limited perspective.

It's as if she believes the POV character has no sense of hearing or smell or taste, no sense of tactile touch. And if the POV character is deprived of the ability to sense physical stimuli to that extent, it would probably be a good idea to let the reader know that up front.

If you want to engage your readers and pull them deeply into the story—if you want to involve them in the story so they won't be so likely to leave at the first opportunity—doing so is easy.

You really don't have to go into great detail in your descriptions. Well, unless the POV character notices something about the scene or setting in great detail. Then, by all means, let the reader in on the secret in your mind. Don't keep it to yourself and assume the reader will "get" it. Put it on the page.

But most often you can vastly enrich your descriptions with only a sentence that invokes each physical sense: Sight, yes, but also hearing, smell, taste, and tactile touch.

And if you add a sentence or two to invoke the POV character's emotional sense—dread, for example, or unease or trepidation or joy or elation or that tingly feeling that drives a smile to your face with the certainty that everything's going to work out—so much the better.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "3 Beautifully Descriptive Novel Passages" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/3-beautifully-descriptive-novel-passages/>. I would not work with Ms. Verducci on a dare.

See “32 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://authorspublish.com/32-themed-submissions-calls-for-june-2021/>.

See “A Fun Combination Idea” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-fun-combination-idea/>. If you read between the lines, this is kind of a mini-class on revenue streams and multi-purposing your writing.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 840 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890

Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068

Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192

Total fiction words for June..... 18775

Total fiction words for the year..... 473264

Total nonfiction words for June... 4820

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 111050

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 584314

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Five Physical Senses](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Short Post Today

June 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Short Post Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I distrust plot for two reasons: first, because our lives are largely plotless, even when you add in all our reasonable precautions and careful planning; and second, because I believe plotting and the spontaneity of real creation aren’t compatible.” Stephen King

“I started trying to write a short story for Amanda [Palmer] ... about what it was like to be me when I was 7, and it just kept going. And it turned into a book called *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*.” Neil Gaiman

A Short Post Today

Today is all about the “Of Interest” section. At the top are a few probably helpful posts about writing, then one that names “the 10 most inspiring, enjoyable books about how to write.”

You won’t be surprised to learn that I disagree with parts of their list, especially the last book listed. Writers should buy that book only to get it off the shelf so no other writers will be tempted to buy it. Then they should drop it into the nearest trash bin on their way out of the book store.

Then I included a note from Dean regarding a crazy new challenge he’s come up with for himself.

Then finally comes a rare post from Neil Gaiman. I was a little disappointed for various reasons (moreso with the interview, which cost me two hours of my life), but you might not be, so I included it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Genre as Story Engine” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/genre-as-story-engine>.

See (related) “On the Many Different Engines That Power a Short Story” at <https://lithub.com/on-the-many-different-engines-that-power-a-short-story/>.

See (related) “How to write” at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/oct/01/stephenking.sciencefictionfantasyandhorror>.

See “From Stephen King to Anne Lamott: the 10 most inspiring, enjoyable books about how to write” at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/apr/17/stephen-king-anne-lamott-10-books-how-to-write>.

See “A Challenge Out of Nothing” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-challenge-out-of-nothing/>.

See “Excellent Portents” at <https://journal.neilgaiman.com/2021/06/excellent-portents.html>. See the interview with Neil and Amanda Palmer. (They even sing.) The interview contains nothing about writing specifically, and it left me with a real sense that I’m very glad I’m me. (Although at about 1:32:00, an audience member asks “Where did your love for writing come from?”)

See “Are Royalties Fair? A Publisher Weighs In” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/are-royalties-fair-a-publisher-weighs-in/>. Per usual, nary a peep about publishers buying all rights and the value that adds to their company.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068
Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169

Total fiction words for June..... 21752
Total fiction words for the year..... 476241
Total nonfiction words for June... 5220
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 111450
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 587691

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Counter Craft](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [LitHub.com](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Stephen King](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Non-Productive Personal Day

June 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Non-Productive Personal Day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It’s dialogue that gives your cast their voices, and is crucial in defining their characters.”
Stephen King

A Non-Productive Personal Day

Hey there. I did a lot yesterday, but almost no writing. Just over 1000 words.

I’m mentioning all of the following because my schedule might be up in the air for a few days while I figure out my new routine and get started with it. This is more important than writing on my current story, though I certainly won’t set either it or the Journal aside if I can help it. I just need to figure out a few things, and I wanted to give you advance warning.

As a few of you know personally, I’m uncomfortably overweight. This is more than disconcerting to me, because I’m not the typical American male. I didn’t go from high school to a few months flipping burgers to college and then into a cubicle somewhere.

I turned 18 in USMC boot camp, then embarked on a 21 year Civilian-Appreciation Course. When I started, you could pretty much light a match on any part of my body, and when I finished, the match might bog down a bit but it would still light.

When I got back out into civilian life, I was dismayed to see men half my age with a paunch twice the size of mine. That was a real shocker.

(Not that there’s anything wrong with it, and I’m not being critical. I’m just saying that was neither what I was used to nor what I expected.)

Like most people, I’ve gained and lost weight a few times since then.

A few years ago (some of you will remember) I was walking 6-8, 8-10, and 10-12 miles per day, alternating on short, medium, and long days. During that time, I lost about 30 pounds and felt great. (Even at only 5’8” on a good day, my “fit” weight is around 165.)

Then a few years ago I developed a problem in my lower back that precludes running (at all) or walking more than about a half-mile. Ugh. Getting older sucks. If you've ever had sciatica, it's like that times two.

So my go-to method of losing weight (walking distance) is pretty much out the window. But I have to lose weight. As I said, I'm uncomfortable.

So yesterday morning I looked up Noom online, filled in all the blanks and hit Send. They would help me hit my target weight by early November. Sounded good.

But they don't have a desktop app. I don't know why, and I didn't check before I signed up. You can access your Noom app only through your iPhone or Android device.

Only 1, my Android phone couldn't connect with the app for whatever reason, probably because 2, I use my phone for, you know, phone calls. I think I might have used the camera thingy once, maybe twice. But that's it.

So I went through all the stuff to cancel Noom and get a refund. Which I have to say worked fine and was almost effortless. I only had to find their Support folks and explain in a live chat what was going on. And I was able to do that on my computer.

If Noom ever comes out with a regular computer app, I'll jump at the chance to join it again. But for now....

I got my bicycle out and cleaned it up. Maybe I can ride my bike without making my back ache. I also have a thing in the house that hikes the rear tire off the floor to turn it into a stationery bike. And then my eating. I have a little work to do there, but my eating's pretty much under control. So we'll see.

But I hardly ever read Dean's posts on his walking and running and other efforts to lose weight, so I promise I won't bore you with details. You come here (I hope) for writing and publishing advice, so that's what you'll continue to get. As I said at the top, I just wanted to let you know what's going on as a kind of advance warning. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Decade Ahead Classes" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/decade-ahead-classes/>.

See "Creating Likeable Villains" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/creating-likeable-villains.html>. Read this, glean what you can, and then forget it and just write what the characters, good and bad, give you.

See "June 10, 1942: The Lidice Massacre" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/june-10-1942-the-lidice-massacre/>. The horrors of humanity, and story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 760 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068
Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169
Day 5..... 1001 words. Total words to date..... 13170

Total fiction words for June..... 22753
Total fiction words for the year..... 477242
Total nonfiction words for June... 5980
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 112210
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 589452

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Censorship and Cancel Culture

June 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: On Censorship and Cancel Culture
- * Patreon
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The job boils down to two things: paying attention to how the real people around you behave and then telling the truth about what you see.” Stephen King

“Authors are now being successfully pressured to remove lines from published books that are deemed objectionable by some readers. ... The point of cancel campaigns is to create a chilling effect for academics, writers, editors, and others.” Jonathan Turley, author of the first item listed in “Of Interest”

“It seems we have all collectively forgotten the old childhood rhyme about Sticks and Stones. The most liberating thing one can do is to simply stop caring or listening to what others say or think about you. Call me whatever you want. I really don’t give a damn.” currentsitguy in a comment on the above article.

Topic: On Censorship and Cancel Culture

In today’s “Of Interest” are a couple of articles on censorship and cancel culture. Thanks to PCM for sending me a link to the first article. He also wrote, “Good God, indie publishing came around at the right time.”

He’s right. It absolutely did.

As an aside, I think “appease” is probably the ugliest word in the English language.

The fact is, every citizen of this nation, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin and other human-created and manipulated divisions, has a right to express his or her opinion. It’s called freedom of speech (expression), and it’s a freedom that’s being sorely tested at present.

Fortunately, I’ve personally endured only one experience with cancel culture. A reader of this Journal didn’t like a short story I wrote because of the way I portrayed the politics that drove the scenes, and she took issue with it. (The tactics portrayed in the story have been widely documented around the world.)

For a very brief time, I thought we were going to engage in an honest back-and-forth. I hoped-for and welcomed that. When I finally recognized the bait-and-switch and haranguing tactics that earmark cancel culture, and I ended the conversation.

The whole thing was my fault. I should have been less trusting and more distant. In response to her first volley, I should have written, “Thank you for your opinion” and then blocked her.

That short story, among many, many others, is not yet published, but it will be as soon as I can find appropriate art for the cover. I would publish it even if I didn’t personally like it (I do) because Freedom of Speech.

I certainly won't avoid publishing it just because one person out there thinks it's a good idea to bite one of the many hands that have worked to guarantee her right to not like a given story.

One person's rights stop where the next person's rights begin.

I sincerely hope you're all of the same mind no matter your personal political, religious, etc. leanings. As "currentsitguy" wrote above, "The most liberating thing one can do is to simply stop caring or listening to what others say or think about you."

Be brave, folks. Write your truth and your characters' truth. Don't toe some bully's imaginary line. Because really, in the real world, Sticks and stones may break your bones but words will never hurt you. Unless you let them.

Also in "Of Interest" is a link to an article about Patreon. The article delineates just a few of the many reasons I will never establish a Patreon account. If you want to support my work, consider becoming a personal patron at <https://hestanbrough.com/become-a-patron/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Authors Facing Increasing Pressure To Retroactively Edit Their Work To Appease Critics" at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/06/10/authors-facing-increasing-pressure-to-retroactively-edit-their-work-to-appease-critics/>. I also recommend reading the comments.

See "Positive Writer" at <http://positivewriter.com/>. If you're still iffy about writing, this might help. Several good articles. If you subscribe, you get two free ebooks.

See "Exodus: Patreon: A Threat To Free Speech Part 4" at <https://jonathanturley.org/2019/01/05/exodus-patreon-a-threat-to-free-speech-part-4/>.

See "The Benefits of Collaborative Writing" at <https://authorspublish.com/the-benefits-of-collaborative-writing/>. Maybe some gems.

See "Yes, 2020 Decade Ahead is Now 2022" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/yes-2020-decade-ahead-is-now-2022/>.

See "You Won't Find the Hardcover of Dave Eggers's Next Novel on Amazon" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/you-wont-find-the-hardcover-of-dave-eggerss-next-novel-on-amazon/>. For some serious comic relief, see PG's comment.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 710 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068
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Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169
Day 5..... 1001 words. Total words to date..... 13170
Day 6..... 3791 words. Total words to date..... 16961

Total fiction words for June..... 26544
Total fiction words for the year..... 481033
Total nonfiction words for June... 6690
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 112920
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 593953

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [JonathanTurley.org](#), [PositiveWriter.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Cat Picture

June 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Little More on Censorship
- * A Breath of Fresh Air (and Cat Shoulders)
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Sometimes you have to go on when you don't feel like it, and sometimes you're doing good work when it feels like all you're managing is to shovel sh*t from a sitting position.” Stephen King

“I wish that future novelists would reject the pressure to write for the betterment of society. Art is not media. ... We need characters in novels to be free to range into the dark and wrong. How else will we understand ourselves?” Ottessa Moshfegh from Twitter

A Little More on Censorship

To provide more or less equal coverage on the other side of what some folks see as a political question, see the first item in “Of Interest” today.

I won't go into how much I believe or agree with in the article. I won't even mention what I personally believe is the primary source of cancel culture. You can make that determination for yourself, as well you should. Besides, the particular source of censorship doesn't really matter to me.

As I wrote yesterday, censorship and cancel culture in all forms and from any party is just flat wrong. You certainly have the right to decide what you will allow your minor children to read, watch or listen to, and of course, you have the right to decide what you will personally read or watch or listen to. But nobody has the right to “cancel” the voices of others and thereby determine what those others will read, watch or listen to.

My personal take? If you don't like a book, close it, donate it, and find something else to do. If you don't like something on television, change the channel. But don't set out on a hate campaign to ban the author or television series. Again, it isn't up to me, you, or anyone else to decide what others read or watch.

A Breath of Fresh Air (and Cat Shoulders)

Dean's post today is about a new member of what he calls “promotion central” (I suppose because he and Kris write so much about their cats). So I thought I'd share something that feels “clean” after the stuff above and yesterday. Something that actually matters.

Around 10 years ago, my wife and I were visiting my mom at her home in Lovington New Mexico. One of my sisters was there too. I was sitting in a rocker-recliner near the sliding front door.

One of my young neices came through the door with all the energy of a child. She was carrying a tiny kitten, maybe 2-month old.

She dropped the kitten in my lap, then disappeared.

The kitten took over. She sat there looking up at me for a moment, then bathed herself a little, then curled up and lay quietly on my lap. She stayed there for the rest of the visit.

My mom, sittin on the couch in front of me and leaning slightly forward, her fingers clasped between her knees, said, “Harvey, I've never seen her do that before. The girls have dropped her

in everyone's lap when they were sitting in that chair, and she was on the floor and out the door again before the girls could get turned around."

So Little Bit came home with us.

She was not one who was happy being alone or locked in a kennel at night. Soon we left her out, and of her own accord, she started sleeping each night while curled up on my left arm. I loved the baby smell of her little shoulders.

Ten years later, she still does, and she's taught me a great deal. More than anything, she's taught me that humans, and especially those in power at any given time, sometimes think a great deal more about (and of) themselves than they should.

She's my little heart, my little angel, and the most calming influence in my life. Here's a picture. She was kind enough to pose for this portrait when she was a little over a year old. I wish you all the same sweet presence.



Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Morality Plays and Goodreads Threats” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/morality-plays-and-goodreads-threats>.

See “A Future Member of Promotion Central” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-future-member-of-promotion-central/>.

See “Get Thee to a Party” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/get-thee-to-a-party.html>.

See “OverDrive to Acquire Kanopy” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/overdrive-to-acquire-kanopy/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 740 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
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Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169
Day 5..... 1001 words. Total words to date..... 13170
Day 6..... 3791 words. Total words to date..... 16961
Day 7..... 3569 words. Total words to date..... 20530

Total fiction words for June..... 30113
Total fiction words for the year..... 484062
Total nonfiction words for June... 7430
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 113660
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 598262

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Little Bit](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Focusing Down

June 13, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Focusing Down
- * The current novel

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There is no Idea Dump, no Story Central, no Island of the Buried Bestsellers; good story ideas seem to come quite literally from nowhere, sailing at you right out of the empty sky: two previously unrelated ideas come together and make something new under the sun. Your job isn’t to find these ideas but to recognize them when they show up.” Stephen King on where to get ideas

“[Q]uite quickly this technique of the tight focus, the super closeup, found itself being played out within the characters themselves, and their stories.” James Clammer

Topic: Focusing Down

Focusing down is a sure way to add depth to your writing and to avoid hearing the dreaded “The story was all right, but it was thin.”

The second quote of the day is intriguing to me. It’s about James Clammer’s experience as he wrote the novel *Insignificance*. The story of the whole novel is contained within a single day. (See the third item in “Of Interest.”)

I’ve found this same focusing down on details is necessary when writing a novel that spans a few days or a week, or even a series that spans 50 years, at least if you want to engage the reader. It’s why readers often email me to say they felt they were “in” the story.

Focusing down is especially important in openings. By “openings” I mean the opening of the novel *and* the opening of each major scene and of each chapter. And it’s easy, at least mentally. The POV character will give you everything you need. You only have to put it on the page.

All stories of any length from flash fiction to novels begin with a character who has a problem and is dropped into a setting. (Some writers, like Stephen King, call this a “What if” question.)

And all POV characters, when they appear in the opening, reveal to the writer what they see, hear, smell, taste and feel (usually both physically and emotionally).

At that point it becomes the writer’s responsibility to put on the page (or not) what the POV character is giving them. In every case, if the writer chooses to omit what the POV character is showing them, that is a conscious, critical-mind decision. And in every case, that decision will render your fiction thin and bland.

The conscious mind decision process begins with thoughts about how much description is “too much” or whether the description is “germane to the story.” That’s all BS.

Hint: If your POV character sees, hears, smells, tastes, or feels it, physically or emotionally, it's germane to the story. If it wasn't germane to the story, the POV character wouldn't sense it in the first place.

The reader can never sense what the writer "imagines" but does not write down. Or to say it the other way, the reader can only see, hear, smell, etc. what the writer puts on the page. And the reader *wants* to see, hear, smell etc. everything.

If the POV character is hanging clothes out back on the clothesline (yeah, that used to be a thing) and notices a notch out of the post holding up one end of the line, the reader wants to see it too. If the POV character is having a hard time hanging the sheet from the double bed because the wind gusts at just the right time, the reader wants to feel and hear that wind too, and maybe the damp, cool sheet slapping the POV character's cheeks and bare arms. (Would you want to keep reading this story?)

If the POV character in a cold garage skins his knuckles on an engine block when his wrench slips off a bolt head, the reader wants to feel the cold air of the garage and the sting of the wound across the knuckle and the warm blood trickling over his hand. And smell the grease staining the floor and the heady scent of the solvent the man used moments before to clean a part. (How about this one? Would you want to keep reading this story?)

Focus down. Put on the page everything the POV character gives you so the reader can experience it too. Deal in minutiae. If you don't, you're missing a sure bet.

Those who follow my numbers below will have noticed that for some reason, the current novel is writing a little more slowly than usual. It's annoying. I have to keep reminding myself that every novel writes differently. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Income Streams" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-income-streams/>.

See "Writing Lovely Moments" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/writing-lovely-moments.html>.

See "Top 10 novels told in a single day" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/top-10-novels-told-in-a-single-day/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068
Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169
Day 5..... 1001 words. Total words to date..... 13170
Day 6..... 3791 words. Total words to date..... 16961
Day 7..... 3569 words. Total words to date..... 20530
Day 8..... 1607 words. Total words to date..... 22137

Total fiction words for June..... 31720
Total fiction words for the year..... 486209
Total nonfiction words for June... 8230
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 114460
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 600669

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
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Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Focusing Down](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: You Can't Sell an Idea

June 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Be sure to read
- * Topic: You Can't Sell an Idea
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Waiting rarely makes things easier. Most of the time, waiting makes things harder. The right time is now.” Farnam Street Brain Food

“The kiss originated when the first male reptile licked the first female reptile, implying in a subtle, complimentary way that she was as succulent as the small reptile he had for dinner the night before.” F. Scott Fitzgerald

“I’ve had a sign over my typewriter for over 25 years now, which reads ‘Don’t think!’ You must never think at the typewriter — you must feel. Your intellect is always buried in that feeling anyway.” Ray Bradbury

When asked what kind of writing made the most money, Elmore Leonard replied, “Ransom notes.”

Be sure to read the first item in “Of Interest” today: “You Can’t Sell an Idea”

I also recommend J. Michael Straczynski’s book, *Becoming a Writer, Staying a Writer* <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1950665887>, and I recommend it sight unseen. I’ve just ordered it myself but obviously haven’t read it yet. So why do I recommend it? Because this is one of those very rare writers, one who will tell you the unvarnished truth.

Topic: You Can’t Sell an Idea

Nobody wants them.

Like Mr. Straczynski above, and like most professional fiction writers, I’ve been approached repeatedly over the years with some version of “I have this great idea. You write it and we’ll split the money 50/50.”

As my friend, ghostwriter Dan Baldwin can attest, if you ask for your 50% up front, chances are the person with the idea will bolt. If he doesn’t, well, then you have a job to do. (Be sure the contract stipulates that you have no idea whether or how well the work will sell.)

Me? I like to keep things squeaky clean. If a guy wants me to turn his idea into a novel, I can do that, and if he crosses my palm with enough silver, I will. As a work for hire. Then all royalties, etc. go to the author (of the idea), with nary another penny to the writer (me).

But usually when I’m asked to write someone else’s idea, I only wish I’d come up with Straczynski’s response: “Unless you’ve figured out a Unified Field Theory or faster-than-light travel (in which case yeah, contact me and we’ll split the money 50/50), ideas are worthless, a dime a dozen.”

It’s true. They are. And they aren’t worthless because they’re not good. They’re worthless because there’s a glut of them.

Ideas literally come from everywhere. You don't have to think them up. You only have to recognize them when they arrive. But if you don't have tons of ideas washing over you, well, you might need to exercise your idea muscle.

To do that, observe people. Seriously, that's all you have to do.

As Stephen King wrote in *On Writing*, "The job boils down to two things: paying attention to how the real people around you behave and then telling the truth about what you see."

Because all good fiction is about people.

SF isn't about science; it's about people's reaction to science gone wrong.

Westerns and action-adventure and thrillers aren't about Colt .45s or Comanches or comancheros or war or a ticking time bomb. They're about the reactions of the characters who are dealing with those problems and the reader's desire to live vicariously through those characters.

I'd like to say I'm blessed, but I'm not. For a writer, I'm actually normal. I have at least a dozen new ideas every day. Some are take-offs from whatever current writing project I'm working on. Some are completely new ideas. A few of those per week might make it into the current work as new scenes or chapters.

One of the best ways to get a good idea for the next major scene or chapter is to write a good cliffhanger for the previous scene or chapter.

I might scribble a note about the stronger "new" ideas. I did that just before I set off to write the Wes Crowley gap series. The note read, "A series to fill-in the 15 year gap in Wes' story." And here I am, almost 25,000 words into Assignment: Brownsville.

Maybe one idea a week falls into the category of feeling strong enough to make a note about it. So doing the math, I might scribble a note about one idea out of roughly 80-some ideas.

The rest settle to the dust on the floor of the Hovel or are swept away off the desk by the fan. And it's absolutely no great loss. If an idea escapes me, I know there will be another dozen or so tomorrow to fill the void.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "You Can't Sell an Idea" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/you-cant-sell-an-idea/>. Read This. It's chock full of gems and quotable lines. I added this link to my writers' resources over on the big site.

See "I'm Selling Books on TikTok, No Dancing (or Crying) Required" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/im-selling-books-on-tiktok-no-dancing-or-crying-required/>.

See “Before There Was Maverick, There Were These Real Ace Aggressor Pilots” at <https://link.popularmechanics.com/view/604b7e399500c8226542be77ed3k0.4u/357c2613>. From the PopMechPro newsletter. Very interesting and informative story.

See “Writing Community Etiquette” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/writing-community-etiquette.html>.

See “Senator Klobuchar Advocates Against Amazon, Other Monopolies” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/senator-klobuchar-advocates-against-amazon-other-monopolies/>. See PG’s take.

See “Catch Those Repetitious Redundancies and Pleonasms” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/catch-those-repetitious-redundancies-and-pleonasms/>. Great advice for formal essayists. Not so much for fiction. Let your characters speak the way they speak.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 910 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068
Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169
Day 5..... 1001 words. Total words to date..... 13170
Day 6..... 3791 words. Total words to date..... 16961
Day 7..... 3569 words. Total words to date..... 20530
Day 8..... 1607 words. Total words to date..... 22137
Day 9..... 1744 words. Total words to date..... 23881

Total fiction words for June..... 33464
Total fiction words for the year..... 487953
Total nonfiction words for June... 9140
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 115370
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 603323

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [You Can't Sell an Idea](#)

The Journal: Mentorships, and Just for Fun

June 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The first quote of the day
- * I used to teach
- * Just for Fun
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Two to three years writing one novel. What the hell? What is she doing the rest of the time? Actually playing the harp? Because real writers write.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

“Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work.” Stephen King

The first quote of the day is from the first post listed in “Of Interest.” I also recommend reading Kris's other posts on “Fear-Based Decision Making” at <https://kriswrites.com/?s=Fear-Based+Decision-Making&submit=>.

I used to teach live writing seminars. Loved it. And I want to say thanks to Matt for his comment on yesterday's post. With that comment, he reminded me of something I used to tell my students (and my editing clients, actually). “If you want fawning praise, talk to your mother. That's her department. If you want to learn how to write, attend my classes.” (grin)

My point was that I wasn't teaching fluff. I taught real nuts and bolts techniques the students could actually put to use in their writing—if they practiced.

The same is true of my nonfiction books today. They aren't simply the regurgitated “everyone says” stuff you find in many nonfiction books on writing. They contain hard-core, down to Earth, no-fluff information, including specific techniques and examples.

When I mentor someone, it's the same, except it's personally tailored to the student's actual writing. And I tend to go all-in. Kind of the same way I used to do with my classes. Except my time with the students was much more limited with my classes.

Since I'm not teaching in-person writing classes anymore, I kind of lost sight of my love for teaching enthusiastic students. I mean, if you're willing to drop \$100 for a one-day class, you have to be at least a little enthusiastic.

So I moved on to writing this Journal and offering personalized mentoring. But when I started mentoring, I lost sight of the effort it takes, what it costs me in time, effort and even emotion.

My nonfiction books on writing sell well, adding another trickle to the revenue stream. So that's good. But I still miss the rush of excitement I get from teaching writers who believe in themselves and who really want to learn the craft and become better storytellers.

So for the time being, I've taken down my mentoring offers. The mentorships are too fragmented. I don't like that. The Mentorships page is still there but with an explanatory note. The links below that note won't work at present.

When I've revised the mentorships so they appeal to the kind of student I'm searching for, I'll reactivate the pages and then sit back and wait for that enthusiastic student. One who wants to learn from me as much as I wanted to learn from my mentors.

Of course, I'll announce that here in the Journal when the offers are live again.

I won't be able to take on a lot of students at the same time. I'm not Dave Farland with his staff or a Masters Class participant like James Patterson. I'm one guy who knows what he's doing and wants to pass it along.

Just for Fun

I don't usually do this—in fact, I think this is the first time I've ever done it—but here's the body of a forward I received via email in its entirety. I've seen lists similar to this one before, but never this particular list.

This illustrates how difficult English can be in translation for folks in other countries. I assume these are all signs in various locations:

In a Bangkok Temple: IT IS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER A WOMAN, EVEN A FOREIGNER, IF DRESSED AS A MAN.

Cocktail lounge, Norway: LADIES ARE REQUESTED NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN IN THE BAR

Doctor's office, Rome: SPECIALIST IN WOMEN AND OTHER DISEASES.

Dry cleaners, Bangkok: DROP YOUR TROUSERS HERE FOR THE BEST RESULTS.

In a Nairobi restaurant: CUSTOMERS WHO FIND OUR WAITRESSES RUDE, OUGHT TO SEE THE MANAGER.

On the main road to Mombasa, leaving Nairobi:
PLEASE TO TAKE NOTICE: WHEN THIS SIGN IS UNDER WATER, THIS ROAD IS IMPASSABLE.

On a poster at Kencom: ARE YOU AN ADULT THAT CANNOT READ? IF SO WE CAN HELP.

In a City restaurant: OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK AND WEEKENDS.

In a Cemetery: PERSONS ARE PROHIBITED FROM PICKING FLOWERS, FROM ANY BUT THEIR OWN GRAVES.

Tokyo hotel's rules and regulations: GUESTS ARE REQUESTED NOT TO SMOKE, OR DO OTHER DISGUSTING BEHAVIOURS IN BED.

In a Tokyo Bar: SPECIAL COCKTAILS FOR THE LADIES WITH NUTS.

Hotel, Yugoslavia: THE FLATTENING OF UNDERWEAR WITH PLEASURE, IS THE JOB OF THE CHAMBERMAID.

Hotel, Japan: YOU ARE INVITED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CHAMBERMAID.

In the lobby of a Moscow Hotel, across from a Russian Orthodox Monastery: YOU ARE WELCOME TO VISIT THE CEMETERY, WHERE FAMOUS RUSSIAN AND SOVIET COMPOSERS, ARTISTS AND WRITERS ARE BURIED DAILY, EXCEPT THURSDAY.

A sign posted in Germany's Black Forest: IT IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN ON OUR BLACK FOREST CAMPING SITE, THAT PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT SEX, FOR INSTANCE, MEN AND WOMEN, LIVE TOGETHER IN ONE TENT, UNLESS THEY ARE MARRIED WITH EACH OTHER FOR THIS PURPOSE.

Hotel, Zurich: BECAUSE OF THE IMPROPRIETY OF ENTERTAINING GUESTS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX IN THE BEDROOM, IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE LOBBY BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE.

A Laundry in Rome: LADIES, LEAVE YOUR CLOTHES HERE AND THEN SPEND THE AFTERNOON HAVING A GOOD TIME.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Business Musings: Traditional Writers” at <https://kriswrites.com/2021/06/09/business-musings-traditional-writers-fear-based-decision-making-part-5/>.

See “Fairfax Board Members Rails Against The Dangers Of ‘Excessive Individualism’” at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/06/14/174458/>. Posted only because it may give you some chilling story ideas.

See “28 Flash Fiction Markets That Pay” at <https://authorspublish.com/28-flash-fiction-markets-that-pay/>. To me, a short-short is not flash fiction. Two separate short forms. I suspect this melded definition came about because it’s easier to redefine something than to study and learn it. Still, maybe a helpful article.

See “Collecting Moments of Pleasure, Thanks To A Favorite Author” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/collecting-moments-of-pleasurethanks-to-a-favorite-author.html>.

See “Author Complaints at City Limit Publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/author-complaints-at-city-limit-publishing/>.

See “Where Is Our Spotify for Books?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/where-is-our-spotify-for-books/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1040 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068
Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169
Day 5..... 1001 words. Total words to date..... 13170
Day 6..... 3791 words. Total words to date..... 16961
Day 7..... 3569 words. Total words to date..... 20530
Day 8..... 1607 words. Total words to date..... 22137
Day 9..... 1744 words. Total words to date..... 23881
Day 10... 3491 words. Total words to date..... 27372

Total fiction words for June..... 36955

Total fiction words for the year..... 491444

Total nonfiction words for June... 10180

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 116410

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 607854

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [JonathanTurley.org](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Mentorships](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Quotes and Of Interest

June 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Not much
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Pace is the speed at which your narrative unfolds. There is a kind of unspoken (hence undefended and unexamined) belief in publishing circles that the most commercially successful stories and novels are fast-paced. Like so many unexamined beliefs in the publishing business, this idea is largely bullshit. ... I believe each story should be allowed to unfold at its own pace, and that pace is not always double time.” Stephen King (and bravo!)

“Life minus x equals death. Solve for x.” Hart Pomerantz

“There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it.” Alfred Hitchcock

“The more I read about where traditional publishing is going in this new century, the more I wonder why any writer with sense would join traditional publishing.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

I don’t have much to write about this morning for the Journal. Mostly I just wanted to get the quotes of the day and the “Of Interest” section out to you. Enjoy. I’m diving back into the novel to play.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “2 Days Left of The Last Sale” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/2-days-left-of-the-last-sale/>.

See “A Touch of Reality” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/a-touch-of-reality.html>. “Nothing about writing” but a lot about living, “staging” a house, etc.

See “How Authors Can Leverage Facebook Ads to Sell More Books” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-authors-can-leverage-facebook-ads-to-sell-more-books/>. Thanks to PG for the tip.

See “Gaming the Publishing Industry” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/gaming-the-publishing-industry/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 250 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 10... 3491 words. Total words to date..... 27372

Day 11... 4318 words. Total words to date..... 31690

Total fiction words for June..... 41273

Total fiction words for the year..... 495672

Total nonfiction words for June... 10430

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 116660

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 612422

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Punctuation for Writers

June 17, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * In the second item
- * Topic: Punctuation for Writers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“A word to the wise is not sufficient if it doesn't make any sense.” James Thurber

“It starts with this: put your desk in the corner, and every time you sit down there to write, remind yourself why it isn't in the middle of the room. Life isn't a support system for art. It's the other way around.” Stephen King

In the second item listed in “Of Interest” today, the writer wrote

11. Exclamation marks are for 11-year-olds!!!
12. Know grammar rules so when your break 'em you do so intentionally.
13. You'll never learn how to properly use commas so don't sweat it.

Anyone else see the problem here?

This kind of defeatist BS drives me insane.

Here's the comment I left on the post, repeated here more or less as a topic:

Topic: Punctuation for Writers

Seriously? Exclamation marks are for 11 year olds and you'll never learn how to properly use commas so don't sweat it?

Okay, so why sweat grammar rules?

Or in the alternative, why not also learn the rules of punctuation so when you break 'em you do so intentionally (and to create an effect in the reader)? I mean, you ARE a writer, right? And punctuation is another tool of your trade, right?

But let's talk about those commas. Really, the 9 (or 19, I forget) pages of comma rules in Harbrace boil down to only five rules, and really only four since two of those are the reverse of each other. Here they are:

1. **Never put a comma** between a subject and its verb or a verb and its object. (Realize that a subject may have more than one verb and that a verb may have more than one object.)
2. **When a subordinate clause** introduces an independent clause, separate the two with a comma. (If you aren't sure about clauses, Rule #2 is an example of itself, as is this explanation.)
3. **Do not use a comma** to separate the clauses when a subordinate clause follows an independent clause. (This rule, again, is an example of itself.)
4. **Use a comma** before the appropriate coordinating conjunction to join two related sentences. (The coordinating conjunctions are for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so. Remember the acronym FANBOYS.) By the way, you very seldom if ever need a comma *after* a coordinating conjunction. If you have any doubt at all, omit it.
5. **Trite as it sounds**, when you are in doubt about whether to use a comma anywhere, leave it out. Believe it or not, most comma problems arise from misuse of commas, not their omission.

My slim, no-fluff book [Punctuation for Writers](#) (Amazon link) was originally titled "The Rules as They Should Read" when I used it as a 16-page handout to teach grunt English comp in college.

Unlike Strunk & White, *Punctuation for Writers* doesn't pretend to teach "style." Style cannot be taught or learned. It is developed and realized over time, with practice.

In school at every level, we're taught if you write *this*, use *this* bit of punctuation in *this* place. But we aren't taught why. We're just told to do it, to believe some great punctuation god has ordained it.

But *Punctuation for Writers* teaches writers how to wield punctuation as a useful tool to guide the reading of their work.

It teaches how and why readers actually *react* to punctuation as they read. And it teaches why punctuation has the effect it has on readers. Hence the title: *Punctuation for WRITERS*.

You can get a copy, paper or ebook, practically anywhere, even eBay. You'll want the second edition.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “50% off and 90-day free trial offers ending soon” at <https://affinity.serif.com/en-us/>. When you get there, scroll down.

See “How Web Content Writing Will Make You a Far Better Writer” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/how-web-content-writing-will-make-you-a-far-better-writer.html>.

See “Bipartisan House Bills Aim to Rein in Amazon & Other Big Tech Companies” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bipartisan-house-bills-aim-to-rein-in-amazon-other-big-tech-companies/>. Please see PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 670 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 10... 3491 words. Total words to date..... 27372

Day 11... 4318 words. Total words to date..... 31690

Day 12... 2224 words. Total words to date..... 33914

Total fiction words for June..... 43497

Total fiction words for the year..... 497986

Total nonfiction words for June... 11100

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 117330

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 615316

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Affinity/Serif](#), [Comma Use](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Punctuation for Writer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A New Phishing Scam

June 18, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A New Phishing Scam
- * A strange day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A New Phishing Scam

A couple of days ago I received a “media enquiry” from Rick Davis. He said he was on the editorial staff of *True Life Magazine*. He wrote

“One of your social media followers nominated you for an interview with our magazine and we would like to publish you in our next issue.

“We work with artists, models, musicians, entrepreneurs, influencers and people making an impact. We are very selective when choosing talent for publishing and we believe your brand is a great fit.

“If you would like to be interviewed and featured in our upcoming issue, Let us know immediately as we are closing out our selections for this publishing cycle, We wish you continued success and we look forward to your response. Thanks!”

So I looked for True Life Magazine online, and it was there, sort of. And I fell for it.

But when I received the interview questionnaire via Google Docs and started answering their questions, I thought it looked a little odd.

The questions were very specific and an answer was “required” for each question. I’ve been interviewed numerous times and had never seen anything like it. Usually legitimate interviewers will give you considerable latitude with regards to which questions you will answer and how you answer them.

On about the third page, my suspicions were confirmed when they asked me to name three more “artists” I respect. I was also “required” to provide their email addresses, social media URLs, etc. I was not comfortable providing those details.

So at that point, finally, I closed the Google Doc, emailed the guy again and said I’d decided against answering his intrusive questions. I’m not the slightest bit surprised that I haven’t heard back.

Just be aware this thing is out there. I suspect it’s a phishing scam.

Yesterday I had a really strange day. I woke up late for one thing. I don't know whether that threw off everything else, but I suffered a thankfully very rare day during which I wasn't able to write fiction.

I struggled through a couple of hundred words, but was unable to get into the flow of the story. This is my definition of horror.

It wasn't my critical mind taking over or anything like that. I just couldn't get into the story—a story that previously was pulling me along—so I finally gave up and took the day off.

I find it odd and a little frightening that even after 60-some novels such a thing can happen. I regularly take a day or two off between novels, but very rarely take a day off while writing one. And when I do it's always a necessary day off when I have to do something else. It's never because I'm unable to access the story.

Anyway, this one might wrap as a short novel as early as today or tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Reader Friday: Writers as Readers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/reader-friday-writers-as-readers.html>.

See "25 Authors Running Fantastic Book Promotions on Instagram" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/25-authors-running-fantastic-book-promotions-on-instagram/>.

See "Selling online is easy. Getting noticed is tough." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/selling-online-is-easy-getting-noticed-is-tough/>.

See "7 Things You Might Not Know About Calvin and Hobbes" at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/53198/7-things-you-might-not-know-about-calvin-and-hobbes>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 10... 3491 words. Total words to date..... 27372

Day 11... 4318 words. Total words to date..... 31690

Day 12... 2224 words. Total words to date..... 33914

Total fiction words for June..... 43497

Total fiction words for the year..... 497986

Total nonfiction words for June... 11640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 117870
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 615856

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [MentalFloss](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Novel Wrapped, But

June 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The Novel Wrapped, But
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Well, the first Wes Crowley gap novel, *Assignment: Brownsville*, wrapped as a short novel at 36,000 words. Per usual, I ran a spell check and sent it off to my first readers.

The thing is (as I keep saying), every novel writes differently. No more than maybe five minutes after I sent this one out to my first readers I experienced the overpowering urge to pull it back and add a chapter (late in the story) in which the POV switches to the bad guy down in Matamoros, Mexico.

Sitting on my couch, I “saw” and “heard” a full scene unfold as the guy arrived home after participating in some unsavory activities to learn some bad news that enraged him.

I'm not sure why my subconscious didn't hand me that down around Chapter 24 or thereabouts during the actual writing of the novel. But the pull of my subconscious is strong, so I'll write that over the next day or two.

Not that doing so will make the story “better,” but it will definitely make it more complete.

Just a bit of trivia about process—Switching PsOV is a technique I finally learned by reading Stephen King’s *The Stand*. I’ve always read tons of stuff, and when I read something that blows me away, I dog-ear pages and go back to re-read passages to try to figure out “how he did that.” I focus a lot on King because in my opinion he’s the only truly masterful (Stage 5) novelist writing today. (There are others I enjoy, but he stands out.)

I had planned to take a couple of days off to do nothing at all and maybe catch up on my reading and doing a few chores around the house. But when the subconscious calls and you’re a writer, you pretty much have to respond. (grin)

For anyone who’s watching the numbers, I crossed over the half-million mark of fiction words yesterday with 11 days left in June. Maybe this will be the year. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “China wants to build a sustainable human presence on Mars. Here’s how.” at <https://www.space.com/china-plans-mars-base-with-astronauts>.

See “Dean Koontz” (podcast interview) at <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3T9yy0ysIfxs9k1NkpgWAr?si=mF5X9TiiRNCdN1H-Y8I77Q>. Thanks to Scott K for the tip.

See “A Signpost Along the Road” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/a-signpost-along-the-road/>. A great post.

See “Sarcasm and the Snark Mark” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/sarcasm-and-the-snark-mark.html>.

See “How Stories Change When They Move From Page to Voice” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-stories-change-when-they-move-from-page-to-voice/>. And see PG’s take.

See “On Not Letting Ambition Take Over” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/on-not-letting-ambition-take-over/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068
Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192

Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169
Day 5..... 1001 words. Total words to date..... 13170
Day 6..... 3791 words. Total words to date..... 16961
Day 7..... 3569 words. Total words to date..... 20530
Day 8..... 1607 words. Total words to date..... 22137
Day 9..... 1744 words. Total words to date..... 23881
Day 10... 3491 words. Total words to date..... 27372
Day 11... 4318 words. Total words to date..... 31690
Day 12... 2224 words. Total words to date..... 33914
Day 13... 2491 words. Total words to date..... 36405

Total fiction words for June..... 45988
Total fiction words for the year..... 500477
Total nonfiction words for June... 12040
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 118270
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 618747

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 62
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Koontz](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Every novel writes differently](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: NOW the novel is wrapped

June 20, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Happy Father's Day
- * I added two chapters
- * Recently some overzealous writer
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Those are great days, when you’re writing, when something happens that you know works and you don’t have any self-doubt about, and you never saw it coming.” Dean Koontz

“One of the biggest keys to success at anything hard is believing that you can figure it out as you go along. A lot of people won’t start until they figure it out. And because most hard things can’t be figured out in advance, they never start.” Farnam Street

Happy Father’s Day

To be honest, I didn’t realize today was Father’s Day until I got an email from one of my sons. If this is an important day for you, I hope it’s an enjoyable one.

I added two chapters to *Assignment: Brownsville* (around 2500 words) and it feels whole and complete to me now. It came in at just under 39,000 words at about 8:30 in the morning yesterday. Feels good. And I was no sooner finished with it than all the voices yelling at me from my creative mind fell silent. I suspect they were smiling smugly.

Now I’m gonna try to take a couple of days off to do some things around the house, etc. (grin)

Recently some overzealous writer (that or a robot, which really is the same thing) got hold of my Windows right-click drop-down menu. How do I know it was a writer (or the aforementioned robot)? Because he, she, or it acted mindlessly.

In the past, when I right clicked the title, say, of a post I wanted to share in “Of Interest,” one choice on the menu read “Copy Link Location.” I clicked that, then posted the URL in “Of Interest” without having to go up to the address bar and cherry-pick the URL.

Cherry-picking isn’t difficult, but it requires a few more mouse clicks, and my time is measured in mouse clicks.

As an aside, usually the URL is everything in the address bar, ending either with “html” or a forward slash (/). But sometimes it’s everything to the left of the question mark. When a question mark appears in a URL, it and the gibberish that follows it are not part of the active URL.

For example, if you want to read about how Stephen King was outed as Richard Bachman, you can click either https://getpocket.com/explore/item/known-alias-how-stephen-king-was-outed-as-richard-bachman?utm_source=pocket-newtab or you can click <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/known-alias-how-stephen-king-was-outed-as-richard-bachman>. Or you can skip the middle man, do a search, and click <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/502166/how-stephen-king-was-outed-richard-bachman>.

But back to the source of my current angst. A writer or a robot got hold of the drop-down menu. If it’s a writer, it’s one who believes in revision, rewriting, and polishing “just because.” (Hence,

the distinct possibility that it's a robot.) Either way, now the target link on the menu reads "Copy Link."

Admittedly this is a very small change. The writer only removed the word "Location." But why? Seriously, what harm was the label doing by being one-word more specific?

I'm getting used to the change—one has no choice when dealing with a mega-corporation—but I have to hunt a little longer to find it now. I really wish that writer (or that algorithm-driven robot) would've just left well-enough alone.

All of which leads me to say this: Stephen King once wrote that there are two kinds of writers on revision: taker-outers and putter-inners.

If you're a "taker outer" please give some thought to your readers. Compare the story as it appears in your head with how it will appear in the reader's after you've lowered the dreaded red pen or blue pencil or delete key on your next target.

Remember, you have the advantage of hearing and viewing the story directly in your creative subconscious. The reader doesn't have that luxury. The reader can only see, hear, smell, taste and touch what you allow through (or allow to remain) on the page.

Also bear in mind that when you see an element that is "too" anything—too long, too complex, too complicated—that's your conscious, critical mind speaking. And if you remove whatever it is, you're second guessing your creative subconscious, which can cause it to cross its little arms and stop talking to you. Not to mention you're second-guessing the reader's taste, which (I'm sorry) is Not Your Job. (grin)

And never, NEVER remove a word or phrase (or sentence or paragraph or chapter) "just because." Don't be a robot.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Using Occam's Razor Without Cutting Your Own Throat" at <http://dyingwords.net/using-occams-razor-without-cutting-your-own-throat/>.

See "Reserve Your Spot at the THRILLING 2022 Writers' Police Academy" at <https://leelofland.com/reserve-your-spot-at-the-thrilling-2022-writers-police-academy/>.

See "This Illusion Broke My Brain" at <https://twitter.com/DrewCoffman/status/1404475707917361156>.

See "Father's Day Reading and Viewing Pleasure" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/fathers-day-reading-and-viewing-pleasure.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800 words

Writing of WCGN: Assignment: Brownsville (novel)

Day 1..... 2890 words. Total words to date..... 2890
Day 2..... 3178 words. Total words to date..... 6068
Day 3..... 3124 words. Total words to date..... 9192
Day 4..... 2977 words. Total words to date..... 12169
Day 5..... 1001 words. Total words to date..... 13170
Day 6..... 3791 words. Total words to date..... 16961
Day 7..... 3569 words. Total words to date..... 20530
Day 8..... 1607 words. Total words to date..... 22137
Day 9..... 1744 words. Total words to date..... 23881
Day 10... 3491 words. Total words to date..... 27372
Day 11... 4318 words. Total words to date..... 31690
Day 12... 2224 words. Total words to date..... 33914
Day 13... 2491 words. Total words to date..... 36405
Day 14... 2506 words. Total words to date..... 38911 (done)

Total fiction words for June..... 48494
Total fiction words for the year..... 502983
Total nonfiction words for June... 12840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 119070
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 622053

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Cycling](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [Farnam Street](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Revision](#), [Stephen King](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Weird and Weirder

June 21, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Weird and Weirder
- * The monsoons are here
- * Topic: Deciding Who You Are
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If you could go on a no-return trip into the future, say hundreds of years, would you? And why would you do that?” story prompt from Dean Wesley Smmith

Weird. I couldn't help but notice the novel wrapped on Writing Day 14. That seems to happen a lot. Talk about an active creative subconscious! It even crossed my mind that maybe my creative subconscious was jerking me around a little, withholding what I needed to really wrap the novel until Writing Day 14. Routine, you know.

Anyway, I was intrigued, so I went back and counted (yes, I'm that anal) and found that thus far this year, 24 full weeks have passed.

Then I scrolled down on the Journal and saw that I've written 10 novels this year. That's not a bad average for what will undoubtedly be my most prolific year yet, not withstanding the negative, niggling little voice that says I should have written 12.

I assume what appears to be those non-productive four weeks were absorbed into necessary or unavoidable days off, the few short stories I've written this year, or novels that took a day or two longer to write.

Still, not too shabby at the almost-midpoint of 2021. And yes, this could as easily be you.

Weirder. When I scrolled down to check the novel count for the year, I also realized this novel wrote more slowly than usual. There were several days (8) when I didn't even hit the 3000 word mark, a few (3) when I didn't hit the 2000 word mark, and only one when I wrote more than my daily goal of 4000 words.

It's as if the creative subconscious did some division on its own and spread this short novel thin so it would span exactly 14 writing days.

Guess I'll go with it. (grin) Come on in. The water's fine.

The monsoons are here apparently. Yesterday I awoke at 4 a.m. to 81° Fahrenheit. Which meant I would step outside to find the sky at least overcast. Which it was. And it was raining, sort of.

I didn't get wet (at all), but there was a light, patterned drumming of rainy little fingertips on the roof of my aluminum carport. All the way to the Hovel (around 150 feet) I think one minuscule raindrop hit my right arm.

Topic: Deciding Who You Are

I'm almost ready to put up the actual craft mentorships again, renamed the Advanced Writing mentorships. I expect to announce that here soon.

I'm also still in the process of deciding what to do with the old "non-writing" or "pre-writing" mentorships, but I've expanded them a little and renamed them the Becoming A Writer mentorships.

In those mentorships I won't teach you to write like I do. I'll teach you to write like YOU do, but more so.

I decided to write a topic on "Deciding Who You Are" as a prelude and because it doesn't really belong in a craft mentorship on writing fiction or even in my new Becoming A Writer mentorships.

This is something that should be decided BEFORE undertaking any such mentorship. Most people either are writers or are not, though there is a pretty narrow middle ground of "hobby" writers. I'll get to that in a minute.

But for now, a definition. When I say "fiction writer," I mean a person who writes fiction or who WANTS to write fiction on a regular basis. A "fiction writer" is all but consumed with the desire to have fun telling stories. It's just what you do.

As I wrote a day or two ago in the Journal, "When the subconscious calls and you're a writer, you pretty much have to respond." Life is short. We should spend as much time as we can doing something we enjoy. If you're a writer, that will be telling stories.

So I'm talking primarily to three main groups:

1. If you're an aspiring writer or just starting out, my Becoming A Writer mentorship topics will set you on a solid foundation and a firm path to success. You'll see some of those tomorrow.
2. If you're already writing but aren't yet prolific or if you seriously want to improve in one or more craft areas, then my Advanced Writing mentorships will help you advance (a lot, and rapidly) in your storytelling ability.
3. But if you really just aren't a fiction writer, then my mentorships are not for you. And that's perfectly fine. If you aren't a writer, spend your time doing something you enjoy.

Now to address that middle ground I mentioned earlier. If you are are a hobbyist writer, meaning you enjoy writing a story or novel now and then or you write only to mark something off your bucket list, there's nothing wrong with that either.

But you might or might not find something of value in my mentorships. Feel free to look them over when I open them again and cherry-pick 'til your heart's content.

But if you're a hobbyist, you should know up front I won't be able to tone-down my own passion for fiction writing as I mentor you. It isn't something I can turn off.

I am eager to pass along what I know. So naturally, my ideal student in any mentorship will be as eager and enthusiastic about writing as I am, or at least will be leaning hard in that direction.

For that reason, these mentorships are intended for those who are or want to be prolific professional fiction writers. They are intended for those who are eager to begin learning or to vastly improve in the craft of writing.

So in me, you will find an eager, enthusiastic teacher, one who will lead, tug, pull and push you to greater heights in your storytelling ability. If you are a hobbyist and want to remain a hobbyist, that's fine. But if storytelling takes over your life, don't be surprised. Just sayin'.

Finally, if you want to give your life over to writing, if you would like to be a prolific professional fiction writer, then frankly my mentorships should make you salivate.

Tomorrow, I'll lift the veil on my notes on the Becoming A Writer mentorships thus far. Trust me, you don't want to miss those notes. I hope you'll consider them food for thought.

Talk with you again tomorrow.

Of Interest

See "Father's Day With Mother Nature On The Billy Goat Trail" at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/06/20/fathers-day-with-mother-nature-on-the-billy-goat-trail/>. (No politics, and some great pictures).

See "First Page Critique: Lethal Impulse" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/first-page-critique-lethal-impulse.html>. I wasn't grounded by the opening page either, but for several more (and more concrete) reasons.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1120 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for June.....	48494
Total fiction words for the year.....	502983
Total nonfiction words for June...	13960
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	120190
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	623173
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	63
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Deciding who you are](#), [fiction writer](#), [hobbyist writer](#), [JonathanTurley.org](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Mentorships](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Becoming A Writer Mentorships

June 22, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: The Becoming A Writer Mentorships
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: The Becoming A Writer Mentorships

First, an update: The mentorships came together more quickly than I expected. They went live this morning. But I decided to post some of my working notes on the Becoming A Writer mentorships because they make for a good topic. There are many more topics in the actual mentorships than are shown here.

You can view the complete mentorships by clicking <https://harveystanbrough.com/mentorships/> (it costs nothing to look) and then choosing one link or the other.

I’m glad it’s over. Now I can go back to writing this morning! (grin)

BECOMING A WRITER, PART 1: GETTING READY

* ***Overcoming the fear of failure, and the fear of success***—Overcoming unreasoning fear is both the beginning of and a recurring part of the process of becoming a prolific fiction writer. Getting over the hump will take some folks a day and it will take others longer. Everything depends on how quickly you can come to trust yourself and downplay the notion that anything you write is “important.” (More on that later.)

. . . ***More topics here.*** For those see <https://harveystanbrough.com/becoming-a-writer-mentorships/>.

* ***Believing in yourself*** (that fear thing again)—You are a writer, an entertainer. As such, THAT you write is vitally important. It’s who you are. But WHAT you write, the individual story or novel, the entertainment itself, is not important in the slightest. The individual story or novel is only a few minutes’ or hours’ entertainment for the reader. That’s it. It’s no more important than that.

. . . ***More topics here.*** For those see <https://harveystanbrough.com/becoming-a-writer-mentorships/>.

* ***Why I don’t recommend*** outlining and other pre-writing structures, and why I don’t recommend rewriting.—The short answer? Because you’ll sabotage yourself.

The first half of the longer answer: When you outline (you can only outline from the conscious, critical mind), you blatantly illustrate to your creative subconscious that you flat don’t trust it (or yourself) to tell the story that the characters, not you, are living. That is not a good start.

That being said, if you can’t shake the unreasoning fear of working without a net, by all means outline. But I won’t give you any guidance on that. I can’t. My only guidance would be to toss the outline and let the characters tell the story they’re living.

As Ray Bradbury and others have said, “No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader.” And no surprise for the reader equals a bland story or novel.

The second half of the longer answer: When you revise or rewrite from the conscious, critical mind, again you illustrate that you don’t trust your creative subconscious. To do that is to literally dissuade the creative subconscious that laid what might well be the golden story.

Again, I will always recommend you go with your creative subconscious and ignore the “opinion” of your conscious, critical mind. Because you literally have zero idea what a publisher, gamer, or TV or film producer might like. None.

BECOMING A WRITER, PART 2: GETTING STARTED

Again, of necessity, the Becoming A Writer mentorships will not be deeply focused on your fiction. These will include specifics and examples (when appropriate), but they will be more generalized than the Writing Craft mentorships.

* ***Coming up with story ideas***—Story ideas are not golden. They're a dime a thousand. When this is over, you will be flooded with a continual stream of story ideas. Ways to exercise the idea muscle.

. . . ***More topics here.*** For those see <https://harveystanbrough.com/becoming-a-writer-mentorships/>.

* **Character, character, character**—All story begins with and hinges on character. The reader roots for character, and the character(s) live the story, react to the setting, etc. It's all about character.

In my own writing, it isn't even my story. It's the characters' story. I'm the lucky guy who gets to check in on them now and then and write down what they're doing and saying.

I actually check in with several of my characters each day. When I'm very lucky, I catch them at the beginning of a story and follow along as they act it out. And that becomes a new short story, novella or novel.

* ***Description, description, description***—Characters don't exist in a vacuum. They exist in a setting. Every one of them.

Every scene also exists in a setting. Have you ever opened a story with dialogue? That's fine. But is your dialogue happening against a white background? A void? No. Not in your mind it isn't. Be sure that makes it to the page. As in...

What do the characters look like? How are they dressed (the parts the POV character can see)?

What's around them? Are they in a room? Are they seated on a couch? Across from each other in chairs?

Is there a table between them? What's in the background? Is it a dine-in table in a kitchen in a house (what's it look/feel like per the POV character)? Is it one of many tables in a restaurant or café?

Does the waitress, waiter, child or other person passing through the scene seem brusque or harried or friendly or carefree? Are they attentive or dismissive? Bothersome? Annoyed or annoying? Etc.

Take your time. Describe the characters and the setting to give the scene life.

* ***Writing openings*** (and grounding the reader in Setting)

* *On being a “putter-inner” or a “taker-outer”*—(From a Journal post a few days ago)

Stephen King once wrote that there are two kinds of writers on revision: taker-outers and putter-inners.

If you're a “taker outer” please give some thought to your readers. Compare the story as it appears in your head with how it will appear in the reader's after you've lowered the dreaded red pen or blue pencil or delete key on your next target.

Remember, you have the advantage of hearing and viewing the story directly in your creative subconscious. The reader doesn't have that luxury. The reader can only see, hear, smell, taste and touch what you allow through (or allow to remain) on the page.

Also bear in mind that when you see an element that is “too” anything—too long, too complex, too complicated—that's your conscious, critical mind speaking. And if you remove whatever it is, you're second guessing your creative subconscious, which can cause it to cross its little arms and stop talking to you. (See “Why I don't recommend outlining and other pre-writing structures, and why I don't recommend rewriting” above.)

Not to mention you're second-guessing the reader's taste, which (I'm sorry) is Not Your Job. (grin)

And never, NEVER remove a word or phrase (or sentence or paragraph or chapter) “just because.” Don't be a robot.

That's the end of the notes.

Everything in Part 2 above will overlap into the Writing Craft mentorships, albeit to much greater depth and more closely focused and fine-tuned to your particular work. Those mentorships will also hold many more topics on craft.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to leave a comment on the site or email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Talk with you again tomorrow.

Of Interest

See “It's Complicated” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/its-complicated/>.

See “25 Literary Fiction Markets Seeking Submissions” at <https://authorspublish.com/25-literary-fiction-markets-seeking-submissions/>.

See “Strange Methods: Michael Moorcock's 3-Day Novel” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/strange-methods-michael-moorcocks>. Michael Moorcock has always fascinated me, but I don't align with all the need for planning things out.

See “First Page Critique – Little League; Huge Trouble” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/first-page-critique-little-league-huge-trouble.html>.

See “Introverted Authors in Public: 4 Tips For Overcoming Your Fear of Being Seen” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/introverted-authors-in-public-4-tips-for-overcoming-your-fear-of-being-seen/>. Any introverted authors out there? See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1250 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for June..... 48494

Total fiction words for the year..... 502983

Total nonfiction words for June... 15210

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 121440

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 624423

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Becoming a writer](#), [Countercraft](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Mentorships](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: In Memory of Casey

June 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* In memory of Casey

* Bestselling Author Russell Blake

- * I got a very brief start
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

In Memory of Casey

As most of you probably know, it's difficult to lose a little friend who's been with you awhile. Forgive me the lack of talk about writing today. As this really is my only outlet, I want to devote part of this space to that special little guy.

Casey, our little Chihuahua-mix pup, passed yesterday at around 15 years old. He was probably a couple of years old when we got him from a no-kill shelter near Tombstone. But he was ailing badly and only barely able to get around, so we made the difficult choice to have him put down.

When we found him at the shelter in Tombstone, he'd been brought in that same day. A kind soul found him wandering the streets, ostensibly searching for scraps of food. His ribs were showing prominently, and he was thin as a split rail.

And he'd been mistreated by whatever brave fighter of blind kittens originally owned him even before he was found on the street. Right up until yesterday, if anyone tried to pet him, he would duck his head and pull back into himself, his eyes filled with fear.

Casey lived a good life once we adopted him. He never wanted for food or companionship. In his last few years, I referred to him as our special breed — the vaunted Silverback Chihuahua — owing to the strip of silver fur that developed from his neck to his tail.

He was a good little guy, and as defensive of his family as they come. He had a bark that, especially if it happened right behind you, sounded as if he'd borrowed it from a rottweiler (seriously). And in defense of his yard, he once tried to go through a field fence after a coyote. He actually lost a tooth in that encounter, when it was ripped out by the fence. The coyote recoiled and disappeared back into the desert soon afterward.

In other news, bestselling author Russell Blake has a new personal blog titled Russell Blake Uncensored (see "Of Interest"). The title means more than it says.

On his "old" site at <https://russellblake.com/> he still talks about matters purely of interest to writers and fans of his fiction. He doesn't post often. I am a subscriber.

Blake's new site isn't a comedy bit. It's a place free of the increasing social media bias to air his honest thoughts, presented blatantly and in defiance of an increasingly censored world, one in which truth is at best a malleable object. As pretty much everyone knows, these days, what is referred to (and often reported by the media) as truth doesn't rely on fact. Unfortunately, it relies more heavily on omission of facts and on who's speaking, who's listening, and whether they approve. And everyone knows that, though roughly half the population will deny it.

Blake isn't a conspiracy theorist, though I suspect he'll quickly be labeled as such. Unfortunately, I suspect his new blog will cost him readers even though an author's private life should have nothing to do with sales. But that's the world we live in.

On the good side, the guy's bulletproof, meaning a falling readership (crossing their little arms and holding their breath until they turn blue or until he cedes to their demands) won't bother him.

Same reason DWS talks openly in defense of Heinlein's Rules and writing into the dark. He's bulletproof to falling sales.

Me? I'm bulletproof too. Not because I've made enough money, but because I just don't care. I know my stories are good, so if some readers don't "like" them (sight unseen) because I hold forth on HR and WITD, that's their loss, not mine. On the other hand, I do not hold forth on political or societal or religious matters, primarily because hey, whatever helps you sleep at night is fine with me.

Still, even as a fictionist, I wish fervently we could all just get back to reality. But I won't tell any but my closest friends what that reality consists of. Suffice it to say that facts are facts and truth really isn't malleable.

Then again, the current socio-political climate is a good thing. It's why I spend so much time in my shell, my fingers moving over the keyboard as I convey my characters' stories. And it's great fun because it allows me, for a while, to live in the real world.

I got a very brief start on the new novel yesterday before I had to attend to more important matters. Back to Wes Crowley.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "New Blog – Russell Blake Uncensored" at <https://russellblake.com/new-blog-russell-blake-uncensored/>. I suspect this will cost him readers, unfortunately, but I admire him for speaking the truth.

See "Who's A Best-Selling Author?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/whos-a-best-selling-author.html>.

See "Intimate Strangers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/intimate-strangers/>. Maybe story ideas, or ways to improve what you already know about craft.

See "Kindle Vella: Return of the Serial" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/kindle-vella-return-of-the-serial/>. I've thought about starting something similar to Kindle Vella but on my own with my own subscribers. Hmmm.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216

Total fiction words for June..... 49710

Total fiction words for the year..... 504199

Total nonfiction words for June... 16070

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 122300

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 626499

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Casey](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [RussellBlake.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Marketing and Promotion

June 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Thanks
- * Topic: Marketing and Promotion
- * There’s also a link
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I believe it was Shakespeare, or possibly Howard Cosell, who first observed that marriage is very much like a birthday candle, in that ‘the flames of passion burn brightest when the wick of

intimacy is first ignited by the disposable butane lighter of physical attraction, but sooner or later the heat of familiarity causes the wax of boredom to drip all over the vanilla frosting of novelty and the shredded coconut of romance.’ I could not have phrased it better myself.” Dave Barry

Thanks to everyone who left a comment or emailed me about little Casey. We appreciate it.

Topic: Marketing and Promotion

In today’s “Of Interest” is an article on marketing and promotion for indie authors. I wish I’d seen it several years ago. You know, before I was so in-love with the feeling of my fingers on the keyboard that I’m regularly turning out a new novel every 2 weeks.

Of course, the article wasn’t available then. Likewise, it isn’t too late now, though it’s considerably more difficult to raise my level of care-nicity to the point that I’ll set aside my fiction writing in order to pursue marketing and promotion.

I know me. I won’t do it. Eventually I’ll get my author blog over at HarveyStanbrough.com up and running again, and occasionally I’ll take a stab at promotions (maybe) but I won’t dig deep and set aside my fictional friends.

Like 7 year-olds with brand new tennis shoes, my characters have become used to looking up at me, grinning, and yelling gleefully, “Watch how fast I can go now!”

But some of you are different. Some of you are not yet ‘trapped’ (I use the word loosely and with reservations) in thinking pretty much every moment about your imaginary friends and how much fun they’re having and how quickly you can get back to them.

And it is for you that I listed that particular article. I hope you will read it, learn from it, and devise a marketing and promotions plan that suits what you do and what you will do.

Only one caveat: I still upload directly to Amazon myself. BUT I believe you can download D2D’s Kindle file and upload that to Amazon if you want to.

There’s also a link to an article on physical attraction and science. I included it because I thought it might come in handy for ‘creating’ characters.

Not that you should consciously create characters, but always you should be learning about people, absorbing information (written and otherwise) about Character, so that when you sit down at the keyboard you’re better able to allow your charactes to create themselves.

If you build it (the story), they (the characters) will come.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How to Develop a Marketing and Promotion Plan as an Indie Author” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-develop-a-marketing-and-promotion-plan-as-an-indie-author/>. And be sure to see PG’s take. This is a post I wish I’d seen several years ago.

See “Paranormal Evidence” at <https://paranormal-evidence.com/>. In case it’s of interest to you.

See “Earth’s fifth ocean just confirmed” at <https://www.space.com/earth-fifth-ocean-confirmed.html>.

See “How to Develop a Marketing and Promotion Plan as an Indie Author” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-develop-a-marketing-and-promotion-plan-as-an-indie-author/>. And be sure to see PG’s take.

See “Why Physical Attraction Matters in Romantic Relationships, According to Science” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-physical-attraction-matters-in-romantic-relationships-according-to-science/>. I say there’s no accounting for personal taste. Eye of the beholder and all that.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216

Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129

Total fiction words for June..... 51623

Total fiction words for the year..... 506112

Total nonfiction words for June... 16650

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 122880

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 628992

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dave Barry](#), [Marketing and Promotion](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Mentorships Updated

June 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Mentorships Updated
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“First forget inspiration. Habit is more dependable. Habit will sustain you whether you’re inspired or not. Habit will help you finish and polish your stories. Inspiration won’t. Habit is persistence in practice.” Octavia Butler on inspiration

“I tell the students that there comes a time when you want to either burn it or flush it. But if you keep going, you know, that’s what makes you a writer instead of an ‘I wish I was a writer.’” Octavia Butler

Mentorships Updated

Sigh. Owing to yet again stumbling into a political ambush on a blog that is disguised as being ostensibly about the business of writing, I’ve added a note to my mentorships introductory page:

“Note: These mentorships are intended to help you become a better fiction writer. I will not air my personal beliefs regarding politics, religion, or anything else that has nothing to do with writing fiction, and for my own sanity I require that any students I accept exercise the same discretion.”

*I also updated the **Becoming A Writer, Part 2** (on the Becoming A Writer Mentorships page) and the Essential Craft Topics on the Writing Craft Mentorships page (they are identical).*

The update consisted of me adding a class on Inventory and another one on Licensing. Finally, I also lowered some of the prices on Becoming A Writer, Part 2 and on the Essential Craft Topics. Prices on those areas now vary between \$29 and \$39.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Benefits of Building a Street Team” at <https://authorspublish.com/the-benefits-of-building-a-street-team/>.

See “Putting All Your Eggs in One Basket: Amazon Edition” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/putting-all-your-eggs-in-one-basket-amazon-edition/>. See PG’s take.

See “Moving Forward or Onward or Whatever” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/moving-forward-or-onward-or-whatever/>.

See “This is Octavia Butler’s best writing advice” at <https://lithub.com/this-is-octavia-butlers-best-writing-advice/>.

See “‘Enterprise self-publishing’ is coming” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/enterprise-self-publishing-is-coming/>.

See “Down the Road” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/down-the-road.html>.

See “Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About” at <http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>. It’s been awhile so I posted this for our new readers.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 340 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216

Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129

Day 3..... 3103 words. Total words to date..... 6232

Day 4..... 2490 words. Total words to date..... 8722

Total fiction words for June..... 54113

Total fiction words for the year..... 508602

Total nonfiction words for June... 16990

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 123220

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 631822

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [J. A. Konrath](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [LitHub](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On the Use of Language

June 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: On the Use of Language
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Polish-American scientist and philosopher Alfred Korzybski remarked that ‘the map is not the territory’ and that ‘the word is not the thing,’ encapsulating his view that an abstraction derived from something, or a reaction to it, is not the thing itself.” Wikipedia

On the Use of Language

Most if not all nouns and verbs and phrases in the English language have at least two meanings: the actual definition(s) (the denotation) and the implied meaning in context (the connotation). And I suspect most (if not all) of you know this.

For example, when a member of a federal or state government organization (say FBI or CIA) “goes off the reservation,” what happens next has no resemblance to what might happen when a member of a tribe of indigenous Native American people “goes off the reservation.” The former is acting on his own and in an unauthorized, often violent manner, usually to achieve a desired outcome. The latter might be shopping for something he can't find in the reservation store or visiting relatives or whatever.

If you would enjoy a really good laugh, stop by Brandeis University's “Prevention, Advocacy & Resource Center” and check out the “violent language” list of words at https://www.brandeis.edu/parc/accountability/oppressivelanguagelist_violent.html.

Then, bearing in mind what you learn there, go write a short story, novella or novel in almost any genre set in the real world.

For example, I learned that I need to go back through all my Wes Crowley and action-adventure and PI/Detective and — well, pretty much everything I’ve ever written.

In all of those, I need to do a global search for the word “trigger,” which apparently I violently and oppressively used to denote the little slip of metal that descends from the mechanical action of every pistol, revolver, rifle and shotgun I depicted.

And when I find that horrible, violent, oppressive word, according to the no-doubt geniuses at Brandeis, I need to replace it with either “content note” or “drop-in.” I can see it now: “Wes crouched, pulled his Colt, and squeezed the content note.” Perfect. I’ll get right on that. (grin)

But I agree with Brandeis that “take a stab at” and “take a shot at” should be replaced with “try.” Well, unless you’re in the middle of an action scene involving a shooting or a stabbing.

Okay, I’m through laughing now. Seriously, in their on-campus advocacy against actual physical violence, the PARC unit serves an honorable purpose. For example, they might have interceded in any number of actual violent acts, including suicide and violence against children or elders. Kudos to them for that.

But as a writer and as a human being who supports all the amendments of the Constitution (even the first one), I really wish they, like everyone else in the world, would stop telling everyone else (including the students at Brandeis) how to think and speak. Because they, like everyone else, are not the General Manager of the Universe. And the purpose of a university should be to teach folks HOW to think, not WHAT to think.

I personally never use words or phrases with the intention of harming others. However, I am responsible only for my intentions; I (and none of you) are responsible for anyone else’s perceptions. And I refuse to walk on eggshells just in case someone else might be offended because they either did not (or chose not to) understand my intentions.

Hmmm... I probably should go back and replace “walk on eggshells” just in case someone out there gets a visual image of me crushing baby-chicken containers beneath my boots. Nah.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Pulp Writer’s Mindset” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/the-pulp-writers-mindset.html>. Yup.

See “Starting Your Novel With Character: 3 Strengths and 3 Challenges” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/starting-your-novel-with-character/>.

See “Brandeis Center Announces ‘Triggering’ Is ... Well ... Triggering” at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/06/27/brandeis-center-announces-triggering-is-well-triggering/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216
Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129
Day 3..... 3103 words. Total words to date..... 6232
Day 4..... 2490 words. Total words to date..... 8722
Day 5..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 12901

Total fiction words for June..... 61395
Total fiction words for the year..... 515884
Total nonfiction words for June... 17640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 123870
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 639754

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Jane Friedman](#), [JonathanTurley.org](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [On the Use of Language](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Tough Love

June 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The last item (tough love)
- * There's a good chance
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The last item in “Of Interest” today is titled “An Editor’s Guide to Why You Don’t Suck.” I almost didn’t list it, for a few reasons.

1. *The article was written* by a “developmental editor.” In other words, someone who believes he understands the content of your book (your story) better than you do. Of course, that’s a scientific impossibility. How can ANYone know “your” story, something that resides in your creative subconscious, better than you do? Well, except your characters, because really, it’s their story. But you’re their translator, so....

2. *The article begins* with “Writing is hard.” Wow. Nothing like setting a negative tone (plus it’s pure, unadulterated bull cookies) right out the gat. Folks, if you really believe writing is hard, go dig a ditch for a few hours under the summer sun. In the sand. In Yuma. But seriously, if you think writing is hard, skip it and find something fun to do. As billions of people have said before I came along, life is short. Do something you enjoy.

3. *The first subsection of the article* is labeled “First Drafts are Never Final Drafts.” Sorry, but that depends. If you slap a bunch of words on the page with no thought for coherence or punctuation, then yes, this is probably right.

But if you cycle back through your first draft as you go, giving your characters a chance to add what you probably missed as you raced through the story trying to keep *up* with your characters, then there’s no reason your first draft can’t be your final draft.

4. *Later in that subsection*, the author says no editor ever has seen a “perfect” first draft. Okay, I have to agree with this one because perfection doesn’t exist. But as a long-time (three decades or longer) editor, I’ve turned around several first drafts because the writer *thought* he needed an editor but didn’t. In those cases, I didn’t get paid, but I did get the satisfaction of knowing I’d done the right thing by refusing to do a job that didn’t need doing.

(As an instructional aside, in one of those cases, the writer sent me a scolding note saying I obviously wasn’t a very good editor if I thought what he sent me didn’t need editing. Then he went off to find a “real” editor who could recognize severely flawed work when he saw it. Think maybe that writer could use a lesson or two in believing in himself?)

There are more flaws with the author’s reasoning, but as an exercise in tough love, I figured I’d list the article in “Of Interest” after all and let you read it for yourself. Chances are, especially if you believe in yourself, you’ll see the flaws in the article for yourself.

There’s a good chance I’ll be posting the Journal a little less frequently. I’ll probably skip posting on some days, especially on days when I don’t have a lot of good stuff for “Of Interest” or a topic to share with you.

I definitely don’t want to post when I have nothing to say and nothing to share. To me, that’s just silly.

So if you notice that the Journal doesn't show up in your inbox now and again, don't sweat it. I'll be back when I have something to share. When I don't, I'll be having fun working on the current novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How To Survive a Waterfall Plunge Using Science" at <https://www.popularmechanics.com/adventure/outdoors/a6960/waterfall-survival-tips/>. In case you have a character who goes over a waterfall, or might someday.

See "Be the Mouse" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/be-the-mouse.html>. In case it helps some of you. Me? Meh. I just write 'cause I love to hear stories and pass them along.

See "16 Magazines that Publish Writing by Children and Teens" at <https://authorspublish.com/16-magazines-that-publish-writing-by-children-and-teens/>. I don't think I have any teenaged readers, but maybe you know some who write. If so, here you go. (Always read terms of service, and teach your children to do so.)

See "An Editor's Guide to Why You Don't Suck" at <http://positivewriter.com/an-editors-guide-to-why-you-dont-suck/>. I include this as a bit of negative learning.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 700 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216
Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129
Day 3..... 3103 words. Total words to date..... 6232
Day 4..... 2490 words. Total words to date..... 8722
Day 5..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 12901
Day 6..... 3492 words. Total words to date..... 16393

Total fiction words for June..... 64887
Total fiction words for the year..... 519316
Total nonfiction words for June... 18340
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 124570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 643946

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Whalin’s 10 Publishing Myths

June 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Whalin’s *10 Publishing Myths* (a review)
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“A Lisbon, Portugal court just ruled that rather than the ‘official’ 17,000 COVID deaths reported by the health ministries, only 152 actually died of COVID.” [Russell Blake](#)

Now there’s a current story idea if I ever saw one.

“Experience the place through your characters’ eyes [ears, nose, etc. and] ... Speak to the senses.” Erika Liodice

I recommend Blake’s post on the push to vaccinate children too, especially now that the president seems to be doubling down by partnering with XBox to get children vaccinated.

Whalin’s *10 Publishing Myths* (a review)

If anyone out there is thinking about buying a book by Terry Whalin titled *10 Publishing Myths*, I advise against it. The advice is for absolutely beginning wannabe writers, and on top of that it’s severely outdated and much of it is wrong. For example, he talks a lot about CreateSpace (no longer in existence) and says books published by them are available only on Amazon (wrong).

In some cases he actually starts or perpetuates a myth. For example, the myth that places like AuthorHouse, Publish America and other subsidy publishers are “self-publishers.” They aren’t.

They're scams, every one of them. If you want to "self-publish" or "indie publish," the word "self" is key. *You* become a publisher.

Finally, late in his book a paragraph says he lists an "11th myth" online. Only it isn't online. It's supposedly available by PDF after you enter your name and email address online. Then you click submit, and it takes you to a page that says it can't be found.

Anyway, you've all heard much more from me about publishing myths than are included in this book. If you're interested in the topic, I urge you to check out Dean Wesley Smith's "Killing the Sacred Cows of Publishing" series over on his website (free) or in his books (inexpensive). I also recommend his "Think Like a Publisher" series.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing Four Novels in a Month..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-four-novels-in-a-month/>.

See "What's It All About, Alfie? Figuring Out Chapter Arcs" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/whats-it-all-about-alfiefiguring-out-chapter-arcs.html>. "Figuring Out" in the title almost kept me from posting this, so caution: This should be read and the information absorbed with the conscious mind but applied through the creative subconscious. If this article causes you to "figure out" your scene as you're writing it, please accept my apology for having listed it at all.

See "How To Write A Good Book Review – The Amazon Review" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-write-a-good-book-review-the-amazon-review/>.

See "Chelsea Apple Makes a Case for BookTok Authenticity" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/chelsea-apple-makes-a-case-for-booktok-authenticity/>.

See "How to Create an Authentic Setting from a Place You've Never Been" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-create-an-authentic-setting-from-a-place-youve-never-been/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216
Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129
Day 3..... 3103 words. Total words to date..... 6232
Day 4..... 2490 words. Total words to date..... 8722

Day 5..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 12901
Day 6..... 3492 words. Total words to date..... 16393
Day 7..... 4419 words. Total words to date..... 20812

Total fiction words for June..... 69306
Total fiction words for the year..... 523795
Total nonfiction words for June... 18790
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 125020
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 648815

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Gems About Writing

June 30, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Dean Wesley Smith
- * John Gilstrap
- * Confidence Matters
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“In this line of work, every moment we live and every person we interact with is a moment of research. More times than not, I find that the really good stuff comes less from studying books than it does from passive listening and watching. It doesn't take work so much as it takes paying attention.” John Gilstrap

“Want to write about quilting? Go where quilters go and then shut up and listen.” John Gilstrap

Dean Wesley Smith is writing about writing again, after a fashion. He’s challenging himself to write five books—four novels and a how-to nonfiction—during the month of July. His post yesterday and his post today will form the prologue of the nonfiction book. Succeeding posts during July will form the chapters of the nonfiction book.

I won’t repeat here what he reports there, but I will link to each of his posts in “Of Interest” from now through the end of July. Should be quite an experience for him, and it might be a great learning experience for the rest of us.

I think I can say with few reservations that most of what I’ve learned about writing fiction, I learned by picking up the gems Dean inadvertently dropped in his blog posts in year back.

When he teaches through his workshops, etc. he’s good. That begins mostly in the second week of the workshop after he’s delivered the basics of what’s going to happen. He drops a few gems or imparts some valuable knowledge during that first week too, sometimes, but not nearly as many or as much. Then beginning in the second week, usually, he gets into the meat.

But his blog posts on writing are different. Maybe because the reader is more involved. If you’re hungry to learn about fiction writing (as I was), you lean into the blog posts and really anticipate what he’ll say next and how he’ll say it. Sometimes an earth-shattering bit of wisdom will be contained in a short phrase. You pick ’em up as you find ’em, stash ’em in your gem pouch and try to keep up.

Even at my current skill level, I anticipate learning something more, something new or something I haven’t thought about before, from Dean’s writings about his self-imposed challenge. I hope you’ll come along for the ride too. I can almost guarantee you won’t be disappointed. The guy really doesn’t know what a good instructor he is.

If you missed yesterday’s Journal post and would like to start at the beginning, read his “Writing Four Novels in a Month” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-four-novels-in-a-month/>. Today’s post is in “Of Interest” below.

John Gilstrap over at KillZone has also hit one out of the park today with “Research Hacks Redux.” Again, it’s in “Of Interest” today.

This is a very important post, especially for those of you who get too deep into research (“too deep” being defined as so deep that it takes time away from writing the novel).

Confidence Matters

Finally, I was struck by “Act Like A Professional,” also in “Of Interest” today. One line in PG’s response stood out, a line ostensibly delivered from a traditional publisher’s representative to a writer at a writers’ conference: “We don’t need you but you need us.”

At a conference back in the '90s, I actually heard exactly those words uttered and in exactly that context. Me being who I am, I stepped over to the writer's defense.

I looked at the one who had uttered that stupid line, an acquisitions editor for a major publishing house. I said, "Excuse me, I couldn't help but overhear. May I ask a question?"

He smiled smugly. "Sure."

I said, "Do you know what we writers would be doing if there were no publishing houses at all? We would be writing."

The smile disappeared. "Oh, but—"

I said, "And if there were no writers, what would YOU be doing?" I grinned. "Want fries with that?"

He excused himself and headed toward the bar, whereupon I told the young writer to never forget the writer is the one who has the power.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Really bloody excellent omens..." at <https://journal.neilgaiman.com/2021/06/really-bloody-excellent-omens.html>.

See "Day Two Prolog..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-two-prolog/>.

See "Research Hacks Redux" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/06/research-hacks-redux.html>.

See "Anaphora, Epistrophe, and Symploce" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/anaphora-epistrophe-and-symploce/>. It's good to understand linguistic devices even if you'll never use the labels again. This is a deep dive. Enjoy.

See "Act Like A Professional" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/act-like-a-professional/>. See PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 770 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216

Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129

Day 3..... 3103 words. Total words to date..... 6232

Day 4..... 2490 words. Total words to date..... 8722
Day 5..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 12901
Day 6..... 3492 words. Total words to date..... 16393
Day 7..... 4419 words. Total words to date..... 20812
Day 8..... 2245 words. Total words to date..... 23057

Total fiction words for June..... 71551
Total fiction words for the year..... 526040
Total nonfiction words for June... 19560
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 125790
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 651830

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63
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Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Confidence Matters](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Taking Your Time and Focusing Down

July 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: On Taking Your Time and Focusing Down
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I asked him how he described himself on his passport. ‘I bet you call yourself an Author,’ I said. He agreed, with a shade of reluctance, perhaps because he scented sarcasm on the way. ‘Just so,’ I said. ‘Well, I describe myself as a Writer. There are authors and artists, and then again there are writers and painters.’” Ian Fleming

“There is only one recipe for a best seller and it is a very simple one. You have to get the reader to turn over the page.” Ian Fleming

Topic: On Taking Your Time and Focusing Down

Forgive the long post. I’m doing something very different today. I seldom share a work in progress, but this passage struck me as particularly valuable as a lesson on taking your time and focusing down.

Yesterday, I had written the following for the opening of Chapter 18 of *The Comancheros*, my current novel. The novel takes place in the Texas panhandle in the 1880s. The Rangers had intercepted a wagon filled with female captives whom the comancheros were shipping south:

In town, the captain put together a special patrol of five Rangers to accompany two of the women back to their homes on the eastern side of the panhandle.

There was more, but not much, and it was all “telling” vs. “showing” (or vs. “letting the reader see”).

Here’s how the chapter ended up:

Chapter 18

One week after Corporal Edwards had led the wagon into Amarillo, the town had returned mostly to normal. There was still an undercurrent of conversation among the citizens regarding the ladies who had been rescued, but most of those conversations were short and spoken in hushed tones and generalities. And most of them wished the ladies well. Many citizens contributed to a fund to help purchase tickets on the train or stage for those who wanted to leave.

The captain had called a meeting for 3 p.m. Wes, having walked over to the livery stable to check on Charley during a lag in the day, was hurrying along the boardwalk on his way to that meeting when he encountered Deputy May.

Before he realized what was happening, the door to his left opened.

Deputy May said, “I will, Sheriff,” then turned and walked directly into him, the door closing behind her.

As her breasts pressed hard against him, Wes caught her by the shoulders, then quickly stepped back and put up his hands, his palms out. “Oh, sorry.” He looked at his hands and slapped them down to his side. “Sorry. I ought’a watch where I’m goin’ Miss—Deputy May. You all right?”

Color flashing into her cheeks, she straightened her hat. “I’m fine, thanks.” She grinned. “I’m the one who should look before I walk. Sorry about that.”

Wes rolled his eyes straight up and realized he was still wearing his hat, and in the presence of a lady. He whipped it off and held it at his chest. “Oh, no ma’am, not at all. I’m just clumsy.”

She laughed, those curious blue eyes practically dancing. “Tell you what, let’s agree that we were both to blame.”

He said nothing, but only nodded, his hat still clamped to his chest.

She said, “You know, we should have a drink some time. Or dinner maybe. Or supper. I mean, I know you’re always with your Ranger friends for those things, but—”

“Oh, no ma’am. I can lose those guys any time I like.”

She laughed again, and the sound seemed to enter his ears and sparkle down through his soul.

Wes only grinned, wondering whether he’d said something witty.

The deputy said, “Let’s maybe do that sometime. I mean, if you want to. I really am grateful for what you said that day, about riding with me and standing with me.” She glanced past him, then pointed. “But right now I’m on my way to the ladies’ barn.”

Wes nodded, the grin still on his face. “Yes ma’am. Well, there’s always that.”

She laughed again. “Maybe not too much longer. I think we’re mostly done. Some of the ladies have already left town, and besides, Melinda and Sally have pretty well taken charge.”

“Melinda and Sally?”

“Oh, yeah. Melinda Pearson and Sally Martin. They’re the two who want to go back to their farms. Those two are different, Wes. They seem eager to take on any challenge. It’s like they’re harder than the others. Or maybe less broken and more tempered. Maybe because they’re determined to stand rather than move away.”

Wes said, “Well, that takes a special kind of woman, right there.” He blushed. “Well, what I mean is—”

Again she chuckled. “I know what you mean. And I appreciate it. It takes a special kind of crazy, doesn’t it?”

Wes laughed. “Well, it might at that.”

“But you’re the same way, Wes, if you think about it. Really, all of us who stay are the same, aren’t we? Women or men, we’re all the same.” She smiled and put one hand on his shoulder. “Anyway, I’d better get down there. We’ll talk soon, okay?” And she brushed past him and went on down the boardwalk.

For a long moment, he watched her go. She was probably right. Maybe most of those who stay are the same, women or men, but he could think of several differences he was particularly glad were in place.

As Deputy May turned the corner several buildings down, he frowned. He was supposed to be on his way to something. Wasn't he?

Then he remembered the meeting. The captain's meeting.

He realized his hat was still in his hands. He quickly slapped it on his head, turned and hurried down the boardwalk.

*

When he worked the latch on the door of the headquarters and the door swung inward, everyone was already seated at the long table. The captain, at the head, looked up. "Ranger Crowley! How very good of you to grace us with your presence."

The others at the table were stifling chuckles.

"Sorry, Cap. I went to check on ol' Charley and I reckon I lost track of time somewhere along the way. I guess I was distracted."

Corporal Connolly laughed. "I saw *exactly* what distracted you. If you don't know, I'll fill you in later."

Everyone else burst out laughing too, and Wes felt his neck and cheeks going red. As he moved to grab the back of a chair, he said, "Now, that was all official business. The deputy was just fillin' me in on what's goin' on down at the ladies' barn."

Corporal Edwards said, "Is that all? Sounded to me like she was askin' you on a date." He looked across at Corporal Connolly. "Isn't that what you heard, Jim?"

"Yeah, but I'm pretty sure what distracted him was the receding view of her be—"

The captain said, "That's enough, gentlemen. I'm sure you're only envious anyway." He looked up at Wes and grinned. "Have a seat, Ranger Loverboy. We have things to discuss."

Everyone laughed again as Wes settled into a chair. He said, "Aw, you guys don't know nothin' about women, that's all."

To derail any chance of a response, the captain rapped his knuckles on the table. "All right, gentlemen, let's get down to business."

"As you are all probably aware, most of the ladies who wanted to leave have already left. I think there are only two or three left, other than the two who wanted to return to their homes." He

grinned. “Perhaps Ranger Crowley can enlighten us more after his impending rendezvous with Deputy May.”

“Aw now, Captain—”

The captain held up one hand. “Perhaps you’ll consider being on time for future meetings, Ranger Crowley.”

Wes only looked at the table and shook his head.

The captain said, “Those two ladies have been instrumental in helping care for the others, but now that most of them are gone, the sheriff believes Ranger Crowley’s girlfriend can handle the workload.” He paused, glanced up at Wes and quietly said, “Sorry. No more.”

As the others chuckled, he said, “So Corporals Connolly and Edwards, I’d like you to ride out tomorrow morning with Rangers Stanton, Stilson and Mendoza. You will accompany Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Martin back to their respective farms. You will leave each of them with a revolver and a carbine from the weapons Corporal Edwards confiscated. Then you will return here. I don’t expect the trip to take more than three days.”

Corporal Connolly said, “Are we takin’ ‘em in the wagon, sir? ‘Cause if we are, the trip might—”

“Ah. Excellent question. No. The sheriff—” and he glanced at Wes, “and the inestimable Deputy May—” he glanced at the others again, “tell me they can both ride quite well. So they will each have their pick of one of the horses you brought back.”

Mac’s hand shot into the air. “What about me and Wes and Lawson over there?”

“You and Ranger Lawson will be here with me on the rear guard.” He paused, then grinned. “Perhaps we can keep Ranger Crowley from doing something he’ll regret. Like losing us any time he likes.”

Everyone burst out laughing again as Wes sank down in his chair and pulled his hat down over his brow. “Oh hell.”

Which version do you find more entertaining? What did you learn about the “character” of the characters?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Thriller Writing Advice From James Bond’s Creator, Ian Fleming — Circa 1963” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/thriller-writing-advice-from-james-bonds-creator-ian-fleming-circa-1963.html>. Great advice for all writers.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 290 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216
Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129
Day 3..... 3103 words. Total words to date..... 6232
Day 4..... 2490 words. Total words to date..... 8722
Day 5..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 12901
Day 6..... 3492 words. Total words to date..... 16393
Day 7..... 4419 words. Total words to date..... 20812
Day 8..... 2245 words. Total words to date..... 23057
Day 9..... 2639 words. Total words to date..... 25696

Total fiction words for June..... 74190
Total fiction words for the year..... 528679
Total nonfiction words for June... 19850
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 126080
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 654759

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Focusing Down](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Taking your time](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Cigars Are on the Way Out

July 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * June slipped away
- * My Cigars Are on the Way Out (sigh)
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Wow, June slipped away from me. For some reason I confused it with July and thought it had 31 days. My spreadsheet's all fixed now, after I pawed frantically at my keyboard before I'd even had my coffee.

Well, apparently either I or my cigars are on the way out. My BP has my doc worried, so yesterday I canceled my email newsletter from my cigar providers, etc. (My take? It's always been high, so whatever.)

Anyway, my plan is to quit around August 1 or a little later when my current supply is exhausted. Yes, I hope I can "cut down" between now and then, which will extend the date of stopping completely and maybe make it "easier" to stop when I do.

But all of this has me considering the vaunted Quality of Life, and of course the definition differs for each individual.

Quality of Life seems always to involve a tradeoff. For some, simply continuing to breathe for a longer period of time, even if steeped in a mental fog, is enough. Or lowering the "risk" of stroke is "worth it" even if they have to give up the ability to function mentally for an extended period of time, and maybe forever.

The last time I quit cigars I was off them for a month. And I could have kept going. After all, to smoke, you have to take a series of small actions that require physical effort: obtain what you want to smoke, position it between your lips, put fire to the end of it, etc. Remove any of those actions and you can't smoke.

But I was in a heavy, thick mental fog the whole time. I was continually confused and unable to function mentally. I went back to cigars because Day 30 or so without them, long after the physical cravings had passed, was as bad as Day 1, and going back to them was the only way to clear the fog.

(When I stopped smoking cigarettes several years earlier there was no mental fog and the cravings died away relatively quickly. I naively thought quitting cigars would be the same. It isn't.)

And that's where Quality of Life comes in. I'm a fiction writer. I literally (no pun intended) live to tell the next story.

So in coming months I'll have a decision to make. Forewarned by my earlier experience, I intend to put up with the fog for at least a month while hoping day by day it will clear. A month in—if it lasts that long, and fingers crossed it won't—I'll continue, still hoping day by day it will clear.

Of course, during that time, I'll sit down and try to access my creative subconscious, try to write. If I can, good. With any luck, I'll enter a new personal "normal." If I can't, well, then I'll either find a way to clear the fog or, barring that, maybe I'll go fishing. I guess either one is Quality of Life. Just a very different life.

For now, I'll be working to finish *The Comancheros*, and I should be able to turn out two more novels before August 31. Maybe even three. We'll see.

As an aside for those interested in the numbers, I'm a little annoyed with myself. This is the first time I've had a real shot at writing a million words of fiction in a year. With exactly 1/2 of the year gone, I'm currently sitting at 528,679 words of fiction. So I only have to write another 471,521 words to hit my big goal. (That's only an average of 2577 words per day every day for the rest of the year.)

Of course, I'll still give it a shot, but the odds against me just went way up. Which leaves me pondering another question: Which is better, a goal deferred and therefore still a goal or a goal achieved, the personal betterment of which requires setting a new, higher goal?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Day One" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-one/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 690 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 10... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 28916

Total fiction words for July..... 3220

Total fiction words for the year..... 531899

Total nonfiction words for July... 980

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 126770

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 658669

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quitting Cigars, the writing life](#)

The Journal: Good Days

July 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * I like days like this
- * Dean mentioned
- * Watch for my posts
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I like days like this when I have little to say on the Journal and few items in “Of Interest.” Those days enable me to post this Journal early and get back to the novel sooner.

Just a hint: if you get anything out of these posts, I would appreciate a comment on that. Your comments keep this Journal going.

Dean mentioned he got around 5000 words on the first day of the new novel in his writing challenge but “only” 1900 words on the second.

That happens to me often. He says for him it’s a shrug. I find that’s true for me as well. For me it’s an “oh well.” Same thing. Some days I’m just tired (generally, not of the story).

But I’m confident the story will continue, and that when I come back the next day it will be waiting. That confidence—knowing the words and the story will be waiting when I come back—and understanding that my word count goal resets to 0 every day are the secrets to being a long-term fiction writer.

Watch for my posts on substack, coming soon. I’ll link to them here. At least one will be free, and at least one will be paid. Current patrons will be grandfathered-in to the paid ones, of course.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Day Two” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-two/>.

See “Masking Kids: The Science Says It Poisons Them With Carbon Dioxide” at <https://russellblakeuncensored.substack.com/p/masking-kids-the-science-says-it>. Story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 260 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216
Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129
Day 3..... 3103 words. Total words to date..... 6232
Day 4..... 2490 words. Total words to date..... 8722
Day 5..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 12901
Day 6..... 3492 words. Total words to date..... 16393
Day 7..... 4419 words. Total words to date..... 20812
Day 8..... 2245 words. Total words to date..... 23057
Day 9..... 2639 words. Total words to date..... 25696
Day 10... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 28916
Day 11... 4036 words. Total words to date..... 32952

Total fiction words for July..... 7256
Total fiction words for the year..... 535935
Total nonfiction words for July... 1240
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 127030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 662965

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), russellblakeuncensored.substack.com, [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Journaling, Focusing Down and More

July 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Birthday thoughts
- * Thank you
- * For those of you interested
- * Whale Sharks
- * Focusing Down
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If you're only going to mention something once, and it has no other significance to the story, choose one specific detail, and that's it.” James Scott Bell

“In a way we're stenographers. The story's being told to us.” Stephen King

Happy Birthday to my wife. Today she turns 36. No, seriously. 36. Happy birthday, Honey.

Oh, and happy 245th birthday to the USA.

Thank you to all of those who reached out via email or comments to let me know you find the Journal of some value. I very much appreciate it.

Different topic. For those of you interested in “journaling,” see “The Art of Positive Journaling” at <https://positive-writer.teachable.com/p/positive-journaling>. What's more, if this interests you, you can get a coupon to enroll in the course FREE (a \$350 value) in exchange for buying Bryan Hutchinson's new book, titled *Photographic and Firsthand Paranormal Evidence from Inside the Haunted Forest*.

First, you should subscribe to his free blog at positivewriter.com. After you've subscribed, email Bryan for further details at bryan.hutchinson@positivewriter.com. Tell him another subscriber sent you, and reference his email to his subscriber base dated July 3, 2021.

In the email, Bryan writes, “Let's get this straight, for purchasing a Kindle copy of my new book (or paperback) you'll receive a coupon code for unlimited access to ‘The Art of Positive Journaling’ course, and a free digital copy of *Writer's Doubt*, and all the other bonuses in the bonus section of that course!” (Copied from an email I received as a subscriber to his blog.)

While poking around for items for “Of Interest” I saw an article titled “Why Has No One Seen a Whale Shark Give Birth.” My first thought was, Um, maybe because it’s a freaking WHALE SHARK? Anyway....

There’s a good article on focusing down in “Of Interest” today, though Mr. Bell calls it “getting specific with details.” Same thing.

I only found one thing I disagree with. He quotes another blogger with “[When providing details] You’ve got to consider the knowledge, education and background of the viewpoint character.”

Sort of, but not really. I get what he’s saying: HOW the POV character describes something will depend on his knowledge, education, etc. But what he notices (and therefore describes) depends entirely on what he can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel and the current situation. As Mr. Bell says, “The trick is to slip [the description] in naturally.”

A few days ago I posted a long excerpt from my current novel as an example of taking your time (self-explanatory) and focusing down. But because the post was already very long, I didn’t point out any of the focusing down. If you read it, and if you have any questions, I’d be happy to answer them.

As for taking the time to write the scene, it’s what the characters gave me. Had I written the quick-narrative overview first version, the reader wouldn’t have experienced the actual scene. So that’s the benefit of taking your time.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Day Three” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-three/>.

See “Getting Specific With Details” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/getting-specific-with-details.html>. A bit more on focusing down.

See “Why Hardboiled Detective Fiction Remains So Popular” at <http://dyingwords.net/why-hardboiled-detective-fiction-remains-so-popular/>.

See “Using dialogue and research in writing (a very short video)” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpDPPV3AUNQ>.

See “Lee Child and Stephen King talk Jack Reacher” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PaxX-DTGo0>. (Much longer video.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 10... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 28916

Day 11... 4036 words. Total words to date..... 32952

Day 12... 4848 words. Total words to date..... 37800

Total fiction words for July..... 11304

Total fiction words for the year..... 539983

Total nonfiction words for July... 1810

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 127600

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 667583

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Whose Story Is It?

July 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Whose Story Is It?
- * Quotes of the Day
- * Some Videos to Check Out
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Whose Story Is It?

Well, today is mostly quotes. You'll see those below. I didn't write fiction yesterday. Didn't even move over to the writing 'puter.

Though some have come close, it dawned on me yesterday that I've never heard any other writer repeat my own mantra: It's not my story, it's the characters' story.

But let me elaborate. I truly believe the characters' life, their story, is ongoing even when I'm not looking in on them. Just as my neighbor's or my children's or 7.64 billion other people's lives are ongoing even when I'm not looking in on them.

I also believe this certainty is essential to becoming a prolific professional storyteller. Aside from myself, this belief is born out by the experience of Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, Lee Child, James Lee Burke, Dean Wesley Smith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch and any number of others.

Actually, I can distinguish only two types of professional storytellers: those who "know" (as I, King, Burke, et al do) the characters, not the writers themselves, are living the story, and those who are "that close" to breaking through to that realization.

Why do I say those other writers are on the verge? Because almost every one of them—even though they won't quite admit or allow themselves to believe the characters are actually living the story, and although as a result of that they fall back on the safety nets of plotting, outlining, etc.—universally admit that Character is the story.

I've long been enamored with DWS' "Stages of a Fiction Writer" (see it at <https://www.amazon.com/Stages-Fiction-Writer-Writing-Writers-ebook/dp/B016VBNPRG> or free at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/tag/stages-of-a-fiction-writer/>).

I personally think Dean got one thing wrong—that whole bestseller thing—because becoming a bestseller is a dream, not a goal (meaning it's something that is outside the writer's control), whereas advancing through the Stages is a goal, meaning it IS within the writer's control.

But the Stages still form the essence of a profound truth. And that truth is this:

Until a writer comes to understand that the life of his characters is completely separate of the life the writer is living, s/he can't break through into Stage 4.

And there's nothing to be afraid of. You might *want* the safety net of an outline or plot, but you don't *need* a safety net. It's strictly a conscious, critical-mind, fear-based decision. And nothing is more freeing for a writer than flying without a net.

Looking in on your characters' life and trusting them to tell the story that they, not you, are living is no more fraught with danger than looking in on your *friendly neighbor's life and committing part of that to the page. (*Note: If your neighbor happens to be a serial killer, there might be some inherent danger in looking in on his life.)

If you were doing the latter, would you attempt to outline and plot your neighbors' life, or would you just write down what the neighbors say and do (albeit omitting the boring parts) as they move through their day?

If you want it to be a true account, you would just write the story. You wouldn't try to control or direct what they say or do. You would simply report it.

Likewise, if you want your characters' fictional story to be a true account, you won't try to control them either. You'll simply report it, writing down what they say and do.

If you just thought, "But the characters live in my head," please take a moment to check in with yourself. Ask yourself, "So what?"

What difference does it make where the characters live? Your neighbors live down the block or across the street. "In my head" is a different location than "in my house" or "across the street" or "in Moscow."

As Stephen King said to Lee Child in one of the videos I watched recently, "We are stenographers. The story is being told to us and we write it down."

Okay, so here are some writers talking about writing. Afterward I've listed a few videos you might want to check out as you have time.

Quotes of the Day

"I never 'wanted' to be a writer. What I wanted to be, broadly speaking, was an entertainer. I wanted to do something that made you [pointing to the audience] happy for an hour or a day or two days just to make you feel good. I'm completely transparent about it. I understand myself very well. I am trying to get, from you, the love and approval I did not get as a child. Lots of writers are like that." Lee Child (I included this one because I can relate.)

(As an aside) "The difference between a mystery and a thriller is an extra zero on the advance." Lee Child

(On writers keeping a notebook of "ideas") "I think a writer's notebook is the best way to immortalize bad ideas. The good ideas are the ones that hang around." Stephen King

"You know, sometimes people say to me, 'Why do you choose to write that creepy stuff?' And I usually say, 'What makes you think I have a choice?'" Stephen King

"I feel like you have to follow the characters and you have to follow the story where it leads. The last thing I want to do is spoil a book with plot. Plot is the last resort of bad writers as a rule. I'm a lot more interested in character and situations." Stephen King

"It begins with a character, all I can do is trot along behind him trying to put down what he says and does." William Faulkner

"Once I learned to value and respect my characters, I could really hear them. I let them start talking." August Wilson

And finally, there's "Writers on Characters" at <https://gointothestory.blcklst.com/writers-on-characters-ccbfa3ad463>.

Some Videos to Check Out

Enjoy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNvw0BcO_FM
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgxqQV8hX8U>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=829vaz2CxiI>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRD7JJLPeIM>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovTDlqMCCn0>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiEAQIzBjoM>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwgUHLQCyR0>

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Day Four" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/day-four/>. An observation: If he isn't consciously (critical mind) allowing the move, etc. to keep him away from the novel, my money's still on Dean for this challenge. Only he can know for sure.

See "I Just Write the Thing" at <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/IJustWriteTheThing>.

See "The Space Shuttle Engines Will Rise Again" at <https://www.popularmechanics.com/space/rockets/a36880258/space-shuttle-rs-25-engine/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1060 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 10... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 28916

Day 11... 4036 words. Total words to date..... 32952

Day 12... 4848 words. Total words to date..... 37800

Total fiction words for July..... 11304

Total fiction words for the year..... 539983

Total nonfiction words for July... 2870

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 128660

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 668643

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	10
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	63
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [characters](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [PopularMechanics.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [tvtropes.org](#), [Whose story is it?](#)

The Journal: Another Brief Note on Focusing Down

July 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Another Brief Note on Focusing Down
- * The Novel
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Another Brief Note on Focusing Down

Okay, and some story ideas, and a bit on dialogue.

Focusing down means making readers lean into the story, or lean into it more closely. It means focusing their attention “down” or more tightly on a detail. You can’t do that with a chase scene.

But you *can* do that with the tires squealing and a wheel cover spinning off and clanging down the side of the road. If it sends people scattering when it bounces off a curb and goes through the plate-glass window of a café, so much the better.

(There you go. Several story ideas right there. The story of the POV character in the fleeing car or the chasing car, or the story of the POV character sitting down to enjoy lunch in a café with whomever. Or the story of the POV character waiting the table when s/he looks up to see... or the story of the cook who leans out through the pass-through at the crucial moment to yell to a waiter that an order’s ready when the wheel cover crashes through the window and....)

You can do it with the perp's hands slipping off the steering wheel at a crucial moment because his idiot brother put Armor All on the steering wheel. (He saw his brother doing so yesterday afternoon but failed to say anything because someone stepped out on the porch of the house and called to him at that crucial moment and....)

Or maybe the perp's car takes out a wood or steel or aluminum light pole, hitting it just below the little square ID plate because his hands slipped. And who knows? Maybe the story's about the perp, or maybe it's really the story of the guy who's half-drunk when he's called out to repair the downed power lines or the light pole.

Or if you're bent that way, maybe it's the story of the drunk on the corner in a disheveled suit (the jacket is ripped down the center of the back) who witnessed the whole thing and is a retired (or fired) old beat-cop or detective whose bloodshot eyes go wide when he realizes maybe, just maybe, he can use this as a vehicle to rebuild his career.

Or the ski-masked guy in pink trousers, a sage-green sweater and white flip-flops with dirty sides who just robbed the Circle K on the corner and gets in the way of the fleeing car.

Or maybe it's the story of the clerk in the Circle K, who has brown hair and eyes and is honest to a fault and who's just been robbed and is wondering whether he'll be fired, and he really needs the income from the job to help fund his college education at CUNY or CalTech or Ohio State. Need I go on?

You can do it with the perp's inability to accelerate at the right moment because he's wearing thong leather sandals and the one on his right foot comes loose and goes sideways on him. (He was going to wear sneakers but couldn't find them when he got dressed in the dark this morning in his town, which is 123 miles away.)

The points are 1) ideas are a dime a million and 2) you can add that detail or those details all without slowing the action. (How quickly did you read through the stuff above this paragraph?)

Yes, it's a little slower to write (so Take Your Time), but for the reader, the sense of action is just as fast if not faster because more is crammed into the reader's brain. And all at breakneck pace.

Dialogue—good dialogue—also is a kind of focusing down. Good dialogue always makes the reader lean in. It even turns the otherwise well-grounded reader into a character in the story. The reader becomes the eavesdropper, just off scene, listening closely as the characters talk to each other.

And what is good dialogue? Dialogue that is real. Not dialogue that “seems” real, dialogue that “is” real: dialogue that comes directly from your characters.

Much has been said about differentiating your characters through their dialogue, what they say and how they say it.

The characters in my current novel (and many others) live in the west. Some are less refined. Some are more refined (for the area). One is highly refined-sounding, a result of his having been reared in the deep south. Of course, many of my characters live in a ship or on a planet in deep space. Some live in Brooklyn. Some live in Ohio or other places.

Some truncate their gerunds (“lyin” instead of “lying”) and some don’t. Some begin almost every sentence with an identifying catch phrase: “Well” or “The thing is” or “There y’go” or “There you go” or “Whaddya mean?” Some who truncate their gerunds and other words (“y’go”) are smarter or wiser than those who don’t. (How one speaks is not always a marker of intelligence but some folks think it is. Use that to your advantage.)

One medium-major (not major but well-rounded and not secondary) character in my current series speaks with a distinctive, deep-southern accent. He also routinely uses “bigger” words. He might say “alleviate” or “utilize” when he means “ease” or “use” but that’s part of who he is and how he speaks.

That isn’t me “differentiating” the characters through their use of dialogue. That’s the characters speaking the way they speak and me following along like a happy lap puppy, writing it all down.

Okay, so then you know what’s coming. Listen to people speak, and take mental notes. I used to tell people the best way to learn dialogue is to hang out in Denny’s at various times (and at various times of day) through the week.

For example, at 2 a.m. in Denny’s you might get to hear cop-speak and bum-speak and failed-lawyer-speak and oilfield-roughneck-speak all at the same time.

But don’t consciously try to mimic that in your stories. When your characters start speaking, just write what they say the way they say it.

The novel probably will wrap today. Maybe tomorrow, depending on what else today holds.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Skipping a Day” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/skipping-a-day/>.

See “38 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://authorspublish.com/38-themed-calls-for-submissions-for-july-2021/>.

See “What My Horse Taught Me About Characters Arcs” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/what-my-horse-taught-me-about-character-arcs-guest-post-by-kay-dibianca.html>.

See “Is the Pirate Queen of Scientific Publishing in Real Trouble This Time?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/is-the-pirate-queen-of-scientific-publishing-in-real-trouble-this-time/>. Be sure to see PG’s take to see the real villain.

See “How Twitter can ruin a life” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-twitter-can-ruin-a-life/>. Again, see PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1110 words

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 10... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 28916

Day 11... 4036 words. Total words to date..... 32952

Day 12... 4848 words. Total words to date..... 37800

Day 13... 3411 words. Total words to date..... 41211

Total fiction words for July..... 14715

Total fiction words for the year..... 543394

Total nonfiction words for July... 3980

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 129770

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 673164

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 10

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 63

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [dialogue](#), [Focusing Down](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Story Ideas](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Don’t Cut Off Your Nose...

July 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: Don't Cut Off Your Nose...
- * The Novel Wrapped
- * First Reader?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Don't Cut Off Your Nose...

Before my computer crashed, I had a good quote queued up for today. In that quote Stephen King says [paraphrasing] he doesn't write in science fiction or westerns or horror or mystery "or any of that," but his work contains elements of all of them. Amen.

(That quote and several other good ones are in one of the vids for which I gave you the URL the other day, the one that's about 1:20:00 long and he's on stage in a red t-shirt.)

Anyway, that quote gave me a topic I've wanted to talk about for a long time but one that's difficult to put on the page so others will understand. So I'll start with a very brief story.

A few years ago, I met a woman at some sort of writers' get-together or something. She said she was an English teacher and that she'd "churned out" 3 novels in only 8 years. Something like that.

I said I was in possession of something that had turned my life around and might help with her production if she was interested. She was. So I offered to send her a copy of Heinlein's Rules.

And she said, "You mean Robert A. Heinlein?"

"Yes, have you seen his rules?"

"No, but I know they won't help. I don't write science fiction."

"But they're only five very short rules, and they pertain to ALL fiction writers. I'd be happy to send them to you."

"No, I won't read anything that might taint my process." And the look on her face said she thought maybe I was trying to con her.

(An aside: "If you want to be thought a liar, always tell the truth." Logan Pearsall Smith)

Wow. I think I felt a disturbance in the Force as her mind snapped shut. No tricking that one into coming over to the Dark Side. (grin) But I only said, "Thank you" and went on about my business.

But seriously, that sort of attitude is kind'a like folding your arms over your chest and refusing to jump from a plummeting airplane because you aren't offered a parachute of a particular color. "I don't know what you're trying to pull here, but I think I'll ride it out." Sigh.

In that video I referenced above, King also says he believes readers “come back for the voice.” In other words, they follow him across genres.

He’s talking about author voice or the style that develops as you write. And I believe he’s right. Because the thing is, what works in one genre generally will work in another.

All writing, all stories, are basically the same regardless of genre. And you can learn from skilled writers regardless of the genre or genres in which they write.

Yes, there are different genre-specific touchstones in each genre. But there are only so many kinds of interactions between characters, and there are only so many kinds of settings and situations in which they can embroil themselves. Duh.

Don’t close yourself off in a bubble. Don’t cut off your nose to spite your face. Don’t be intentionally ignorant. Writing is writing and fiction is fiction.

As I thought it would, the novel wrapped just before noon yesterday at a little over 45,000 words. It also wrapped on Writing Day 14, though if you’re counting, it was calendar day 15. Oh well.

I’ve often talked about being surprised by things that happen as I write, a result of not planning or plotting and just writing into the dark. But on this one, I think for the first time ever, I was actually surprised by the very last sentence.

I won’t give it away, but suffice it to say I expected Wes to climb aboard his horse, Charley, and head for Amarillo. But he didn’t.

Guess I’ll tag along and see where he’s headed next.

So after I ran a spell check, I sent it off to my main first reader (Thanks, Russ.) and to a few friends. Then I intended to take the rest of the day off. Didn’t work out that way. (grin)

When I wrapped *WCGN2: The Comancheros*, I took a few hours off. Then I came back to the Hovel mostly for a cigar. While I was out here, I figured I might as well set up my “template” for the next novel. (I use the same front matter, end matter, chapter heads, etc. for each novel.)

And the next thing I knew, an epigram occurred to me. As I wrote it down, a first sentence showed up, and the next thing I knew, I was around 1200 words into *WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory*. Don’t be shocked or dismayed. (grin) Wes is still a Texas Ranger. But he’s annoyed with a situation, and he’s just young enough and bullheaded enough to set aside jurisdiction and see how much he can do about it. Should be a fun ride.

So Writing Day 14 for the previous novel was also Writing Day 1 for the current one. I love it when that happens.

I'm always looking for more first readers. I had several there for awhile, and then they started kind of fading away. Now I'm down to one, and he's very good, attentive but unintrusive.

The fading-away is my fault. I think it's a penalty I pay for being prolific. If you're interested in becoming a first reader, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and I'll give you the details.

If you've ever dreamed of riding wild on a good horse in a just cause, seriously, you might consider signing on as a first reader for the WGCN novels.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Day Six" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-six/>. Sigh. The challenge is not looking good.

See "Tips for Writing for Television" (for fun) at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/tips-for-writing-for-television.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 980 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191

Writing of WCGN2: The Comancheros (novel)

Day 1..... 1216 words. Total words to date..... 1216
Day 2..... 1913 words. Total words to date..... 3129
Day 3..... 3103 words. Total words to date..... 6232
Day 4..... 2490 words. Total words to date..... 8722
Day 5..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 12901
Day 6..... 3492 words. Total words to date..... 16393
Day 7..... 4419 words. Total words to date..... 20812
Day 8..... 2245 words. Total words to date..... 23057
Day 9..... 2639 words. Total words to date..... 25696
Day 10... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 28916
Day 11... 4036 words. Total words to date..... 32952
Day 12... 4848 words. Total words to date..... 37800
Day 13... 3411 words. Total words to date..... 41211
Day 14... 4027 words. Total words to date..... 45238 (done)

Total fiction words for July..... 19933

Total fiction words for the year..... 548612

Total nonfiction words for July... 4960
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 130750
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 679362

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [fiction is fiction](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [writing is writing](#)

The Journal: Computers and Programs and Novels, Oh My

July 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Computers and programs and novels, oh my
- * Don't ever write this
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The upsides of a few Twitter likes and a small honorarium that won't cover rent are hard to weigh against the risk of harassment that can destroy your mental health, career, or even life.”
Lincoln Michel

Computers and Programs and Novels, Oh My

Sometimes it seems like there are always ten more things to do.

Before I moved over to the writing 'puter yesterday, I decided on a whim to design covers for the twelfth book in the main Wes Crowley series and then the first two or three books in the Wes Crowley Gap series. So I opened my go-to app, Serif PagePlus X9.

Only it kept telling me I didn't have certain fonts installed. Only I knew I did (but I double-checked anyway.) So I opened it again. Same thing happened.

The whole process of designing the covers should have taken less around a half-hour (I already have the art). But over an hour later I had zero new covers, threw up my hands, and decided to bite the bullet and design the covers with my new Affinity Publisher program.

Only it required a new update that was available. Sigh. So I downloaded the new update and started installing that.

Then I realized I'd be starting from scratch with a brand-new program, and for that I'd need to set aside at least one full (frustrating) day. So I decided to just write.

Well, I wrote a little, but I was too tempted to play with the new program. So I went and did that and realized I was making it harder than it really is. I'll get the hang of it soon. But by then I was really tired, so I closed the day and took the rest of it off from about 1 p.m.

So after I first-read a story for a friend, I'm going back to the novel this morning. After I've finished it, I'll stop for a day or two and design enough covers to really familiarize myself with what I need to know from the program.

By the way, please, please, please don't ever write a scene like this:

Two detectives (or whomever) are poking around in a heavily treed area where they shouldn't be, and then suddenly Det 2 notices a red-dot light on Det 1's forehead.

Det 1 looks curiously at Det 2 and says, "What's wrong? Do I have something on my face? And what was that sound? Birds, maybe?"

And Det 2, instead of immediately taking Det 1 to the ground or shoving him aside or SOMething, calmly says, "No, it wasn't birds. It's a sniper."

Seriously? (Recently seen on a highly touted Netflix series.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Day Seven" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-seven/>.

See "Art Should Be a Doorway, Not a Mirror" at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/art-should-be-a-doorway-not-a-mirror>. Damn. I'll say again, I just write stories. I'm not responsible for others' perceptions of those stories.

See "History Net" at <https://historynet.com>. Journal reader and writer Phillip M. says "story ideas abound." If you're running short of ideas, take a look.

See “5 Steps to Creating a Unique Character Voice” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-steps-to-creating-a-unique-character-voice/>. I included this in case you want it, but the easiest way to “create” a unique character voice is to let the characters speak for themselves.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191

Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397

Total fiction words for July..... 21139

Total fiction words for the year..... 549818

Total nonfiction words for July... 5530

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 131320

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 681138

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [historynet.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On “Making” Good or Great Writers

July 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * On “Making” Good or Great Writers
- * An Observation on “Pressure”

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“All things are difficult before they are easy.” Thomas Fuller

On “Making” Good or Great Writers

In today’s “Of Interest” I’ve included a “Reader Friday” from the KillZone, primarily because it’s based on a Stephen King quote.

Here’s my response (expanded):

I think the key word in this passage is “make” and King’s repetition of that. This quote runs alongside his thought that writing can’t be taught, but it can be learned.

The mechanics of writing can be taught. In fact, I teach most if not all of them through my mentorships, my nonfiction books, this Journal and in other places.

But it’s up to each writer to apply what s/he’s learned, continue to learn and continue to practice. And by “practice” I don’t mean hover with rewrites. I mean Write New Stories.

In other words, anyone can be taught to write, but in my experience few can learn to “be a writer.” As Heinlein wrote as an addendum to his Business Habits (Heinlein’s Rules), “That’s why there are so few professional writers and so many aspirants.”

For me, it all boils down to priorities. I’ve observed that in most fields of endeavor, greatness (or even adequacy to claim the title Writer) is achieved by a Zen-like learning to let go of what’s holding the aspirant back, combined with passion, determination, and a work ethic.

Plainly put, if storytelling isn’t the aspirant’s passion—something for which s/he willingly sacrifices other parts of her life and maybe even her mental health—s/he probably won’t ever be an accomplished writer.

Generally—again, in almost any field of endeavor—what we are passionate about, we achieve. What we are *not* passionate about, we naturally allow to fall to the side as less-important while we pursue other interests.

Is that a bad thing? Absolutely not.

I do believe there are “born” writers, but I also believe there are “born” mechanics, carpenters, cops, lawyers, carpet- or flooring-store owners, clerks, laborers, etc. And all of those see themselves as the luckiest person on Earth because all of them get to do what they love for a living.

I've personally witnessed oil field workers, working cowboys, and ditch diggers who would not rather be doing anything else.

In fact, I'd go so far as to say if you aren't in it (whatever "it" is, even writing) because you'd rather be doing it than anything else, you should fold your hand and go do that thing your passionate about, that thing you love to do.

There's nothing wrong with that, and everything about it is right.

An Observation on "Pressure" (and DWS' current personal challenge)

None of us are exempt from attacks by our conscious, critical mind. Reading between the lines (where critical mind resides) of his last few posts, I suspect Dean has allowed his critical mind to seep in and apply "pressure" to meet deadlines.

As he taught me and countless others, pressure is a good thing when it drives you to the keyboard.

But once you're at the keyboard and in the story, you have to shut out the pressure, forget about it and Just Write. The story, not the challenge, is the thing. If you take care of writing the story, the challenge will take care of itself.

Dean's been at this writing thing for a long time. Eventually he will sit back, take a breath, and remember that what matters is THAT you write, not WHAT you write or when or how long it is.

I predict in the next week or so he'll kick this challenge to the side, as well he should. Later, in some future month, he'll probably reboot it and succeed as so few others (myself included) could.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Day Eight" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/day-eight/>.

See "Write Dialogue Like a Pro with Elizabeth Sims" (learn more or register) at <https://www.janefriedman.com/write-dialogue-like-a-pro-with-elizabeth-sims/>. Sounds as if it might be worthwhile and worth the \$25.

See "Paraprosdokian: 40 Funny Sentences You Won't Expect" at <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/paraprosdokian-40-funny-sentences-you-wont-expect.html>.

See "Three Platforms for Serialized Fiction" at <https://authorspublish.com/three-platforms-for-serialized-fiction/>.

See “Self-publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/self-publishing/>. Be sure to see PG’s take too.

See “Bookshop.org Continues to See Strong Sales” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bookshop-org-continues-to-see-strong-sales/>.

See “MurderCon: It’s a Killer Event!” at <https://leelofland.com/murdercon-its-a-killer-event/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 730 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191

Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397

Day 3..... 3876 words. Total words to date..... 6273

Total fiction words for July..... 25015

Total fiction words for the year..... 553694

Total nonfiction words for July... 6260

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 132050

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 685744

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [On "Making" a Writer](#), [On Pressure](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Some Next-Level Stuff on Pacing

July 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Some Next-Level Stuff on Pacing
- * As predicted
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I will fail to success. Two novels this month and four next month.” Dean Wesley Smith

“To be an author, you have to sit your gluteus maximus in a chair, somewhere, and string words together.” Reavis Wortham

Topic: Some Next-Level Stuff on Pacing

Just had a chat with a mentoring student. In part of that, I told her the main thing DWS taught me about pacing:

Hit the freakin' return key (Enter key) now and then. Why? Because very long paragraphs slow the reader down. Whether you want them to or not.

So if you write what you think is a really tension-filled scene, and if ANY of the paragraphs in that scene are longer than 4 or 5 lines (I'm talking lines on the page or screen, not sentences), maybe hit the Enter key a little more often.

Paragraphing fiction is not like you were taught to paragraph essays in high school or college.

If dialogue (or narrative observations) switch from one character to another, start a new paragraph.

If the POV character moves from one room to another or from the living room to the front porch or the front porch to the car, start a new paragraph. Especially if she's fleeing something or someone.

And if you have a short, terse sentence that sums up what preceded it, consider putting it in its own paragraph.

I don't have a separate “Pacing” class in my mentorships. That's because pacing is something that (to my mind) is better covered in-context. So a discussion on pacing would enter into almost any of the writing Craft mentorships, early or advanced.

You can also learn pacing the way I learned it. Almost every story or novel I write, whether SF or Western or Detective/PI/Crime or Mystery is tension-filled. I don't write Horror, but I studied

(continue to study) Stephen King. I don't write WWII novels, but I studied Jack Higgins. Because those and others are masterful writers.

If you read something by a bestselling writer that blows you away, stick a slip of paper or something in the book at that point. Then continue reading for pleasure.

But after you finish, go back and re-read with a writer's eye those parts that blew you away. How did the writer do that?

When as a reader, sweat beads were popping out on your forehead and the writer allowed you a breather (a respite from all the tension), how did s/he do that?

And when s/he all but literally dragged you through the high-tension scenes and put those sweat beads there in the first place, how did s/he do that?

They did both with pacing. And pacing isn't all about physical action and guns going off. It also goes to letting the reader into the POV character's state of mind.

Most of the time, you will find long paragraphs (say 8 lines or more) in commercial fiction only when you're being allowed to rest as a reader. Yes, there are exceptions.

I enjoy reading Lee Child's Jack Reacher stories, but I often find myself scanning or skipping the really long paragraphs he sometimes includes.

So when you read an exception, consider this: It's much easier to stop reading a story in the middle of a long, tiring paragraph than it is to stop reading in a series of shorter paragraphs.

Pacing starts with sentence (or fragment) length and punctuation, it goes to word choice, and much more. And yes, it goes to "hitting the Enter Key now and then."

Want to write a page-turner? There you go.

As predicted, Dean tossed in the towel on the challenge today (see the first item in "Of Interest"). This was a smart thing to do.

Here's the comment I left:

Not only will you fail to success, but you'll put pressure back in its proper perspective. (grin) That's another thing you taught me years ago: Pressure is great to get you to the keyboard, but once you sit down, pressure needs to disappear. **THAT** we write is important; **WHAT** we write, length, etc. not so much.

These days I figure the characters' stories are ongoing in another dimension or something even when I'm not checking in on them. (Just like the neighbors' et al lives are going on even when we aren't aware.)

When I write, I just open the window and record what they give me. I remain the luckiest guy on Earth that they chose me to run through the story with them, trying to keep up, writing down what they say and do.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Reset In August” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/reset-in-august/>.

See “Excuses” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/excuses.html>.

See “‘Social’ Mitochondria, Whispering Between Cells, Influence Health” at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/social-mitochondria-whispering-between-cells-influence-health-20210706/>. Possible weird story ideas.

See “A New Kind of Information-Coding Seen in the Human Brain” at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/a-new-kind-of-information-coding-seen-in-the-human-brain-20210707/>. A new race of super-intelligent humans? Possible story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 830 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191

Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397

Day 3..... 3876 words. Total words to date..... 6273

Day 4..... 2559 words. Total words to date..... 8832

Total fiction words for July..... 27874

Total fiction words for the year..... 556253

Total nonfiction words for July... 7090

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 132880

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 689135

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pacing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Short Writing Day

July 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Short Writing Day and a revelation
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“People want stories. That never changes. There’s nothing quite like the feeling of getting pulled into a fictive dream.” James Scott Bell

Short writing day yesterday though it was also an exciting day for me.

After writing several short stories and 15 novels in concert with Wes Crowley, he finally told me what happened to him before he met Mac and consequently joined the Rangers. Turns out that’s when his one rule for life was seeded and took root. Very cool.

A daughter stopped by on Friday on her way to visit cousins near Phoenix, and then my son from Flagstaff and his girl came down too, late on Friday night. So yesterday we spent the day with them. Very enjoyable.

I’ll be back in the saddle following Wes this morning. (Not an easy thing, balancing a 13” HP on the pommel of a galloping horse.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “More on the Current State of Publishing” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/more-on-the-current-state-of-publishing.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 180 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191
Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397
Day 3..... 3876 words. Total words to date..... 6273
Day 4..... 2559 words. Total words to date..... 8832
Day 5..... 1561 words. Total words to date..... 10393

Total fiction words for July..... 29135
Total fiction words for the year..... 557814
Total nonfiction words for July... 7270
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 133060
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 690874

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Are You Like Me?

July 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Are you like me?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Are you like me?

Do you wake up each morning with a child-like desire to get dressed and race past breakfast (and the surprised look on your mother's face) and out the front door to play with your friends?

It's an exciting game, but it ran long yesterday. When the sun started to fade in the west, you had to stop and go inside, "wash up," and eat supper.

But the game was far from over at that point. Still carrying the fire of the game, you ate quickly, then watched TV for awhile and were amazed at how well the story played out. And how sad the tiny people inside the TV must have been that it was over for another week. Aaugh!

And finally you went almost anxiously to bed. Because tomorrow's a brand new day! And you looked forward to waking up and resuming the game again, and part of you hoped it would go on forever.

But really, how long it would last or what might happen next never crossed your mind. All that mattered is you'd slept, you were refreshed, and morning was here at last! The game awaits!

Here's where I might be a little luckier than you. For me, every coming day is a weekend day. There are no boring schoolbooks to pull out, no homework to trudge through. So for every unfortunate out there who's still tied to a day job other than writing and who gets only two full days per week to write, I get seven. As I said, I'm a lucky guy.

When the sun is setting, I do still have to go inside, wash up, and eat, grumbling like a five year old all the way. Then I watch a couple hours of TV, sometimes still grumbling. (And yes, I still feel bad for the tiny people inside the TV.)

But I go to bed almost anxiously, because I know that's a necessary threshold to cross, and I know it will lead me to the next morning where the game and my friends await. Could life get any better? I don't think so.

I recently watched a TV series featuring the biblical character Cain, the first murderer. The story described in detail how horribly bored he was. He had been fated to immortality, wandering the earth forever, unable to die.

My only thought was this: The guy should've been a fiction writer. He'd never be bored and he'd be grateful for the time.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Business Master Class Started" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/business-master-class-started/>. You can still get in.

See "Can Multitasking Harm the Brain?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/can-multitasking-harm-the-brain.html>. And see my response.

See "This U.S. Navy Warship Shot Down MiGs and Pranked the Soviets" at <https://warisboring.com/this-u-s-navy-warship-shot-down-migs-and-pranked-the-soviets/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 470 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191
Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397
Day 3..... 3876 words. Total words to date..... 6273
Day 4..... 2559 words. Total words to date..... 8832
Day 5..... 1561 words. Total words to date..... 10393
Day 6..... 3007 words. Total words to date..... 13400

Total fiction words for July..... 32142
Total fiction words for the year..... 560821
Total nonfiction words for July... 7740
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 133530
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 694351

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: David Farland and a Royal Model O Typewriter

July 13, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * David Farland
- * Royal Model O

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[E]ventually the character’s story demands to be told in full.” David Farland

If you get David Farland’s newsletter, you recently received one titled “Writing Your Series, Part 3.” But if you go to Farland’s Writing Tips blog, it doesn’t seem to be up yet.

Actually, it is. So are Parts 1 through 6. But they were originally written in 2014. So to see the entire series of posts on “Writing Your Series,” visit <https://mystorydoctor.com/?s=Writing+your+series>.

There are six posts in the series, but really you can skip over Parts 1 and 2. They’re basically fodder. But I found Part 3 interesting, and the last three posts are pretty meaty as well.

These are based on traditional publishing, but there’s no reason an indie publisher can’t take advantage of some of the tip as well.

I learned from reading Part 4 that my Wes Crowley series is both “episodic” and a “long tale” (what I call a “saga”). Each title in that series is complete in itself and stands alone, yet if you read the entire series you get another overall story. So the original Wes Crowley series is basically 13 stories overall, told in 12 volumes. Kind’a cool. (All my other series except the PI series are long tales. That one is episodic.)

Reading Part 5, I learned that the Crowley series takes place in “non-persistent worlds.” That is, although the overall timeframe (about 60 years) remains the same, Wes starts out in the Texas panhandle and ends up deep in Mexico in a fishing village. And there are many worlds in between, of course. The passage of time keeps the whole series cohesive.

I found Part 6 especially helpful, if only to set in concrete thoughts I’ve long entertained. Lots of gems in that one.

I don’t really have the characters-getting-lost problem he talks about in that post though. I tend to keep lesser characters alive by shifting to their POV in a separate section or chapter and taking up their story for a while, always while my major POV character is off doing something he or she has to do.

Anyway, despite his solid grounding in and support of traditional publishing, I do recommend you set aside an hour or so and read through Farland’s series.

Yesterday, I bought a 1935 Royal Model O portable manual typewriter, a work of art in a black case. I thought of Harlan Ellison, setting up with his Olympia SG3 in a department store window and writing short stories, page by page, as people lined the sidewalk to watch and to read the stories through the glass.

I'd seen my Royal in an antique store my wife and I visited with my son and his girl Cathy on Saturday. It felt as if it was mine and I'd finally located it. So yesterday morning we drove back over and bought it.

Remarkable, and great fun. I anticipate writing some short stories through it, and maybe even a novel or two. Then I guess we'll test the OCR capability of our scanner. Or not. I just keep thinking of how much fun it will be to write on it.

You can see a picture of one at <https://www.ebay.com/itm/184900391812>. Mine didn't cost nearly that much. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Sucked Down a Copyright Hole" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/sucked-down-a-copyright-hole/>. I'll say it again. Copyright is your livelihood. Get yourself a copy of The Copyright Handbook from NOLO Press.

See "Why FBI Profilers Mistake Writers for Serial Killers" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/why-fbi-profilers-mistake-writers-for-serial-killers/>.

See "29 Literary Fiction Publishers that Accept Direct Submissions" at <https://authorspublish.com/29-literary-fiction-publishers-that-accept-direct-submissions-no-agent-required/>.

See "Hook Your Readers with a Compelling Storyline, Tagline, & Back Cover Copy" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/hook-your-readers-with-a-compelling-storyline-tagline-back-cover-copy.html>. Once I'm "into" writing a novel, I can sum it up in one sentence. As for previous works? I can talk about those all day. (grin) And for goodness' sake, leave out any plot elements. Otherwise readers will have no reason to buy the book.

See "Amazon Gets the Go-Ahead to Track Your Sleep With Radar" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-gets-the-go-ahead-to-track-your-sleep-with-radar/>. Story idea?

See "Summer Book Kit Giveaway at The New York Public Library" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/summer-book-kit-giveaway-at-the-new-york-public-library/>. If you have children at home, see PG's addendum.

See "Should Authors Review Books?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/should-authors-review-books/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191
Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397
Day 3..... 3876 words. Total words to date..... 6273
Day 4..... 2559 words. Total words to date..... 8832
Day 5..... 1561 words. Total words to date..... 10393
Day 6..... 3007 words. Total words to date..... 13400
Day 7..... 2488 words. Total words to date..... 15888

Total fiction words for July..... 34630
Total fiction words for the year..... 563309
Total nonfiction words for July... 8490
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 134280
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 697589

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: One Writing Process

July 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: One Writing Process
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I always tell people to just let a story or a book be what it wants to be. Sometimes I even forget my own lessons.” Dean Wesley Smith

“Most of the ‘wisdom’ from members feels like advice we’ve all heard over the years presented as inviolable rules. Those of you who have hung around TKZ for a while know my opinion on the rules of writing: There aren’t any. Fiction writers need only to entertain their audience. If they can do that while including a prologue that’s all about waking up from a dream in the middle of a thunderstorm and wondering who they are, then Godspeed.” John Gilstrap

“Writing is a craft, and crafts need to be practiced.” John Gilstrap

Topic: One Writing Process

Notice this topic is titled “One Writing Process,” not THE writing process.

In an email, a dear prolific writer friend mentioned that occasionally he has to get to the computer to write a scene that’s resolved in his head while he slept, or upon waking. He also shared a bit of his writing process.

In my response, I shared a bit of my writing process with him, and it occurred to me that might be of interest to some of you.

First, as for having to get to the computer to write down the part of the scene or the character’s life that was revealed to me as I slept, I don’t do that. (Not that there’s anything wrong with it. Just not my process anymore.)

I used to do that. Given a story idea or a scene acted out or pretty much anything else from my subconscious, I would drag myself to the writing ‘puter and put it down so I wouldn’t either forget it or have to try to remember it after I woke up at my usual time. At a minimum, I’d wake up just long enough to scribble a note on a bedside notepad.

But now I trust my characters completely. That took some time, but I’m glad it finally came. As my friend wrote in his email, “I’ve been here before, a lot, and they [the characters] somehow make it happen.” That’s pretty much my mantra all the time: When I feel the story is bogging down, it helps me remember to trust the characters. When I find myself wondering what will happen next or how everything will work out (both conscious-mind attempts to sabotage the story) it helps me remember to trust the characters. That it’s *their* story, not mine. That I’m only their stenographer.

It helps a lot that I know their story’s going on even when I don’t look in on it, so I trust that something will be happening when I do. So if I “see” something happening when I’m away from the writing ‘puter, I generally just let it go. It’ll either be there again when I sit down to write or it won’t. Shrug. (I know. Weird.)

I consider myself lucky in that way. But honestly, I feel it has less to do with luck and more to do with practice, as John Gilstrap alludes to in one of the Quotes of the Day. If you want to make anything a habit, you have to practice it for awhile first.

So my process...

These days I get up at 2 or 3 or 4. If I feel good and awake, I get up. If I don't, I go back to sleep for another hour or two. When I get up, I brew my one allowed mug of coffee and go to the Hovel. I read/respond to emails, check the blogs I usually read, and then prep and publish the Journal. That generally takes between 1 and 2 hours.

Then usually I take a break of a half-hour or so.

After that I move over to the writing 'puter. I usually read the previous chapter or two, then put my fingers on the keys and just write whatever the characters give me in the moment. So my writing isn't so much a diary of what happened as a record of what's happening at the moment.

I make any adjustments while cycling, and other than correcting typos, the characters make those adjustments. (My characters don't do typos. They don't recognize or care about misspelled words. They're just trying to tell their story.)

For me, each major scene is a chapter, and for me those usually come in at around 1200-1300 words. Truth be told, when I've finished a chapter, I DO highlight the whole thing to find the word count of the chapter, and I add that to my reverse outline between the chapter number and the chapter notes. (Of course that number always changes a bit after I cycle back through the chapter.)

Of course, minor or transitional scenes are necessary too. Most often I can move those a few lines up or down to adjust the length of a chapter if necessary. (This is something I didn't realize I was doing until I wrote this post.)

That's it for me. But again, every writer is different. Whatever works for you is fine. By "works for you" I mean "enables you to put words on the page and finish a story." Plus, in my opinion, a writing process should be a living entity. It should evolve over the years. If it doesn't, maybe we need more practice.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "It All Counts" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/it-all-counts.html>.

See "Massive Move Day" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/massive-move-day/>. Scroll down to "Writing Update."

See “Maybe It’s Time to Admit People Just Like Books?” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/maybe-its-time-to-admit-people-just>.

See “With Virgin Galactic’s launch of Richard Branson in the books, all eyes are on Blue Origin and Jeff Bezos” at <https://www.space.com/blue-origin-jeff-bezos-launch-follows-virgin-galactic-richard-branson-flight>. I almost didn’t list this one. Anyone else tired of watching multi-billionaires play astronaut?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 970 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191
Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397
Day 3..... 3876 words. Total words to date..... 6273
Day 4..... 2559 words. Total words to date..... 8832
Day 5..... 1561 words. Total words to date..... 10393
Day 6..... 3007 words. Total words to date..... 13400
Day 7..... 2488 words. Total words to date..... 15888
Day 8..... 4307 words. Total words to date..... 20195

Total fiction words for July..... 38937
Total fiction words for the year..... 567616
Total nonfiction words for July... 9460
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 135250
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 702866

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Process](#)

The Journal: Unknowingly Trying?

July 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Unknowingly Trying?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“That’s the beauty of copyright. It’s divisible. ... Authors will be well served to think about protecting the rights in their characters when signing publishing contracts and licensing agreements.” IP Attorney Kathryn Goldman

“The two books stalled and stalled and stalled. Each time I thought I had found a way to tell the story that I wanted to tell, I would hit another wall—or the same wall. And usually, that was because *I was unknowingly trying to do something that was wrong for the story*” [emphasis added]. Octavia E. Butler

Topic: Unknowingly Trying?

The second quote above screams at me that even those who buy into the rewrite-edit-polish myths also know the simple truth of the conscious, critical mind vs. the creative mind. They just don’t recognize the difference even when it taps them on the shoulder.

I especially like this sentence: “I was unknowingly trying to do something that was wrong for the story.” That is a double-edged sword, and both edges miraculously cut in the same direction.

First, let me just get this out of the way: “unknowingly trying” is an interesting concept. Is it even possible to unknowingly try? I don’t think so.

Certainly if a writer succumbs to “trying” (conscious, critical mind) to figure out what happens next in a story and where the story’s going, and if the writer eventually commits that to paper, the characters’ story is already lost. At that point, it becomes the writer’s story, not the characters’ story, and the writer herself is trying to tell a story she isn’t living.

But if “unknowingly trying” means the writer’s creative subconscious is giving the writer the story, and the writer *decides* (again, critical mind) that what the creative subconscious was giving her was “wrong for the story,” then again, the characters’ story is lost.

The only answer to this dilemma is to trust the creative subconscious and the characters and not “try” anything. Just Write The Next Sentence. It really isn’t that difficult. Just get out of the way and let it flow. Just Write The Next Sentence, trust that it’s right, and then write the next

sentence. Lather, rinse, repeat. Or rather, trust the creative subconscious, trust the characters, repeat.

And it doesn't matter what you call this process.

* Dean Wesley Smith calls it Writing Into the Dark.

* A long-time writer friend calls it Writing Into the Unknown.

* Others call it "Discovery Writing" or "Writing Organically."

* I call it Recording the Story that the Characters (Not You) Are Living. I exist as a writer only because the characters don't have actual physical fingertips and keyboards.

* I have friends who, if pressed to call the process anything at all, might call it "Doug" or "George" or "Rebecca."

So it doesn't matter what you call it. All that matters is that you will be thrilled with the results if you do it.

Even if the "next sentence" you are given and write doesn't make sense to you at the time, trust it. Most often the characters know where they're going with something, even if you don't. (And frankly, if you're very fortunate, you will seldom know where the story's going).

But if you trust the characters and continue to "just write the next sentence," they will get you through to the end.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Vintage WD: How I Built Novels Out of Writer's Blocks" at <https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-fiction/vintage-wd-how-i-built-novels-out-of-writers-blocks>. Thanks to KC for the tip.

See "Forensic Terminology, Illustrated" at <https://leelofland.com/forensic-terminology-illustrated/>.

See "Are Fictional Characters Protected Under Copyright Law?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/are-fictional-characters-protected-under-copyright-law/>. Be sure to see PG's take.

See "The 2021 Inkers Con Author Conference starts in 3 days!" at <https://www.inkerscon.com/>. If you choose to attend, use the code D2D at checkout to save \$50 off the fee. Thanks to Sam for the tip. (This is not an endorsement. This is me saying something is available.)

See “How To *Easily* Publish On Apple Books” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/how-to-easily-publish-on-apple-books.html>. Shrug. Or just publish to D2D and let them do all the heavy lifting.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191
Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397
Day 3..... 3876 words. Total words to date..... 6273
Day 4..... 2559 words. Total words to date..... 8832
Day 5..... 1561 words. Total words to date..... 10393
Day 6..... 3007 words. Total words to date..... 13400
Day 7..... 2488 words. Total words to date..... 15888
Day 8..... 4307 words. Total words to date..... 20195
Day 9..... 3356 words. Total words to date..... 23551

Total fiction words for July..... 42293
Total fiction words for the year..... 570972
Total nonfiction words for July... 10040
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 135830
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 706802

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 11
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 64
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
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Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Trust](#), [WITD](#), [WITU](#)

The Journal: SpaceRons, and Author Angst

July 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The Novel Wrapped
- * Author Angst
- * SpaceRons
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“We have have been discussing how writers, editors, commentators, and academics have embraced rising calls for censorship and speech controls...” Jonathan Turley

Well, my short novel wrapped yesterday at a little over 28,000 words. I was fine with that. Honestly, this one felt more like a really long short story than a novella or novel. (grin)

That makes an even dozen novels this year so far, including novels 5-10 of the SF FOH series, two SF-westerns, the last novel in the regular Wes Crowley series, and the first three novels in the Wes Crowley Gap Series.

I should have a baker's dozen by the end of the month. I'll write at least one more novel in the gap series before I switch back to something else. All I know at present is that a man named Pinchot (the elder brother of a previously killed Ranger) will show up and things will happen.

Spell-checked the novel and sent it off to my first reader. My intention is to take off today and maybe the whole weekend. From past experience, I suspect that will only work out for today. (grin)

There's an article on "Author Angst" in today's "Of Interest." I read it. The only way to get past the "angst" the author of the article is talking about is to realize your opinion isn't the only opinion in the world. Even if you think what you've written is horrible, someone out there will love it. And a boatload more will like it.

Disclaimer: The only time I've experienced "author angst" is when a lightning storm hit and I hadn't backed up my half-finished novel and it disappeared. Now THAT'S angst. Pretty much anything else is just stuff. (grin)

SpaceRons

A few days ago I linked to an item in "Of Interest" about yet another billionaire going into space. To that link I added a question: "Anyone else tired of watching multi-billionaires play astronaut?" (grin) This morning the term SpaceRons sprang to mind to describe guys like that. And I mean "guys." There must be some female billionaires out there, but I see no women indulging in this silly, self-aggrandizing behavior yet.

Anyway, in response to that question, my like-minded friend J.G. sent me this in an email from Texas:

“At this time, 7.9 billion of us on Spaceship Earth are circling the sun at 66,000 mph. The entire outer surface of our ship (we’re not in a tiny pressurized cabin) is, for the most part, quite comfy while the ship wobbles and rotates doing a thousand mph, regulating seasons and regenerating itself.

“Our altitude? It’s relative to everything else in the universe so it’s immeasurable. Therefore, it’s hard to get excited when “space billionaires” ride a bottle rocket up 50 miles for a few minutes in nothing more than an infomercial.”

GREAT response to my stupid question. Thanks, J.G. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Turn On E-Mail in Teachable” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/turn-on-e-mail-in-teachable/>.

See “Getting Past Author Angst” at <https://authorspublish.com/getting-past-author-angst/>. I didn’t laugh at this, but I probably would have if I’d read it.

See “How to Use Vellum on a PC” at <https://self-publishing-academy.teachable.com/courses/180455/lectures/2712691>.

See “The Most Significant Choice Of Your Writing Career” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-most-significant-choice-of-your-writing-career/>.

See “Gallup Poll: Only 21 Percent of Americans Trust Newspapers” at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/07/15/gallup-poll-only-21-percent-of-americans-trust-newspapers/>. Dystopic story ideas, and more on censorship.

See “Selling and Distributing Your Book: What Self-Published Authors Need to Know” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/selling-and-distributing-your-book-what-self-published-authors-need-to-know/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Writing of WCGN3: The New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1191 words. Total words to date..... 1191

Day 2..... 1206 words. Total words to date..... 2397

Day 3..... 3876 words. Total words to date..... 6273
Day 4..... 2559 words. Total words to date..... 8832
Day 5..... 1561 words. Total words to date..... 10393
Day 6..... 3007 words. Total words to date..... 13400
Day 7..... 2488 words. Total words to date..... 15888
Day 8..... 4307 words. Total words to date..... 20195
Day 9..... 3356 words. Total words to date..... 23551
Day 10... 4615 words. Total words to date..... 28166 (done)

Total fiction words for July..... 46908
Total fiction words for the year..... 575587
Total nonfiction words for July... 10620
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 136410
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 711997

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [JonathanTurley.org](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Some Cover Design Fundamentals

July 17, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday
- * Topic: Some Cover Design Fundamentals
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday, which should have been a relaxing day off, was mostly a bust. We went to a couple of estate sales over in Sierra Vista. Neither had much that we were interested in, and the other attendees at one acted as if they'd never been around other humans before. Sheesh.

We shopped in the commissary too, and found some of what we needed but not all. And then I chose and ate the wrong thing for lunch, making myself ill. It was just one of those days. All in all, I hope today (and every day) will be better.

Topic: Some Cover Design Fundamentals

A writer friend and mentoring student wrote to me with questions about front cover design. Below is what I conveyed, much expanded.

Designed well, your front cover should work for both your ebook and your paper book, with one notable exception: you have to take into account trim size and bleed for your paper cover.

For that reason, for your paper cover the title and the author name have to be a little farther from the top, bottom and right side to make room for the knife. There are no such restrictions on the ebook cover, which is front cover only. For the rest of this, I'm talking only about the front cover.

Size

I've always created covers at a 2-3 ratio. Mine begin life at 6250 pixels wide by 9375 tall. When that's exported to a .jpg image, I resize it down to three sizes—2000 x 3000, 300 x 450, and 180 x 270—and name each “Title of the Work” plus the width, so “Title of the Work 2000” etc.

I upload the 2000 file to Amazon and D2D and wherever else. I use the 300 file for the specific book page on my site (for an example, see <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/in-the-cantina-at-noon/>) and the 180 file for the cover on the genre page (for an example, see <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/the-wes-crowley-series/>). (Clicking the smaller cover on the genre page takes the reader to the book page.)

On the actual cover...

Use cover art that conveys the genre and theme of the story. (Study bestselling covers. Duh.) Don't try to tell the story in the cover art.

Make your title and author name as large as possible, ideally say 1/4" below the top (or bottom) and 1/4" from either side, centered. Why make them large? So when Amazon (or whomever) puts up that tiny little thumbnail image, the potential reader can still see the title and author name. (If you study any covers from any bestsellers, you'll note you can see both even in thumbnail. Hint, hint.)

Ideally, the edges of the title and author name should line up vertically.

Note: The example I showed above is not that way because I also had to consider the cover art. The space to the top right was suitable for the fairly long title, so that's where I put it. (But note that the right side of the title still lines up with the right side of my name.) The left side of the

author name seems almost to drip down from the vertical light area in the upper left of the corner of the image.

The elements of the cover...

- 1, Cover art, of course.
2. Title.
3. Title tag. This can be as simple as “a Wes Crowley novel” or “an intense SF short story.”
4. Series tag (if you’re writing in a series). The series tag simply reads something like “Book 11 in the Wes Crowley saga.”
5. Author name.
6. Author tag. Again, I don’t have an author tag on the example cover. Mea culpa. The author tag typically follows the author name and reads something like “Author of the SF Journey Home series.” You get the idea.

Fonts

Fonts should almost always suit the genre and be bold. That doesn’t mean they can’t also be thin. Again, check them on a thumbnail-size image to be sure. (You can do this by simply decreasing the zoom size until you get the size you want to check. Note that adjusting the zoom will not resize the actual image.)

It’s generally a good idea to “pick” the font color from a color in the cover art. I do that on all my covers.

Certain font colors also have certain effects on the reader. For more on that (and all of this) I strongly recommend you spend a little time studying bestselling covers at Amazon, Kobo, wherever. You can even right click on an image, select “save as” from the dropdown, and save a cover to your desktop to study later.

Design Programs

The above will work for you no matter which design program you use to lay out your covers. I personally use and recommend Serif Affinity Publisher as a viable alternative to much higher-priced alternatives.

Hope this helps.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “What if You Were the Main Character” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/what-if-you-were-the-main-character.html>.

See “Audio Fatigue” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/audio-fatigue/>.

See “What’s the (plot) point?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/whats-the-plot-point/>. No, I am not advocating plotting. Ever. But you might get some story ideas from this, and for those of you who plot, well, there y’go.

See “Pulphouse Fiction Magazine Subscription Drive” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/pulphouse-fiction-magazine-subscription-drive/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for July..... 46908

Total fiction words for the year..... 575587

Total nonfiction words for July... 11480

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 137270

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 712857

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [cover design](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Well, Foey

July 18, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Well, Foey
- * Smashing Smashwords
- * Daniel Fellows
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

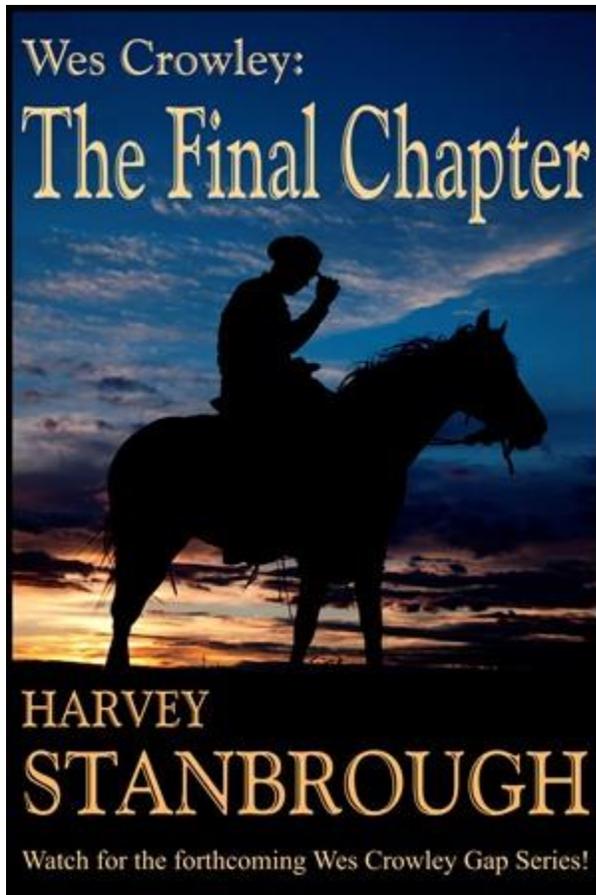
“Governments always claim noble purposes as the basis for limiting speech or other rights.”
Jonathan Turley

I started a new novel yesterday morning. As usual, a fairly slow start. And then around noon I realized, well, foey.

In talking with a friend, I came to know that I have five unpublished novels: *Terra 2*, the last novel in the FOH SF series (so far); *Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter*, the 12th and last novel in the original Wes Crowley saga; and the first three novels in the Wes Crowley Gap Series. Good grief!

I wrote those novels between late March or early April and a couple of days ago. So I decided to take some time to sort that out, design covers, put together promo docs and get those up so folks can find them. I guess being prolific has its drawbacks. (grin)

So at noon yesterday I stopped writing and started doing all that. Sigh.



By 2 p.m. I'd created that cover over there (I thought the guy tipping his hat was a nice touch for the last book in a series) and the promo doc and uploaded everything to D2D and Amazon. Each one took less than 5 minutes.

If you paid attention to yesterday's topic, you will notice this cover doesn't have a series tag (e.g., "Book 12 in the Wes Crowley saga). That's because I was feeling a bit churlish, and after all, the thing IS titled "The Last Chapter."

And I used the author tag space to talk about the gap series.

Smashing Smashwords

Then I decided since I'd uploaded all the other Crowley saga novels to Smashwords I'd upload this one too. A full HALF-HOUR later I finally had it uploaded to Smashwords. It is also the last one I'll ever upload to them.

Smashwords has long needed to change their user interface, and they finally did. But if it was possible, they actually made it MORE labor intensive and clunk than it was before. From here on out, I'll publicly advocate against using Smashwords as an aggregator. We owe Mark Coker a lot for getting this whole ball rolling, but loyalty only goes so far.

There are many more viable options, including D2D and StreetLib. Those, in my mind, are the best two. And if (when) D2D adds distribution to Google Books, they will stand alone at the top of the heap.

If you're a real go-getter, you can upload your files to Amazon, Apple, B&N Nook, Kobo and probably even some of the library services.

If you value your time more than the few extra cents you'll get on royalty, you can upload to Amazon and D2D (Draft2Digital.com) and be done with it in a matter of minutes. Woohoo!

I read a few entries in [Daniel Fellows' blog](#) this morning. You'll meet Daniel in a comment on Dean's site in "Of Interest." He reminds me of me about 7 years ago. He's setting challenges for himself, doggedly working through them, and blogging every day about it (at least so far). I wish him luck with his journey.

Today I will devote the day to creating four more covers and promo docs and uploading those to D2D and Amazon. I will not be uploading any of them to Smashwords.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "New Books As Stretch Rewards" (BUT see the first two comments) at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-books-as-stretch-rewards/#comments>.

See "Getting Published" at <https://www.stephenleather.com/getting-published/>. Thanks to Daniel Fellows for the tip. Very important post.

See "Colossal Failure: Alcohol Prohibition & The War On Drugs" at <http://dyingwords.net/legalization-is-to-only-solution-to-regulating-alcohol-and-drugs/>.

See "Water in the Basement" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/water-in-the-basement/>. A great story, but not about writing.

See "How to Write a Great Summary" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-write-a-great-summary/>. Any time I see anything from Grammarly, I immediately think "Grain of Salt." If you have enjoyed a good experience with Grammarly and care enough to email me privately, I will tell you why I think they're horrible.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 670 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965

Total fiction words for July.....	48873
Total fiction words for the year.....	577552
Total nonfiction words for July...	12150
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	137940
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	715492
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Smashwords](#), [StephenLeather.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Yesterday, a Topic, and Today

July 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Yesterday
- * Topic: You’ve Finished Your Novel. Now What?
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday, I worked on creating covers and promo docs for four novels. I’m rusty. I started creating covers around 7, then wrote the promo docs, and finally got them all uploaded to D2D and Amazon a little before noon. Then I decided to take the rest of the day off. Finally back to the novel today. Yay!

Topic: You’ve Finished Your Novel. Now What?

I actually saw the second item in “Of Interest” yesterday, but I waited until today to post it. I have too much to say on the topic.

This is another of those “different strokes” things. But let me elaborate.

First, I know this is a small thing, but I never actually type “The End” at the end of the story. It’s a psychological thing. I trust I’ve written the thing well enough that the reader can tell s/he’s reached the end of the story.

Anyway, back to the big stuff.

When I finish the “first draft” of my novels, I do not celebrate. To me, celebrating the “accomplishment” of finishing a novel is like a mechanic celebrating the accomplishment of having tuned a car engine, or a plumber celebrating the accomplishment of having unclogged a drain. It’s my job, right? So what’s to celebrate?

Truth be told, I actually mourn to varying degrees when a novel ends. Just as we humans mourn when a relationship or another human being who is close to us ends. Even if I know my friend or loved one has “gone to a better place,” I don’t celebrate the departure. Nor do I celebrate when my novel ends and goes to D2D.

But like most humans, I DO celebrate exciting beginnings: you know, births, new friendships, the first time you get to drive a Corvette or fly back-seat in an F-16. Or when I start the next novel.

As for that “first draft” stuff, you all know my take on that. Why not just do it to the best of your ability the first time through?

To my mind, finishing and then rewriting a novel makes as much sense as loading up a wheelbarrow full of rocks and dirt, moving it halfway (or less) to the destination, and dumping it so you can come back tomorrow and load it up again.

No thanks. I’m far too lazy for all that. I’d rather load it up once, move it to the destination, dump it and be done with it.

But I DO have to smooth-over the wheelbarrow load after I dump it, right? Of course. But at least the dirt and rock is in the target location so I can rake it smooth.

And with my just-finished novel, I run a spell-check (that’s my second draft), then send it to my first reader. When I get it back from him, I smooth-over whatever glitches he’s found (that’s my third draft), and then I’m done. Cover, promo doc, upload to D2D and Amazon.

Then I can take a day off (or not), then celebrate the *beginning* of the next one. (grin)

So far this year, I’ve written 12 novels. All 12 will be published and up for sale or presale and earning money before today is out.

That’s while those trapped in tradpub houses have written one novel (if they’re allowed two per year), or half a novel. Or while many other indie publishers have written two or three or maybe up to six novels.

I'm just not sure I can see a downside to what I'm doing. But I invite you to read the second item in "Of Interest," then make your own comparison. Which approach makes more sense to you? Whichever it is, do that.

Today—Well, there is one downside to what I'm doing. It's difficult for me to keep up.

This morning when I got to the Hovel I remembered I still had to update StoneThread Publishing. And when I got there, I had to add SIX novels, not five. I had to add the five I uploaded for publication yesterday plus *Rider Jones: The Marshal*. I'd forgotten about that one.

So I spent the first two hours of the day updating the genre pages and creating six new book pages. Fortunately I got up at a little after 3 this morning, so the Journal will still go out early (about 5:30). Then, finally, I can move over to the writing 'puter and get back to my version of normal.

I still need to move some of my book pages from my author site over to StoneThread Publishing, but I'll mess with that later. I'm jonesing to write. It's only been a day and a half, but it feels like I've been gone from the story for a week.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "What Authors Have Found in Substack" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-authors-have-found-in-substack/>. Of interest to me because I'm considering moving my blogs to substack. (Just FYI, not all subscriptions to substack blogs are paid.)

See "You Finished Your First Draft. Now What?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/you-finished-your-first-draft-now-what.html>. For anyone who needs it. I recommend this for study and comparison.

See "To Adverb or Not to Adverb?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/to-adverb-or-not-to-adverb.html>. For my money, never use an adverb in a dialogue tag. Elsewhere, use as necessary.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 890 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965

Total fiction words for July..... 48873

Total fiction words for the year..... 577552

Total nonfiction words for July... 13040

Total nonfiction words for the year.....	138830
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	716382
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Adverbs](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Rain

July 20, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Rain
- * I had a great deal of fun
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Story is more important than style.” David Farland

Another group of words that should be attached via sticky note to the edge of every writing computer everywhere. Right alongside “Story is more important than words.”

To use a builder analogy, if words are nails and the writing computer is the hammer, Story is the Taj Mahal.

“[L]ong before we dreamed of cities, I imagine we should probably have had a premonition, dreamed the sound of lonely saxophones on fire escapes.” David Searcy

Rain is a big deal for us in the desert southwest, and more precisely, in southeast Arizona. At tiny little St. David (roughly halfway between Benson and Tombstone on your map) we got 1.6" of rain two days ago and 1.1" of rain yesterday. For us, that is a deluge of biblical proportions.

I enjoy the meaty, deep-throated thunder and the overcast, much-cooler days and nights. In the Hovel with its 3-foot thick adobe walls, it's easy to imagine sitting in a bunker and listening to devastation outside.

I won't write it though, probably. My bunker has already made an appearance in several stories at at least a few novels.

I especially enjoy the quiet, feather-edged mental silence ushered in by the physical pattering of rain on the metal roof.

Unfortunately, we've been in a drought. Out in the desert (and even around the edges of my yard), away from a regular source of water, the mesquites and acacias and bird-of-paradise plants don't even have beans this year.

I had a great deal of fun reading and leaving comments at The Passive Voice and the KillZone blog this morning. An enjoyable way to ease into the day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Mournfulness of Cities" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-mournfulness-of-cities/>. Beautifully written.

See "Hot People Unlearn Fatphobia and Stories+Spells for the Dog Days – the latest from Bookshop.org" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/hot-people-unlearn-fatphobia-and-storiesspells-for-the-dog-days-the-latest-from-bookshop-org/>. Do yourself a favor and see PG's rational take.

See "A Lot of Stuff for Writers" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-lot-of-stuff-for-writers/>.

See "Exploding the 10,000-hour Myth" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/exploding-the-10000-hour-myth-2/>.

See "Turning Inspiration into Habit" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/turning-inspiration-into-habit/>.

See "Getting Great 'Word of Mouth' Advertising" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/getting-great-word-of-mouth-advertising/>.

See "Beyond Google: 6 Reliable Resources for Researching Your Novel" at <https://prowritingaid.com/art/1576/research-resources-for-authors.aspx>. Thanks to KC for the tip.

See “POP QUIZ ON ADJECTIVES” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/pop-quiz-on-adjectives.html>. As always, in service of Story, sometimes it’s important to get the word order wrong. Witness “I Sing the Body Electric” vs. the corrected “I sing the electric body.” Strictly for fun, of course.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 430 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965

Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589

Total fiction words for July..... 51497

Total fiction words for the year..... 580176

Total nonfiction words for July... 13470

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 139250

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 719436

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Rain](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Sigh. Mentorships

July 21, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Mentorships
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Mentorships

First, nothing I write below will affect my current mentoring relationship with my one student.

I've updated my [Mentorships](#) again, and for the final time. Now I'll just leave them up unless I decide to stop offering them at all.

The changes are extensive. I kept the topic descriptions, but cancelled the option to “buy” specific topics. I typically give much more than I'm asked, so offering them as individual topics was self-defeating where my time is concerned.

Now I share my knowledge, suited to the student's own fiction, only via three “big” mentorships: Becoming a Writer, Essential Craft, and Advanced Craft.

Becoming a Writer can be purchased only by itself.

Essential Craft and Advanced Craft may be purchased individually, or together at a small discount.

If you're waiting for me to produce one-size-fits-all video classes, you can stop waiting. I won't do that. The idea doesn't appeal to me. I want to actually mentor other fiction writers, and to me that means a one-on-one mentoring relationship. To me, it only makes sense to focus any professional discussions on the student's own work. I'll continue to offer the one-size-fits-all stuff here in the Journal as thoughts occur to me.

All of that said, the way I currently choose to teach is apparently not right for everyone. (Shock!) (grin)

To that end, if you've ever considered joining Dave Farland's APEX writing group, you can now watch a 5-minute video and listen to Dave talk about the group at <https://www.apex-writers.com/>.

Note: This is NOT an endorsement. I'm only passing along information.

Once you get there, you'll have to scroll down to find the screen and watch the video. APEX might be right for some of you.

There's also a link to a free YouTube video from Dave listed in today's “Of Interest.” If you sign up for Dave's newsletter, you'll get another free video every Tuesday.

Also, as always, Dean Wesley Smith offers one-size-fits-all lectures and workshops. You can find links [on his website](#).

Again, not an endorsement. Just passing along information in case it's what you need.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Dangers of Editing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-dangers-of-editing/>.

See “The Advanced Story Puzzle: How to Brainstorm and Outline a Bestseller (video)” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLSs-ZRTrGc>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 380 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965

Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589

Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413

Total fiction words for July..... 53321

Total fiction words for the year..... 582000

Total nonfiction words for July... 13850

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 139640

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 721640

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Mentorships](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Feelin’ a Little Snarky

July 22, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * I can't make this stuff up
- * The Perfect Society, the Perfect World
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Seriously, I can't make this stuff up:

“Jeff Bezos says flying in space changed his view of Earth.” from an article at Space.com

Now there's some news, eh? Sorry. Couldn't help myself.

That quote reminded me of line I heard one time in a presentation delivered by a meteorologist. He was talking about releasing weather balloons, and he actually said, “And as the balloon rises, it gets farther from the earth.” (grin)

Of course, nobody's immune to such inanities. In one official Marine Corps (FMF or Fleet Marine Force) manual titled *Lessons Learned from Operational Experience in the Republic of Vietnam*, one line read that as a result of a years-long study, leadership had determined that the chance of a helicopter being struck by groundfire increased as the helicopter's altitude decreased.

But back to another quote.

“‘[The earth's atmosphere is] this tiny little fragile thing, and as we move about the planet, we're damaging it,’ Bezos said, referring to greenhouse-gas pollution.” from the same article at Space.com

Ahem. No word as to whether he acknowledged that he had just launched himself into suborbital space atop rockets that added to the problem for absolutely no reason but so he could have a gander.

Finally, John Milton once wrote, “For neither man nor angel can discern Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks Invisible, except to God alone.”

A wonderfully poetic sentiment, but completely inane. For my money, discerning hypocrisy isn't that difficult, and it certainly isn't invisible except to those who choose not to look. Just watch what a person does vs. what s/he said, and always believe your eyes over your ears.

Again, nobody's immune. Any other inanities out there?

The Perfect Society, the Perfect World

In commenting on a post over at The Passive Voice (one that has nothing to do with writing, so it is not listed below), I hit upon a story idea. If you want it, you may have it:

Imagine a world in which everyone was issued a mask at birth and required to wear it 24/7/365 (or 6) nobody would have caught CovId when it was first released. Or the flu. Or tuberculosis. Or or or...

Perhaps in a future world, masks will be surgically attached at birth so people *finally* will be able to live forever. Duh! The perfect society! How has anyone not thought of this before? (As another commenter wrote, "This is public health, not individual liberty.")

Of course, with masks in place, from birth-zero people would have to receive sustenance via feeding tubes (a new normal) plugged into conveniently placed ports in the skin. But that's only a good thing too. Everyone could be placed on an approved diet. The entire nation would soon be rendered healthy.

And of course the government could attend to any unruly segments of it easily by simply changing the diet to alter the DNA or RNA (or include minute amounts of arsenic), etc.

Of course, not *everyone* would be on board with this new perfect world. So there y'go. Two story ideas for the price of one. Maybe even a whole series.

As a final note on all the hubub, in a poem I wrote about humans and Earth one time, the last two lines were "And the universe moseys past, hands in its pockets / wondering what the fuss is all about."

I have a copy of the National Geographic "Map of the Known Universe." On that map, drawn to scale, our nearest celestial neighbor is a scant 1/4" away. Yet if Earth and her infestation of humans suddenly disappeared, not only would nobody else care, they wouldn't even notice. I look at that map occasionally to ground myself in precisely how important I am in the overall scheme.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Other Half of the Secret" at <https://journal.neilgaiman.com/2021/07/the-other-half-of-secret.html>. Notice how long it takes to work through licensing issues, or rather, how slowly licensing takes place.

See "True Crime Thursday – You Got the Wrong Guy" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/true-crime-thursday-you-got-the-wrong-guy.html>. Interesting info on what to do at the end of this short post.

See "Nanoarchitected Materials: The New Kevlar" at <https://leelofland.com/nanoarchitected-materials-the-new-kevlar/>.

See “Disabled space enthusiasts can now apply for Zero Gravity space training” at <https://www.space.com/astroaccess-zero-g-flight-disabled-astronaut-training>. (In case anyone out there is disabled or other-abled and interested in applying.)

See “Jeff Bezos says...” at <https://www.space.com/jeff-bezos-blue-origin-spaceflight-earth-fragility>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 740 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965

Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589

Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413

Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573

Total fiction words for July..... 56481

Total fiction words for the year..... 585160

Total nonfiction words for July... 14590

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 140380

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 725540

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Critical Mind: A Diagnosis

July 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: Critical Mind: A Diagnosis
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Critical Mind

Diagnosis

I'm seemingly never immune to intrusions from the critical mind.

Yesterday, as I wrote in the current story, that niggling, quiet little voice (creative mind) kept telling me I was forcing things and going in the wrong direction. By "wrong" I mean I was telling the story per what "made sense next" instead of just giving the characters their head and writing what they gave me to write.

You would think by now I'd know better, and I do. But really, apart from having improved my skill set, the only advantage to having written so many stories is that I recognize a critical-mind intrusion more quickly than I used to.

And I did recognize the problem early — that I'd allowed my own stupid critical mind to intervene — but I kept on, thinking (yep, more critical mind) I could "fix" it.

Nope. Ain't gonna happen. Never happens. Any time you trust the critical mind to "correct" the creative voice, you're screwing up the story. It isn't your story. It's the characters' story, so who better than them to tell it?

Intercession

So after a few hundred all but forced words, I stopped for the day (actually, I muttered an expletive and pushed away from the desk, angry), and my wife and I went to Sierra Vista to visit antique shops and junk stores.

Other than an enjoyable lunch and a brief stint of grocery shopping at the commissary (since we were in the vicinity), we got nothing physical out of the trip. But at least I escaped the story for awhile. (The need to "escape" the story is another strong sign my critical voice had taken over).

When we got back, I went out to the Hovel for a cigar, but I stayed away from the writing computer even then.

Cause(s)

I made this novel "important," a favorite doorway of the critical mind. Why? Because it probably will be the last one before my hiatus, during which I expect to be encased in a mental fog while I shake the nicotine bug. Therefore it was important that I work through and finish it before I'm faced with entering that fog.

And I made this one super-important because, after all, any “last” novel might also be THE last novel. Eventually one of them will be. How do I know I’ll still want to write when I emerge from the fog? How do I know my characters will even still have stories to tell? Or that they’ll still welcome me to be their recorder?

Yeah, I know. Faith, belief in myself, the knowledge that I’ve done it before, etc. And all of that is good and important. But it isn’t set in concrete.

Treatment

So today I’ll scroll back to where my critical mind interceded, delete the few hundred words I wrote yesterday, and continue with the story the characters are actually living. I’ll forget the novel, immerse myself in the story again, and focus on writing the next sentence, then the next, until the characters lead me through to the end.

You know, practicing what I preach.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Why I Write (by George Orwell)” at <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/why-i-write/>. Another take for your leisurely perusal.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 550 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

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Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589

Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413

Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573

Total fiction words for July..... 56481

Total fiction words for the year..... 585160

Total nonfiction words for July... 15140

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 140930

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 726090

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [critical mind](#), [George Orwell](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Amberries

July 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Unlike Kristine Kathryn Rusch
- * Neil Gaiman
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Unlike Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Dean Wesley Smith is usually pretty good about backing away from political hot topics.

Kris tends to alienate (with extreme prejudice) anyone who doesn’t agree with her. By doing so she ends up only preaching to the choir. She’s a masterful business person and should be a valuable resource in that arena, but I personally had to step back from both her free blog and my paid subscription to her Patreon account. It was actually adversely affecting my health.

I just couldn’t handle never knowing when I was going to walk into Abrasion Canyon and be ambushed with blatant politics. I don’t like ambushes. Amberries grow on them. (We used to call fragmentation grenades amberries ’cause they often seemed to come from ambushes.)

And my stepping back was AFTER I emailed her privately to complain about the overtly political posts, and she wrote in her response that I was right and that “going forward” her blog would be a safe place for people of all political beliefs.

It isn’t. That was it for me. I don’t deal well with people who lie to me. I mark ’em off my list and go on about my life.

By comparison and as noted by others, Dean Wesley Smith can be a little abrasive. (He uses the words “stupid” and “idiot” a lot.) I suspect that comes from 9 years of dealing with beginning writers who constantly make bad decisions and wonder why he doesn’t too. That has to be aggravating when by and large, he’s only trying to help them. Still, that’s no excuse.

On the other hand, he never overtly talks politics, at least that I've seen. All his posts are about writing, publishing, or to promote something he's doing, like his current Kickstarter campaign. I usually don't link to a lot of his promotion posts unless I personally find them of value as a writer.

Today he wrote a post titled "Copyright And Value and Estates." Frankly, it's nothing earth-shaking, but it contains two good examples, one negative and one positive, and therefore (in my opinion) has value.

But for some reason he felt the need to drop a "mask bomb" in one place and used both "stupid" and "idiots" there and in another place. I suspect he did so because Kris is his wife. She recently wrote an entire, very annoying and hateful post (I happened upon it over at The Passive Voice) on the topic of forcing others to do what she thinks is best. And the old saying applies: If Mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy. Appeasement can be useful in marriage.

So if you can overlook or ignore the minor abrasiveness in his post (or if you agree with him), you can see the post at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/copyright-and-value-and-estates/>. If not, skip it. It isn't worth getting your blood pressure up.

However, in the first spot in "Of Interest" I've posted a much calmer blog post about wills and estates for writers. Neil Gaiman wrote this back in 2006, but it's still valid and displayed prominently in the sidebar of his website. Enjoy.

Tomorrow, I hope I can write a Journal entry that doesn't make me feel so much like I need to go scrub my hands with disinfectant.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Important. And pass it on..." at <https://journal.neilgaiman.com/2006/10/important-and-pass-it-on.html>.

See "Pay the writer" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/pay-the-writer/>. See PG's take.

See "Harlan Ellison: Pay the Writer (short video)" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj5IV23g-fE>. (From the film Dreams with Sharp Teeth. You can see the trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmfzKKM49uY>).

See "Close Encounters of the Initial Kind – Tips for When Characters Meet" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/close-encounters-of-the-initial-kind-tips-for-when-characters-meet/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 620 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589
Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413
Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573
Day 5..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 13077

Total fiction words for July..... 59985
Total fiction words for the year..... 588664
Total nonfiction words for July... 15760
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 141550
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 730214

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Harlan Ellison](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Pay the Writer](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Wills and Estates](#)

The Journal: From B&N and Reader Kudos

July 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * From Barnes & Noble Press
- * Reader Kudos
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Lack of courage sabotages more people than lack of ability. Don't beat yourself before you start.” Farnam Street blog

“I was successful in getting published that first time because I broke the rules and created something no one else was doing.” Reavis Wortham

“If you’re an author and not familiar with [Writer Beware](#), you probably should be.” The Passive Guy

From Barnes & Noble Press, in case you’re interested

FREE Marketing Webinars! Readers tend to like certain writing styles and knowing who you write like could help you find new fans. ScoreIt!™ from our marketing partner, Inkubate, identifies your reader audience by matching your writing traits to those of best-selling authors! Then, ScoreIt! provides insights as to how you can connect with these readers. Sign up for a free one-hour virtual webinar to learn more by clicking on one of the links below.

* Wednesday, August 4th at 12:00 noon EDT (register at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_4dwYatSIT0e6MXuJ2MANqw)

* Thursday, August 5th at 4:00 pm EDT (register at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_211GCeNmTnOiLyRpTbKPGQ)

No word on whether the webinars will be recorded for later viewing.

In the meantime, based on the theorem that two negatives form a positive, is a “virtual webinar” actually an “in-person event”? (grin) Or aren’t all webinars virtual?

Reader Kudos

A first-time Wes Crowley reader emailed me: “I’m getting addicted to Wes. The first chapter [of *Rise of a Warrior*] was scary. Your writing is mesmerizing.”

I’ll file that one under Stuff Writers Love to Hear.

Another reader wrote “Your hands are laughing. Did you not realize you have teflon skin? That is how you move so smoothly from one world to another, literally.”

Poetically said, but I wasn’t sure where to file that one, but Wes glanced sideways at me, a grin on his face. “I’m pretty sure that means you don’t give a damn.” Then he laughed.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Free Lecture: Everyday Activities to Improve Your Writing Process” at <https://authorspublish.com/free-author-lecture-everyday-activities-to-improve-your-writing-process-with-john-bemis-signup/>.

See “Inspired Every Morning” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/inspired-every-morning.html>.

See “I Did It My Way” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/i-did-it-my-way.html>. Break the rules, but learn them first so you can break them intelligently.

See “Bad Contract Alert: Bytedance’s Fictum Reading/Writing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bad-contract-alert-bytedances-fictum-reading-writing/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 360 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589
Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413
Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573
Day 5..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 13077
Day 6..... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 17781

Total fiction words for July..... 64689
Total fiction words for the year..... 593368
Total nonfiction words for July... 16120
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 141910
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 735278

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Reader Kudos](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Writing Routines

July 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Writing Ritual and Routine
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Writing Ritual and Routine

Over on TKZ today, Sue Coletta posted an article on writing ritual and routine. Interesting post, and she asked toward the end about others' rituals and routines.

I thought mine would make a good post over here on the Journal.

I rise at 2 or 3 a.m. (I take my 6-8 hours from a different part of the day), grab a mugga coffee, and walk about 150 feet to my Hovel, an adobe shack with 3-foot thick walls. That gives me the sense that I'm going to work. I go to work every day with (usually) one day off between novels.

Inside, I have my business computer with internet, etc. and my writing 'puter with only my fiction, a niftily little 13" that feels a lot like a typewriter.

On the business computer, I check emails, read TKZ et al, respond to my mentoring students. When necessary, I create covers and write sales copy. Finally I file my daily Journal for my subscribers, then I take a 10-minute break (or so) at the house and head back to the Hovel and to the writing 'puter.

When I sit down at the writing 'puter, my creative mind knows it's time to play. I read back over what I wrote the day before (usually 2000 to 5000 words), allowing myself to touch it here and there as I go. That gets me back in the story, and it allows me to catch up with the characters. (They're almost all younger than I am.) Then I sit back and wait for the fun to happen.

And my characters take over. After all, it's their story, not mine. I believe their story is going on even when I don't check in with them (just as my neighbors' story is going on even when I don't know what it is).

When I do check in, they're kind enough (and I'm lucky enough) that they allow me to run through the story with them trying to keep up. In return, they allow me to be their recorder. And off and on for the rest of the day I have a ton of fun. Best gig in the world.

So share YOUR writing ritual or routine with Sue over at TKZ and with us here at the Journal. What do you do to make (or let) the magic happen? Visit <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-writing-routines>, then scroll down and leave a comment.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How Amazon and Bookbub Will Help You Sell Books–FREE” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-amazon-and-bookbub-will-help-you-sell-books-free/>. Seriously, read this.

See “Writing Ritual and Routine” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/writing-ritual-and-routine.html>.

See “Jerry Jenkins’ FREE Writing Workshop: How I Write Bestselling Novels” at <https://leveragecreative.lpages.co/ynb-monday-webinar-registration/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589
Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413
Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573
Day 5..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 13077
Day 6..... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 17781
Day 7..... 2552 words. Total words to date..... 20333

Total fiction words for July..... 67241
Total fiction words for the year..... 595928
Total nonfiction words for July... 16570
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 142360
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 738280

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Routines](#)

The Journal: More on Ideas, and Introducing Tidbits

July 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * More on Ideas
- * Topic: Introducing Tidbits
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

More on Ideas

Excerpted from an email to a potential new mentoring student. In his email he told me he was deluged with story ideas:

I'm glad you're deluged with ideas. I get so tired of would-be writers asking "Where do you get ideas?" My typical response is "Where do you NOT get ideas?"

Just this morning during my walk, I passed through several swarms of flying ants. My imagination immediately went to an alien invasion.

A little later, as I was eating breakfast and looking out through the glass door, a blade of grass, moved by a slight breeze, was flashing signals at me. (There was a bit of dew on the grass.) But I "saw" someone who'd climbed to the top of a tree flashing signals with a mirror. Why? Where'd the mirror come from? Why did he feel the need to climb a tree to get his signal out? Who was he trying to signal? And why? Etc.

He also asked about writing in different genres, thereby spreading himself "too thin," and the effect that might have on readers:

Don't worry too much about genres or spreading thin. Just put everything out under your own name or a single pen name. Readers will find you. Most readers read more for the author's voice than for genre. If Nora Roberts suddenly started writing mysteries or thrillers, most of her romance genre readers would follow her in a heartbeat.

Topic: Introducing Tidbits

This is a new feature of the Journal, in which I intend to share more widely things I'm talking about with a new writer while we're in the pre-mentorship stage. I'll try to share a different idea or two here each day.

New writers tend to ask the best questions, at least from an instructor's standpoint. They tend to ask things I've long since taken for granted and might otherwise fail to mention.

But new writer or not, if you have a question you'd like me to answer, email me.

Don't write by the clock. If you do, you'll be looking at the clock a lot, and that is a conscious-mind activity. Never intentionally open your creative mind to critical mind input. And no, don't set a timer. Chances are, part of your mind will be waiting for the timer to ding. Forget all that. Just show up at your appointed time and write.

1. I have found a daily word-count goal most useful. If you want to write for an hour every day, I recommend a daily goal of 1000 words. (If that seems like a lot, it isn't. It's only 17 words per minute.) If you can set aside less time or more time per day, adjust that goal as necessary.

2. Keep track of your progress on a spreadsheet. You'll be amazed how fast the words add up. (I will gladly share my own spreadsheet as an example of one way to set it up. You only have to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.)

The idea is to write 1000 words per day. Sometimes you'll fall short, but that's all right. Tomorrow, the number resets to zero anyway. On other days, you'll be caught up in the story and write more than 1000 words. Again, that's fine because the next day the number resets to zero.

3. If you find that you're consistently hitting or surpassing your goal, raise it to 1500 or 2000 words per day.

Having a goal is important, but the actual goal itself doesn't matter. A goal is only a tool, something to strive for and make you reach, something that will drive you to the chair and force you to put your fingers on the keyboard and write.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Almost to Fourth Stretch Goal..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/almost-to-fourth-stretch-goal/>. Worth backing just to get teh stretch goal rewards.

See "Epic Novel Writing Workshop" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/epic-novel-writing-workshop/>.

See "Single-draft Shakespeare" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/single-draft-shakespeare/>. I can think of several more contemporary examples.

See "25 Books That Writers of Fiction Should Consider Reading" at <https://authorspublish.com/25-books-that-writers-of-fiction-should-consider-reading/>. I respectfully suggest unless you're an essayist, you should never buy *The Elements of Style*. Fiction isn't about correct grammar. Fiction is about Story. And I humbly recommend adding *Writing the Character-Driven Story* (by moi) in its place.

See "(Character) Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes" at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/character-ch-ch-ch-ch-changes>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 720 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589
Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413
Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573
Day 5..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 13077
Day 6..... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 17781
Day 7..... 2552 words. Total words to date..... 20333
Day 8..... 2234 words. Total words to date..... 22567

Total fiction words for July..... 69378
Total fiction words for the year..... 598154
Total nonfiction words for July... 17290
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 143080
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 741234

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
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Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Countercraft](#), [Daily Word-Count Goal](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Story Ideas](#), [the writing life](#), [Tidbits](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Three Kinds of Fiction Writers

July 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Three Kinds of Fiction Writers

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Being ‘good at things’ is not the point. Enjoying the ride is. [R]emember to take joy in the process.” PJ Parrish

“Given the growth in the audio market, I use far more dialogue tags than I used to. On the page, I believe they become invisible, and on audio, it keeps the listener on track.” John Gilstrap

Topic: Three Kinds of Fiction Writers

I used to say there are two kinds of fiction writers, but I’ve come to realize there are three. All writers that I’ve encountered fall into one of these three groups. I myself was not immune. I have belonged to all three at one time or another. But you can belong to whichever group you want. It’s your choice.

The writers in Group 1 are Writers or Authors (always capitalized in GroupThink) who don the Authorial Robes of Power and ascend into an Authorial Ivory Tower. I spent many wasted years in this group.

From that distant, elevated vantage point these writers outline and plot and plan. They write character sketches, carefully devise signaling character names, research and world-build.

Unfortunately, most of these (like 99% or more) spend weeks, months or years planning their masterpiece. (Guilty.) In the meantime, they most often can be found on writer boards and in critique groups, where their fears are supported by like-minded writers as they collectively exchange ancient myths about writing as if they are true and being uttered for the very first time.

But many (like 90% or more) never get past that point. Many of them never actually write.

The few who do eventually move on to actually committing the story to the page are certain it’s their story. They control every word their characters utter, every aspect of their characters’ lives, and every twist and turn of the story, per the character sketches they’ve carefully written and the plot they’ve carefully outlined.

They generally see writing as a Labor of Love, the key word being Labor, or as Work, as in something you don’t want to do but have to do. They generally tell all the right people that writing is a special kind of travail and utter drudgery, and they really wish they could do something else for a living. And they would, but for their Calling.

Unfortunately, even the 1 to 10% of these writers who actually write will never know the sheer joy of storytelling. They will remain safely locked away and protected from their fears as [Stage 1 and 2 writers](#).

Group 2 consist of writers who have come to understand the story will be better if they don't control every aspect of it. Some of them, still in need of at least the framework of a safety net, set up a shallow outline or use "signposts" or "touchstones" to guide them along the way. But by and large, they've come to trust their characters—to a degree.

Some actually break free (for example, during NaNoWriMo) and just commit the story to the page. These writers are most often heard to utter, "You can't edit a blank page."

But all is well. The safety net is still in place. Anything "wrong" with the story can still be corrected in critique and revision and rewriting and polishing, during which they don the Authorial Robes and ascend into the Tower to "correct" what their creative subconscious has wrought. Most never understand they're rewriting and polishing their original voice off the story. Like the writers in Group 1, these writers will remain locked-away as Stage 1 and 2 writers.

Group 3, of which I can proudly proclaim I am finally a member, have enjoyed an epiphany. They have come to understand it isn't their story at all. That it is the characters' story. After all, the characters, not the writer, are the ones who are actually living it.

These writers never don the Authorial Robes and never ascend into the Authorial Ivory Tower. Instead, each day, they roll off the parapet into the trenches and race through the story right along with the characters. As Bradbury once wrote, "Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations."

These writers have come to trust the characters to tell their story. These writers sit down, put their fingers on the keyboard, and simply write what happens, what the characters say and do.

Now and then, the characters say or do something that seems a little "off" to the writer, or the story starts to bog down. At those times, these writers take a breath and remember that the characters, not they, are living the story.

Then they put their fingers on the keyboard, excited to be reunited with their characters again, and write the next sentence. And the next, and the next. And soon the story is flowing again, the oddball event that happened earlier has been explained, and the characters lead them through to the end. Whereupon the writer takes an hour or a day to mourn, then begins the next story.

And those stages of a fiction writer? These writers are certain they don't know everything, that there is always more to learn. They turn their mind to learning from Stage 4 and 5 writers (to my mind, only Stephen King currently ranks Stage 5). Then they Practice what they learn by putting Story on the page, and the more they practice the more quickly they advance through Stages 1 – 4.

Disclaimer: This is far from being an exhaustive look at these groups. And of course, all of that being said, every writer is different. If you find you are successful (by your own definition of success) doing things in a given way, by all means continue to do them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Lots of Interesting Comments” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/lots-of-interesting-comments/>.

See “On Chandler, Dilettantes, Getting Paid, And The Loneliness Of The Long Distance Writer” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/on-chandler-dilettantes-getting-paid-and-the-loneliness-of-the-long-distance-writer.html>. A ton of good stuff in this one.

See “Find Your Topic, Not Your Voice” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/find-your-topic-not-your-voice/>. I didn’t list this for the OP but for PG’s take.

See “Writing Mastery 1” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6v1CP7GGYbU>. Get more vids every Tuesday by signing up for David Farland’s newsletter at <https://mystorydoctor.com>.

See “Writing To Be Heard” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/writing-to-be-heard.html>. A tone of good stuff in this one too.

See “10 More Naming Words Ending in -nym” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/10-more-naming-words-ending-in-nym/>.

See “The Art of Fiction” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-art-of-fiction/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589
Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413
Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573
Day 5..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 13077
Day 6..... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 17781
Day 7..... 2552 words. Total words to date..... 20333
Day 8..... 2234 words. Total words to date..... 22567
Day 9..... 2227 words. Total words to date..... 24794

Total fiction words for July..... 71702

Total fiction words for the year..... 60031

Total nonfiction words for July... 18370

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 144160

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 744541

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Three Kinds of Writers](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Just Write Something Already

July 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * An astute reader
- * On the cigar front
- * Tidbits
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

An astute reader caught an egregious typo in yesterday’s Journal (Thanks, Russ). In the Numbers section, I reported 60031 total words of fiction for the year. Let’s play with that for a moment.

That would mean on average in the first 208 days of 2021 I’ve written a rip-roaring 289 words per day.

Yeah, somehow I managed to omit a numeral. That number should have read 600381, which it now does. Which means on average, I’ve written 2889 words per day. That’s a little better but still not great. (grin)

As a matter of interest, if I’d hit my daily goal of 4000 words per day every day thus far, I’d have 832000 words right now. (grin) See why I often complain about being a slacker?

On the cigar front (for those few who might want an update) my supply is dwindling, and that is a good thing. As is always the case, I decided to make this major change when the discomfort of continuing finally outweighed the discomfort of not continuing.

I will miss the actual cigars, the act of buying and receiving them, and the limited social aspect of them. I will miss enjoying a good cigar as a like-minded friend enjoys his and we slather philosophy across a broad range of topics. But I will not miss the taste of them or the habit of them or the way I feel physically after I smoke one. I won't miss the swollen ankles and the elevated blood pressure and the limits all of that places on me.

Fortunately, leaving them behind will not require luck. It will require only stubbornness, and I have an ample supply of that.

Tidbits

I've heard many beginning writers complain that they might harm their "career" if they

- * write in different genres
- * write both short stories and novels
- * write too short or too long
- * write about certain themes or subjects
- * write (or don't write) certain character types
- * et cetera et cetera ad nauseam.

And I realized all of these writers have two things in common.

One, apparently they believe they will harm their career if they write. At all.

Two, what career?

My advice to those folks? Get over yourself. Just write something already.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "True Crime Thursday – Easter Bunny Didn't Bring THESE Eggs" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/true-crime-thursday-easter-bunny-didnt-bring-these-eggs.html>. I just had a feeling someone out there needed to see this. Maybe for your criminal mastermind?

See "Most people prefer reading paper books over digital books on tablets, phones" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/most-people-prefer-reading-paper-books-over-digital-books-on-tablets-phones/>. Or, as one commenter wrote, "A survey by paper book publishers says paper books best, and much better than market 70% dominated by bloke with private space programme."

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
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Day 8..... 2234 words. Total words to date..... 22567
Day 9..... 2227 words. Total words to date..... 24794
Day 10... 3968 words. Total words to date..... 28762

Total fiction words for July..... 75670
Total fiction words for the year..... 604349
Total nonfiction words for July... 18830
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 144620
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 748969

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Tidbits](#)

The Journal: Desperately Avoiding the Adverb

July 30, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Desperately Avoiding the Adverb
- * On Tidbits
- * Marketing Tidbit
- * Of Interest

* The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“On a different subject, “... head shaking with rue” sounded odd. Is this just me or is the author desperately avoiding the adverb?” Mike Hall, in a comment on a post on The Passive Voice

Topic: Desperately Avoiding the Adverb

For many years, I’ve kept a running list of verbs writers use in dialogue tags to replace “said” and thereby, they reason, to “spiff up” the tag and make it more interesting to the reader.

The fact is, “said” is the only verb you need to carry dialogue. “Asked” isn’t really necessary because there’s a question mark. “Exclaimed,” likewise.

The thing is, dialogue tags should NOT be interesting. A dialogue tag that draws attention to itself pulls the reader’s attention away from the story.

In other words, a dialogue tag SHOULD be short, quick and boring so readers can all but skip over it. So “he said” or “she said” or “John (or Sally) said” really is as good as it gets.

The dialogue tag’s only purpose is to let the reader know, almost subliminally, which character is talking. The dialogue tag is not part of the story. It is an aside to help guide the reader through the story.

Now, to add a little tone without going to an all-out brief descriptive narrative that is NOT attached with a comma to the dialogue, you can also go with “mumbled” or “muttered” or “whispered” or “screamed” or “yelled.” You get the idea.

But notice that “mumbled” or “muttered” or “whispered” or “screamed” or “yelled” (like “said”) are all verbs that indicate an actual form of utterance. That’s the key.

When I read a line like “‘How much do you love me?’ she sang,” it makes me cringe. “Sang” is not a form of utterance. And if that’s followed a short time later by a second instance, something like, “‘Let’s get together soon,’ he demanded,” I’ll usually put the book down and stop trying to struggle through it.

Any dialogue tag should consist only of a noun or pronoun followed by a verb that indicates a form of utterance.

Likewise, it’s a great policy to NEVER use an adverb in a dialogue tag. That’s one of the very few absolute rules of writing that I personally adhere to and recommend.

If you ever write, “‘But you don’t love me, not really,’ she said sadly” you need to drop “sadly” and let the readers get that she’s sad on their own. Or maybe let them see that she’s sad in a brief descriptive narrative:

“Sally wiped a tear from one cheek. ‘But you don’t love me, not really.’”

So seriously, omit adverbs from dialogue tags. For that matter, use as few dialogue tags as necessary too. Brief descriptive narratives are a great substitute because 1) they stand alone, 2) they convey to the reader which character is speaking, and 3) they allow the reader to “see” or otherwise sense a bit of the scene.

But many writers, guided by misspoken comments like “Kill all adverbs” or “The way to Hell is paved with adverbs” from famous writers, tend to omit ALL adverbs period.

And that’s just silly.

Adverbs, like adjectives, are nodifiers, and sometimes modifiers are necessary. Generally speaking, adjectives modify nouns and adverbs modify verbs (but seriously, don’t use them in dialogue tags).

This all-or-nothing stance by writers creates excerpts of the kind Mr. Hall commented on in the Quote of the Day above.

Here’s the excerpted full sentence, in which author Megan Abbott was obviously striving (conscious mind) to make sense while intentionally avoiding (conscious mind) the use of adverbs:

“Even their names set them apart, sounding elegant and continental even though their father was an electrician and a living-room drunk and their mother had grown up eating mayonnaise sandwiches every meal, as she always told her daughters, head shaking with rue.”

Awkward narrative? Yes. And not because it’s a very long sentence (though it is not a run-on sentence). It is awkward because the phrase “head shaking with rue” calls attention to itself. Nobody would say that. I used to teach English as a Second Language classes, and even non-native English speakers would say that.

More likely people would say, “shaking her head ruefully” (or just “shaking her head” and let the reader pick up on the meaning).

Your number one job as a storyteller is to keep the reader engaged and reading. Any awkward construction you force on the story will risk causing the reader to stop reading, and in that moment, you will have failed in your job.

So I’m just sayin’, be careful out there, but don’t “desperately avoid” any part of speech. Don’t be so careful that you run readers off.

About Tidbits

I was silly to think I could keep Tidbits going with only my responses to questions from new writers. Because frankly, very few new writers ask me questions.

That being said, if you are a new writer, and if you want to ask me a question, I welcome that. If I ever use my response to your question in Tidbits, I will not divulge your name. I share only for the benefit of other writers.

In the meantime, Tidbits will morph (has morphed) into short comments on writing, marketing and publishing that I think you might find of interest. Here's the first.

Marketing Tidbit

To read about the "A+ marketing facility" at Amazon, by use of which you can "build up an extended listing" on a book page by using "different 'modules,'" see https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/GHL7P99B7AA543CN. (Thanks to Writing Observer, another commenter on the post at The Passive Voice.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing for Lonely Readers" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-for-lonely-readers/>.

See "The Things We Hid" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-things-we-hid/>. This is very long. I suggest skipping straight to PG's (also long) take. And the comments.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 990 words

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Day 7..... 2552 words. Total words to date..... 20333
Day 8..... 2234 words. Total words to date..... 22567
Day 9..... 2227 words. Total words to date..... 24794
Day 10... 3968 words. Total words to date..... 28762
Day 11... 4779 words. Total words to date..... 33541

Total fiction words for July..... 80449
Total fiction words for the year..... 609128
Total nonfiction words for July... 19820
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 145610
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 754738

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	12
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Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Adverbs](#), [David Farland](#), [Dialogue Tags](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Why I Post Every Day

July 31, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Why I Post Every Day
- * The Novel
- * An interesting newsletter
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It is as if these authors were in a dark prison cell, pulled up by the bars to look out the window at Armageddon, and fail to look behind them to see that their cell door is open. ... It’s really hard to feel pity for those who willfully disregard changing reality.” Alicia Butcher Ehrhardt on tradpubbed authors who can’t believe indie publishing works

“[T]hese companies are now dispensing with any pretense in actively barring criticism of government policies and viewpoints.” Jonathan Turley on censorship

“And when memory failed and written records were falsified—when that happened, the claim of the Party to have improved the conditions of human life had got to be accepted, because there did not exist, and never again could exist, any standard against which it could be tested.” George Orwell in 1984

Why I Post Every Day

One reader asked why I post (almost) every day. The quick answer is because I want to share what I've learned with other writers.

I'm aware that some readers read my posts every day, while others catch up every few days or once a week or whatever. That's fine. But the extended reason I post almost every day is because I generally write whatever occurs to me, and I generally write it when it occurs.

For example, I'm actually writing this yesterday, after I've transferred most of yesterday's Journal post to the back end of the website and before I've added the updated Numbers section and clicked Publish to make it go "live." In the interim, I skipped back over here to write this so I won't forget it.

If I chose to post to the Journal only once a week, you'd miss a lot of potentially useful information. Because that's how my mind works. Once I've had a thought and let it go, either into the Journal or off into the nethersphere, it's gone.

Actually, yesterday is a great example. I almost didn't post yesterday because really I had nothing to say. Nothing had come to mind.

Then I read the comments on the post over at The Passive Voice. Mr. Hall's comment ([see yesterday's Quote of the Day](#)) caught and engaged my attention, and I was off and running with the bit on adverbs.

So if you read the Journal and find something useful to your practice in writing (or to your marketing or publishing efforts) good. If not, there's (almost) always tomorrow.

The novel feels like it's going to wrap in the next day or two. Which is a good thing. I should have it back from my first reader and up for pre-publication sale before I run out of cigars and enter the Eerie Fog Zone. (grin)

Once I enter that zone, I might or might not continue to post (almost) every day. I honestly don't know what will happen.

I do know I'll "desmoke" the Hovel (necessary), and I do know I'll still come to work every day (or most days). Again, that's necessary if only to get accustomed to a personal new normal of being in the Hovel without cigars.

I also know I'll still post the Journal if I have anything to say that I think you might find useful. And I know I'll still sit at my writing 'puter at least once a day and see whether any of my characters want to allow me to check in with them. During that time too, I plan to set my Royal typewriter on my writing desk and see what happens.

Beyond those things, which I can control, I have no clue what will happen while I'm in that zone.

I do NOT plan to bore you with “Ooh, I feel like this or that” as a result of being in that zone. Though if you’re in the midst of stopping a long-ingrained habit or addiction yourself and you’d LIKE to know about my experience (like maybe what to expect), email me and we’ll correspond about it privately.

Either way, I’ll talk with you again soon.

You can read an interesting newsletter from aggregator StreetLib by [Clicking Here](#).

Although the newsletter is personalized to me, it contains a lot of goodies. To get your own newsletter subscription (they don’t come very often) visit <https://streetlib.com>.

Of Interest

See “State of the Author July 2021 edition, ending an era” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/state-of-the-author-july-2021-edition-ending-an-era/>. If you read nothing else today, read this, including PG’s take and the comments.

See “liebjabberings” at <https://liebjabberings.wordpress.com/>. A site that is new to me. Worth checking out.

See “The Shadow State: Twitter Suspends Commentator for Criticizing Vaccine Policies” at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/07/30/the-shadow-state-twitter-suspends-commentator-for-criticizing-vaccine-policies/>. Censorship matters.

See “Resonance and The Reader’s Journey” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/07/resonance-and-the-readers-journey.html>. Meh. Readers want to be entertained. Whether they want to escape or re-invision their life while doing so doesn’t matter.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820 words

Writing of WCGN 4: William J. Pinchot (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
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Day 8..... 2234 words. Total words to date..... 22567
Day 9..... 2227 words. Total words to date..... 24794
Day 10... 3968 words. Total words to date..... 28762

Day 11... 4779 words. Total words to date..... 33541
Day 12... 3875 words. Total words to date..... 37416

Total fiction words for July..... 84324
Total fiction words for the year..... 613003
Total nonfiction words for July... 20640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 146430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 759433

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Alicia Butcher Ehrhardt](#), [Jonathan Turley](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [liebjabberings](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: New Releases

August 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * New Releases
- * Of all the blogs I visit and read
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[Y]our words are how you see yourself, your actions are how other people see you.” Farnam Street blog

“Talent sets the floor, character sets the ceiling.” Bill Belichick

“If you’re too busy to read the fine print and figure out what it means, don’t enter the contest.”
The Passive Voice

New Releases

Well, *Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter* went live yesterday. You can see it at <https://books2read.com/u/3Lw9le>. That’s the 12th and final book in the Wes Crowley Saga, a story that spans roughly 50 years. I’m particularly fond of the cover, in which a silhouetted Wes is tipping his hat against a western sunset. (grin)

Of course I’m still writing the Wes Crowley Gap Series. In the original saga, there’s about a 15-year gap between Books 3 and 4, and Wes wanted to explore that gap. Happily, he invited me along to record his story. And I’m glad he did. So far, it’s been high action, high adventure, and a ton of fun.

Three novels in that one so far, and I’ll finish the fourth in the next day or two. When I come out of my mental fog, I’ll probably dive back into that series. Then again, I might write in one of my other series. I have three series in SF, plus Detective PI, Action-Adventure, and one or two others I can’t bring to mind right now.

In the meantime, again I’m back to releasing a novel every two weeks. All are available for pre-publication sale, and each provides a few hours of sheer entertainment for a lot less than the cost of a movie ticket. The schedule of releases looks like this:

Terra 2 (Book 10, FOH series), August 15

Assignment: Brownsville (Gap series), August 30

The Comancheros (Gap series), September 15

In the New Mexico Territory (Gap series), September 30

Return to the New Mexico Territory (Gap series), October 15

Of all the blogs I visit and read (and share in “Of Interest”) only Dean Wesley Smith’s blog has been invaluable, indispensable, to me as a writer. Think about that.

In “Of Interest” today, Dean marks the occasion of his ninth year of blogging every day.

From other sources, I get a spark of an idea here, a worthwhile tip there. Now and then. Maybe. But without Dean’s blog, I literally wouldn’t be where I am today as a fiction writer. Or as a blogger, come to think of it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Nine Years” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/nine-years/>.

See “The How and Why of Epigraphs” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/how-and-why-of-epigraphs.html>.

See “Renowned Toxicologist Dr. M. Fredric Rieders Joins 2021 MurderCon Lineup!” at <https://leelofland.com/renowned-toxicologist-dr-m-fredric-rieders-joins-2021-murdercon-lineup/>.

See “Fatal Flaw — What Really Caused The Titanic Tragedy” at <http://dyingwords.net/fatal-flaw-what-really-caused-the-titanic-tragedy/>.

See “Adult Child and Elderly Parent” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/adult-child-and-elderly-parent/>. Interesting. And as an elderly parent of adult children, I tend always to take the elderly parent’s “side” because that character actually knows what the other characters can only assume.

See “How Bad Contest Entry Rules Can Be Mitigated: The Medium Writer’s Challenge” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-bad-contest-entry-rules-can-be-mitigated-the-medium-writers-challenge/>.

See “Twitter Suspends Science Writer After He Posts Results Of Pfizer Clinical Test” at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/07/31/twitter-suspends-science-writer-after-he-posts-results-of-pfizer-clinical-test/>. More censorship.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820 words

Writing of WCGN 4: Return to the New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589
Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413
Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573
Day 5..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 13077
Day 6..... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 17781
Day 7..... 2552 words. Total words to date..... 20333
Day 8..... 2234 words. Total words to date..... 22567
Day 9..... 2227 words. Total words to date..... 24794
Day 10... 3968 words. Total words to date..... 28762
Day 11... 4779 words. Total words to date..... 33541
Day 12... 3875 words. Total words to date..... 37416
Day 13... 3346 words. Total words to date..... 40762

Total fiction words for July..... 87670

Total fiction words for the year..... 616349

Total nonfiction words for July... 20640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 146430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 762779

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [DyingWords.net](#), [JonathanTurley.org](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The novel will wrap today

August 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The novel will wrap today
- * Talking numbers
- * It doesn't happen
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I view my life as a novel in progress. As I awoke this morning, I anxiously turned the 27,373rd page to see what happens next.” Lars Bagman

I love this quote. In my mind, it's absolutely true. That's why I often refer to the difference between “my life/story” vs. “my characters' life/story.”

I assume the characters' life (and story) is ongoing even when I'm not checking in on them. So when it's time again, I just open a door on that world, roll off the parapet into the trenches of their story, and run through the story with them for awhile. I repay them by acting as their stenographer, writing down what happens. Great fun!

“An author who gives a manager or publisher any rights in his work except those immediately and specifically required for its publication or performance is for business purposes an imbecile.”
George Bernard Shaw (via The Passive Voice)

Well, it’s been a good run, but I expect the novel will wrap today. The end is in sight. It might have wrapped yesterday, but I’d have had to put about 7000 words total on the page to make that happen, and I’m not up to par with that nonsense yet. (grin)

When I stopped yesterday, I had enough steam left to write maybe another 2000 words or so. But I think I’m between 3000 and 4000 words from the end, so if I’d done that, today would have been a very short day with only maybe a thousand words left to write. I didn’t want to do that.

Given the energy boost that should result from kicking my addiction, I hope to raise my daily goal soon. But we’ll see.

Talking numbers

To hit my annual goal this year, I needed to write 83,334 words of fiction per month on average.

In the first 7 months of the year, I wrote 616349 words of fiction, or an average of 88048 words per month. So I’m ahead of the curve but only barely.

Note that I did that by ignoring the annual and monthly goal. Instead I worked toward a daily word-count goal each day. As Dean Wesley Smith says, “Numbers add up. You only have to let them.”

To exactly hit 1,000,000 words of fiction on the year, I need to write another 383651 words by December 31. Or a monthly average (for the next 5 months) of 76730 words per month. Even with the (maybe) interruption caused by kicking my addiction and the (maybe) ensuing fog, I think I can do that. I guess we’ll see. Aren’t numbers fun? (grin)

Note: I would easily make this a “pulp speed” year if I include both the Journal AND my fiction, as my friend Dean does. In that realm, I have 762779 total words for a monthly average of 108968 per month. But my goal is to make a million words of just fiction. After all, that’s where the challenge is. And for me, that’s where the fun is.

It doesn’t happen very often that I have absolutely nothing new for the “Of Interest” section, but it happened today. Dean’s post wasn’t about writing, the Kill Zone blog hadn’t posted yet as of this writing, and The Passive Voice was all quotes.

So I’m relisting the post from TKZ, complete with the Comments link, because there are some really great comments on that post.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The How and Why of Epigraphs” (and comments) at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/how-and-why-of-epigraphs.html#comments>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 590 words

Writing of WCGN 4: Return to the New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589
Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413
Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573
Day 5..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 13077
Day 6..... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 17781
Day 7..... 2552 words. Total words to date..... 20333
Day 8..... 2234 words. Total words to date..... 22567
Day 9..... 2227 words. Total words to date..... 24794
Day 10... 3968 words. Total words to date..... 28762
Day 11... 4779 words. Total words to date..... 33541
Day 12... 3875 words. Total words to date..... 37416
Day 13... 3346 words. Total words to date..... 40762
Day 14... 3572 words. Total words to date..... 44334

Total fiction words for August..... 3572
Total fiction words for the year..... 619921
Total nonfiction words for August... 1150
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 147580
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 767501

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Novel Wrapped

August 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The novel wrapped
- * Keeping Track
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The novel wrapped yesterday. Weird. I put pressure on myself just before the end of this novel.

I wanted to finish it yesterday, and I allowed that desire to translate into pressure to finish it. Pressure is never a good thing. As a result, I wrote three separate endings, only one of which I completed. (The right one, of course.)

So when the smoke cleared (literally) I had written 1865 words that did not make it into the final novel. Oh well. It's done.

Then I ran a spell check and shipped it off to my first reader. Now I begin my brief exile. I'll be here when I can, but my posts might be very short for awhile.

Keeping Track

For those of you who were intrigued by the thought (yesterday) of each day of your life being a page in the novel of your life, a friend came up with an easy way to keep track. (Thanks, Russ.)

Russ writes, "If you would like to be able to do the same (and you have Microsoft Excel), simply enter the following formula in a cell of the spreadsheet: =DAYS(NOW(),"DD-MMM-YYYY"). Then replace the DD-MMM-YYYY with the date that was the day *before* your birthdate if you want the count to include both the day on which you were born and the current date."

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "For Love or Money?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/for-love-or-money.html>.

See "The Shiver Test" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/the-shiver-test/>. As always, for consumption by the learning (conscious) mind. Absorb what you need, then apply it through your creative subconscious as you write.

See "39 Themed Calls for Submissions" at <https://authorspublish.com/39-themed-submissions-calls-for-august-2021/>.

See “Writing Prompt Generator” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-prompt-generator/>.

See “Instagram for Dummies” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/instagram-for-dummies.html>.

See “Dont over-explain ‘default’ objects and gestures” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/dont-over-explain-default-objects-and-gestures/>.

See “Hard times are coming” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/hard-times-are-coming/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 310 words

Writing of WCGN 4: Return to the New Mexico Territory (novel)

Day 1..... 1965 words. Total words to date..... 1965
Day 2..... 2624 words. Total words to date..... 4589
Day 3..... 1824 words. Total words to date..... 6413
Day 4..... 3160 words. Total words to date..... 9573
Day 5..... 3504 words. Total words to date..... 13077
Day 6..... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 17781
Day 7..... 2552 words. Total words to date..... 20333
Day 8..... 2234 words. Total words to date..... 22567
Day 9..... 2227 words. Total words to date..... 24794
Day 10... 3968 words. Total words to date..... 28762
Day 11... 4779 words. Total words to date..... 33541
Day 12... 3875 words. Total words to date..... 37416
Day 13... 3346 words. Total words to date..... 40762
Day 14... 3572 words. Total words to date..... 44334
Day 15... 3361 words. Total words to date..... 47695 (done)

Total fiction words for August..... 6933
Total fiction words for the year..... 623282
Total nonfiction words for August... 1460
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 147890
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 771172

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Anthony Trollope and Challenges

August 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Anthony Trollope
- * Challenges
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Anthony Trollope

A couple of years ago I posted a link to a video about Anthony Trollope. The title of the video is “How to Be Prolific.” I posted the link in today's “Of Interest” again.

What brought this up is a comment someone made in response to a comment I made about 2 years ago. His comment (today) was “Yeah, but Trollope was using pen & paper for all of it. That'd slow you down!”

In the first place, he obviously missed what I was saying, that the old pulp writers, many of whom wrote on pen and paper or typewriters, were much faster than I.

So I replied, in part, “Nope. Many of the old pulp writers wrote far more than I and did so with pen and paper or typewriters. But the point is, whether using pen and paper, typewriter or computer, what slows one down is ‘constructing’ a story rather than just listening to (and recording) the story the characters themselves are living.”

Another commenter (sliver tain, a year ago) wrote, “It's surprisingly easy to write shit.” Yes, some commenters are just that gracious.

But that old myth again, that anything written “fast” must be bad. So again I responded: “What an incredibly juvenile statement. I'll let my work speak for itself. How about you? Where can I find your books and stories?”

That's what I wrote. But I have to admit, what I wanted to write is the following:

“First, forgive me. I admit, I don’t deal well with stupid people and those who believe the best use of their day is to spout garbage in the hope of running someone else down. So as long as you’ve gotten my attention, allow me to correct you as gently as possible. But I’ll retain your graphic representation of “poor writing” so I can be sure you’ll understand. Okay? Is your tiny brain ready? Here goes:

“No, it isn’t easy at all to write shit. In fact, it’s incredibly difficult to write shit. Instead of simply letting the story happen, you have to plot and plan and edit and devise and scheme and trade atta-boys and other “critiques” until your story is scrubbed and polished and Just Simply Peachy Perfect. You know, just like all the other finely polished stones in the publisher’s inbox. And oh, Heaven knows just like You yourself are, and you *know* that’s true ’cause your mommy said so.

“Yeah, good luck to you with that. Me? I trust my characters to convey to me the story that they, not I, are living. Like King says, I’m only their stenographer. But what do I know? I’ve only written 66 novels, 8 novellas, over 200 short stories (and around 35 collections) and 15 or so nonfiction books, all of which are selling well. That must compare very poorly with your own achievements. Which are?

“But I’m being unfair. You’re probably still making your way through the “talking about writing” and “thinking about writing” and “taking classes about writing” and “teaching others about writing” stages rather than actually, you know, Writing Anything At All. So you get yourself on into the plotting and planning and devising and critiquing and polishing stage just as quick as you can, you superbly precious creature, because sure as shootin’ the world is Just Waiting With Bated Breath to read your singular masterpiece.”

Don’t worry. I’m just having fun. (grin)

Challenges

All of that reminded me I’m feeling a little contentious right now. I’m also very much in a “put-up or shut-up” kind of mood, and I love challenges.

So instead of lying around whining and waiting for the fog to clear and the stars to line up right and for myself to “feel” better, I’m going to start Novel 5 of the Gap series today and see what happens. Because what’s important is THAT I write, not what I write or how much time I take off or other things I do.

It’s easy to push myself when I’m standing on both feet, energized, leaning forward and ready to run. It’s a different matter when I’m mentally lying face down in mud that somehow I can at least (but just) breathe through.

I look forward to seeing what happens. This no-crutch living is a hoot.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Silver Age of Essays” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-silver-age-of-essays/>.
Any essayists out there?

See “The infantilization of Western culture” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-infantilization-of-western-culture/>.

See “How to be Prolific – Anthony Trollope” at <https://youtu.be/TdbuA6lByBE>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 2210

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 148640

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 771922

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 12

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 65

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Despite the Bluster

August 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Despite the bluster
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Well, despite all the bluster, I didn't start the next Gap novel yesterday. Probably today, maybe tomorrow or the next day. No biggie. It'll come when it comes, and I've been doing this long enough not to be worried about it.

I'd rather not get too far behind the curve ball for the 80,000 words I need per month for the rest of the year to attain my 'big' goal, but if I do, I do. I've missed that particular goal before. The world didn't end or anything.

I started a short story yesterday inspired by a painting hanging in the office. It's titled "The Brown Door." I wrote only about 700 words. I won't count them at all unless the story takes off. If it does I'll count the words then, and if it doesn't I won't.

I *did* check in on Wes, but he didn't want to talk. I figure that's all right. Even young spring roosters like him need to rest now and then, especially after riding through 5 novels in 5 months, vanquishing various and sundry bad guys and annoying normal folks.

So as I said, when Wes is ready again, or when any character wants to come out to play, I'll be ready too. In the meantime, whatever happens is fine. Shrug.

For now I just have to focus on leaving the bad stuff behind. I'll be back when I'm a writer again (i.e., when I've put some new words on the page in a fiction).

The good news is I've written 13 novels in the first 7 months of this year. That puts me on track for 22 novels this year total. That would be really cool.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Dealing with Writer's Block" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/dealing-with-writers-block/>. I suppose this might be valid for some. Writer's block doesn't actually exist unless you allow it, but what Farland is talking about here is a good way to assess one possible cause of feeling "stuck" in your story.

See "The Secret Ingredient of a Commercially Successful Novel" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-secret-ingredient-of-a-commercially-successful-novel/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 320 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933
Total fiction words for the year..... 623282
Total nonfiction words for August... 2530
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 148960
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 772242

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Good to Be Back

August 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Sorry I've been away
- * Updates
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I don't pay no attention to no kind of critics about nothing. If they knew as much as they claim to about what they're criticizing, they ought to be doing that instead of just standing on the side lines using their mouth.” Cassius Clay in an interview with Alex Haley

“Ninety percent of success can be boiled down to consistently doing the obvious thing for an uncommonly long period of time without convincing yourself that you're smarter than you are.”
Farnam Street blog

Sorry I've been away for a few days. Frankly, there was very little of interest around the web. Dean's seemingly high-centered over his latest Kickstarter, and there's been little of interest (or useful) going on over at the KillZone blog or even at The Passive Voice.

And whether Dave Farland is going to offer up something unique or just spout worn-out clichés is anybody's guess from day to day. I'm not running the guy down. That's just how he rolls, probably because he's trying to cater to beginning writers as well as those considerably farther along.

Oh, Dean is also planning some upcoming "in person" workshops in Vegas for which, of course, he and Kris will require vaccination certificates. I only hope they require masks as well, given the increasing numbers of vaxxed folks who have succumbed (many completely) to the mutated virus.

Anyway, things picked up again this morning, as you will see in "Of Interest."

In my absence I've been trying to stay busy, but mostly away from my desk, driving, visiting estate sales, etc.

Updates

But yesterday, during my latest "day off" and a couple of days after I copyedited a short story for a young (or at least young in the craft) writer, I had a moment of clarity: I'd much rather work on my own fiction than on anyone else's.

So I've updated the Copyediting page over on my author site (see <https://harveystanbrough.com/copyediting/>). I had fun with it. I'm still offering copyedits, but I brought my prices more into line with reality, considering my experience and how much I give when I teach and copyedit. (This will not affect my one long-standing client.)

I also updated my mentorships again, and for the same reason.

The Becoming a Writer mentorship remained mostly unchanged. That mentorship is still low-cost, but then most of it is generic too. Meaning I don't have to invest a ton of time to guide writers through that one.

And frankly, so few would-be and beginning writers will take the leap to actually believe what I'm selling over there than I don't have to invest emotionally either. I don't have to hope they'll get it, because I know going-in that most of them won't be able to overcome the myths. Shrug.

So not a big deal. It's all good. The writer who can't bring himself to opt-in isn't out much money and I'm not out much time. And for the very rare one who DOES opt-in, s/he will have hit the jackpot, just as I did around 7 years ago.

The Writing Craft mentorships are another creature altogether. They are very time and labor intensive, and they require a massive emotional investment as well. So again, now the prices of

those are comensurate with what the student gets. We're talking one-on-one instruction here, not passively sitting and listening to videos or audios.

Today

I haven't started writing fiction again yet, but more than likely today's the day. I dreamed a very vivid story last night. I'm looking forward to writing again.

Beyond that, I'm still sleeping a lot, walking a lot, trying not to eat a lot, and just healing. It's a process. And I suppose it's better than simply lying down and assuming room temperature.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Speculative Fiction Workshop With Daisuke Shen" at <https://authorspublish.thinkific.com/courses/spec-fic-with-daisuke-shen>.

See "Tighten Up" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/tighten-up.html>.

See "Alex Haley Interviews Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali)" at <https://alexhaley.com/2019/09/12/alex-haley-interviews-cassius-clay-muhammad-ali/>. Very interesting interview.

See "Three Easy Ways to Strengthen A Scene" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/three-easy-ways-to-strengthen-a-scene.html>.

See "Relationship Thesaurus Entry: One-Night Stand Lovers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/relationship-thesaurus-entry-one-night-stand-lovers/>. Story ideas, and see PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 710 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 3240

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 149670

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 772952

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AlexHaley.com](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Good “Of Interest”

August 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Still not back
- * Stormy weather
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yeah, I’m still not back. Not really. Not as a writer of fiction. Soon, I think, but who knows. I did write a little fiction yesterday, but nothing I’m including in my word count anywhere.

I’ll probably write more today and tomorrow and so on until one day it “takes” and I’ll be off and running again.

Really, I’m posting this today mostly to get the items in “Of Interest” out to you. If I drop away for another day or three, don’t worry about it. Just working through the fog.

In the meantime, apparently a gnat passed gas in Montana somewhere, which caused a power outage here in St. David Arizona.

But about the time I got into a good grumble about that, clouds DID pile up in every direction but Down. I dragged a chair out into the driveway so I could watch the artistic flashes from the lightning storm to the east. And a half-hour or so later, the wind picked up (a lot), and the clouds all met in the middle. I and my chair went back into the yard. We retained our dignity. We did not run.

We got one and a quarter inches of rain in roughly an hour, and this morning another half-inch had been added. So yay. Rain is good, gas-passing gnats aside.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Things to Consider for Successful Book Signings” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/things-to-consider-for-successful-book-signings.html>.

See “She Thinks My Tractor’s Sexy” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/she-thinks-my-tractors-sexy/>. MAN i love the truth, and PG’s take is definitely the truth.

See “Stop the Lies” at <https://dailyreckoning.com/stop-the-lies/>. A great (and increasingly rare) honest article, and chock full of story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 290 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 3530

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 149960

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 773242

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [DailyReckoning.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: An Opportunity for Writers

August 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * An Opportunity for Writers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Hemingway ... developed a technique that let him transfer from one point of view to another. He would simply start outside a character, describing the world and the character, and then move into dialog, which colors the world with emotion. Eventually, in a third paragraph, he would then move fully into the character's thought processes. ... To move out, he'd simply reverse the strategy.” David Farland

For the record, this works, although I would argue that it is not necessarily an intentional, conscious-mind process. Once you are aware of it (so, either now or after you've read the full article in “Of Interest”) there's a good chance this will come straight from your creative subconscious as you write. Note that we're talking about switching POV characters, not first- to third-person and back, etc.

An Opportunity for Writers

I mentioned Dean's latest Kickstarter. Here's the bottom line: In addition to getting whatever reward you sign up for (even for only \$5), you will also get these pop-up workshops, each valued at \$150, free:

–Pop-Up: When They Do it Wrong: Getting Inspiration from Things You Love to Hate

–Pop-Up: Writer's Deadly Delusions: What Writers Believe That Can Kill Their Writing and Business.

–Pop-Up: A Tribute to the Pulp Writers: What You Can Learn and What to Avoid from How Pulp Writers Lived and Worked.

–Pop-Up: Can I Sell Without Promotion? (not hit yet, but close)

There are only a couple of days left on the Kickstarter campaign. This is the only time I'll talk about it. So if you'd like to get these great pop-ups, I suggest you [Click Here](#) and donate \$5 (or more) to the cause.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Everything I’ve Learned about Being a ‘Professional’ Writer in One Post” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/everything-ive-learned-about-being>. Some good stuff, some stuff that would be a great medium for growing mushrooms.

See “Telescoping Penetration” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/telescoping-penetration/>.

See “24 Publishers that Accept Science Fiction or Fantasy Novels (No Agent Required)” at <https://authorspublish.com/24-publishers-that-accept-science-fiction-or-fantasy-novels/>.

See “First Page Critique: A High Dive And A Hike To Somewhere” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/first-page-critique-a-high-diveand-a-hike-to-somewhere.html>. Especially see her thoughts under “Establish your setting.”

See “Should MFA Programs Teach the Business of Writing?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/should-mfa-programs-teach-the-business-of-writing/>. Long but worth the time it takes to read. Either that or just don’t go for an MFA.

See “Book Wars” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/book-wars/>. Especially see PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 3930

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 150360

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 773642

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever

say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Countercraft](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Nothing Really

August 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Dean's Kickstarter
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[T]he CEO of The American Booksellers Association described the shipment of a book to a large numbers of bookstores as a ‘serious, violent incident.’ Quite an accomplishment for a small stack of dried pulp from a dead tree.” The Passive Guy

Nothing really to talk about today. Just some good items in “Of Interest.”

If you didn't get in on Dean's Kickstarter yesterday, you might want to stop by today and donate \$5. Though really it isn't a donation. Really, in addition to whatever reward to sign up for, you'll also get all the stretch rewards. At this point, those include four pop-up workshops for a total value of \$600. Not a bad purchase for \$5. To join in the feasting, visit <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/403649867/pulphouse-fiction-magazine-subscription-drive-2021>.

With any luck, once this Kickstarter's in the past, Dean will get back to writing and talking about writing in his blog. And with any luck, so will I.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “An Insider's View of Audio” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/an-insiders-view-of-audio.html>.

See “Politics and the English Language” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/politics-and-the-english-language/>.

See “American Booksellers Association Apologizes for Accidentally Promoting Candace Owens Book” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/american-booksellers-association-apologizes-for-accidentally-promoting-candace-owens-book/>. What a crock of particularly foul-smelling waste.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 210 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 4140

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 150570

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 773852

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Dolly Parton, Russell Blake and James Patterson

August 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Russell Blake
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Russell Blake is an international bestselling novelist. He is also an American ex-pat, living in

Mexico. There, he is not subject to the current or forthcoming “mandates” of the US federal government.

If you’re young enough to entertain the thoughts, and if you’ve ever wondered what it would cost to live in Mexico, the prevalence of drug cartels, etc., I suggest you take a look at “Cheap and Easy” at <https://russellblake.com/cheap-and-easy/>. Also, of course, the post is full of story ideas.

Now, rather than entering into the “if I could do things over” doldrums, I’ll move along.

“Of Interest” is a smorgasborg today. Enjoy.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Dolly Parton to publish her first novel in 2022” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/dolly-parton-to-publish-her-first-novel-in-2022/>. Sounds like PG has much the same opinion of James Patterson as I do.

See “Banned Hashtags You Should Avoid In 2021” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/banned-hashtags-you-should-avoid-in-2021/>. For fun.

See “Will a Traditional Publisher Republish My Self-Published Book?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/will-a-traditional-publisher-republish-my-self-published-book/>.

See “Fluttering” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/fluttering/>.

See “YouTube Censors Sen. Rand Paul for Speaking Against Mandates” at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/08/11/youtube-censors-sen-rand-paul-for-speaking-against-mandates/>. It isn’t just Twitter and Facebook. Censorship is coming quickly to a venue near you.

See “The Bomb Didn’t Beat Japan ... Stalin Did” at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/05/30/the-bomb-didnt-beat-japan-stalin-did/>. Very interesting.

See “Unusual Governments to Take Inspiration From” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/unusual-governments-to-take-inspiration-from/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 220 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August.....	6933
Total fiction words for the year.....	623282
Total nonfiction words for August...	4360
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	150790
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	774072
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: What’s Going On

August 13, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * What’s going on
- * Slow news day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

What’s going on

For better or worse, in this Journal I’ve always shared my successes and my failures in the hope that sharing those would help you navigate your own way. So the thought just dawned on me that I might at least let you know what’s going on at the moment. Not *that* I am currently unable to write fiction, but *why* I’m currently unable to write fiction.

Going into this mess, I described my conundrum as a mental fog. But that didn’t really do much to let you know what was going on. Here’s what I meant by “mental fog”:

Each day, I show up at “work” in the Hovel. Each day I follow the same routine I’ve followed for years, minus the nicotine fix from a cigar. And each day, after I’ve done the preliminary stuff, I move over to the writing ‘puter, put my fingers on the keyboard, and see what happens.

Around 10 days ago when all this started, I couldn't even think coherently. I couldn't put two words together in a meaningful way. If speaking aloud, I had to pause often and think of the right word, etc. (It was a little like I've heard the speech symptoms of a stroke described.)

Over the past few days I've been speaking more coherently (mostly) though I still get flustered. But more importantly from the standpoint of a writer, I have occasional flashes of the coming story, also in a stream of cohesive thoughts. Not as good as it used to be, but better than it was a week or 10 days ago. So the situation is getting better.

The thoughts and words are coming again, if somewhat erratically. So each day I put my fingers on the keyboard and try to write them.

The only way to describe what happens next is that my fingers don't work. The mind-fingers coordination is gone.

Usually I touch-type (without errors) at about 60 words per minute, and I approach double that when I'm in the zone and the scene is unfolding fast and furiously. Typically, after I've hit around 4,000 words on the day, my mind-finger coordination starts to slip and I start to make a lot of errors. That's usually when I stop for the day.

But at the moment in my current fog, even the words, sentences, and scenes that are clear in my mind don't translate smoothly to the page. Even in the morning, when I'm first trying to commit the story to the page.

I type a word, make an error. Backspace, correct, type a word, make an error. Et cetera. And no, I can't just keep going like that and eventually write a 1200 word scene. The frustration's too great, not to mention the lost direction of the narrative, the lost dialogue, etc. I'm constantly interrupting the flow of the story to go back and make corrections.

And no, I can't just ignore the errors and maybe go back to fix them later during cycling. That's fine when it's a few errors per thousand words. It's a whole different thing when it's up around 1000 errors per thousand words.

So that's what I mean when I say it's a mental fog. But I'll keep showing up every day. I'll keep following my routine, and afterward I'll keep moving over to the writing 'puter, just in case. I'm looking forward to the fog clearing, at least enough that the words in my head translate through my nerve system down to my fingers and out onto the page. That, my friends, will be Hebben.

Slow news day around the Internet, or at least the corners of it that I visit.

Dean's Kickstarter is finally over. I'm hoping now he'll get back to writing about writing fiction. TKZ is some silly BS that makes not the slightest bit of difference to the lives of even those who participate, and the Passive Voice... well, it was all right. Nothing to write home about.

I included the first item in “Of Interest” because some of you might be on Goodreads (fair warning, and all that). I included the second item because the writer’s complaints therein were just so very precious. (Yeah, that’s sarcasm.)

Every time I stumble across a writer who can’t manage to come to grips with her personal angst I wanna stick my fingers in my ears and run in circles yelling “Lalalalala!” until it Just Stops.

You know the kind of angst I mean: “Alas, am I perfect or am I simply free of imperfections? However shall I decide?” Blah blah blah.

If you are able to write well, get over yourself and realize you have the best job in the world.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How Extortion Scams and Review Bombing Trolls Turned Goodreads Into Many Authors’ Worst Nightmare” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-extortion-scams-and-review-bombing-trolls-turned-goodreads-into-many-authors-worst-nightmare/>.

See “The Heart of the Trouble” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-heart-of-the-trouble/>.
Pretentious twit, anyone?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 830 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 5190

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 151620

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 774902

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Responses and the Journal

August 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Responses
- * Copy of the Journal?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Sorry for any confusion created by yesterday’s post.

Some folks apparently thought I was wondering what caused my brain fog. Nope. I knew what caused it. I even knew in advance that it was going to happen and roughly what it would entail. I just don’t know how long it will last (but I’m not asking about that either).

I only wanted to report on my experience and make you aware of why I am personally unable to write fiction at the moment, just in case it might help some of you in some way. Probably it doesn’t matter. I just thought it was interesting.

I hope my personal mental disconnect will clear up sooner rather than later.

If it does, I will go back to writing fiction. If it doesn’t, actually I’m okay with that too. At 66 novels, 8 novellas and over 200 short stories, I’ve had a good career. So no worries either way.

By the way, if any of the newer subscribers out there would like a copy of my Journal entries for the past year or two, just [email me](#) and I’ll send those out in PDF format. Free. No biggie.

I’ve not been terribly informative recently, and there’s a lot of good information in those past Journals. They’re even searchable. (I recommend searching for the general “Topic” or for specifics like “Scene,” “Setting,” “WITD,” “Cycling” etc.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Animals Count and Use Zero...” at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/animals-can-count-and-use-zero-how-far-does-their-number-sense-go-20210809/>.

See “Collections” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/collections/>. In case it might jump-start you to putting together your own collections.

See “Are You Ready for the Word Play Masters Invitational?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/are-you-ready-for-the-word-play-masters-invitational.html>. Mostly BS but maybe fun.

See “Archetypal Character Arcs, Pt. 15: Introduction to the 6 Flat Archetypes” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/archetypal-character-arcs-pt-15-introduction-to-the-6-flat-archetypes/>. Very basic stuff. Read it, absorb it, then forget it and just write. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 320 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 5510

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 151940

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 775222

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Main Impurity

August 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Main Impurity
- * Dean, another half-price sale
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Asking for feedback creates a critic. Asking for advice creates a partner.” Farnam Street blog (*I love this. h*)

“The main impurity is your ‘inner editor.’ That is the judgmental voice that assesses every creative move the moment you try to make it. It loves to reject things. It tells you what not to write. ... The way you turn off that voice is by writing through it.” James Scott Bell

The Main Impurity

I agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Bell that “the main impurity” is what he calls the “inner editor” and what I call the critical mind or critical voice.

The difference is that he believes it's a good idea to allow that “inner editor” back into his writing later to “correct” what his creative mind has done. Hey, whatever works for him is fine.

I do not believe that's a good idea. I want my creative mind to know I have faith in its storytelling ability, and I won't shoot myself in the foot by sending it negative signals. For example, that it needs to be “corrected” by what Mr. Bell describes as “the judgmental voice.”

Speaking of judgmental voices, Dean's offering another half-price sale. You'll see it in “Of Interest.” If you're thinking of buying a particular workshop and you want my advice, email me. If I've taken the workshop, I'll respond with whether I recommend it (or not) and why.

When you get to his post, I recommend you scroll down to the all-caps “SETBACK” and read from there. Otherwise you'll have to wade through several paragraphs of him griping.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Summer Setback Sale” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/summer-setback-sale/>. If you want to email and ask me about a workshop

See “What’s the Perfect Time to Launch an Ebook?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/whats-the-perfect-time-to-launch-an-ebook/>. See PG’s take.

See “Solving the 5,000-Year-Old Murder of “Otzi The Iceman”” at <http://dyingwords.net/solving-otzi-the-icemans-murder-a-really-cold-case/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 5840

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 152270

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 775552

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Book Launch

August 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Terra 2
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Terra 2 went live today. I only noticed because Books2Read (part of Draft2Digital) sent me a notice. (If you have a Draft2Digital account, you automatically have a B2R account with the same login information.) Anyway, here's the skinny:

This is the tenth book in the Future of Humanity (FOH) series. After a long journey, General Amanda Lowrey has set the ship down on the new human home world: Terra 2.

But this is still an alien world, and the humans are not alone. Landing Site Eden and each of the satellite sites, each 50 miles from Eden to the north, east, south and west, have their own problems to deal with.

Come along and join the fun. Or the battles.

The universal link provided by Books2Read is one of the many reasons I use Draft2Digital as my main distributor. By clicking a single link, the prospective purchaser can choose to get the title from any major ebook store or subscription service.

Books2Read is clunky in only one way: If you distribute to any other stores yourself (separate from Draft2Digital), and if you want the B2R universal link to point to those stores, you will have to add those links manually to the B2R dashboard.

For example, I distribute to Amazon separately. So after the Books2Read generates a universal link, I have to go to my Books2Read dashboard and manually add the Amazon buy link.

When you have as many books as I do, and if you let it slide for awhile, that becomes a chore.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How Data Science Pinpointed the Creepiest Word in "Macbeth" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-data-science-pinpointed-the-creepiest-word-in-macbeth/>. Extremely interesting if you're a word freak.

See "Creating and Resolving Conflict in Your Novel" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/creating-and-resolving-conflict-in-your-novel.html>. Not sure why I bothered to post this. Just more regurgitation of the same old stuff.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 310 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August.....	6933
Total fiction words for the year.....	623282
Total nonfiction words for August...	6150
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	152580
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	775862
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Quotes and Of Interest

August 17, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Thanks to Matt
- * Joy Fielding
- * The last item
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Any coincidence is worth noticing. You can throw it away later if it is only a coincidence.”
Agatha Christie, via The Passive Voice

“[M]ost writers make less than ten thousand dollars a year, so you shouldn’t even be thinking of money. The odds are stacked against you, so you really need to love what you do. You need to be comfortable, even look forward to, spending hours every day—I recommend at least four—alone in a room with nothing but your computer and your imagination.” Joy Fielding

Thanks to Matt for recommending the herb rhodiola rosea to help ease the withdrawal symptoms from stimulants (in my case, caffeine and nicotine). I tried it and it works for me. If you find yourself in a similar situation, I recommend trying it.

I love the quote above from Joy Fielding. I took it from the article that is the subject of the second link in “Of Interest.” Some good, straight-forward information in the first half, much of it quotable.

Re the last item in “Of Interest” today, I’m not big on bloggers or instructors who address the readership or class as if we’re all 6 years old. What’s gained by all the schmoozy, cutesy crap? If you need to do that to keep your readership, I suggest your readership isn’t worth keeping.

How about respecting your audience as the professionals they are, or at least are trying to become? Seriously, giggle-giggle, wink-wink over *homicide investigation* techniques? Maybe it’s just me, but if I were in a classroom and the instructor was giggling and guffawing as he presented this information I’d wonder just how unhinged he was and whether maybe he did the murder himself.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Bobby Fischer and the Hero’s Journey” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/bobby-fischer-and-the-heros-journey.html>.

See “What’s the Secret to Writing a Bestseller? Hint: There Isn’t One.” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/whats-the-secret-to-writing-a-bestseller-hint-there-isnt-one/>.

See “When should writers return to old, abandoned work?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/when-should-writers-return-to-old-abandoned-work/>.

See “Academy Instructor Detective Sergeant Dilly Pickle: Homicide Crime Scenes” at <https://leelofland.com/academy-instructor-detective-sergeant-dilly-pickle-homicide-crime-scenes/>. If you can wade through the juvenilia, there’s some good info here.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 370 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 6520

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 152950
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 776232

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Hiatus, DWS and Koontz

August 18, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Hiatus
- * Recommendations
- * Power Words
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It took me 15 years to discover I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous.” Robert Benchley

A Hiatus

Being subject to neither of the maladies mentioned in Mr. Benchley's tongue-in-cheek quote—I do have a talent for writing but am far from being too famous to quit—I'll be on hiatus for awhile.

Should I decide to make this a permanent vacation, I'll pop back into your inbox with one more edition of the Journal to let you know that. Otherwise I'll talk with you again when I've resumed writing fiction. I hope that will be this month.

Recommendations

During my absence, I suggest you check in with Dean's blog now and then just in case he eventually returns to talking about writing.

I also suggest you check the Kill Zone blog just in case someone over there offers any advice that is not bound up in the myths. It happens occasionally, especially in posts from John Gilstrap.

I recommend a subscription to The Passive Voice. Good stuff there almost every day.

Links to all three are in today's "Of Interest."

Finally, I also suggest you use the Search box in the sidebar at the [Journal](#) and at [HarveyStanbrough.com](#) to search for topics in which you're particularly interested. Just type "scene" or "setting" or "character" or whatever search term you like and see what pops up.

Power Words

Naturally, just as I'm on my way out the door, Dean actually offered up a pretty good post this morning on a new workshop he's going to offer on the use of "Power Words."

I wish him luck with the workshop, but it isn't one I'll personally recommend. Honestly the use of power words, or as I call them "electric" words, is something you can learn by reading the work of great writers (as Dean himself recommends) twice: once for pleasure and once critically, studying the passages that blew you away and figuring out how that happened.

That's one way to learn the use of electric words. The other way requires having faith in yourself and your creative subconscious. (And why not? What harm will result from you having faith in yourself?)

As before, read the work of great writers, but this time ONLY for pleasure. Sure, when you hit one of those passages that blows you away, you might read over it again just to relish it, but then move on and read the rest of the story.

Your creative subconscious will STILL absorb any technique that affects you that strongly, and that newly gained knowledge will STILL seep through into your own work without you ever having to get the conscious, critical mind involved.

I wrote earlier that what Dean calls "power" words I call "electric" words. This is more a matter of semantics than anything else. Some words are charged with interest and carry more weight than their denotation and some aren't. Electric words are important, but what's more important is knowing when to use them.

And finally, just to pick a nit, Koontz’s second sentence IS long, but it is NOT by definition a run-on sentence. So you can see it in context, here’s the sentence:

The great black serpent of highway undulated over a series of low rises and gentle downslopes, through sand flats that glowed faintly, as if radioactive, past sudden thrusting formations of rock threaded through in places with quartzite or something else that caught the Big Dog’s motorcycle’s headlights and flared like veins of fire.

Now this is just a pet peeve of mine, people presenting something as a fact when it isn’t. Besides, if you don’t know the rules, you can’t break them intelligently.

Anyway, I suspect Koontz chose to write the sentence this way so the reader could experience the sensation of being on the motorcycle. Longer sentences convey emotion. As you read the sentence again, you can almost hear the sound of the bike engine flattened by the cool breeze of the desert night.

Talk with you again when I’ve resumed writing fiction.

Of Interest

See “Power Words” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/power-words/>.

See “Another Dark and Stormy Night” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/another-dark-and-stormy-night.html>.

See “Four hundred years of melancholy—why Robert Burton’s masterpiece speaks to our pandemic age” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/four-hundred-years-of-melancholy-why-robert-burtons-masterpiece-speaks-to-our-pandemic-age/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 740 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 7260

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 153690

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 776972

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Electric Words](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Run-On Sentences](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

NO JOURNAL FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS

The Journal: Just Checking In

August 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Just Checking In
- * Corona Model 3 Folding Typewriter
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I'm not back, but I thought I'd check in. Hope this finds all of you well and writing your fingers to the bone.

I'm showing up at the desk every day, hitting all my usual blogs, etc. and attempting to open the right valves to let the fiction flow. So I'm here. If any of you need anything, email me.

When I've put enough time in the chair to know it isn't going to happen for at least one more day, I go do other things. My primary priority remains writing fiction. I guess I just want to say if you're one of those who WANTS to write and who CAN write, what's stopping you? Count your blessings and just write already.

I visited an estate sale recently and bought another antique typewriter. This one is over 100 years old. It's a Corona Model 3 portable (folding) typewriter, with the serial number 123136, which places its date of manufacture firmly in 1917.

Anecdotally, one of Hemingway's favorite typewriters was the 1921 Corona 3 that Hadley Richardson presented to him for his 22nd birthday. Mine is older than Hemingway's, but quirkily

enough, mine is also far less useful to me as a writer of stories in English. It has a Cyrillic (Slavic) keyboard.

The closest I can make out by comparing the characters on the keyboard to the characters in various languages, this one was used in either Bulgaria or Belorussia (today, Belarus). It is in good working order, and it even has a ribbon and a carrying case. (The carrying case needs to be repaired but it's all there.)

If you like old typewriters and if you'd be interested in owning this very unique one, email me. Otherwise I'll wait and let one of my children sell it.

Talk with you again when I've resumed writing fiction.

Of Interest

See "Writing Tips, Book Events, and Writers' Conference" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/writing-tips-book-events-and-writers-conference/>. There's a lot here to look at and check out.

See "Your Characters, Real or Imagined" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/your-characters-real-or-imagined.html>.

See "Different Roads To The Same Destination" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/different-roads-to-the-same-destination.html>.

See "28 Publishers Seeking Young Adult Novels – No Agent Required" at <https://authorspublish.com/28-publishers-seeking-young-adult-submissions/>.

See "Plot Or Character? What's Your Starting Point?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/plot-or-character-whatsyour-starting-point.html>.

See "Traversable wormholes are possible under certain gravity conditions" at <https://www.space.com/traversable-wormholes-modified-gravity>.

See "Last Day of the Workshop Sale... Six New Classes Added for Today!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/last-day-of-the-workshop-sale-six-new-classes-added-for-today/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August.....	6933
Total fiction words for the year.....	623282
Total nonfiction words for August...	7660
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	154090
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	777372
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

NO JOURNAL FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS

The Journal: Stopping for a Visit

August 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Stopping for a Visit
- * Octavia Butler
- * Scam Alert
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Until I began writing my own stories, I never found quite what I was looking for... In desperation, I made up my own... I made a universe in it. There I could be a magic horse, a Martian, a telepath. There I could be anywhere but here, any time but now, with any people but these.” Octavia Butler

Stopping for a visit to say hello and share some things that are beginning to stack up.

I know some of you haven't been able to pull the trigger yet on trusting yourself enough to Just Write. That's fine. I will continue to strive to help anyone who wants to know the joy and pleasure of sitting back and allowing your characters to tell you a story.

But if you aren't there yet (or if you are cross-armed determined never to get there, that's fine too), you might want to see "Plotting for Pantsers and Pantsing for Plotters" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/plotting-for-pantsers-and-pantsing-for-plotters.html>. Not my personal cuppa, but what do I know?

One caveat: I've talked here before about deciding not to buy a novel by a famous writer because the plot was spilled out in the sales copy. Why buy and read the novel when I already know the story from the sales copy?

Likewise, if you are able to plot-out (outline, signpost, etc.) a story and then still write it without being bored out of your mind, good for you. But if you want to avoid boring your reader, keep in mind (and practice) Kate Wilhelm's Law:

Every time an event occurs or changes and every time your characters make a choice, "throw away your first three ideas" of what will happen. Why? Because if you can "figure out" what will happen next, chances are the reader can too. And if the reader knows in advance what will happen next, chances are she'll close your novel and find something interesting to do.

That's where Wilhelm's Law comes in. The reader will seldom wade three-ideas-deep into the morass in an attempt to figure out what's coming next in your story. And if all of that is beginning to sound like a boatload of work, well, instead you might consider remembering it's the characters' story (not yours) and letting them tell it. Just an idea.

To see an interesting, if short, article on Octavia Butler, see "Octavia Estelle Butler: Notetaking as Science Fiction" at <https://fortelabs.co/blog/octavia-estelle-butler-notetaking-as-science-fiction/>. Thanks to Karen for the tip.

At "True Crime Thursday – Are You Dead or Alive Scam" (see <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/true-crime-thursday-are-you-dead-or-alive-scam.html>), Debbie Burke talks a bit about a whole series of new scams and references a site that lists them day by day.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Fantastic Writing Advice by Keith Johnstone" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/fantastic-writing-advice-by-keith-johnstone/>.

See "Keith Johnstone" at <https://www.keithjohnstone.com/>.

From the You Have GOT to Be Kidding Me Department, see “‘Nevermind’: California Man Sues Band 30 Years After Being Featured as a Naked Baby on Iconic Cover” at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/08/25/nevermind-california-man-sues-band-30-years-after-being-featured-as-a-naked-baby-on-iconic-cover/>.

See “The Day Afghanistan Died” at <https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/08/the-day-afghanistan-died/>. I would never write this. No reader would believe it. I’m so ashamed of our nation right now I can hardly breathe.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 8200

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 154630

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 777912

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Yesterday

August 31, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Another month gone
- * Yesterday
- * Yesterday also
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance.” George Bernard Shaw

Well, another month gone. That feels significant for some reason, though with me it resonates only with stalled numbers and missed opportunities. I won't go into that. Too depressing.

Yesterday I sold my Chevy Colorado pickup. It's a 2007, so it was made back when they still actually *looked* like a mid-size pickup. A few model years later, the Colorado looks more like a full-size pickup, though still with the weird, sloped roof. Who needs to streamline a pickup? Just let it be a pickup already.

I originally bought the Colorado from a cousin when my uncle passed away. But I never enjoyed driving it or riding in it. The seats and ceiling were too low, and even at only 5'8" every time I got into the thing I had to consciously think of where to put my knees.

So I was at an estate sale on Saturday. As my wife and I turned back toward my pickup, I noticed a man admiring it. Joking, I said, “I'll sell you that pickup if you want it.”

He looked up, not grinning, and said, “Really?”

And we were off and running. Then yesterday we met at a notary public where I signed over the title, he handed me a wad of cash, and we went our separate ways.

Now I'll go find something that's old, tired, and needs a little love. Something like my old '87 4Runner, a beat-up old thing that I loved dearly. Unfortunately, I passed it along early to one of my offspring, who promptly sold it out of the family because he was upset with me. Oh well.

Chances are, whatever I get will have vent windows (remember those?), a manual transmission, and an in-dash ashtray. Not that I need an ashtray any longer, but just so I can fondly recall a time when we were still allowed to make up our own minds about personal matters.

Yesterday also, a friend emailed to tell me he'd received an email from Amazon announcing the first book in the Wes Crowley gap series ([Assignment: Brownsville](#)). First time that's ever happened, to my knowledge.

And a week or so ago a lady emailed me to say her Amazon Alexa had told her about a book release I had upcoming. Probably the same book, but I don't know. She didn't mention the name

of the book and it doesn't really matter. It's all very strange. I just hope Amazon keeps the announcements coming.

Anyway, neither of those announcements happened because of anything I did, other than writing the book in the first place and making it available through Amazon and D2D. It's all very mysterious to me, but then in this day and age, as technology taketh away, so does it giveth. Or something.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Some Unconventional Advice..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/some-unconventional-advice-about-how-to-write-the-dmn-blurb/>. Mostly, see PG's take. But seriously, to learn how to write sales copy for fiction, see Dean Wesley Smith's *How to Write Fiction Sales Copy* at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0178MQVX2/>.

See "33 Common Literary Devices..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/33-common-literary-devices-definitions-examples-and-exercises/>.

See "How to Write a Mystery – A Handbook from Mystery Writers of America" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/08/how-to-write-a-mystery-a-handbook-from-mystery-writers-of-america.html>. I own this book and it really DOES have a lot more in it that Debbie Burke didn't give away in her post. I recommend it.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 590 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... 6933

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 8790

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 155220

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 778502

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: A Few Tidbits

September 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A few tidbits
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“My problem isn't piracy, it's obscurity.” Cory Doctorow

“Your next book is your best promotion.” Dean Wesley Smith

“A writer is a person who writes. An author is a person who has written.” Dean Wesley Smith

Yesterday as I watched and listened to Dean Wesley Smith in a few pop-up lectures, I was reminded of a few tidbits I've found to be true. I thought I'd pass those along:

1. The difference between writers who make it and writers who don't is *attitude*.

Writers who make it are only storytellers, only entertainers. They Just Write, and what they write isn't important in the slightest. They're storytellers, so what's important is THAT they write, not WHAT they write. “Being published” isn't important. What's important is the check clearing.

2. In other words, writers don't allow their ego to enter into the process. And with no ego, they have no critical voice issues.

The ego demands perfection. The ego is what requires rewrites, critique, polishing, etc. The ego requires writers to become authors. It requires them to stop moving forward and look back at what they've written.

3. But readers read for Story, not perfection. So as a writer, go for broke. Don't hold back, and don't LOOK back. Don't judge your own work. Write it, submit or publish it, and move on.

This—the difference in attitude between those who call themselves writers and those who call themselves authors—is what Dean was talking about several years ago when he uttered the third quote above. I remember the entire utterance:

A writer is a person who writes. She tells a story to the best of her ability, then submits it or publishes it and moves on to write the next story. She's always moving ahead, never looking back.

An author is a person who has written. Having finished a story, she stops writing and spends all her time promoting what she's written.

4. But you have to promote your work, don't you?

Well, yes, you do, but not in the way authors believe.

To promote your book, do this:

1. write openings with depth that pulls the reader into the story (the opening sells the current book),
2. write a satisfactory ending (the ending sells the next book),
3. design a genre-appropriate cover,
4. write effective sales copy <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0178MQVX2/>, and
5. write the next book.

I know. None of that feels like “promotion” because it's part of what you should be doing as a writer anyway. But it IS promotion, and it is the best promotion.

5. So in answer to the old question of whether you can “sell without promotion,” no, you can't sell without promotion. But YES, you can absolutely sell without all the gimmicky crap that *passes* for promotion, like exclusivity agreements and paid ads and other money- and time-draining activities. You really don't need any of that. To sell well, all you need is what's in the list above.

But that's for writers. Let's go back to authors for a moment.

6. I already talked about writers always looking forward and authors stalling and looking backward. So I'll just leave this here for any authors out there:

Remember the old truism that writers are the worst judges of their own work?

a. *Authors quote that truism*, usually with a chuckle, when they look back at their work and believe it's “good.” Then they use the truism itself (“Well, I am the worst judge of my own work”) as an excuse to launch into a series of rewrites, etc. It's as if they're saying, “I wrote this,

therefore it can't possibly be any good." What a horrible lesson that is to teach the creative subconscious.

b. Yet when those same authors look back and believe their work is "bad," they seem to forget the truism altogether. And with "writers are the worst judges of their own work" firmly hidden away, again they launch into a series of rewrites, etc.

7. So how to break the cycle?

Simple. Believe in yourself, and understand that you really ARE the worst judge of your own work. So if that's true, why bother looking back at what you've written at all? Besides, that isn't even your job. Your job is to write the story. The READER's job is to judge it.

And seriously, how you feel about your own work is neither here nor there. Good or bad, it's only one opinion. And the only opinion that matters is the opinion of the person who wants to buy it.

So don't judge your own work. Write it, finish it, submit or publish it and move on to the next story. Always move forward.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Career You Learned No Longer Exists" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/career-you-learned-no-longer-exists/>.

See "A Guide To Crime Scene Investigation" at <https://leelofland.com/evelyn-ev-e-dense-a-guide-to-crime-scene-investigation-2/>.

See "Holliday Collection" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/holliday-collection/>. Or you could just write 5 stories, bundle them into a collection, and publish it without going through the class.

See "Big Business of Library E-Books" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/big-business-of-library-e-books/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 840 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for the year.....	623282
Total nonfiction words for August... 840	
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	156060
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	779342
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: All About SF

September 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * All About SF
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“A starting crew of just 98 people would be enough for a 6,300-year-long journey (travelling in a hypothetical spacecraft at speeds that are possible with current technology) to Proxima Centauri b... [The crew would consist] of 49 unrelated breeding pairs, ready to pass on their genes. The population would only remain genetically diverse and healthy over time under certain conditions, so for example, the crew’s breeding would have to be monitored and restricted.” excerpted from the first item in “Of Interest”

Today’s post might be of greater interest to those interested in writing Science Fiction or Science Fantasy Fiction (SF or SFF). Though generally speaking, good writing is good writing and a good technique in one genre usually transfers flawlessly to others. Anyway, when I write in the genre, I’m writing SFF. I don’t know enough about physics to write a story that is both interesting and sticks to the rules.

There are different definitions of the two forms, but my definition is simple and useful: Science Fiction must adhere to the laws of physics as we know them, period. Science Fantasy Fiction has no such requirement. And this is another situation in which subgenre trumps everything else: if your story is SF and if it has even one fantastical element, it's Science Fantasy.

But as is always the case, no matter how realistic or futuristic or fantastic the science, the story is never about the science itself. The story is about the characters' *reaction* to the science.

For just one example, I took the excerpt in the quote of the day from the subject article because it seems to me chock full of intriguing story ideas.

I wrote my version (well, one of my versions) in the Future of Humanity (FOH) series, consisting of *The Ark*, *The Journey Home 2-9*, and *Terra 2*, the tenth novel in the series. But in my books, I didn't address the problem indicated in the quote of the day. And it's a very intriguing problem.

You could begin on Earth with the generation ship ready and in orbit awaiting its crew. What would the selection process be? Who selects the crew? Adhering to the notion in the quote of the day, how would the selectors absolutely ensure that none of those selected are related to each other? What might applicants do in an effort to be chosen or to sabotage another's chances of being chosen? Etc. There's a novel or two or three without even leaving Earth.

But once you DO leave Earth, and if the primary mission of the relatively small crew is to repopulate the species (as indicated in the quote of the day), you have only to establish the setting: a space ship on a journey that is intended to last through several generations. But after that, the story might go in any of several directions:

* How specifically (and by whom) is the crewmembers' breeding "monitored and restricted"? Are there eunuchs aboard (presumably robotic to avoid having to feed another mouth) for that purpose? If there are robotic eunuchs aboard, are they maintained by humans? If so, might the humans attempt to manipulate them? Etc.

* Or perhaps the ship itself monitors and restricts the humans' breeding. How? Non-lethal electric shock delivered to unauthorized pairings before the act can be consummated? Etc.

* And which humans (and why) will attempt to override the ship's supervisory functions? And what might go wrong? Might some glitch develop in the system and "teach" the ship that humans are never to be allowed to breed?

* Or might some alien species intentionally implant that glitch or manipulate the ship's code and have to be convinced of humanity's worthiness to breed and continue as a species by a desperate crew? And who among the crew would rise to the challenge to discover and make contact with the aliens and argue the point?

* No matter how or by whom the crews' breeding is monitored and restricted, human nature being what it is, the crew would resist that monitoring and restriction. What occurs as a result of that resistance? Would it necessarily result in a happy ending?

* And then there's the establishment of a rank structure (someone has to be in charge of the trek): are there differences in the monitoring and restrictions of various ranks (e.g., who's going to tell the CO with whom she can breed and when?) Etc.

* And of course this could be "straight" SFF, on or off-planet Earth, dealing with the human and/or non-human characters' reactions to the science that is causing the problem and the science that might correct it. But it could also wander off into SFF erotica if you choose to play in that direction.

If any of the ideas above spark a story in you, run with it. As I mentioned earlier, I've already written my version, though I admit I might write another. The notion of monitored and restricted breeding is just huge. It explodes into so many different ideas that it would be almost impossible for any writer not to at least consider writing about it.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "What's the minimum number of people needed to survive an apocalypse?" at <https://www.livescience.com/minimum-people-to-survive-apocalypse.html>.

See "Interstellar Space Travel: 7 Futuristic Spacecraft to Explore the Cosmos" at <https://www.livescience.com/55981-futuristic-spacecraft-for-interstellar-space-travel.html>.

See "China wants to build a mega spaceship that's nearly a mile long" at <https://www.space.com/mega-spaceship-china-proposal>.

See "The Rule of Three" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-rule-of-three/>. Sorry. I thought this was going to be more instructive than promotional.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 920 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 1760

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 156980
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 780262

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [DeanWesleySmith.com](#), [LiveScience.com](#), [Space.com](#)

The Journal: Got my new pickup

September 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * My New Pickup
- * Labor Day Weekend
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[T]hink like a publisher. I want to wholesale the books to someone like Little Passports because they [not I] work to acquire the end customer....” Darcy Pattison



My bride was kind enough to take a couple of quick snapshots of my new pickup.

Well, it's new to me, and exactly what I wanted. Please pay no attention to the short, fat, slouchy, probably balding vagrant who wandered in to photo-bomb the second picture. (Like Wyatt Earp in Tombstone, I was down at the creek, walking on water.)

Anyway, this is a 1994 Ford F150 five-speed four-wheel drive romper with a standard cab and a short wide bed. I am in Hebben. Its name is Charley Vuelo. Those of you who have read the Wes Crowley series will understand. (grin)



This whole long Labor Day weekend, The Passive Guy is posting articles and videos about workers who perform manual labor and the labor movement as it occurred/is occurring in the States. If you're interested, drop by <http://www.thepassivevoice.com/>.

Your opinion may vary, and that's fine, but I'm not a fan. No matter which "ism" is attached to it, I don't care for mob rule, bullying or coercion.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Substack and the Return (?) of Serialized Fiction" at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/substack-and-the-return-of-serialized>.

See "I Like Substack. But the PR Is Getting Ridiculous." at <https://www.janefriedman.com/i-like-substack-but-the-pr-is-getting-ridiculous/>.

See "How to Make Six Figures Self-Publishing...." at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-to-make-six-figures-self-publishing-childrens-books/>. This advice is about self-publishing period, not just children's books.

See "Update on My 70 in 70 Challenge" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/update-on-my-70-in-70-challenge/>.

See "The Rhythm of Writing" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/the-rhythm-of-writing.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 280 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 2040

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 157260

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 780542

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Special Edition

September 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Special Edition
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Special Edition

This will be short. I'm publishing the Journal today only to urge you to read “Come Looking For Anger,” Dean Wesley Smith's post from yesterday. Yesterday is the first time I remember being at my computer and *not* reading his post on the day it was published. Go figure.

Anyway, it and the comments are must-read. And spread the word to your writing groups and writer friends. Then duck.

You can find the post at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/come-looking-for-anger/>.

And if you want to see the post that caused all the disruption (and the comments) see “Career You Learned No Longer Exists” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/career-you-learned-no-longer-exists/>.

Enjoy. Then go write.

There’s some good CW music over at <http://www.thepassivevoice.com/>.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “44 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://authorspublish.com/44-themed-calls-for-submissions-for-september-2021/>.

See “What Do Apes, Humans, and Koalas Have in Common?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/what-do-apes-humans-and-koalas-have-in-common.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 150 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 2190

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 157410

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 780692

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Insanity

September 9, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Vincent Zandri
- * John Gilstrap, actor
- * Insanity: Writing Advice from a Stage Zero Writer
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If the sad parts don't make us cry when we write, and the funny parts don't make us chuckle, then we're just phoning-in our performance, and the reading audience will see right through it. To be believed, you need to live the moment on the page.” John Gilstrap

“Writing a novel is rarely fun. Like most writers, I usually rely on love for my characters, daily word count goals, and pure determination to make it through.” Lindsay Syhakhom (Remember this quote of the day)

As I was reading comments on Dean's “Come Looking For Anger” megapost a few days ago, I discovered another working professional writer: Vincent Zandri. You can find his website at <http://vinzandri.com/>. Extremely interesting site. I strongly recommend dropping by for a look-see.

In today's “Of Interest,” John Gilstrap (see the first quote of the day) almost hits one out of the park. Then, right at the end, he buys it all back when he says (jokingly, I'm sure) that he might return to acting “if I could just find a way to edit my performance live on the stage.”

How very close he came. Maybe the *inability* to edit a performance live on stage is what makes a live stage performance so very electric. This is obviously my own personal shortcoming. Apparently it's impossible for me to understand how anyone can live with such boring, trudging certainty and sameness and safety day after day after day.

How can they not thrill at the excitement of the unknown? What's to be afraid of? It's only words on a page.

How can they not enjoy the thrill of hearing a story for the very first time and not knowing what will happen next? How can they not want to simply see, hear, smell, taste, and feel what happens next vs. *controlling* what happens next?

Head shaking. I just don't understand.

Insanity: Writing Advice from a Stage Zero Writer

Also in "Of Interest" today, I've linked to an article by Nathan Branford on how to stop writing a novel. (Coincidentally, Nathan is also the author of *How to Write a Novel*.) I was astounded by this quote:

"For the last year and a half, I've written nearly a dozen drafts of a novel. I wrote (or rewrote) 1,000 words every day, cancelled plans to work on my novel, and dreamed of publication."

But what was truly astounding was what he wrote a little later in the article:

"About six months into the writing process, I knew my novel wasn't going to work."

Frown. Yeah? Then why keep at it for another year?

Then I noticed the article was actually a guest post by a would-be writer named Lindsay Syhakhom, a Stage 1 or Stage 0 writer who hasn't written any published fiction that I could find but who hands out advice to other would-be writers.

Ahh. Okay. So I'll cut to the chase. I've both finished a bunch of novels and stopped writing a couple of them, so I can say this with clarity and confidence.

Know how to stop writing a novel?

First, take your fingers off the keyboard. Then,

- * if you want to abandon it completely, close the file and drag it to the trash.
- * if you might return to it someday, close it and put it in your Someday file.
- * if it's a good idea but you want to start over, close the file, open a new one, and start writing again.

But more importantly, know how to keep writing a novel?

1. Trust your creative voice and Just Write the Next Sentence, then the next and the next. I know this sounds overly simple, and it is, but it works. Do this no matter how many times it's necessary. Your readers will thank you.

I can hear some of you saying “But what if the novel really actually sucks? Will they thank me then?”

2. Yes, they will, because what *you* believe sucks, they might flat love. Your opinion of your work is still only one opinion, and it isn’t even the one opinion that counts. The only opinion that counts is the reader’s opinion. And it “counts” only with that reader.

So go, read the article. At one point, Lindsay actually writes “Later drafts were worse than early drafts.”

Um, yes. Of course. Duh. I could have saved her a year and a half and told her up front that rewriting would only make her work worse.

But again, read the article. Witness how deeply she descended into the critical voice, even while she’s aware she’s descending into the critical voice. She was in critical voice before she ever started writing. Look again at the second quote of the day.

Frankly, I would be surprised if she’s ever able to write a novel. With her current mindset, it’s too much for her to pull off.

Nobody can write a novel, but anyone can write a sentence, a paragraph, a scene. Do that enough times, and you’ve written a novel.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Bestseller Status: It takes a Hell of a Lot of Work ...” at <http://vinzandri.com/bestseller-status-it-takes-a-hell-of-a-lot-of-work/>.

See “You’ve Got To Live The Moment” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/youve-got-to-live-the-moment.html>. How close he came to great advice. If only he’d left out the editing part.

See “Questions of Life and Death” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/questions-of-life-and-death.html>.

See “How to stop writing a novel” at <https://nathanbransford.com/blog/2021/09/how-to-stop-writing-a-novel/>. (Thanks to the Passive Guy.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 920 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for the year.....	623282
Total nonfiction words for August...	3110
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	158330
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	781612
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Nathan Branford](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Vincent Zandri](#)

The Journal: A Day Out

September 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Day Out and a Short Progress Report
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Tell the Editor and Writer to take a walk and let the Child write whatever it wants.” Clive Matson

“We’re writers. We write. If something gets in the way of the writing, it does not belong in our toolbox.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Today we’re going out of town to estate sales, etc. More to spend a day out of our normal environs than for any other reason. A kind of treasure hunt. But there’s a lot in “Of Interest” so I thought I’d post this first.

For any who are wondering, I'm still struggling with the fog that ensued with kicking the cigar habit, but the fog isn't as thick, and the cravings and withdrawal symptoms are mostly gone. I was surprised to see that it's only been a little over a month. It feels like at least a year since I've written anything.

Anyway, I feel as if I've turned a corner and will be able to write fiction again soon. Frankly, I can hardly wait.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "The Creative Unconscious in Writing" at <https://authorspublish.com/the-creative-unconscious-in-writing/>. Interesting.

See "13 Things 'Star Trek' Gets Right (and Wrong) About Space Tech" at <https://www.space.com/33600-star-trek-space-technology-countdown.html>. Interesting opinions, but very so-what. Trek is science fantasy. It doesn't have to stick to facts.

See "The Human Body in Space: 6 Weird Facts" at <https://www.space.com/20730-human-body-spaceflight-weird-facts.html>.

See "FBI v. Local Police: Are You Guilty of Recycling Clichés" at <https://leelofland.com/fbi-v-local-police-are-you-guilty-of-recycling-cliches/>.

See "Some Pop-Up Descriptions" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/some-pop-up-descriptions/>. This is about red herrings.

See "Research And Learning And Blogging" at <https://kriswrites.com/2021/09/08/business-musings-research-and-learning-and-blogging-jumping-the-digital-divide-part-5/>.

See "Amazon Dangles a New Perk in Fight for U.S. Workers: Free Bachelor's Degrees" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-dangles-a-new-perk-in-fight-for-u-s-workers-free-bachelors-degrees/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 290 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 3400

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 158620
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 781902

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Making a Story Important

September 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Making a Story Important
- * A Fallacy
- * Prejudgment Stinks
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Full of bull on every page.” Jack Kerouac in a letter to Allen Ginsberg about Truman Capote's writing

“That isn't writing at all. It's typing.” Truman Capote about Kerouac's On the Road

I wasn't going to post today at all, but then I read Kelley's comment on my previous post, “Insanity.” I assume the comment referred to my subtopic on “how to keep writing a novel.”

But as I was writing that, the notion of making a story “important” was tugging on my sleeve too.

Take a look at today's Kill Zone blog post, "Write, and Live Forever" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/write-and-live-forever.html>. This article could have been titled "How to Make a Story So Important It Freezes You Solid."

I left a comment on the article:

"I write one clean draft and publish. In that endeavor, I always bear in mind two things:

"1. I really am the worst judge of my own work, but that's true in both directions, when I think the work is good and when I think it's bad, and

"2. No matter what I think of the work, the reader's opinion is the only one that matters."

A Fallacy

A little later in the article, James Scott Bell writes, "I recall reading a piece by an early indie pioneer who posited that maybe the idea is to be fast and not worry about top quality."

Okay, that's an immediate fallacy, yet it's one that "traditional" (outline, rewrite, revise, polish) writers repeat as often as possible. And it's pure, unadulterated bull patties. Writing "fast" does not necessarily mean a lack of "top quality." It just means the prolific writer is spending more time in the chair.

Mr. Bell doesn't say who the indie pioneer is, so the quote can't be fact-checked, but frankly it doesn't sound right. For example, I can't imagine ANY writer saying, "Why write better? What's the benefit?" as this indie pioneer allegedly did.

And after that bombshell, the indie writer allegedly wrote, "I'm talking about releasing a book that would average 3.7 stars from readers, whereas if I spent an extra month on it, I could average 4.2."

Okay, let's think about that. How does ANY writer know a book will average 3.7 stars? And how does any writer know spending an extra month on a book will increase the average to 4.2 stars? That's just silly.

For one thing, the only way this argument could possibly be tested is by releasing a book, seeing what star-rating average it receives over time, then "improving" it, re-releasing it, and waiting to see whether the star average goes up or down.

By the way, I don't even do that with my first readers. They check for typos, wrong words, etc. In other words, they check for things that are black or white, right or wrong. But yes, occasionally they express an opinion about the story (e.g., "Maybe you should have blah blah blah), which I generally ignore. Why? Because what one reader likes another reader won't like. If I chose to try to "fix" things to suit one reader's taste, then another's, then another's, I would never write anything new again.

But again, all of that's just silly. While the writer's standing-still and working on the rewrite, the rest of the world is moving on. Reader interests change with world events, and reader tastes change with age and newly developed interests. But even that isn't the biggest silliness in this fallacy.

The biggest silliness is the apparent ignorance of the fact that one reader's trash is another reader's treasure. What is a 3.7-star story for one reader is a 5.0-star story for another (and yes, a 1.2-star story to another). Don't fall into the endless trap of trying to please everyone. You're the writer. Your job is to write. Judging the story is the reader's job. And frankly, what the reader thinks of your story is none of your business.

Prejudgement Stinks

You can like your own work (or not) one story at a time, and you can speculate about what readers might like or might not like all you want. But you cannot decide for a reader what he or she will actually enjoy reading.

When you rewrite a work, or when you decide to put it in a drawer rather than publishing it, you're prejudging your story for all of its potential readers. In effect, you're deciding for someone else what they will or will not have a chance to enjoy. Would you allow anyone to make that decision for you?

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Strange, repeating radio signal near the center of the Milky Way has scientists stumped" at <https://www.space.com/strange-radio-source-milky-way-center>. Wow. Talk about story ideas!

See "Strange Methods: Zadie Smith's First Twenty Pages" at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/strange-methods-zadie-smiths-first>. Hey, whatever. You know my take: Write it once, write it cleanly, and move on to the next project.

See "9/11...Heroes and Houdinis" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/9-11-heroes-and-houdinis.html>.

See "What is the Easiest Font to Read?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-is-the-easiest-font-to-read/>. I use Georgia. I picked it over Times New Roman because in Georgia, the lower-case "e" doesn't look like a lower-case "c". Of the three fonts mentioned by name in the article, Merriweather is both free and a great font for readability. The other two are proprietary.

For fun, see "Compilation of President Reagan's Humor from Selected Speeches" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTIfGFJqLko>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 910 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 4310

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 159530

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 782812

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [President Reagan](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Checking In

September 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Writing lags
- * Carmelita Ramos
- * Kill Zone blog
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Writing Lags

I was recently reminded that only last year I had a four-month (May through August) lag in writing. Weird how the mind forgets things like that. Here I was thinking this is the longest I’ve gone without the ability to write, but that just isn’t true. I’m currently only about six weeks into

my current lag, and it's for a much better reason. So I'm going to try to not worry about it so much and just wait it out.

That said, I can feel my superpowers returning. (grin) Joking aside, thanks for continuing to be there. Your support means everything.

Carmelita Ramos

Apparently Carmelita Ramos will appear in the next short story or novel I write. She popped into my head one day, and she actually said, "Write me down." So I wrote her name down. Surely that's what she meant. Write down her name so I wouldn't forget it.

But that wasn't it. She wants me to literally write her. Not her name. Her. Should be interesting. I guess we'll see.

I was actually mentioned by name in the Kill Zone blog post this morning about Pixar's Rules for storytelling. Cool.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Pixar's 22 Storytelling Rules" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/pixars-22-storytelling-rules.html>.

See "Coming Up With New Stretch Awards" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/coming-up-with-new-stretch-awards/> *and see the comments*.

See "Amazon A+ Content" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/amazon-a-content.html>.

See "Viktor Frankl on the Human Search for Meaning" at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/03/26/viktor-frankl-mans-search-for-meaning/>. After reading this, I bought Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning, which according to the article, he wrote "in 9 consecutive days." That's an average of around 5000 words per day.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 280 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 4590

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 159810
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 783092

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
 Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
 Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
 Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [BrainPickings.org](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#)

The Journal: An Inane Quote

September 20, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * An Inane Quote
- * A lot to see
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day (an inanity)

“Everything is a decision.” Matthew Salesses in Craft in the Real World (as noted in an article in “Of Interest”)

What a stupid, inane quote.

The problem is, we’re talking about two different “real worlds” here. Granted, in the real world of timid, frightened, uncertain writers—a world that is admittedly much larger than the world in which I reside—certainly everything from character “development” to setting to scenes and plot points is a conscious decision. Because if those timid little writers don’t “decide” all of those things, if they don’t exercise absolute control, then, then, OMG! *Something Bad* might happen.

Yawn. How boring. And how pretentious of them to actually believe any reader anywhere cares which particular word the writer chooses or whether the writer decides to make the protagonist active or passive or—gosh, I don't know—passive aggressive or even tarantular piquant.

In the other real world, the one in which I reside, storytellers just tell stories. There's nothing "important" about the stories except as determined later by individual readers. The stories are only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment.

In this world, we know that readers don't care about our decision-making process, or whether we even have one. Readers just want a good story, and they reserve for themselves the right to decide what does or doesn't fit their definition of "good."

And from the readers' perspective, it's exactly the same back in that other real world. Even in that world, despite the writers' unreasoning fears, there are no real-world consequences to writing a "bad" story or a "flawed" character or anything else. If you're a storyteller, some of what you write will be brilliant and some of it will be crap. To You.

But to readers, what you thought was brilliant might be crap and what you thought was crap might be brilliant. The point is, the harder you consciously *Try* to write a good story, the more likely you are to turn out a piece that nobody will enjoy. What is well-thought-out equates with Predictable.

As I've said here many times, as a writer and storyteller, your job is to write the story, not to judge it. Judging it is the readers' job.

So there you have it. In both versions of the real world—both the world of the blind leading the blind through the clichéd-advice echo chamber and the world of professional long-term storytellers—the quote of the day is a lie.

Among storytellers, the opposite of the quote of the day is true: Nothing is a decision. Once you put your fingers on the keyboard and trust your characters, you just write.

There's admittedly a lot to see in "Of Interest" today. That's the main reason I posted today.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Why and How I Got My Rights Back from HarperCollins" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-i-got-my-rights-back/>.

See "How I Became the Honest Broker" at <https://tedgioia.substack.com/p/how-i-became-the-honest-broker>. A very good read.

See “Supply Chain Woes...Traditional, Indie, And More” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/supply-chain-woestradiational-indie-and-more/>. I tried to click through to the OP but the link is currently broken. (I think Kris’s site is down.)

See “How Forensic Botany Catches Killers” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/how-forensic-botany-catches-killers/>.

See “Ebooks Are an Abomination” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ebooks-are-an-abomination/>. Read the comments.

See “Active Protagonists are a Tool of the Patriarchy” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/active-protagonists-are-a-tool-of-the-patriarchy/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 51600

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 160380

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 783662

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Jane Friedman](#), [Substack](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Some Fun, and Serious Stuff

September 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Some Fun
- * Serious Stuff
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A little fun this morning. See Nathan Bransford's "How a book goes from acquisitions to bookstore shelves" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-a-book-goes-from-acquisitions-to-bookstore-shelves/>. But be sure to see PG's comment at the end of the OP.

And now, some serious stuff, including a serious look at how to get story ideas. Please go read "True Crime Thursday – A Small Town's Loss of Innocence" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/true-crime-thursday-a-small-towns-loss-of-innocence.html>. There will be a quiz.

Okay, did you read it? I know, it's horrible, frightening, etc. But as a writer it's also rich with story fodder.

The article, written from the POV of a witness to the aftermath of the actual event, struck me immediately as a source of numerous story ideas:

1. Write it from various "friendly" PsOV:
 - a. one of the cops, male or female, ranking or line officer.
 - b. the assistant manager
 - c. another direct witness to the actual event
 - d. the "good Samaritan"

Of course, a story written from any of those PsOV will presume the owner of the blue pickup is a generic bad guy. But you could also write a story from the POV of the shooter. Honestly, this POV most appeals to me.

What caused him to be living in his pickup? He was "camping" in a gym parking lot so he could rent shower facilities, but what series of events, misunderstandings, etc. led to him being run off from his previous location? And before that, who was he? Had he held a job? A career? Did he have a wife and family? Was he just down on his luck, or was he a perpetual bum?

Why did he choose another gym in the same chain? (Was it the only chain in that part of the state or did he select that chain for a particular reason?)

The author of the article said management had received "complaints" about him from customers. What complaints or what sorts of complaints? Was he begging for money? Was he openly harassing customers? Or did the customers simply not like that he was camping in "their" parking lot.

Note: The names of those involved other than the initial victim have not been released as of this writing. If I were personally going to write from the POV of the shooter, I would wait to learn his name just in case it made a difference. You never know.

Actually, you could write several stories or a novel (or two) based on this event.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “27 Literary Magazines Publishing Hybrid Writing” at <https://authorspublish.com/27-literary-magazines-publishing-hybrid-writing/>.

See “First Page Critique: Using Setting And Action To Inject Suspense” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/first-page-critique-using-setting-and-action-to-inject-suspense.html>.

See “Potential predatory scholarly open-access publishers” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/potential-predatory-scholarly-open%e2%80%91access-publishers/>. See PG’s note about vanity or subsidy publishers, all of whom are predatory.

See “Home On the Moon: How to Build a Lunar Colony (Infographic)” at <https://www.space.com/21588-how-moon-base-lunar-colony-works-infographic.html>. For any SF writers out there. Interesting info.

See “Writing for audio made me a better writer, period” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-for-audio-made-me-a-better-writer-period/>. Interesting concept.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 5660

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 160880

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 784162

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: A Pair of Real Writers

September 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I am not a writer
- * An email and some thoughts on WITD
- * Don Pendleton and Michael Newton: A Pair of Real Writers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers.” T.S. Eliot via The Passive Voice

“Comparison is the thief of joy.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

By my own definition, I am not currently a writer, much less a “real” writer. With all that I’ve written I suppose I could still lay claim to the title, but it wouldn’t feel right. At the moment, it just isn’t true.

A writer is a person who writes. A real writer is a person who writes consistently, who writes because that’s just what s/he does. It’s who s/he is. I’ll be back to being a writer (and a real writer) soon, I hope, but at the moment, I’m neither.

A reader of the Journal and writer, Alexander T, emailed to say he’d recently finished his 10th novel. He’s 33 years old and has no children, and in that context complained that he was surprised to realize he’d written so little.

Now, Alexander and I have been in touch for a few years and he knows my take on it. He knows about Heinlein's Rules and about trusting yourself and writing into the dark. Apparently, for one reason or another, he just can't quite pull the trigger on it.

And of course, Alexander is not alone. He's far from unique in his inability to trust himself and just write into the dark.

For various reasons, inane as it seems on the surface, some writers will never believe in themselves strongly enough to choose the advice of a real, prolific fiction writer over what they learned in school from non-writers. You know, the non-writer professional educators who did their best to convince us NOT to trust ourselves. I know. Go figure.

And to add to the inanity, the pro writers who teach WITD don't even ask you to believe them. They just lay out the technique and then urge you to believe in YOURSELF.

When I first started talking about Heinlein's Rules and WITD around 7 years ago, I suppose I assumed that if I could do something anyone could. That's why I laid bare my successes and failures in this Journal for all to observe. For some reason I thought if I shared this wonderful, freeing technique, everyone would soak it up.

But of course, we're all different. The truth is, not everyone WANTS to engage in a freeing technique. And honestly, that was something of an epiphany for me. How can anyone not want writing to be great fun?

But many, many writers are actually frightened of absolute freedom in writing. It's very likely that they're frightened of one or more purely imaginary consequences. What if someone doesn't like their story or novel? Oh no! Will the world end? Uh, no.

Or maybe they're only frightened of being solely responsible for their writing. If they write into the dark, they can't blame anyone else for anything, because they alone have input. Or maybe they just need to be told what to do, what steps to follow, so they constantly have touchstones.

I personally believe it's a combination of these things. I believe they are indeed frightened of imaginary consequences, but I also believe they need the security of structure and ceremony. The "smells and bells" of the writing world, so to speak. I believe those folks have an innate need to follow a formula: do this (outline, character sketches, etc.), then this (write), then this (revise), then this (receive critiques), then this (rewrite X number of times) and they will be successful.

Well, some very few of them will. But an overwhelming majority of them will not.

It's ironic that—during this time of my *not* writing—I've finally come to understand that not everyone wants to be happy and free in their writing, that writing into the dark really isn't for everyone. I still believe it's the best way to go about writing fiction, but I also understand that some folks probably will never be able to trust in their own abilities.

Enter Don Pendleton and Michael Newton.

In his email, Alexander mentioned having found Don Pendleton. Pendleton is the author of 125 books, the originator of The Executioner series, and the man who is credited with coining the terms “action-adventure” and “live large.” You can find his bio at <https://www.donpendleton.com/bio.html>.

Alexander also pointed out Michael Newton. Only a year my senior before he passed away earlier this month, Newton was all that I aspire to be. He is the author of well over 300 novels and other books.

Newton is inexorably tied to Pendleton because he’s one of the writers who took over writing The Executioner series after Pendleton stopped. Very interesting guy, at least from the standpoint of being a writer. Check out his site at <http://michaelnewton.homestead.com/>.

Do I know for a fact that Pendleton and Newton followed Heinlein’s Rules and wrote into the dark? No, of course I don’t. But it’s hard to imagine that they didn’t. Just do the math.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Business Musings: Comparison is the Thief of Joy” at <https://kriswrites.com/2021/09/22/business-musings-comparison-is-the-thief-of-joy/>.

See “Haiku...an Introduction” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/haiku-an-introduction.html>.

See “Contraband: Finally, No More Cakes and Pies Containing Saws and Files!” at <https://leelofland.com/contraband-finally-no-more-cakes-and-pies-containing-saws-and-files/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 900 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 6560

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 161780

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 785062

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Don Pendeleton](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Michael Newton](#)

The Journal: Analogies and a Clarification

September 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Yesterday’s post
- * Some writers and some drivers: analogies
- * My experience, a clarification, and more of my experience
- * The essential key
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

This is long. My apologies in advance.

Yesterday’s post struck a chord with a few folks. There were emails and there were comments. In one comment, Matt P called the post a “low-KT tactical nuke.” (grin) In another, Anitha K wrote “on days when WITD seems to lead me down an underground mine with no exit in sight, it’s that much harder to trust it.” I encourage you to [read the comments and my brief responses](#).

The initial, central idea behind the post was that despite how much we naturally believe other people are like us—that they have our values and tendencies, our discipline and abilities, our passions and desires—in reality that simply isn’t true.

I do believe most people are GENERALLY alike even across cultures and national boundaries. I’m traveled just widely enough to believe that most people are “good” people who just want to live their lives and enjoy their friends and family, everyday frustrations and general cultural differences aside.

But when it boils down to specifics, individual people are not alike at all. For our purposes, that means different writers trust or believe or get-used-to different methods to put their story on the page.

Some writers can charge into a thunderstorm and simply trust that they'll come out the other side. They revel in the thrill of the unknown, experiencing events as they unfold. Others have to know the windspeed and direction, anticipated precipitation, and whether there's a monster hidden in the cloud bank before they'll even consider running in. The first small group will be able to bring themselves to write into the dark. The second, much larger group, will not.

I like analogies. Let me give you another, maybe more apt one:

There are a few folks who are capable of climbing into a vehicle one morning, backing out of the driveway, and Just Driving for the thrill of driving. They don't plan their route and they don't carry a map. They don't even anticipate what they'll see around the next turn or over the next hill. They don't want to know in advance. They simply revel in the wonder of whatever they discover.

These folks have no specific destination in mind. They only want to go where the road leads them and discover what they're given to discover. They are addicted to the sheer wonder of revelation, and they trust that everything will turn out fine in the end.

As you've probably guessed, those are the writers who are able to write into the dark.

Now, absolutely anyone who owns a vehicle CAN climb in and Just Drive if they want to, but most never will, and for good reason. In the long run, there are responsibilities to consider. In the short term, what if they run out of gas? Or what if they get a flat tire? Or what if the paved road turns to dirt or gravel? What then? (Sweat beads appear at only the thought of something unexpected happening.)

Still, the idea of being a free spirit sounds really cool, so they get into the car, back out of the driveway, and drive to the service station to top off the tank, check the oil and coolant, wash the windshield, etc. While they're there, they buy a map Just In Case. Next, they go to a tire shop and have the attendant check the spare tire and the jack, making sure everything's in working order.

But as they pull away from the tire shop, they think *Well, it's late in the day. What if I run out of daylight while I'm on the road? That wouldn't be good, especially since I don't know where I'm going. I can see only so far down the road in the glow of my headlights. It's an adventure for sure, but there are limits. There's no reason to risk doing myself harm or getting lost. Maybe I'll wait 'til tomorrow. The car's ready. I'll wait 'til tomorrow, and then I'll go for sure.*

And the next morning—and the next and the next and the next—something comes up. And a week or ten days later, when the bold urge to Just Go strikes again, they go out, get into the car, and realize the gas tank isn't full. Better top it off. And the spare might have leaked. Better have it checked. And where is that map? Better buy another one just in case.

Those are writers who WANT to write into the dark but can't quite pull the trigger on it.

Now, I hasten to add, as Dean Wesley Smith often says, every writer is different, and that's fine.

My experience, a clarification, and more of my experience—When I first heard of Heinlein’s Rules and WITD, I made a conscious decision to trust Dean. To me, it only made sense to trust him as a prolific professional writer with hundreds of credits to his name. So I took a deep breath, stepped off the cliff, and plunged into the unknown. I also trusted Bradbury, that I would somehow build my writing wings on the way down.

It was a thrill. I was excited that I could potentially write a story, even a whole novel, while having absolutely no clue where it was going from one scene to the next. None of that mattered. I only knew I wanted to feel excited as I was telling stories. I wanted storytelling to be fun, not work, not drudgery.

I also knew that plunging in and giving WITD an honest try was the only way I could personally know for sure whether it actually worked. Not for anyone else, but for me personally. If I fudged at all, I would never know whether WITD would work. And not knowing was never an option I was willing to consider.

Besides, I also knew I was never in any real danger, was I? What would happen to me if I tried WITD—I mean REALLY tried it—and it didn’t work? Absolutely nothing. I could always trudge back to the bread-and-soup line of outlining, character sketching, etc. There’s a lot of comfort in realizing your greatest fears are BS.

A clarification—In yesterday’s post I referred to that bread-and-soup-line ritual as the “smells and bells” approach to writing. I did not mean to present that as a viable alternative to WITD. It isn’t.

Practitioners of WITD tell pure stories straight from their characters via their creative subconscious. Those who use the smells-and-bells approach consciously think their way through much (if not all) of the story, severely watering down and taming the story that might have been.

So when I mentioned the smells-and-bells approach, I was referring to it as a safety apparatus that exists *for those who are unable to trust that they don’t need it*. Non writers (English teachers, et al) and traditional writers would have you believe if you go through the entire ritual and touch all the magic stones, you’ll somehow call forth the magical writer fairy dust and be annointed a professional writer.

What will actually happen is that you’ll teach your creative mind that you don’t trust it, that you personally believe your own critical mind and the critical minds of others know better than your CREATIVE mind how to CREATE a story.

But back to my own experience, I have to admit I was never in danger of rejoining the smells-and-bells crowd either. Been there, done that, threw away the t-shirt. For me, knowing what’s going to happen in a story is far too boring. If WITD hadn’t worked for me, I would have simply found something else fun to do. Like fishing.

Anyway, it turned out all right for me. I tried WITD—again, REALLY trusted it and tried it—and I’ve turned out an incredible number of words and novels and series and short stories in the past 7 years. And you can too.

It isn’t even a matter of trusting me, or Dean for that matter. It’s a matter of trusting yourself.

You only have to stop thinking about it and worrying about it. You only have to take a deep breath, stop making excuses, and do it.

Finally, I believe the most essential key to being able to write into the dark is to begin with the understanding that no novel and no story is inherently important. You will turn out work that is incredibly important to some people, and that’s all you can hope for.

There will also be some who sort of like your work or who don’t like it at all, but so what? Whether and who enjoys or detests your work isn’t the point. The point is that you’re a writer, and that means you’re the first person ever to hear your characters’ story. It doesn’t even matter whether you personally like or dislike what you’ve written. All that matters is that you wrote it and some readers will like it.

The story itself isn’t important beyond being a few minutes’ or a few hours’ entertainment. The story itself isn’t important in the slightest. What’s important is that you fulfilled your destiny as a writer: what’s important is not *what* you wrote, but **THAT** you wrote.

We aren’t dealing with life or death here. We’re only dealing with, as Lawrence Block put it, *Telling Lies for Fun and Profit*. Nothing more serious than that.

Writing into the dark is not the “only” way to write fiction, not by a long shot. But it’s the most freeing way. All you have to do is really want it.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Was Marilyn Monroe’s Death Actually a Homicide?” at <http://dyingwords.net/was-marilyn-monroe-murdered/>.

See “3 Writing Prompts to Spark Your Creativity” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/3-writing-prompts-to-spark-your-creativity/>.

See “On Going Exclusive” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/on-going-exclusive.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1630 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 623282
Total nonfiction words for August... 8190
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 163410
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 786692

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#)

The Journal: Filling in a Few Blanks

September 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Great comment
- * Filling in a Few blanks
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I have also been far less critical of my painting (probably because I had no expectations of success!) and happier to let a painting emerge and evolve over time. This has given me the freedom to experiment and try new approaches and techniques without obsessing about the end result. ... Now I see that if I adopted the kind of approach and attitude I have to my painting, the writing process could be far less fraught with self-doubt and criticism.” Claire Langley-Hawthorne

Great comment on yesterday's post. (Thanks, Matt.) Matt's comment and my response pretty much constitute an extra blog post by themselves. [I urge you to read it.](#)

Filling in a Few blanks—Over the past couple of days, I've talked about the value and thrill and rewards inherent in writing into the dark. I've openly affirmed that WITD isn't for everyone. Certainly everyone is capable of it, but very few are trusting enough of themselves to actually do it.

Writing into the dark requires a lot of letting go.

It requires that you trust your creative subconscious after you've spent a lifetime listening to others actively teaching you that your creative subconscious is not worthy of that trust. That you should always double-check and-or have others double-check your work, that you should allow your conscious, critical mind to rewrite what your creative subconscious has wrought.

Initially you were taught those negative thoughts in school by people who most often were not fiction writers themselves. They probably meant well, but the fact is, they had no clue what they were talking about. And even today across the internet and in writers' groups and conferences and conventions and how-to books, fellow writers echo and reinforce those same negative thoughts.

But intentionally involving the conscious, critical mind in your writing at any time is a mistake.

Invoking the critical mind before you write—and putting together ANY kind of outline, character sketch, etc. requires conscious thought and the involvement of the critical mind—tells your creative subconscious you don't trust it to come up with a structured story and viable situations and characters.

Involving the critical mind during the creation of the story (consciously reading, "looking for" problems, revising) tells your creative mind you're checking up on it and sends a clear signal that you don't trust it.

And involving your and other critical minds (critique group, anyone?) after the fact again tells your creative mind blatantly that you don't trust it.

To me that's just silly. To me, it makes sense that if you want to "create" something, you should invoke your "creative" subconscious. And having done so, you should trust it completely, and not abandon or contradict it because of input from your or anyone else's conscious, critical mind. Be loyal to yourself and defend your work fiercely.

Nothing good in literature ever came from the conscious, critical mind.

Unfortunately, most (like 99.999%) of prolific, long-term professional writers wisely keep their storytelling process to themselves.

Fortunately, now and then a few (DWS, Block, Child, King) individually or collectively, intentionally or inadvertently, leak the secret to becoming a prolific professional storyteller: The secret is to let go of all the negative crap you've absorbed and trust yourself. It's that easy and that difficult.

If you Trust Yourself you will write more and you will enjoy it more. You will also hunger to learn more about the craft.

As you learn more about the craft and then practice what you learn by writing more, your storytelling skills will improve and you will sell more.

Don't hover over a work. Don't revise or rewrite or otherwise try to make it "better." Write it, submit or publish it, and move on to the next work. Always keep moving forward.

As I've also affirmed recently, although WITD is not the only way to write fiction, it literally is the only way for ME to write fiction. I count myself as very fortunate. I've seen the joyful side of writing. I could never go back to slogging through all the myths.

For me, writing is never drudgery, never a "labor" of love or any other kind of labor. But then, I'm only enabling my characters to convey the story that they, not I, am living.

Consider, in *their* story, the characters are off on a spaceship to a distant planet or sighting through a rifle scope at enemy lines or laying charges along a strategically significant bridge or riding wild on a good horse in a just cause. They're doing exciting things, and I get to be the first to hear about those things.

On the other hand, in my own story, I'm sitting here at my desk in the Hovel as my fingers move over a keyboard. In my bland, unexciting story, I'm serving as the stenographer for my imaginary friends. And I know I'm a fortunate, fortunate man. Because if the characters themselves had keyboards and fingers, I wouldn't be necessary at all.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Art Lessons" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/art-lessons.html>. Sorry. All I can do is shake my head and say "Duh."

The Numbers

The Journal..... 870 words

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Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for the year.....	623282
Total nonfiction words for August...	9060
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	164280
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	787562
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: A New DWS Series of Posts

September 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * I no longer subscribe
- * A New DWS Series of Posts
- * A promotion myth revealed
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

If it matters to you that you get market news, etc. from Authors Publish, you’ll want to go to <https://authorspublish.com/> and subscribe. It’s free. I’m no longer subscribed, so I won’t be passing along their information any longer.

Likewise for David Farland’s writing tips newsletter. Go to <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-blog/>, scroll to the bottom of the page, and enter your information to subscribe (free). I’m no longer a subscriber. Too much nonformation for me.

This morning, DWS started a new series of blog posts titled *The Wet Blanket Reality*. I found it eerie how closely on-point he was with my own recent blog posts. Especially in the third section, “So Why Call the Introduction ‘The Myths’?”

Remember I was talking about what we all learn from well-meaning teachers in school? Here's an excerpt from Dean's post:

"The ... myths of writing fiction are taught to all of us in school from a very early age. Myths like 'Fiction writing is special.' Or 'Fiction writing is hard.'

"It is neither special or hard. But as kids in school, we watch teachers who have never written a novel take apart novels, find them amazing, and thus teach that writing novels or stories must be special and must be hard. Teaching out of ignorance. Teachers just don't know that sitting alone in a room and making stuff up is great fun and scary easy if you are willing to keep learning."

A few paragraphs later, he makes another great point: "If you could hold a pen as a kid, you could become a writer as long as you don't ... outline and world build so much ahead of time [that] there is nothing left to write."

That was a point I failed to make in my recent posts, but it gets straight to the heart of the matter. If you outline, write character sketches, world-build, etc. when you sit down to actually write the story there will be nothing left to write. You will have written everything that's interesting about the story, and you'll face a boring exercise of filling in the blanks.

And that is my personal anathema: If I already know the whole story of a novel because the author spilled the plot into the sales copy, why would I bother reading it? I won't, because what entertainment value is left?

Likewise, if I already wrote the whole story of a novel in an outline, why would I bother writing the novel itself? Why would I put myself through that slogging drudgery when there are tons of other good stories to write that I haven't heard yet? Again, I wouldn't.

I've related the story here before of a crime novel I was working on a few years ago: [Situation Solved](#). When I was around 34,000 words in, a friend visited. As we chatted, I told him a little about the novel. Before he could stop himself, he blurted out what he thought would be a great ending.

He was right—it would be a great ending—but knowing it in advance ruined the story for me, so there was no reason to write more on that story until the memory went away. (This is why you should never talk with anyone about your work in progress.)

So I set the novel aside, and I moved on to write several other novels before returning to finish that story sometime later. It finally wrapped at 58,000 words with an ending that was unexpected but occurred naturally from writing into the dark.

Anyway, Dean's post is a good one (typos, etc. aside) and promises to lead to a good series of posts and a good book.

Not surprisingly, another myth is presented in today’s Kill Zone blog: If you want to sell books, you have to sometimes “sit at a lonely table full of books in front of Barnes & Noble, directing people to the restroom.” In other words, you have to do physical book signings, etc.

Nope. You can, of course, put the time and money into a self-styled book tour. I’ve done that before back when I was traditionally published. And yes, book sales went up when I toured or when I spoke at writers’ conferences.

I invested days at a time and hundreds of dollars in gasoline, hotel rooms, and time to those endeavors, and I made 95 cents per book sold. (I had a very lucrative 10% royalty from the publisher.) So when I’d sold 100 books I’d made \$95. I’ll let you use your imagination to subtract hotels, gas, etc.

Each time an ebook of that same title sells today (and the ebook is priced at only \$4.99), I make \$3.50. When I’ve sold 100 books I’ve made \$350. And there is no cost for hotels and gas. But again, you do the math.

So all in all, I find it much wiser and more time effective to invest minutes in social media, my Amazon author profile, etc. instead of days on the road.

Of course, your results might vary, so I’ve included the Kill Zone blog post in “Of Interest” as well.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “The Wet Blanket Reality... Introduction” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/the-wet-blanket-reality-introduction/>.

See “With a Little Help from My Friends” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/with-a-little-help-from-my-friends.html>.

See “Ancient Footprints Push Back Date of Human Arrival in the Americas” at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/23/science/ancient-footprints-ice-age.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 9920
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 165140
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 788422

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#)

The Journal: WITD and Cycling

September 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Nothing good in literature
- * WITD and Cycling
- * Readers are different
- * All of that being said
- * Some good songs
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A couple of days ago I wrote that “Nothing good in literature ever came from the conscious, critical mind.” Given that “good” resides in the eye of the beholder and given that we can never know how good a plotted work might have been had it been written into the dark, I’ll stand by my statement.

A friend emailed me part of an article (copied and pasted) from Quora that offered an example of a carefully planned-out work of fiction.

I read what he sent. But one, I’ve never heard of the author mentioned in the article (French writer Georges Perec) or any of his books, and two, we have only the author of the article’s word that the book in question was “four years in the planning.”

You can see at least part of the article by going to <https://poetryintheraw.quora.com/What-major-literary-work-was-carefully-planned-out-in-advance> and scrolling down to Alex Johnston (should be the first answer).

WITD and Cycling

While I was poking around Quora and looking, I also found this question and answer:

“Q: What major literary work was carefully planned out in advance?”

“A (from Alex Jouravlev): I am surprised nobody mentioned the Harry Potter series. It has so many easter eggs, some very careful planning is definite.”

ANNND *THIS* is exactly why English teachers believe (and teach) that writers must outline and plot and plan. The teacher takes a book apart, finds “easter eggs” and the like, and assumes the easter eggs, etc. must have all been planned in advance.

But that simply isn’t true. Ms. Rowling might well have plotted and planned the Potter books in her series, but not necessarily.

When I write, my characters often do unexpected things. I’ve mentioned this before.

If in Chapter 23, Aunt Marge suddenly pulls her deceased husband’s .38 snub nose revolver from the pocket of her housecoat at 2 a.m. and threatens the stranger in her living room, well, then that’s what happens so that’s what I’ll write. Never mind that I have no idea how the .38 got into the pocket of her housecoat in the first place. But that’s one of the great things about WITD and cycling.

Unstuck in time and cycling—so still in the creative subconscious—I’ll drift back to Chapter 19 or wherever Aunt Marge first awoke to odd sounds in the house. And as she gets out of bed, I’ll show her donning her housecoat, then reaching into the drawer in the nightstand to grab her dead husband’s revolver and slip it into her pocket.

Then I’ll smugly scroll back to where the white space starts and continues writing what the characters say and do and what occurs as a result. The key is that all of this is done while in the creative subconscious mind.

The point is, readers are different than writers. If a story is well written, readers will be stuck-in and pulled along by the timeline of the story. They jump in at the beginning and read straight through to the end. Because of that progression, they’ll assume the writer is a genius, that every easter egg, red herring, and plot twist and turn was carefully planned.

But stories don’t have to be written from Point A to Point Z. They only have to appear to have been written like that. Unlike the reader, the writer ISN’T stuck in the timeline of the story. The writer can move forward and back in the story at will and remain in the creative subconscious as s/he does so.

Okay, all of that being said, honestly I'm not sure why how others write or don't write even matters much to me. It doesn't really. After all, I've mostly defeated the myths and my own critical voice, so why should I care?

The only thing I can figure is that I've Been There (mired in the myths), am Now Here (WITD), and want to share the joy. I know better than to believe I can convince anyone, and really I'm not trying to.

I'm only saying "Here, take a look at this. It's very freeing, it costs you nothing, and it can give you everything. All that's required is that you honestly try it." Then if they try it, great. If they don't, at least I showed it to them.

There are some good songs/videos about driving at The Passive Voice today. See <http://www.thepassivevoice.com/>.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "The Wet Blanket Reality... Chapter One" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-wet-blanket-reality-chapter-one/>.

See "Indie Presses Have to Partner Up" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/indie-presses-have-to-partner-up/>. See PG's hilarious (and spot-on) comments.

See "Navigating Self Doubt" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/navigating-self-doubt/>. If you aren't living under a rock, I've given you the key to escape self-doubt over the past few days, not to mention the past few years. Self-doubt comes from your critical mind. Laugh at it and tell it to shut up. It will go away.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for August..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for August... 10740

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 165960

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 789242

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: One More Benefit of Being Prolific

October 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * One More Benefit of Being Prolific
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days.” Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

I didn’t know books (and films) affected others like this.

I received an email this morning from a person who apparently “follows” me on Amazon. She wrote, “Amazon announced yet another book publication by Harvey Stanbrough. How is it possible that you say you are not writing, yet books keep shooting out?”

Well, that’s one more benefit of being prolific. Your name is always out there, especially if you use pre-publication scheduling.

Since November 2020, I’ve written 17 novels, including the entire Ark series, *The Portals*, *Rider Jones*, *Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter* (the last volume of the Wes Crowley saga), and the four Wes Crowley Gap Series novels.

I published the first novel of The Ark series on November 28 and the second on December 26 of last year. Then I went into a publishing slump through January and February. I was writing, but I wasn’t publishing. I finally published the third novel of that series on March 13, 2021.

But beginning with that March 13 release, I've released fifteen novels in a row. What's more, I released one book every two weeks with only two exceptions. For some reason, in the first exception I released three novels in a two-week period (*The Journey Home: Part 6* on May 15, *Rider Jones* on May 26, and *The Journey Home: Part 7* on May 30). Probably I was in too big a rush to get *Rider Jones* out. In the second exception, there was no new release on July 15. I probably just missed it in my scheduling.

Finally, although I haven't written a word of fiction for the past two months, the Wes Crowley Gap Novel 4: *Return to the New Mexico Territory*, will release on October 15. With any luck at all I'll be writing again soon and I can continue my every-two-week publishing streak at least out to the end of the year.

So that's one more up side to being a prolific fiction writer. The more your name is out there on new books, the more easily and readily readers will find you and hear of you and be reminded of your work, and of course that means your sales go up.

Come to think of it, I'm not sure there *is* a down side to being a prolific fiction writer. Not in this wonderful new world of publishing. Well, other than the confusion that can ensue when you try to remember what you've published and what you haven't, etc. Dean talks a little about that in his post on his blog today.

Aside from the unlikely possibility of hitting a lightning-strike payday (at least mid-six figures), it's difficult for me to imagine why anyone in this era would even try to be "accepted" by a traditional publisher and be limited to one novel per year.

And then of course there are those "hybrid" writers who take advantage of indie publishing yet for whatever reason limit *themselves* to one or two novels per year. They limit themselves with all the stuff we've talked about over the past few posts: outlining, planning and plotting, revision, rewriting, submission of their work to critique groups, etc, all in the relentless pursuit of perfection. Which of course, doesn't exist.

To that kind of reasoning I can only shake my head. But I hasten to add, whatever they want to do is fine. I have enough to do just taking care of the fires in my own camp. So officially, I can only mimic what we so often hear around the internet in writer forums: Hey, whatever works for you.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Having Fun With Collections" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/having-fun-with-collections/>.

See "My 50-Cent Masters Degree in English Language" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/09/my-50-cent-masters-degree-in-english-language.html>.

See “Could a machine have an unconscious?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/could-a-machine-have-an-unconscious/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 660 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 660

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 166620

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 789902

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Being Prolific](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Traditional Publishing Contracts: Derivative Rights

October 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * From Dan Baldwin’s Writing Tip of the Week
- * About Kris Rusch Licensing Books
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There is only one thing you can do, I think. Log out of BookScan. Close Goodreads. Log off Twitter. And go write. I know it’s not a very original thought. But clichés can be true. Maybe it’s the only true thing.” Lincoln Michael

“At the root of most fear is what other people will think of us.” [*Courage is Calling*](#) by Ryan Holiday

Below is reprinted most of Dan Baldwin’s recent blog, which appeared in his Writing Tip of the Week on October 3. It was too good to not pass along, with his permission, of course:

Contracts: Derivative Rights

While rummaging through some old files I came across a contract offer from a major traditional publisher from many years ago. I thought I’d share the thoughts that popped into my mind. The following excerpt is taken directly from that contract, a contract I did not sign in its original form.

GRANT OF RIGHTS AND SUBSIDIARY RIGHTS

Author hereby grants to Publisher, for the full term of the applicable copyright in the Work in each and every country of the world....

Derivative Rights: The exclusive right to create adaptations and derivative works of, or any commercial products adapted or derived from, the Work or any element thereof....

Why is this a good idea?

Notice that the Author hands over (grants) a hell of a lot of rights to the publisher who had nothing to do with the creation of the original work, the characters, the plot or the hours spent blunting your fingers on the keyboard. The contract goes into great detail listing all the media past, present and future applicable to the great handover. Unless the contract specifies otherwise, the publisher controls the life of the book and anything developed from the book. Can you say movie... video game... paperback... toys... cereal boxes....

The creator grants all future goodies to the marketer. Again, why is this a good idea?

Such clauses, and there are many of them, are what I and many others call “dealbreakers.” I’m not so desperate to publish traditionally that I’d be willing to just grant the rights to something I’ve created.

“Well, well, Mr. Fleming, you’ve really come up with something with this James Bond of yours. We see a great future and a lot of income from the old boy. We’ll take it from here. All of it. Don’t let the door hit you in the butt as you leave.”

FYI – I did sign with the publisher, but not until we negotiated many significant changes in the initial offer. These days I wouldn't waste the effort. By the time I can handle all such negotiations, I can Indie publish and be well on my way to completing the next book.

The bottom line: when it comes to [granting rights], don't get taken.

Quote of the Week: "The meek shall inherit the earth... but the strong shall retain the mineral rights." Anonymous

Recommended Reading: [*Deal Breakers 2013: Contract Terms Writers Should Avoid*](#) by Kristine Kathryn Rusch

About Kris Rusch's Licensing Books

Thanks to Dan Baldwin for the post above.

Though Rusch herself wrote that *Deal Breakers 2013* is "woefully out of date," it might still be useful for anyone seeking a traditional publishing contract.

On the other hand, to read Kris' updated articles on Contracts and Dealbreakers, visit <https://kriswrites.com/business-musings/contracts-and-dealbreakers/>. The links to the free blog posts are listed there. If you scroll down a bit, you can also find all of those posts and probably more info in one book titled [*Rethinking The Writing Business*](#).

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Fall Special Workshop Sale" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/fall-special-workshop-sale/>. Just FYI.

See "Sales Numbers, Goodreads Reviews, and Other Ways to Drive an Author Mad" at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/sales-numbers-goodreads-reviews-and>.

See "476 Ways to Avoid Saying 'Said'" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/476-ways-to-avoid-saying-said/>. Note that they aren't recommending using dialogue tag verbs other than said.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 300 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 623282
Total nonfiction words for October... 960
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 166920
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 7090202

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Selling Books Without Promo

October 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Selling Books Without Self-Promotion
- * The Person Who Doesn’t Conform
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“So! How do you sell books without a single self-promotional tweet, post, or video?” Greer Macallister (Writer Unboxed article in “Of Interest”)

“[A] lot of people have lost respect for the ... person who doesn’t conform.” Erykah Badu

Ahem... based on my experience, I suspect Ms. Badu’s comment would be more accurate if she replaced “have lost respect for” with “fear.”

Welcome to recent new subscribers! Glad to have you along.

Selling Books Without Self-Promotion

I took the first quote of the day from an article about self-promotion at Writer Unboxed (via The Passive Voice) this morning.

In the article, the author asked that very intriguing question, but never answered it. Instead, she went on to describe yet one more way to self-promote on social media.

So let me answer the question.

“How do you sell books without a single self-promotional tweet, post, or video?”

The answer really is simple: Write the next book.

You’re a writer, so write.

The more you write, the more your name gets out there, and the more readers discover you and your books.

The Person Who Doesn’t Conform (AKA, your protagonist)

Readers buy books to see what that person who doesn’t conform is going to do next. They read in part to “experience” the protagonist’s boldness and non-conformity safely, vicariously. But they respect the protagonist. They wonder at him, and they respect him.

Orwell’s [1984](#) springs to mind. The story opens with the protagonist conforming, exactly like everyone else. But fiction needs conflict, and soon enough we see that the character isn’t conforming at all.

Really, that’s the definition of the protagonist in most good fiction: an ordinary person doing extraordinary things in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. He turns right when everyone else is turning left. He does the unexpected, and hence, a story is born.

“Bob went to work” is not a story.

“On his way to work, Bob took off his wristwatch and dropped it into a storm drain” is a story. Now all you have to do is fill in what happened next.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Monday Tips and LOLs” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/10/monday-giggles.html>. Fun.

See “How To Properly Introduce Your Protagonist” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/10/how-to-properly-introduceyour-protagonist.html>.

See “Success Without Self-Promotion” at <https://writerunboxed.com/2021/10/04/success-without-self-promotion/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 1360

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 167320

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 790602

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [George Orwell](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Insider Info About Traditional Publishing

October 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Insider Info About Traditional Publishing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Insider Info About Traditional Publishing

By his own admission, John Gilstrap was one of the last very fortunate writers for whom lightning struck under the old “traditional” publishing system. The lightning struck in the form of a very large, life-changing, six-figure advance.

Today on the Kill Zone, he posted a brief explanatory article along with links to a video he recorded. In that video, he, his agent, and his editor are chatting about traditional publishing.

I trust John for various reasons, so I’m publishing this edition of the Journal primarily for any of you who are still considering going the traditional publishing route.

I haven’t watched the video myself—no reason—but I suspect you can trust what you hear. However, I also recommend you give some thought to what is *not* said. For example, I would be surprised if they divulge any information about traditional publishing contracts, especially concerning the granting of rights, non-competition clauses, date-based rights-reversion clauses, etc. So I recommend you take what you learn from this with a grain of salt.

With that in mind, see “Chatting With The Pros” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/10/chatting-with-the-pros.html>. Good luck.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Think Like a Horror Writer to Create Better Villains” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/think-like-a-horror-writer-to-create-better-villains/>. For your liesurely perusal. I’m not personally big on “creating” characters.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 220 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 1580

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 167540

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 790822

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [John Gilstrap](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Learn

October 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Today
- * A Rose by Any Other Name
- * Arm Yourself
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Terror’s not ghosts flying through the walls, going woo-woo-woo. Terror is when the party is over and everyone has gone home and at last you can take a deep breath and you lock the doors and your place is finally empty and quiet, and you turn out the lights and then you hear the toilet flush upstairs. That’s terror.” Warren Murphy

Today the Journal has only three entries in “Of Interest” but I predict some of you will find them invaluable. That’s why this edition went out at all. Enjoy.

A Rose by Any Other Name

I’ve talked here before about the writer who refused even to read [Heinlein’s Rules](#). Understand, that writer assumed **Robert A. Heinlein’s** “Business Habits for Writers” couldn’t possibly be of value to her because she was “not a science fiction author.” Wow.

I could practically hear her mind snapping shut. But as it often is, justice was swift and definitive. Wrapped in her own smug certainty, that writer will never know what she missed.

Unfortunately, that writer is not unique in her intentional ignorance. There’s no way to know how many writers refuse to read Stephen King’s *On Writing* because they aren’t horror authors. (Never mind that King writes a lot that is not horror.)

Or how many refuse to read Lee Child's *The Hero* because they don't write in the thriller genre. Or any of Lawrence Sanders' excellent nonfiction books on writing because they don't write provocative mysteries or whatever.

Again, you can almost hear the sound of should-be-fertile minds snapping shut. And that has always amazed me. I've always believed that writers, of all people, should lead the way when it comes to having open, inquisitive minds.

But that's probably the difference between being an amateur writer and being a professional. To a professional who wants to learn something new, genre (like gender, skin color, etc.) simply doesn't matter. All that matters is mastery.

Mastery in the writing craft translates to useful knowledge, up to and including mastery, in any genre.

Everyone is ignorant of something. Everyone has something they don't know. The trick is to not be intentionally ignorant. Intentional ignorance is stupidity.

Arm Yourself

Even if you never plan to write erotica, read at least the first several paragraphs of "An Erotica Pioneer Goes From Hero to Villain for Dozens of Authors" to get the gist. You can find the link in "Of Interest."

Then be sure to read PG's comments afterward. Because forewarned is forearmed.

And maybe the most important part of today's edition of the Journal—take a look at Warren Murphy's writing class. (Whoever runs his site botched the text. I suggest you forgive them that technicality and read it anyway, then skip down to the knowledge he's sharing.)

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "The Wet Blanket Reality... Chapter Two" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-wet-blanket-reality-chapter-two/>.

See "An Erotica Pioneer Goes From Hero to Villain for Dozens of Authors" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/an-erotica-pioneer-goes-from-hero-to-villain-for-dozens-of-authors/>.

See "Writing Class" at <http://warrenmurphy.com/index.php?page=writing-class>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 520 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 623282
Total nonfiction words for October... 2100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 168060
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 791342

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Warren Murphy](#)

The Journal: How to Write Faster

October 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * “Of Interest” Is No More
- * How to Write Faster
- * Size Really Doesn't Matter
- * The Numbers

“Of Interest” Is No More

After years of including an “Of Interest” section in the Journal I've discontinued it. I've realized there are no longer any writers out there who are both actively teaching and who can teach you more than I can about the craft of writing.

Most of those who *do* purport to teach simply regurgitate the same old myths you've been hearing during most of your life. You can easily find them all over the Internet and in literally

hundreds of “how-to” books. Oddly, those myths are always presented as if they were the original thoughts of whatever nonfiction book or blog post you’re reading at the moment.

I will never do that to you. As I have always done, I will continue to tell you the truth about writing.

How to Write Faster

Over at The Passive Voice this morning I read an article titled [“How to Write Faster”](#). I included the link so you can read it if you want. If you do, be forewarned, it’s all PBS (pure bull, um, cookies). They even recommend you “type faster.” Wow, huh? What brain trust came up with that?

Listen, there are no easy shortcuts. If you want to write “faster,” take responsibility for that and spend more time in the chair.

Typing at even an average of 1000 words per hour (a blazing fast 17 words per minute) and spending only one hour per day in the chair actually writing, you can turn out a 90,000 word novel in 3 months and be thought prolific. After all, that’s four long novels per year. Working only one hour per day.

Or if you have an actual work ethic and spend even 4 hours in the chair writing each day, you’ll finish the same 90,000 word novel in 23 days and actually BE prolific. That’s almost 16 long novels per year.

And should you happen to actually put in a regulation 8 hour work day... well, you get the idea.

Size Doesn’t Really Matter

You can also let go of the inane 90,000 to 120,000 word novel length, which was strictly an invention of traditional publishing.

Here are the lengths to which I ascribe:

A short story is 2000 to 7999 words. A novelette is from 8000 to 14,999 words. A novella is from 15,000 to 24,999 words. A short novel is anything from 25,000 to 44,999 words. A novel is 45,000 to 79,999 words, and a long novel is any length from 80,000 words on up.

Why do I chop them up that way?

Because a short story is about One Event. It should wrap in about 8000 words or fewer. A novelette usually is still about one main event, maybe sliding into two. A novella, like a novel, is about a (short) series of interconnected events that lead to an overall resolution. It generally has far fewer main and supporting characters than a novel has.

Now to the novel—A novel of *any* length can have any number of main and supporting characters and will have a longer series of interconnected events. The longer that series of interconnected events, the longer the novel.

The benefit to writing shorter novels? It goes to discoverability. If you write a 90,000 word novel, you have your name on one cover. If you write two 45,000 word novels or three 30,000 word novels, you have your name on that many more covers. You are that much more discoverable.

That being said, I always recommend that you allow a story to be whatever length it wants to be. My own novels have ranged overll from 25,000 words to 110,000 words.

Finally, for funsies, I suggest you check out [“The great \[PAPER\] book shortage of 2021”](#). Really, I’m suggesting this one only so I can add that none of this applies to ebooks. Just sayin’.

Okay, that’s all for today. Talk with you again later.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 640 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 2740

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 168700

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 791982

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Fiction Lengths](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Wriitng Faster](#)

The Journal: What Is Writing Into the Dark?

October 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * "Of Interest" Is Back
- * Topic: What Is Writing Into the Dark?
- * Almost Writing Again
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"To see the blue color go right by you and now you're staring into blackness, that's the thing."
William Shatner, trying to convey his experience on Blue Origin

"Of Interest" Is Back

Yeah. I was silly to get rid of it. I'll happen across things that might be of interest to you as writers of one genre or another or as writers in general, and that's what I'll post in there.

I won't post links to any bad advice (the myths) on writing. You can find those easily enough on your own.

Topic: What Is Writing Into the Dark?

At its most basic, Writing Into the Dark (WITD) simply means writing without giving any particular thought to what will go into a story. No character sketches, no outlines, no advance world building, etc. Just write. Of all the writing techniques, WITD is the most freeing. You write one clean draft, then submit or publish it, then move on to the joy of writing another story.

WITD requires that you trust in your own abilities and in everything you've learned up to the current point. You've learned and absorbed a great deal more than you realize. But you've also been taught, mostly subliminally, not to trust what you've learned. Not to trust your abilities. Not to trust your creative subconscious.

You've been taught to allow your conscious mind to question and correct your creative subconscious through revision and rewrites. And the more you revise and rewrite, the farther you get from your own unique, original authorial voice.

Don't do it. Instead of following the advice of your English teacher and a bunch of others who have never written a novel, be a professional and follow Heinlein's Rules:

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you write.
3. You must not rewrite.
4. You must put it on the market (submit or publish).
5. You must leave it on the market (and write the next story).

The most practical, efficient way to follow Heinlein's Rules is to write into the dark.

If you're ready to try writing into the dark, the best method is to take a deep breath and jump into the deep end.

First, know this: Despite the sweat beads breaking out on your forehead at even the thought of WITD, nothing bad will happen. If you write a crappy story, nobody will come to your house and beat you up or shoot you. Nobody will bomb your car. But the thing is, you have a much greater chance of writing a crappy story by outlining, revising, and rewriting than you do by simply writing one clean draft.

And another thing: What you believe is a crappy or so-so story, another reader will think is wonderful. Stay in your lane. You're a writer. Write.

To WITD, start with a character who has a problem. The problem that begins the story usually is not "the" problem of the story. It might be an untied shoelace, for example, or a closed door the character can't open without putting something down.

Drop that character into a setting, then just keep writing the next sentence and the next and the next until the character(s) leads you through to the end of the story.

The key to WITD is letting the characters tell the story that they, not you, are living. You have no business worrying about where the story will go or what will happen next. It's the characters' story, so where it will go and what will happen next is literally none of your business.

Imagine for a moment your neighbors have heard of your writing prowess and they've asked you to accompany them to Cabo San Lucas for the weekend. They want you to document their story in writing. You get a free trip to Cabo, and all you have to do is go with them, observe what they do, listen to what they say, and record it all for posterity.

Of course, it's their story so you can't change anything. For example, you record only their take on the various setting (not your take) and what they say and do (not what you say and do or would say or do in their place). You record what happens but you record it through their physical and emotional senses, not your own. Again, it's their story, not yours.

On the other hand, so what? As your initial payment, you're getting a free weekend in Cabo. And your neighbors have already told you that you own all rights to their story. So you can sell it as a short story or novel. And if it's a short story, you can sell it individually as well as part of a collection, etc. So what's the down side here?

There isn't one.

And writing your characters' story is exactly the same thing as writing your neighbors' story. Exactly. Your characters invite you to go along on their adventures in the wild west of the 1880s or on a space voyage two hundred years in the future or tagging along with a detective or a PI as he or she solves a murder. They invite you to document a romance or a shooting or a bank heist or the failure of the magnetic drive in a space ship.

What they do NOT invite you to do is invent what you're writing. Again, your only job is to record for your characters what happens and what they say and do. And yeah, then make money off their story for the rest of your life.

Again, there is no down side. It isn't even your job to decide whether the story is "good" or "bad." You're the impartial recorder. You're only vouching that the story is what your neighbors or your characters actually experienced as their story unfolded. So you write it, you submit or publish it so others can read it, and then you move on to the next story.

Some of you are thinking But what if that one doesn't sell?

The answer is So what? What do you care? Some readers will buy it and some won't. Of those who buy it and read it, some will like it and some won't. You have zero control over any of that, so don't worry about it. Besides, you should already be working on the next story in the queue.

No individual story is important. No individual story matters, At All. You'll like some of the stories you write, and you won't like others, or you won't like them as well. But again, so what? If you're a writer, what matters is THAT you write, not what you write. What matters is the sheer joy of creation, and having fun letting your creative mind play.

Almost Writing Again

I recently received notice that the last novel I had queued up for publication, *Wes Crowley Gap Novel 4: Return to the New Mexico Territory*, went live today. For the past few months (since the middle of March) I've published at least one novel every two weeks, usually on the 15th and the 30th. That's a total of 15 novels published since March 13. Quite a streak

I thought maybe I could use this as a kind of deadline. To keep my streak of publishing every two weeks alive, I would have to write another novel between now and the end of the month, then release it on October 30. The key phrase there is "have to." Too much pressure. Remember, no one story or novel is important. No one story or novel matters, except as it matters to the reader.

So the overall challenge of it was tempting, but I'm not quite there yet. So I'll let that publishing streak end today and I'll start another one when I start writing again. Maybe I'll even come up with a nifty challenge of some kind that some of you might want to participate in with me.

Of Interest

See “William Shatner moved to tears by space launch with Blue Origin” at <https://www.space.com/william-shatner-blue-origin-flight-moved-tears-reaction>. I recommend watching the short video too. Cool what he says about how quickly they left the safety of the atmosphere.

Talk with you again later.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1370 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 4110

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 170070

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 793352

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Writing Into the Dark: Part 2

October 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Topic: Writing Into the Dark: Part 2

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It’s all a matter of process vs. product. I like the *writing*. I like telling a story. I like being stuck and not knowing where I’m going. I love that process. If you want to write more, practice, and care about the process [vs. the individual story]. Having fun telling the story is what matters. Don’t worry about the end product. Readers will buy it or not, and there’s nothing you can do about it. If you enjoy the process, you’ll sit in the chair a lot more.” Dean Wesley Smith, cleaned up a little and paraphrased from one of his videos.

And yes, it’s the same for me. Maybe even more so.

Topic: Writing Into the Dark: Part 2

Okay. So if you follow Heinlein’s Rules and write into the dark, there’s no revision, no rewriting, no running the manuscript past critique groups, no editorial process, and so on. Right?

Well, not quite. The main key to all this is not to involve your conscious, critical mind in what should be the sole domain of your creative subconscious.

Yep, the Conscious, Critical Mind Has a Purpose (but it isn’t fiction)

When it’s time to make serious, conscious, critical decisions—truly “important” decisions—yes, of course you make those with your serious, conscious, critical mind. But those decisions have nothing to do with writing, where the greatest possible danger is a paper cut (and not even that with ebooks).

I’m talking about REALLY serious, conscious, critical decisions, like whether to cross a road in the path of oncoming traffic. Or whether to hold an apple in your teeth while your buddy tries to dislodge it with a bullet fired from a .41 caliber revolver. (Show of hands: Anyone? No? Just me?) Or whether to remain at your desk or dive out the window of your home office when the door explodes into the room on fire.

THAT’S when you invoke the serious, conscious, critical mind, for decisions like those.

Fiction doesn’t matter. It’s not important. As my Brit friends say, it’s “only a bit of fun.”

You CREATE from the CREATE-ive subconscious. See the parallel? And that should be fun. You’re allowing your inner child to run and play. That’s all you’re doing.

Fiction isn’t even real. It’s a story. It’s nothing more important than a few minutes’ or hours’ entertainment for the reader. Nothing more. It isn’t important enough to give it over to your serious, stodgy, arms-crossed, grouchy, conscious, critical mind. So lock the old geezer away.

Writing fiction is playtime. It's a time to invoke your creative subconscious, to let your inner child out to run through a story with your characters. And the ONLY goal of that kid is to have fun.

So how do you know when your critical mind is slipping in?

Any time you want to "look for" anything, that's your conscious, critical mind. Any time you want to "decide" anything, the same. And any time you encounter a negative thought about your writing ("this story isn't good enough to submit to a magazine" or "same thing.

In those cases, your conscious, critical mind is trying to stop you from writing or submitting. It's trying to protect you from criticism and rejection. But the fear of criticism and rejection are UNREASONING fears.

Repeat after me: ***There are no actual consequences to failing as a writer***, so you might as well not worry about criticism and rejection and have fun writing the next story. If you "fail," nothing bad will happen. The earth will keep turning, and you'll simply go on with your life. Besides, if you "fail" according to one reader (even yourself), you will have achieved something great in the eyes of some other reader.

Note: If you ARE still mired in the myths and stuck in the critical mind, I recommend reading *Quiet the Critical Voice (and Write Fiction)*, [available at Amazon](#) and at any other ebook retailer.

In WITD there is no revision, no rewriting, no critique workshopping, and very limited editing.

Revision and rewriting are both functions of the conscious mind. In both cases you're consciously "looking for" things you want to change and then changing them.

But why would you do that? Why would you allow your stodgy old critical mind to second-guess your fun-loving, story-telling creative subconscious? Doing that sends a message to your creative subconscious that you don't trust it. There's no better way to make that inner child cross its little arms and refuse to come out and play.

And as for running your manuscript past a critique group, if you're striving to keep your own conscious, critical mind out of your creative work, why would you allow someone else to poke their serious, harrumphing, critical nose in?

Even if you luck out and get a critiquer who isn't trying to make your work look as if he wrote it, what he offers up is still the opinion of only one reader. And what makes you think his opinion is any more valid or important than the opinion of any other reader?

It isn't. So just say no to inviting others to critique your work. Write your story, publish it, and then forget it. Move on and write the next story. Let each reader judge for him or herself whether s/he likes the story you've published.

And what about editing? Seriously? No editing at all?

A good first reader is worth his or her weight in gold. Your first reader should simply read the story for pleasure. (The best first readers are folks who are avid readers but who are not also fiction writers.) If something pops out at him or her as s/he's reading, s/he should point it out. That's it.

A good copyeditor also is worth his or her weight in gold. Whether you need a copyeditor is a decision you'll have to make on your own. I don't use a copyeditor myself, but I have a very good first reader, and otherwise I just don't worry about it. I copyedit for a few other folks, but I teach as I go so I'm more expensive than most. If you're on a budget, you might consider hiring a local student who is gifted in the English language to copyedit for you.

But otherwise, no, no editing. And absolutely no "developmental" editors. How can someone else "develop" a story that came directly from your mind? Just no.

Now, cycling vs. revision

Back to that "revision" thing for a moment. You'll remember that in yesterday's installment I said with WITD your goal is to write one clean draft and be done. Well, that's true.

So how do you write a clean draft if you don't revise?

The answer is simple. You DO revise, but you revise while in the CREATIVE voice, not from the conscious, critical mind. And since the revision is done in the creative voice, we don't call it revision. The technique seems to evoke an cyclical mental motion, so we call it "cycling" instead.

I write about 1000 words per session, and (conveniently) about that much per scene. When I finish a session, I take a break. I might only get up and walk a few feet away and back, or I might walk up to the house to refill my drink or whatever.

Regardless of the length of the break, when I come back to the desk, I "cycle back" to the beginning of the prior session and begin reading. Now, I'm not "looking for" anything. I'm just reading like any reader would, for the story.

As I read, I allow my fingers to rest on the keyboard, and I allow myself (my characters) to "touch" the story as I read through it.

Again, I'm not actively "looking for" anything. I'm not making any decisions. I'm just reading and letting my characters move my fingers if they find it necessary to do so.

Important: If the conscious, critical mind starts to horn in while I'm cycling, I immediately stop, save the document, get up and walk away for awhile. When I come back, I start reading where I left off and continue right up to the white space.

Then I write the next sentence and I'm off and running for another 1000 words or so. I repeat that cycle (hence, cycling) until the characters lead me through to the end of the story.

One other note on (and use for) cycling: The reader reads the story from Word One to the Last Word, A to Z, straight through.

But the writer doesn't have to do that. If you're writing along into the dark and suddenly Aunt June pulls a revolver from the pocket of her housecoat, you might panic just a bit. Why? Because you don't remember her putting the revolver INTO her pocket, so how could she pull it out?

So right then you "cycle back" to when Aunt June heard a strange noise in the house. And you let the reader "see" Aunt June taking her deceased husband's revolver from the nightstand drawer and slipping it into the pocket of her housecoat before exploring the source of the noise.

Then you go back to where you left off and continue writing. It's just that easy. And for some, I guess, just that difficult. You have to let go and trust YOURSELF.

Okay, the floor is open for questions on either yesterday's topic or today's.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

Nada

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1590 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 5700

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 171660

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 794942

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Cycling](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: A Little More on Process

October 17, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * If you don't currently practice
- * Questions from a screenwriter
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things.” Elinor Smith

If you don't currently practice writing into the dark, and if you want to, read my previous two posts. I have a feeling some folks see “WITD” in the subject line or in the contents list and skip reading the post. Probably they think it's the same old thing.

It might be, but usually it isn't. When I revisit a topic, I usually do so because I've thought of something new to say about it, or I've thought of a different way to say it that might cause the little light to come on where previous attempts have failed.

So if you're one who skipped the two preceding posts, and if you're interested in WITD, I suggest you go back and read them.

Questions from a screenwriter (Thanks, MGP.)

When I talk about WITD here it's usually in response to questions I've received. The previous two posts (and this one) were no exception.

A screenwriter emailed me a few days ago and asked whether I thought it was possible to write screenplays into the dark. That's what started me thinking about WITD again.

As I wrote in my response to the screenwriter, actually I think it IS possible: “Could [you] switch in [your] creative subconscious from a character's snappy dialogue to framing a scene to

positioning another character and then [writing] that character's actions and/or dialogue? Might be an interesting experiment.”

You'd still be down in the trenches running through the story with the characters, but you'd be “seeing” events develop through a different lens. Rather than simply conveying what happened as you would in a short story or novel, you would be setting the scene for the actors as well as providing their dialogue and so on.

If you've cleared out the myths, and if you have the kind of mental discipline that enables you to switch from content to format and back to content like that, I suggest you go for it.

As I also told the screenwriter, you could always write the story into the dark in the first place, and then adapt that for the stage or screen afterward.

A couple of days later, the same screenwriter also asked whether I thought he could apply Heinlein's Rules to screenwriting.

Although in my own experience and probably in this Journal I tie Heinlein's Rules to WITD—for me they go hand in hand—neither is necessarily dependent on the other. So for me, that was a really easy question to answer.

Heinlein's Rules can be applied to any kind of writing. Not just science fiction, not just speculative fiction, and not just fiction. It can be applied to nonfiction, essays, and playwriting or screenwriting.

Of course, if you're *any* kind of professional writer you automatically have to write (Rule 1) and finish what you write (Rule 2). But Heinlein himself hedged his bets with his contentious Rule 3: “You must refrain from rewriting except to editorial order.” (Later, Harlan Ellison added “And then only if you agree.”)

To my mind, Ellison's addendum is important. It reminds us that we, the writers, are in control of our own work. We can choose. When an editor/agent/publisher/producer/etc. “requires” a rewrite or requires a change, we can choose to defend our work as-is and say No, albeit maybe to the detriment of the pending contract. Or we can choose to do as the person requests. The important thing to remember is that the story is YOUR intellectual property. Only YOU can decide the treatment it receives.

Hypothetically, if everything else in a pending traditional contract was acceptable, and if I was asked to make a few inconsequential changes that didn't directly affect the content of the story, I would make them. But if anyone requested changes to the actual content, from a character name to character eye color to gender, etc., they would have to cross my palm with silver. And the amount of silver would have to increase to remain commensurate with the level or number of changes requested.

Of course, that will never happen because I would never go back to traditional publishing. (grin)

Any of you have any thoughts on whether WITD can be used for screen- or play-writing? Feel free to share in the comments.

And if you have questions or other comments, feel free to share those as well.

[Click here for a free, annotated copy of Heinlein's Rules.](#)

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Contest Alert: Bardsy's "The Short and Long of It"" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/contest-alert-bardsys-the-short-and-long-of-it/>. Be sure to see PG's take.

See "Book Printing 101: What You Need to Know Before Approaching a Printer" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/book-printing-101-what-you-need-to-know-before-approaching-a-printer/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 6520

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 172480

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 795762

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Heinlein's Rules](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: 10,000 Trillion Ants

October 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Rewording Heinlein's Rule 4
- * An Analogy
- * Dean Wesley Smith's post yesterday
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“There are, by some rough estimates, 10,000 trillion ants in the world at any given moment, and their combined weight would match the total weight of the planet's human population.”
Christoph Irmscher, paraphrasing Edward Osborne Wilson in “The Ant Man's World.”<https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-ant-mans-world/> Idea for an SF novel or series of novels?

Rewording Heinlein's Rule 4

I was talking with screenwriter MGP again and he inadvertently proved the wisdom of Heinlein's Rules. As part of his most recent email he complained about the number of times most scripts are rewritten:

“[I]t's a common industry standard that every script be rewritten numerous times, even by people who didn't write it.... [B]y the time the project goes to production ... it is, in many cases, vastly different than ... the original.”

As a work-around, he fell back on Heinlein's Rule 4, or at least his version of it: “[J]ust sell the script, move on to the next one, and never look at the finished product.”

Exactly. With only a couple of exceptions, that's exactly what I do with my novels, novellas, short stories and collections. Always keep moving forward.

Looking back (revising, rewriting, etc.) does nobody (or the work) any good. Revising or rewriting replaces your original, unique voice with how you “think” (critical mind) the work “should” read. And if you're revising or rewriting, you aren't creating the next new work. You aren't moving forward. So looking back effectively a double-whammy.

Conveniently, that thought—just publish the work, move on to the next one, and never look back—leads us right back to Heinlein’s Rule 1, and the process starts all over again. All of which makes it easier to just have fun with the story and the process: writing into the dark.

This brought to mind again how “important” our work is. The individual story isn’t important at all. It’s only a piece of inventory, something to be sold or licensed.

An Analogy

A writer who loves writing is exactly like a brickmaker who loves making bricks.

What is important is not the individual brick, but that the brickmaker has fun as s/he keeps turning-out bricks. If s/he slows the process to try to smooth and polish each brick, two bad things will happen: the brick will still be flawed, and production will slow to a halt.

And all of that is silly. The brickmaker’s clientele want bricks, but they don’t expect perfection. They only want good bricks that won’t crumble to dust.

So the brickmaker wisely invests in learning the craft and continuing to improve the product overall. Not the individual brick but the brick-making process. Because as any good brickmaker knows, the process creates the bricks and the bricks create the paycheck.

Dean Wesley Smith’s post yesterday contains an increasingly rare bit of information about writing. I recommend reading the last five paragraphs of “Some Clean Up... And Writing Stuff” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/some-clean-up-and-writing-stuff/>. Interesting to see that after four or five decades in the business, he still struggles at times with critical voice.

An Anniversary of Note

My wife told me a reminder popped up on her Facebook account. Seven years ago today (October 19, 2014) I sat down at my writing ‘puter and typed the following paragraph:

Wes Crowley leaned forward and poked with a stick at an ember that had popped out of the campfire a moment earlier. “Been a long trail this time, boys.” His attention fixed on the ember, he worked the tip of the stick under the edge nearest him, then flipped it backward into the fire. A few sparks released. “Sure lookin’ forward to gettin’ back.” He looked up, a tired, easy grin on his face. “What about you, Mac?”

Those were the first 78 words of *Leaving Amarillo*, my first novel, and the book that eventually became the fourth novel in a 16-volume series. It was also the first of 66 novels and 8 novellas overall. As a nod to our recent discussions, all of those were written into the dark. Amazing how quickly the time goes.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “How to Use Real People in Your Writing Without Ending Up in Court” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-use-real-people-in-your-writing-without-ending-up-in-court/>. I disagree with the author’s contention that “every fiction writer bases characters on real people.” I don’t.

See “Chapter Titles Are a Great Marketing Tool in the Age of E-Books” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/chapter-titles-are-a-great-marketing-tool-in-the-age-of-e-books/>. Food for thought. This might also be a useful vehicle for the inclusion of “keywords.”

See “A Writer’s Greatest Super Power” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/10/a-writers-greatest-super-power.html>. A decent take on Observation.

See “David Sedaris’s 5 Tips for Observing the World” at <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/david-sedaris-tips-for-observation-as-inspiration#10-iconic-books-by-david-sedaris>.

See “Spanish crime writer Carmen Mola reveals her most stunning plot twist: She doesn’t exist and her books are penned by three men” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/spanish-crime-writer-carmen-mola-reveals-her-most-stunning-plot-twist-she-doesnt-exist-and-her-books-are-penned-by-three-men/>. I had to laugh. Too good to pass up, especially in today’s world. If this happened in America, somebody would get sued.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 830 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 7350

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 173310

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 796592

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever

say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 623282
Total nonfiction words for October... 7700
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 173660
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 796942

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: A Little More on Publishing to Paper

October 22, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A Little More on Publishing to Paper
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A Little More on Publishing to Paper

Yesterday I mentioned that I probably would not be taking my publications into paper. I have a couple more things to say about that, and I should have said them yesterday:

One: I've had a lot of my novels and collections out in paper, so this isn't something I've never tried. But those books didn't sell very well, probably because they were priced three or four times higher than the ebook versions. And remember, that's for exactly the same content.

Two: I meant in no way to hint at or otherwise suggest what YOU should do with your own publications. That's up to you. I'm only playing devil's advocate, giving you something to consider. I have at least one friend who publishes ONLY to paper.

Dean Wesley Smith actually recommends going to paper with all publications. He reasons that a paper book will typically go through five or six readers in its lifetime, thereby making more readers aware of your name (discoverability). It's probably important to note that although Dean sometimes does the layout, cover design etc. himself, he doesn't have to. All he really has to do is turn his work in to his employees at WMG Publishing.

For me personally, discoverability isn't a good enough reason to expend the time and/or money to take my publications to paper. For just one thing, even after I get in the flow again of doing layout, a full cover spread, etc., it will still take at least an hour to lay out a novel, and probably more like two or three hours. That's if everything goes smoothly, and it doesn't include proofing, corrections, etc. after the book is printed. Finally, I'll have to price the paper book much higher than its ebook version, yet I'll make only a little over \$2 per sale. As Redd Foxx used to say, that's just bad math.

On a paper book with a cover price of \$15.99, a \$2 royalty is 12.5%, about what traditional publishers pay.

On the same ebook with a cover price of \$5.99, I'll make a 70% royalty, or \$4.20. So I can sell ebooks for less (so the price is more attractive to potential buyers) yet I'll make over twice as much on the royalty. Just sayin'.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

Nada

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 8100

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 174060

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 797342

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Publishing to Paper](#)

The Journal: Sort-of WITD and Pseudonyms

October 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * One Alternative to WITD
- * On Pseudonyms
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Spend the best hours of your day on the biggest opportunity, not the biggest problem.” Farnam Street blog

“Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.” Hanlon’s Razor by Robert J. Hanlon

One Alternative to WITD

In “Of Interest” today I linked to an article about NaNoWriMo. The article is written by a young woman who calls herself a “pure ‘pantser’.”

(Ahem. Sorry, but I flatly despise that term. It puts me in mind of a schoolyard bully whose only joy in life is derived from “pantasing” other people. No, I’ve never been pantsed, but when I was 9 I was sent home for two days as punishment for attempting to feed my lunch pail to just such a “pantser” who was about to practice his hobby on another child.)

Anyway, I understand in this context the term is not meant to be derogatory. It's meant to denote a person who "flies (or writes) by the seat of her pants." Meaning without an outline. By which the author means she writes into the dark. But later in the article, she illustrates plainly that she actually doesn't.

She can't. She's still trapped in two myths: one, that moving forward in the story *with* a plan is better than doing so without a plan. And two, that revision and rewriting (allowing the conscious, critical mind to second guess the creative subconscious storyteller) is a good idea. You all know my take on these two fallacies.

In other words, she doesn't trust her characters to tell their own story, and she doesn't trust her own creative subconscious to get it right.

Still, I decided to pass along the article, especially for those of you who aren't quite able to pull the trigger on writing into the dark. We aren't all alike. Not everyone can bring themselves to trust fully in their characters and their own abilities. Not everyone can experience the unfettered freedom of actually writing into the dark.

If you fall into that camp, first, I'm sorry. I wish you could experience the sheer terror and joy of WITD. Second, the article might help you get closer. It's relatively well written and the author does hit on a few valuable points.

I won't summarize those points for you here. The article isn't long, and you should get from it whatever you get from it without further interference from me. I hope it will help.

On Pseudonyms

In the second item in "Of Interest" the author is wondering whether readers are justified making a fuss when they learn a "real" writer writes under one or more pen names.

My own take? No. A reader has no more right to insist I use my "own name" than I have to insist they must be addressed, by everyone in their life, by whatever appears on their birth certificate. The whole idea is silly. Besides, if I created the pen name and the character to go with it, then that name IS another of my "own" names.

You can read my full response in the comments after the post. And tomorrow or so I'll be back here with the bios of my own major pseudonyms. I think that would be fun, and I think you'll enjoy them.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "NaNoWriMo: How to Fly by the Seat of Your Pants—and Win" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/nanowrimo-how-to-fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants-and-win/>.

See “How Far is Too Far With a Pseudonym?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/10/how-far-is-too-far-with-a-pseudonym.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 8700

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 174660

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 797942

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags ["pantsing"](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pseudonyms](#)

The Journal: Personas vs. Pseudonyms

October 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Personas vs. Pseudonyms
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Personas vs. Pseudonyms

As I mentioned yesterday, I thought you might enjoy reading about a few of my pseudonyms. Actually, though, “pseudonyms” is a misnomer. A pseudonym is only a false name, a mask one can hastily put on to conceal one’s “true” identity for whatever reason. (Does anyone ever reveal their true identity? And which one? But that’s a matter for another post.) A pseudonym is a lie, and it doesn’t imbue the writer with any particular skills. It’s only words.

I’ve used a few pseudonyms—one was Raymond L. “Ray” Severeid, and I forget the other two or three—but there’s nothing interesting to say about any of them. They were only different names, as I said. In the hierarchy of importance of names, pseudonyms exist somewhere far below even secondary and tertiary character names. They simply don’t matter.

What I used was a series of personas. They are all inactive now. (You know, probably.)

A persona is the skin, muscles and sinew I put on when I want to write in a certain tone or about a certain topic. It’s also a whole other personality, with strengths and weaknesses that lend themselves to writing a different story than I might have written as just plain old me.

For example, when I wrote a story as Eric Stringer, putting on his persona enabled me to write much more horrific stuff than Harvey Stanbrough could ever have written.

When I put on the persona of Nick Porter, I wrote as an ex-pat adventurer. I was able to drink, fight and experience outrageous adventures that I might never have experienced otherwise.

And when I put on the persona of Gervasio Arrancado, I was finally able to sense the magic that is draped lightly in the air just beyond the limits of hearing and eyesight all around an otherwise bland everyday life.

As an aside, I’ve often thought about allowing my major characters to write some of their own stories. After all, they’re as fully fleshed-out as any human I’ve ever known, real or fictional, and as any persona.

Wes Crowley could write some great stories under his own author name. Juan-Carlos Salazár, the Keeper of the Tales in the main cantina in Agua Perlado, is certain he could write dozens of stories and novels encompassing his tall tales. After all, he’s entertained the denizens of the main cantina in Agua Perlado for decades.

Almost any of the main characters in the Blackwell Ops series could write their own stories. And Nick Spalding has approached me on more than one occasion wanting to use my fingers as he tells more stories about Europe just before World War I. And it goes on and on. All my characters believe they could be writers. (grin)

Anyway, here are the sometimes tongue-in-cheek bios of four of my personas. I hope you will enjoy them. Remember not to make fun: characters have feelings too. And really, isn’t a persona/pseudonym just another character?

Nicolas Z. Porter (whose writing style I eventually made my own and put under my own name) is an expatriate, having moved in better times to a small place in the coastal hills above the fishing village of Agua Rocosa.

Nick is a rawboned adventurer who enjoys deep-sea fishing, trout fishing in the back country, engaging intimately in the revolutionary struggles of other lands, and any other endeavors that might serve to refill the well of experience from which he draws his stories. He unapologetically takes full responsibility for his own life, but he flatly refuses to accept responsibility for poor choices made by others. He stole his favorite saying from Ray Bradbury: “I love to write. It’s all I do.”

Eric Stringer (the borderline psychotic persona of Harvey Stanbrough) is a miserably failed newspaper reporter whose father was obsessed with one soft spot after another and whose mother didn’t love him enough to care that she didn’t love him enough. She swapped him to a camel jockey she met along the border in southern California for a hit off his crack pipe and a swing on his banana hammock.

Eric was born into poverty and clawed his way up to debauchery and tearing the wings off young maidens. After he served a term in an Illinois state prison for failing to vote multiple times in an election (he lived in Chicago at the time, and the law is the law) he began to write stories about all the strange and unusual things he saw. Some of them actually existed.

An additional note on Eric: When our friend Nick Porter was mysteriously killed in late June, 2015 (see “Death of a Persona” at [Amazon](#)), we all suspected Eric, but of course we couldn’t prove anything.

He grew more self-centered and snide as time went on, and one morning he simply didn’t come in to work. The last we heard, Eric had moved to a faraway land where he spends time trapping and pulling the wings off moths, butterflies and fairies and occasionally writes short stories under the pen name Harvey Stanbrough. Quite the jokester, our Eric.

Gervasio Arrancado (the magic-realism writing persona of Harvey Stanbrough) was born in the state of Guerrero in Mexico in a small adobe hovel with a dirt floor and a roof made of ocotillo branches. He was reared in the orphanage at Agua Idelfonso, several kilometers, give or take, from the fictional fishing village of Agua Perlado. He is fortunate to have made the acquaintance of Augustus McCrae and Woodrow Call, Hub and Garth McCann, El Mariachi, Forest Gump, The Bride (Black Mamba), Agents J and K, a very old man with enormous wings, Juan-Carlos Salazár, Maldito, the chupacabra and several other notables.

Gervasio is a third cousin, twice removed, to the most interesting man in America. He visits regularly with his friend Nick Porter, whom he fondly calls Paco—nobody knows why, but we’re all certain he has his reasons—and with Juan-Carlos Salazár, whom he calls his colaborador in all things literary. To this day he lives and writes at that place on the horizon where reality just folds into imagination.

Oh, and I almost forgot MJ François. MJ is a writer and poet who pens only erotica. She is fond of the sensual and passionate pleasures and appetites that are imbued in and can be derived from the physical human form.

She is especially in awe of the female form, the primary purpose of which, she says, is to “provide pleasure to all who approach and are found worthy.”

As for me writing as MJ François... well, that was an interesting if very short-lived experiment. I wasn't at all comfortable in the persona, and after a few stories we decided to go our separate ways. I suspect she might have moved in with Eric.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Protecting Fictional Characters Under U.S. Copyright Law” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/protecting-fictional-characters-under-u-s-copyright-law/>.

See “This Founder Created A Social Media Platform For Authors That Aims To Disrupt The Publishing Industry” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/this-founder-created-a-social-media-platform-for-authors-that-aims-to-disrupt-the-publishing-industry/>. Posted in case you want to participate, but also see PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1200 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 9900

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 175860

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 799142

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Persona vs. Pseudonym](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Nothing Really

October 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Nothing really
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Nothing today, really. I suspect this will be the shortest post I’ve ever put up. I’m posting today only to send you the “Of Interest” links below. I hope you will find them helpful, hopeful or amusing.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Offend Me, Please!” at <https://danbaldwin.com/f/offend-me-please>.

See “Twitter Tutorial – From Zero to 12K” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/10/twitter-tutorial-from-zero-to-12k.html>. If marketing is important to you, this is a good article.

See “7 Simple Social Media Tips for Successful Authors” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/7-simple-social-media-tips-for-successful-authors/>.

See “Blue Origin unveils plans to build a private space station...” at <https://www.space.com/blue-origin-unveils-orbital-reef-private-space-station>. Story ideas?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 100 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for the year.....	623282
Total nonfiction words for October...	10000
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	175960
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	799242
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dan Baldwin](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Rewriting and Hemingway

October 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: Rewriting and Hemingway
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Rewriting and Hemingway

Once again, a writer gave me a topic to write about here. Screenwriter MGP wrote to ask, “Why do you think rewriting is so embedded in the writing community?”

He went on to talk about Hemingway and the allegation that the great writer “rewrote the last few sentences of *Farewell to Arms* 39 times.” Then MGP wrote, “in the article itself the writer uses that as ‘inspiration’ to allow himself to write sloppy and ‘fix’ it later.”

My response to the direct question was succinct: Rewriting is so embedded in the writing community because we’re taught in junior high, high school, and college—*by people who do NOT write fiction*—not to trust our creative subconscious.

We're taught that rewriting is a necessary part of the process. Unfortunately, most writers never break out of that silliness and learn to trust themselves. The memory of the English or Lit teacher's voice is too loud.

Writing is the only job I know in which aspirants will actively seek advice from people who do not practice in the field (for example, so-called developmental editors or book doctors) or writers have no significant accomplishments in the field. Think about that.

Every single major fiction writer I know of (say writers with over 35 or 40 novels) follows Heinlein's Business Habits for Writers (Heinlein's Rules), including Rule 3: "You must refrain from rewriting except to editorial order." Harlan Ellison later added, "And then only if you agree."

Of course, today, if you aren't frightened half to death and can bring yourself to indie-publish, there are no publishing-house editors with whom to agree.

As for the article MGP quoted, obviously the author of that article poked around until he found a quote that, in his mind, supported what he wanted to do. How very sad that he couldn't simply write the way he wanted to without feeling a need to justify it. I suspect Hemingway would have laughed at him, if he'd noticed him at all.

Consider how easy it would have been for that same author to cite the business habits of another great writer, the aforementioned Robert A. Heinlein.

Then again, what could Heinlein possibly know? Heinlein published only 32 novels, 59 short stories, and 16 collections plus a few screenplays, etc. That's compared with the great Ernest Hemingway who, according to Wikipedia, published "seven novels, six short story collections, and two nonfiction works" during the thirty years from the mid-20s to the mid-50s.

I should add that Hemingway himself often said things that were outrageous, simply because it was fun for him to watch baby writers soak it up. He was, as MGP wrote, "fluffing up his process." For example, he sometimes said he often wrote drunk, or that he wrote standing up to be in touch with his manhood (the weight of his testes hanging down). And 99% of it was bullshit.

And he was a legend, a legend that really took hold only after the publication of his last short novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*. But because he was a legend, of course other people routinely made up things about him to support or inflate that legend. He was such a great writer/storyteller, for example, that he MUST have rewritten those last few lines 39 times. Again, I suspect that's all BS.

DWS claims that Hemingway wrote into the dark, but frankly I don't believe that either. After all, he wrote for thirty years but published only those 7 novels and 6 short-story collections plus some nonfiction. The math doesn't add up. You can't write into the dark but at a snail's pace.

That doesn't mean he didn't write from the creative subconscious. I'm sure he did. But he saw himself as writing "art" (elevated literary stuff, aiming for awards, etc.). So after he'd written a scene or a sub-scene, he polished it (conscious, critical mind) to bring the writing up to his own elevated standard.

Hemingway was known for his very spare "iceberg" writing style. And being known for it, he felt a need to live up to it. He often said to be a writer you have to write "one true sentence, the truest sentence you know." So when he stopped writing for the day, in his own mind he had produced the best work he could up to that point, a series of those "truest" sentences.

Note that I'm not saying you can't produce great stories while trusting yourself and writing into the dark. After all, we'll never know whether Hemingway's work would have been just as good or maybe better if he hadn't so thoroughly messed with it.

The takeaway—

It's always better not to elevate "writer" to a "calling" of some sort. It's better to simply accept "writer" as what we do, then show up to work and do it. I've written into the dark since April 2014, yet a few of my short stories, at least one novella and at least one novel have been compared favorably by readers with Hemingway's work and style. All of that *without* me rewriting anything 39 times. Or even one time.

So I think the key to being comfortable in the chair is to write the way you want to, trust yourself and your process, and allow readers (not yourself and not other writers) to judge your work.

By the way, if you've never read Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, and if you'd like to, you can find the first publication of it in the September 1952 issue (page 34) of [Life Magazine](#).

I also recommend Ken Burns' documentary.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "11 Facts About Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man And The Sea*" at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/64363/11-facts-about-hemingways-old-man-and-sea>.

See "Ernest Miller Hemingway" at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hemingway.

See "Ernest Hemingway bibliography" at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hemingway_bibliography.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 960 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 623282
Total nonfiction words for October... 10960
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 176920
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 800202

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Ernest Hemmingway](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [rewriting](#), [Robert Fulghum](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Two Very Important Posts

October 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Important Post 1
- * Important Post 2
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There are nearly 20 million titles available for delivery tomorrow in today’s world; there were certainly well under a million available 20 years ago. And with most customers not reached through inventory in stores, it is usually not relevant where a potential customer is: in your country or someplace else.” Mike Shatzkin

“[T]here really are only two companies that define the book business today. ... Amazon and Ingram comprise the global infrastructure of the book business. Amazon has the single biggest share of the online print and ebook (through its Kindle format) markets. And Ingram reaches every other corner of the book world.” Mike Shatzkin

“If a retail bookstore is your only option for reaching customers as it was for hundreds of years, you build your business, marketing and pricing around the costs of that sales channel.” The Passive Guy

Important Post 1

Wow, what an important post today at The Creative Penn. Do this:

1. Please go read “You Are A Writer. You Create And License Intellectual Property Assets” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2021/10/27/you-are-a-writer-you-create-and-license-intellectual-property-assets/>.
2. Print-out (or copy/paste) the article and save it for future reference. I’ve linked to it in several categories in the Writers Resources on my author website.
3. Then go read PG’s lengthy, very important take on the original article, which is excerpted at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/you-are-a-writer-you-create-and-license-intellectual-property-assets/>.

You’re welcome.

Important Post 2

Then, please go read “Every publishing strategy should start with Amazon and Ingram” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/every-publishing-strategy-should-start-with-amazon-and-ingram/>. You’ll find the link to the original article, but again, be sure to read PG’s take.

What’s absolutely astounding and impressive about this article is that it was written by “veteran publishing consultant” and long-time traditional publishing insider Mike Shatzkin.

In addition to the Quotes of the Day above, Shatzkin wrote that “Ingram will accept it as part of their job description to help you optimize your sales through Amazon. The reverse is not true.”

In that quote, if you replace “Ingram” with “[Draft2Digital](#),” the statement remains true, and Draft2Digital, like Amazon, also offers POD (paper) publishing and distribution in addition to ebook aggregation. Just sayin’.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Genre and Its Discontents” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/genre-and-its-discontents/>.
A fun and informative post.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 380 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 11340

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 177300

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 800582

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [Draft2Digital](#), [Licensing](#), [Mike Shatzkin](#), [The Idea Logical Company](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: More on IP and Going to Print (Paper)

October 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * More on IP and Going to Print (Paper)
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“We need to be aware that there is no frontlist or backlist anymore. There’s just the work.”
Kristine Kathryn Rusch, in “IP Is The New Frontlist (Part Two)”

“If new-to-you is the model, then most indie writers are going about promotion all wrong. Instead of always focusing on the real new product, writers need to focus on the project that makes the most sense to promote.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

“We’re writers. We produce IP. IP has a lot of uses. One of them is appealing to readers who are new to us. We can do that, if we see what we do as an entire piece...” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

More on IP and Going to Print (Paper)

Well, for the second day in a row I’m pushing a pair of particular posts.

First, see Kristine Kathryn Rusch’s “IP Is The New Frontlist (Part Two)” at <https://kriswrites.com/2021/10/27/business-musings-ip-is-the-new-frontlist-part-two/>.

Yes, I’m referencing KKR. In this particular Business Musing, she actually keeps her political and social ideology to herself. So if you believe differently than she does, you may read the article without feeling that you’re being harranged.

I highly recommend doing what she suggests in the article, whether you have 10 pieces of IP or 1000 or more. You might even want to print-out or bookmark the article and save it in a file somewhere so you can refer back to it later.

The Passive Guy also posted the short article, “Reactions to Ingram Spark Post” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/reactions-to-ingram-spark-post/>. This will be a slightly convoluted journey, so please bear with me.

Reading that post caused me to revisit the referenced post on Ingram Spark from yesterday’s Journal and read the comments. (I recommend reading at least the first comment yourself at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/every-publishing-strategy-should-start-with-amazon-and-ingram/#comment>).

The commenter uses Ingram Spark sometimes and Snowfall Press at other times. Reading that led to me visit [the website of Snowfall Press](#), which the commenter used as an alternative to Ingram Spark. Might be worth checking out if you are one who takes your books to paper.

Of course, don’t be afraid to investigate and use other POD presses too if they seem to suit your needs. And if you let me know the name and URL of the press you use, I’ll give them a little extra mileage here in the Journal. The only requirement is that the press actually distributes to more than one entity (e.g., so Amazon KDP doesn’t qualify).

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Halloween Is All About Fear. Turns Out, so Is Publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/halloween-is-all-about-fear-turns-out-so-is-publishing/>. Duh. It isn’t a fear of publishing. It’s a fear of not being deemed good enough, either by someone else (traditional publisher) or by yourself or readers (indie publisher). It’s a fear instilled directly by people who don’t write fiction, and it’s an unreasoning fear. Get over it.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 490 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 11830

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 177790

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 801072

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Ingram Spark](#), [Intellectual Property \(IP\)](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Publishing to Paper](#), [Snowfall Press](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Unreasoning Fear](#)

The Journal: Write. Or Don’t. Whatever.

October 31, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Write. Or Don’t. Whatever.
- * Happy Hollowe’en

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Sometimes magic is just someone spending more time on something than anyone else might reasonably expect.” Raymond Joseph Teller

“How do you cope when almost no one notices? ... How do you keep going when nothing seems to help? ... Is it worth it to keep on keeping on?” anonymous past commenter at Kill Zone blog

Topic: Write. Or Don't. Whatever.

In the first item in “Of Interest” today, James Scott Bell takes off on the questions posed in the second Quote of the Day above. I left a comment there. Then I thought I'd bring the comment over here and expand it a bit.

Back when I was speaking at a lot of writers' conferences, I heard that last question at least dozens of times: “Is it worth it for me to keep writing?”

My usual answer was a shrug followed by, “Depends—are you a writer or not?” Then I'd leave him or her to ponder that decision.

My attitude hasn't changed. Only the individual can decide whether continuing with any endeavor is “worthwhile.” If you're a writer, writing is worthwhile. If you aren't, it isn't.

Once that's decided, I can offer a few tips to the few folks left in the room:

1. It's been said that the best promotion for a novel is to write the next novel. I agree wholeheartedly.
2. I'm a writer, so I write. Shrug. Writing is the most fun I can have with my clothes on. If it wasn't, I'd find something else to do. For a writer, not writing is a kind of personal Hell.
3. What the reader likes (or not) is up to the reader, not the writer. Even the writer's own opinion of his/her own story is still only one opinion, and it carries no more weight than any other opinion. Here's the thing:

Even if you think your story sucks canal water from all 50 states, some reader out there will love it. If you publish it. If you don't publish it, you'll never learn this lesson. And if you think your story is a Pulitzer Prize or National Book Award contender, some reader out there will hate it.

But so what? Who cares? Caring about such silliness is not my department. My job is to write the thing in the first place.

4. I love to learn and I love to write. So I continually improve my craft, I write the story to the best of my current ability, and I make my book available and attractive.

4a. To help my book attract readers in the first place, I study appropriate genre covers and create an attention-grabbing cover.

4b. To further entice readers, I write the best sales copy possible. (Hint: No Plot Elements!) I recommend Dean Wesley Smith's inexpensive [*How to Write Fiction Sales Copy*](#). I recommend you buy a paper copy. You'll dog-ear it.

5. Then I publish the thing, forget it, and go write the next story or novel idea that occurs to me.

So there it is: Given a good, well-written story, a good cover, and good sales copy, sales come when they come.

As a writer, I have the best job in the world. The writing and storytelling is the thing. My personal first "payment" is being the first to be entertained by the story. Everything else is gravy.

When I'm writing, I have a ton of fun. The most difficult and most disingenuous part of my job is convincing everyone else I'm "sweating blood in pursuit of my art" or some such nonsense. (grin)

As for whether it's worth *your* while personally to "keep on keeping on," only you can decide that. All I can say is Write. Or Don't. Whatever. Hey, the world won't stop spinning.

Happy Hollowe'en

Wow. Well, another month gone. I hope you'll have a happy/spooky/enjoyable/cozy/loud/quiet Hollowe'en. Whatever slips an extra ace into your personal deck.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "How to Get Discovered When Nobody Knows Who The Heck You Are" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/10/how-to-get-discovered-when-nobody-knows-who-the-heck-you-are.html>.

See "10 Earth impact craters you must see" at <https://www.space.com/10-earth-impact-craters-you-should-visit>.

See "On Regional Dialogue and Locations" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/10/on-regional-dialogue-and-locations.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 700 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for October..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for October... 12530

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 178490

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 801772

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Space.com](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Another DWS Kickstarter

November 2, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A couple of comments
- * Another DWS Kickstarter
- * Back to NaNoWriMo
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I’ve never written a novel in 30 days (as if!) but I did do NaNoWriMo to write 500-1000 words a day of my then-WIP and it really got me over a hump.” Kathleen McCleary

A couple of comments

The above quote is from an article that says if you want to “win” NaNoWriMo, it’s easy: Just change the definition of “win.”

That advice is right up there with taking pride in receiving a participation trophy. But that’s the world we’re stuck with at present. I guess I’ll “win” NaNo by simply going to the Hovel each morning for the month of November. Easy peasy.

Ridiculous. If you want to write 50,000 words in a month, at least give it an honest shot. If you don’t, don’t. Nobody cares. But don’t cheapen it by changing the definition.

As an aside, the “(as if!)” in the quote reveals that the author has bought into all the myths her English teacher presented in school. She actually believes herself incapable of writing a novel in a month. I feel bad for her.

Folks, the truth is, it doesn’t take a village. It takes one person with an attitude problem. One person who believes “I can do this” and refuses to be manipulated or harrassed or harranged into believing “I *can’t* do this.” Please believe in yourself.

Another DWS Kickstarter

In case you don’t know, DWS and Kris Rusch are doing yet another “Holliday Spectacular” Kickstarter. I mention it because it has only a day or so left.

If you’re interested in receiving “an original holiday story every day from November 25th to January 1st,” or if you’re interested in getting some freebie “pop-up” classes, etc. for a small donation, check it out at <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/403649867/wmg-holiday-spectacular-2021>.

Back to NaNoWriMo

Somehow this is already the second day of November, so I guess I’m late talking about the annual NaNoWriMo. Anyway, if you’re participating, good luck. Just do the math, folks. It isn’t difficult.

Most people write around 1000 words per hour. (That sounds like a lot, but it’s only a blazing-fast 17 words per minute. That leaves a lot of time for staring off into space.) So if you want to write 50,000 words in a month, it’ll take you about 50 hours.

Divide that 50 hours by 30 days and you’ll find that means you’ll have to write 1.66 hours per day on average. That’s every day (but it’s also an average).

If you’re like me and you’d rather talk word count than hours, divide 50,000 by 30. You’ll see that your daily goal is 1,667 words per day. Might as well set a daily goal of 2000 words. Two hours.

And if you happen to hit that goal exactly every day, at the end of the month you will have written SIXTY thousand words, not 50,000.

Two hours per day. Or two thousand words per day. That's all.

And that goal (two hours or 2000 words) will cover you even if you forgot and you aren't starting NaNo 'til tomorrow. That leaves you 28 writing days, during which (if you hit or exceed your goal) you'll write a novel of 56,000 words or more.

And if you follow what you've learned in this Journal, you'll write that first draft cleanly and publish it when you're finished. Then, if you aren't very careful, you'll do the same thing again in December. And January. And February. And you'll be a writer.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "The Way to Win NaNoWriMo – Guaranteed" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-way-to-win-nanowrimo-guaranteed/>. I include this not because it has any merit—it doesn't—but because it's the article I referenced above.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 610 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 610

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 179100

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 802382

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [NaNoWriMo](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Censorship in the Name of Inclusivity

November 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Censorship in the Name of Inclusivity
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“For a writer’s voice to resonate, it must be true to the writer. Twenty-five years ago, when my first novel was about to drop, I took the one writer who gave me early advice out to dinner in a very nice restaurant in Alexandria, Virginia. It’s one of those old-money places where people speak in hushed tones and eat baked Alaska for dessert.

“The writer in question was then and is now a huge bestseller, whose violence and sex are *very* graphic. I asked him if it was uncomfortable facing his neighbors after that. He took a pull on his wine and said, very loudly, ‘John, f**k your neighbors! Let ’em write their own GD book.’” John Gilstrap in response to a comment <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/editing-for-inclusion.html#comment-97310> on his post “Editing for Inclusion”

Topic: Censorship in the Name of Inclusivity

Yep, I’m gonna talk a little about censorship brought on by so-called “political correctness,” or as I call it, “lies of evasion.” The more politically correct you are, the less anyone knows what you really believe and the less trustworthy you are. Let’s get to it.

As part of the post referenced above, John Gilstrap wrote,

“I recently dealt with a Facebook PM exchange wherein a distressed reader complained that I had not included trigger warnings in my latest book. When I told her that the title *Stealth Attack*, combined with a cover image of a bullet and gobs of barbed wire, should have carried that water, she maintained that such was not enough.”

As I added in a comment on the post, I felt sorry for John’s critic. Never in her life will she actually enjoy a story, whether printed or presented in video or audio. She’ll sit, pen in hand, ready to note each word, phrase and image that she self-righteously believes is not politically

correct. How very starved for attention she must be, to believe a complete stranger actually cares what she thinks.

On the broader stage, to anyone with a brain and despite the constant screaming from both coasts, inclusivity in the real world is a non-issue. By and large, it's not only the way things should be, it's the way things are.

In my experience, most people have friends and acquaintances (and some even relatives) who bridge the gap across races. That doesn't mean I can ever know personally what it's like to be a person of a different gender or race (or even family) in America—face it, I can never really know what it's like to be any other person, even of my own race and gender—but I know enough to focus on our similarities instead of our differences.

And I know enough, as do most individual human beings, to judge others based on what they say and do rather than their appearance. Or as MLK put it, based on “the content of their character, not the color of their skin.”

That is in direct opposition to those who make so much noise specifically about the color of skin or nationality just to draw attention to themselves and virtue-signal to the rest of us how very “woke” they are. Guess what? Most of us don't care. To most of us, those folks are only a minor annoyance, and all their virtue signalling is BS. They'd be better served to move out of their parents' basement and get a job.

The rest of us don't crave the attention and we don't need a special word to describe how to artificially fawn over people who are superficially different than we are. We simply live and do unto others as we would have them do unto us. It's an honest, straightforward approach that breeds friendship instead of mistrust and simmering hatred.

So yeah, I'm all for actual inclusivity in the real world. But the politically correct “Oh-everyone-look-how-perfectly-wonderful-I-am-for-saying-the-approved-thing-in-precisely-the-approved-way” *appearance* of inclusivity? Not so much.

When I write, I write to let the story unfold and find out what happens next. I don't write to impress anyone, and I CERTAINLY don't write to appease anyone, least of all those who believe they have the right to control others. When I learn that readers enjoy my work, I'm pleased and happy for them. When I learn that they don't, I shrug and go back to my writing.

If you couldn't tell, I'm annoyed with all the meaningless noise when there are so many real-world problems waiting to be solved. And frankly, I wouldn't give a self-righteous, virtue signalling control freak the time of day if my middle finger was a watch. And as for writers who actually pander to these slobs? Shame on them.

Should we go out of our way to hurt someone's feelings or sensitivities? Of course not. But neither should we walk on eggshells to avoid “offending” someone who makes being offended their life's work.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Editing For Inclusion” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/editing-for-inclusion.html>.

See “What would happen if the speed of light was much lower?” at <https://www.space.com/what-if-speed-of-light-slowed-down>. Pretty cool.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 1430

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 179920

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 803282

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

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Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Censorship](#), [Inclusivity](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Political Correctness](#), [Space.com](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Atticus to Rival Vellum

November 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Happy Birthday
- * Atticus to Rival Vellum
- * Impostor Syndrome: The Wes Crowley Saga vs. Lonesome Dove
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Happy Birthday

Happy 36th birthday to my youngest son, Roy. (grin) Feel better soon, Son.

Atticus to Rival Vellum

I wanted to get this out there in case it interests any of you. Apparently Atticus is a new cross-platform writing and formatting software program that rivals Vellum, which is only for Macs.

At the moment, the program is still relatively inexpensive, and all updates, etc. are free. See “Atticus – New Formatting Software for Writers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/atticus-new-formatting-software-for-writers.html>.

I’m personally satisfied with the .epub I download from Draft2Digital, so I won’t be purchasing Atticus, but if I was younger in this process I probably would. I recommend you take a look and see what you think.

Impostor Syndrome: The Wes Crowley Saga vs. Lonesome Dove

Have you ever dealt with impostor syndrome? I’ve heard it said that all writers struggle with it at one time or another. I’m not sure I believe that (“all” is a lot), but the syndrome or a close cousin settled over me recently as I thought about returning to my writing ‘puter.

Why? Well, when I set out to write my very first novel, *Leaving Amarillo*, the two main characters (Texas Rangers) were based very loosely on the idea of Augustus McCrae and Woodrow Call from the film version of Larry McMurtry’s *Lonesome Dove*.

In *Leaving Amarillo*, I introduced the world to Western Z “Wes” Crowley and Otis “Mac” McFadden. They started out as partners. And to my surprise, that’s where their resemblance to McCrae and Call ended.

Over the years, *Lonesome Dove* was followed by two sequels—*Return to Lonesome Dove* and *Streets of Laredo*—and finally two prequels: *Dead Man’s Walk* and *Comanche Moon*. (By the way, for my money, the best film from a Texas Ranger standpoint is hands-down *Comanche Moon*, and the best Gus McCrae is Steve Zahn. He was more Gus than even Robert Duvall was.)

In the Wes Crowley saga, I followed the original trilogy with three prequels, then six sequels. Even with all that, there was still a gap of about 15 years in the storyline, so then I decided to tell some of Wes’ stories from that gap. I have four more titles in that “Gap” series. So far.

Anyway, off and on over the years I've wondered exactly how similar my Wes Crowley Saga was to McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* series. So out of curiosity, on Thursday and Friday, my wife and I pulled out the two prequels (each a multi-episode mini-series) and the original *Lonesome Dove* film and spent all of two days watching them in chronological order. (We probably won't bother with the sequels. Or we might watch them tomorrow just so we can say we finished the whole thing.)

I bring all this up because as we watched, I kept expecting to see similarities between McMurtry's work and my own. I think I expected the stories to be similar because my Wes Crowley and McMurtry's Gus McCrae seemed so similar.

But I should have known better. For one thing, I wrote all of those novels into the dark. And for another, Wes Crowley was just me, living vicariously in the late 1800s through the story. Wes' partner Mac McFadden doesn't have a real-life counterpart, and he certainly wasn't the strictly upright Captain Call of *Lonesome Dove*.

So I'm pleased and relieved to report that, aside from both stories beginning in Texas and featuring Texas Rangers, horses, guns and Comanches, there were no similarities. The stories are completely different.

All of which I mention as a preface to saying this: Sometimes facing a fear provides the greatest self-validation.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

Nada.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 620 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 2050

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 180540

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 803822

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atticus to Rival Vellum](#), [Impostor Syndrome](#)

The Journal: All About Items of Interest

November 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * All About Items of Interest
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Today’s Journal is all about items I thought you might find of interest. As a result, a bit ironically, there’s nothing in the actual “Of Interest” section again today.

Anyway, I hope you find one or more of these items useful.

From Jane Friedman’s weekly blog digest, I culled “NFTs: What Are They and How Much Should Writers and Publishers Care?” just in case any of you are interested. You can find the full article at <https://www.janefriedman.com/nfts-what-are-they-and-how-much-should-writers-and-publishers-care/>.

In the interest of full disclosure, I personally neither understand nor care enough to want to invest the time to understand NFTs, blockchain, crypto-currency, etc. Nothing about any of that interests me in the slightest, so please don’t write me about it. But if you’re a young person, this might well be part of your future and something you should begin to grasp at least lightly.

From the same blog digest, I also gleaned Penny Sansevieri’s “How to Secure Early Endorsements (Blurbs) for Your Book.” Again, something I’m not personally interested in, but something that might interest some of you. You can find that article at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-to-secure-early-endorsements-blurbs-for-your-book/>.

You might also want to take a look at Garry Rodgers’ “The Six Ghosts Of Fear” at <http://dyingwords.net/the-six-ghosts-of-fear/>. I admit I only scanned the article, but based on the first couple of comments it might help some of you.

And finally, as much as I've enjoyed writing stories about Wes Crowley and the Texas Rangers, of course that's all fiction. If you'd like to read a bit about the real Texas Rangers, I recommend <https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/texas-ranger>.

Near the end of that article, there's even an animated timeline that begins with "Tejas" in 1821 and runs through the present day. Again, something that might interest some of you.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

Nada.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 310 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 2360

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 180850

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 804132

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not "the only way" to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [DyingWords.net](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Penny Sansevieri](#), [Texas Rangers](#)

The Journal: Why Do You Write?

November 8, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Why Do You Write?
- * Time to Start Considering Goals?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[T]he world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me. ... I write because I'm scared of writing, but I'm more scared of not writing.” Gloria E. Anzaldúa

“Any writer worth his salt writes to please himself.” Harper Lee

“Writing is the only thing that, when I do it, I don't feel I should be doing something else.”
Gloria Steinem

“Real writers don't write to get published. They write just to write.” Jeff Goins

Why Do You Write?

At the Kill Zone blog today, a new contributor posed the interesting question, “Why do you write fiction?”

After leaving my own response, I went on an internet search from which I gleaned the Quotes of the Day and many more.

In this Journal I often discuss what I personally consider to be the best practices of *how* to write fiction: writing the best story you can at your current skill level from beginning to end in one clean draft. But we seldom, if ever, discuss *why* we write.

When I'm writing fiction, I do so because I love my characters and I want to learn what happens next in the story they're living.

But considering the question helped me, so I thought I'd pass it on to you: Why do you write? I hope you'll leave a comment at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-why-do-you-write/>. But even if you don't leave a comment, I hope you'll at least seriously consider the question, and that doing so will help you in some way.

Is It Time to Start Considering Goals?

Maybe it's a little early, being only a week into November. Still, time inexorably moves forward and 2022(!) will be here before we know it. Besides, you don't have to set goals (or resolutions) that begin on January 1. You can start as early as in the next minute or hour or day. Any of those begins a new year and the rest of your life.

Anyway, I mention this because DWS is about to succeed at his “70 in 70” publishing challenge, publishing 70 major publications with his name on the cover during his 70th year on the planet. So now he’s about to set himself another challenge, this one to begin on January 1. And that put me in mind of thinking about such things.

Naturally, my own next annual goal will be to write a million words of fiction in a year since I self-destructed on the attempt this year. Once I start writing again, my daily goal will be 3,000 words per day.

I keep track of fiction and nonfiction (Dean calls the combination of those “consumable words”) but to me only the fiction words really matter. And this year, even if I wrote 120,000 words of fiction in both November and December (4,000 words per day), I’d still fall far short of writing a million words of fiction on the year.

How about you? Do you have a particular goal in mind? A particular challenge? (Setting challenges is an excellent way to achieve goals.) Feel free to share. Your challenge might interest others too.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Why I Write: 23 Fascinating Quotes from Famous Authors” at <https://www.aerogrammestudio.com/2014/03/27/why-i-write-23-quotes-famous-authors/>. I also recommend clicking the Writing Tips tab to see what you might find.

See “Running and Writing” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/31931.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 2930

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 181420

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 804702

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [aerogrammestudio.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Why write?](#)

The Journal: Stomping on Chandler’s Good Advice

November 11, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Happy Veterans’ Day
- * DWS
- * Stomping on Chandler’s Good Advice
- * I started writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You can’t have guys with guns running around loose in your novel and surprises popping up like Whac-A-Mole.” Elaine Viets

“Um, why not?” Me, in the back of the class, arm raised, waving frantically

Happy Veterans’ Day or as we used to call it, Marine Corps Hangover Recovery Day. Yesterday, your United States Marine Corps celebrated its 246th anniversary. Semper fi to my brothers and sisters in arms.

For anyone who’s interested, DWS also turned 71 yesterday. On his blog he listed the 70 major books he published during his 70th year. You can see that at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-70-70-project/>. Some good comments too.

In the post he also seemingly listed everything else he did aside from publishing—Kickstarters, workshops and pop-ups, and even short stories—so I found it odd that he didn’t specify how many novels or novellas he actually wrote during the year. But the publishing was his challenge.

Stomping on Chandler's Good Advice

At the Kill Zone blog, Elaine Viets' post is "The Man With the Gun," and is about advice from Raymond Chandler. She opens with, "Most mystery writers know this quote by Raymond Chandler: 'When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand.'" At that point, the post goes (fashionably) off the rails and any chance at a post being helpful ends.

I did not leave a comment. I know it would fall on ears that are hard of listening. I did argue (below) a couple of the more ridiculous points she made. I guess I'm just in that kind of mood.

EV: "Why not a woman with a gun?"

Sigh. Okay, first, he didn't say it couldn't be a woman. Back then, before folks became so &*\$@&# fake-hypersensitive and spent the better part of their day looking for something to be "offended" about, the word "man" in that context was generally taken to be generic.

Maybe it would have been better had Chandler written "bring in a 'person' with a gun" (or even 'perit' to get rid of that toxically masculine 'son' part). Then again, how could he know that perception would someday be given greater weight than intent (and reality) and that people would become so ridiculously good at faking being butt-hurt over nothing?

All of that being said, Chandler wasn't talking literally about a "man with a gun." He merely meant when action started to flag, it's a good idea to drop in a surprise. *Note: If you write into the dark, you won't have to worry about this. The characters will more than take care of it.*

EV: (wide-eyed, I suppose) "Is the man with the gun threatening or killing someone?"

Seriously? Um, he/she/it has a &*\$@&# GUN. In the real world that automatically denotes a threat and drops a pretty heavy hint that he/she/it is planning to intimidate, wound or kill someone.

Okay, I'm through. It's like arguing with a fence post. You won't change its mind and it's obviously unable to actually grasp the matter at hand. I hope for Viets' sake she suddenly realized she was about to be late with her blog post and slapped this one together to fill the void. If this kind of inanity is what I can expect from her in the future I'll just skip reading her entries. You can read the silly post yourself at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/the-man-with-the-gun.html>.

If it matters, I started writing fiction again yesterday. Only several hundred words. Nothing to count and nothing to report, just finally wetting my beak again. Practicing shutting out the critical mind, practicing writing description (openings) and practicing giving my creative subconscious free reign. It will take awhile to come back I guess, but at least I'm crawling in that direction.

I'm looking forward to writing full time again. Especially because in most of my books I have "guys with guns running around loose ... and surprises popping up like Whac-A-Mole." Ahem.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

Nada.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 680 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 3610

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 182100

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 805382

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Raymond Chandler](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Writing Scenes Out of Sequence

November 14, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Welcome, and on Writing Scenes Out of Sequence

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If criticism from outside proves devastating, it is because it so readily joins forces with an infinitely more strident and more aggressive form of criticism that has long existed inside of us.”
[The School of Life](#) via Farnam Street blog

In other words, external criticism only serves to reinforce one's lack of trust in one's own abilities.

Welcome to Norbert W of Innsbruck, Austria. Norbert knows the freedom of writing into the dark, but he emailed to ask whether writing scenes out of sequence and fitting them together later is a valid process. I thought I'd answer here to share it with everyone else.

First, a disclaimer: This is about writing into the dark. If you are still so frightened and untrusting of your own abilities that you resort to outlining or “signposts” or other ways of consciously thinking your way through the story, this is not for you.

But if you write into the dark (or want to learn how), the short answer is, Yes, of course writing scenes out of sequence is a valid process. If you need an example from among the ranks of professional fiction writers, it's my understanding that Kristine Kathryn Rusch writes that way most of the time.

The longer answer is still yes. Your process is your process. If you write scenes as they occur to you and then intuit how they fit together later, that's fine. For me, the bottom line is the characters. If out-of-sequence scenes are what the characters are giving you, I wouldn't question them. Just go with it. The whole key to writing into the dark is to let the characters tell the story that they, not you, are living.

Here's the difference: In YOUR story, you're sitting alone in a room banging away at a keyboard. But in THEIR story, which is appearing word by word on the screen before you, they're on a spaceship, or committing or investigating a murder, or riding wild on a good horse in a just cause. Or whatever. The point is, as a writer (as a recorder) you're channeling your characters. It's THEIR story, so let them tell it.

My own list of best practices for writing fiction would begin and end with that: Remember that the characters, not you, are actually living the story. It's their story, so trust them to tell it. And don't second-guess them with your critical, conscious mind.

Full disclosure: The above is not how I write personally. I do write into the dark and let the characters tell the story, but with very few exceptions, the characters in the stories I record tell their stories sequentially, from beginning to end.

I usually write 800 to 1500 words (a scene, which is also a chapter) and then take a short break. When I come back, I read back over what I wrote (for pleasure, with my creative mind) and allow my characters to touch the story as I go. I call that process “cycling.” Then I write the next chapter/scene, etc.

But how about it? Do any of you who are reading this write non-sequential scenes and then put them in place later? If so, extend this discussion and let me hear from you. You can email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com or you can leave a comment at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-on-writing-scenes-out-of-sequence/>.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “The Wet Blanket Reality– Chapter Three” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-wet-blanket-reality-chapter-three/>. If you’re still looking for an agent, be sure to read this.

See “Spider Writers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/spider-writers.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 4210

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 182700

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 805982

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Writing Scenes Out of Sequence](#)

The Journal: The DeepL Translator

November 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The DeepL Translator
- * Some Great Stuff in "Of Interest"
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The DeepL Translator

I failed to mention last time, when Norbert W in Austria emailed me, he used a translator to translate his Austrian (German language) email into English.

I tried the same thing later, and I believe DeepL is a very good translation program. I've added it to my Writers' Resources over on my author site. You can find the free version of the translator at <https://www.deepl.com/Translator>.

The development of this translation program also seems to be heading in a very good direction. At present, you can even select whether you want the translation delivered in a "formal" or "informal" tone.

After they've developed it a little more, I might even use it to translate some of my stories and/or novels into Spanish. Of course, most characters speak informally, but a few speak formally, so any translation would take some tweaking.

As a former instructor of English as a Second Language, I also am very curious how well the program would translate idioms. American English is replete with them, and those were more difficult to explain to a classroom full of eager students than even our weird spelling rules.

There's some great stuff in "Of Interest" today: a very basic but useful primer on printing options, an entertaining post on fairy tales and tall tales vs. "realistic" fiction, an informative post on the use of "cue words" (catchwords) by characters in fiction, and then two posts on creating conflict. (IMHO, the first is more classic theory and the second is more real-world.) And all of that wraps with a rare post by Neil Gaiman, albeit one that has nothing to do with writing. Still, you might get some story ideas out of it.

Enjoy, and I'll talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “The Short-Run Printing Option: Pros and Cons” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/the-short-run-printing-option-pros-and-cons/>. A superficial overview that is still helpful, though in a limited way.

See “Fairy Tales and the Fictionness of Fiction” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/fairy-tales-and-the-fictionness-of>. I found parts of this delightful and thought you might too. This reminds me of Juan-Carlos Salazar, the fictional bartender and Keeper of the Tales in Agua Perlado (Wes Crowley series), who is a much better storyteller than I am.

See “Cue Words in Dialogue” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/cue-words-in-dialogue.html>. These are what I and others call “catchwords” or “catch phrases.” They are Bart Simpson’s “Cowabunga” or “Don’t have a cow, man” and they are Festus Hagen’s “Matthew” when everyone else calls the marshal “Matt.” How your characters speak is almost as important as what they say.

See “Adversaries in Fiction: Who Is Standing in Your Character’s Way?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/adversaries-in-fiction-who-is-standing-in-your-characters-way/>.

See “Need Conflict? Just Let Your Characters Talk” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/need-conflict-just-let-your-characters-talk/>.

See “Art and Climate” at <https://journal.neilgaiman.com/2021/11/art-and-climate.html>. Not specifically about writing, but maybe some story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 470 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 4680

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 183170

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 806452

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Countercraft](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Fiction Writing and Pulp Speed

November 16, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * First, welcome
- * Second, today’s post
- * Let’s Talk Fiction Writing and Pulp Speed, Part 1
- * Let’s Talk Fiction Writing and Pulp Speed, Part 2
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“A Pulp Speed writer loves to just tell stories, one right after another.” Dean Wesley Smith

“The crap rules the traditional publishers forced on writers are gone for writers smart enough to escape them. [W]riters are free to write stories again at whatever pace they want to write. ... The second pulp era is upon us.” Dean Wesley Smith

“[I]f you think it can’t be done, ask yourself why? Why is your belief system telling you that?”
Dean Wesley Smith

First, welcome to Kim R, Deb ?, Triss W, and any other new subscribers I might have inadvertently missed recently. I hope you’ll find some of what you need here, and please feel free to leave a comment or email me if you have any questions or comments.

Second, today’s post is very long. It isn’t something I could get through well in fewer words, and it isn’t something I wanted to break into two or more posts.

However, it also might be the best post I’ve written all year. To make it a little more palatable, I’ve broken it into two parts. I hope you’ll get a mug or tall glass of your favorite beverage, settle in and enjoy it.

Let’s Talk Writing and Pulp Speed, Part 1

If you've written a novel, you've already accomplished something most aspiring writers will never accomplish, so good on you. If you've written more than one, so much the better.

Writing fiction professionally is not for everyone. There are those who write only to check an item off a bucket list, and there are those who write as a hobby. If either of those are why you write or have written, that's fine.

But if you are an aspiring professional fiction writer—one who consistently writes (or wants to write) short stories and/or novellas and/or novels—and if you're willing to do the difficult initial work of setting aside the myths, you have a wonderful surprise coming.

Once you learn to trust yourself and set aside the myths we were all taught—that outlining, seeking advice from critique groups, revision and rewriting/polishing are necessary because we can't *possibly* create something by ourselves—you will enter a world in which it's literally sheer joy to go to work every day. A world with no hoked-up drama of how “hard” writing is, one in which you can hardly wait to get back to your current story, or to write the next one.

In this new world, you won't celebrate finishing a story or novel. As we do when we lose a friend or family member, you'll regret that it's over and ruminate that it was entirely too short. You might even mourn a little. And you'll want to recapture that feeling of joy that's been snatched away, so you'll start the next story or novel, and you will celebrate that birth, that new beginning. Again, just as we do in every day life.

As a bonus, you will have no shortage of story ideas, and you will find that the sensation of the keys moving beneath your fingers and the words appearing on the screen is almost hypnotic, if not outright erotic.

If you're an aspiring professional fiction writer, this is a decision only you can make. In any case, it isn't something you “can't” do, so that excuse is out the window. This is something you either choose to do or choose not to do.

And I'll tell you the truth: What's easiest in the early stages is to decide NOT to do it. If you remain safely mired in the myths of outlining, revising, seeking criticism, rewriting and polishing, you can honestly complain at your launch party about what terrible drudgery writing fiction is, because it will be.

But if you do that, you will never know the sheer joy of unbridled creativity. Unbridled storytelling.

On the other hand, you can take responsibility for your own work and choose the much more rewarding path. To do that, force yourself to Trust Your Characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Don't allow your conscious, critical mind to second-guess them (and don't EVEN allow anyone else to second-guess them!).

Oh, and while we're at it, stay the hell out of that authorial ivory tower. You wouldn't try to control what your neighbors say and do as they live their story, right? So don't try to control

what your characters say and do as they live their story. Besides, face it: You don't look all that good in silken robes anyway.

Instead, slip into your jeans, sneakers and t-shirt, roll off the parapet into the trenches of the story, and race through it with your characters. You have fingers. They don't. Their job is to live the story. Your job is to experience it with them and record it for posterity.

Do that, and I guarantee you will enjoy going to "work" every day. If you'd like some assistance in doing that, I strongly recommend following Heinlein's Rules. [You can download a free copy here.](#)

Let's Talk Writing and Pulp Speed, Part 2

If you don't read anything else today, please read "Pulp Speed Brought Forward Again." You'll find the link later in this post. It's one of the best posts Dean Wesley Smith ever wrote. It's blunt and plain, with no frills. And he brought this post forward again at just the right time for me personally.

Now, Dean and I don't agree on everything. For just one example, when he talks about pulp speed, he includes all "consumable" words, by which he means fiction plus nonfiction plus blog posts. About the only writing he doesn't count is emails.

But you can write blog posts (especially with no restrictions as to topic) and nonfiction books or essays without getting rid of the myths.

You can also write fiction without getting rid of the myths, but it won't be *good* fiction. It will be wholly or partially contrived by the conscious, critical mind, and it will *feel* (and read) as if it were contrived. The writing of it will be laborious, and it won't be a labor of love. It will be drudgery, a concept that is sheer terror for a natural storyteller.

Take it from me, the sooner you learn to trust yourself, your own abilities, and your creative subconscious (your characters), the happier (and "faster") you will be as a storyteller. You'll also practice your craft a lot more while writing dozens of short stories or multiple novels in a year, so you'll also become a better storyteller a lot more quickly.

To write FICTION at pulp speed, you have to set aside all those myths: outlining, needing to know what happens next and how the story will end, revising and rewriting, seeking critiques, polishing, etc.

You can't write fiction at pulp speed while working with a safety net. To write fiction at pulp speed, you need to have to know that you don't NEED a safety net. That you won't fail, and that if you do, so what? The fact is, there will be no consequences. None. You'll just begin the next story.

And that's what I'm going to do. When I start writing fiction in earnest again (sometime this month), I'll also begin a new annual goal: to surpass 1,000,000 words (pulp speed) of published *fiction* in one year.

So go read Dean's post at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/pulp-speed-brought-forward-again/>, then maybe come back and re-read this one. Then begin the hard work of clearing out the myths and learning that you really can trust yourself. All it takes is a decision followed by stern determination.

Then jump in and let's write some stories.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Writing Shooting Scenes: How Hollow are Your Points?" at <https://leelofland.com/writing-shooting-scenes-how-hollow-are-your-points/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1330 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 6010

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 184500

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 807782

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Pulp Speed](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Fiction](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: A Turning Point

November 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Lot in "Of Interest" Today
- * A Turning Point
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"For me, the witchcraft that is writing rarely rises to the front of my mind. When it does, I seem to screw up. I go to work, pound out words and pages, and somehow, when it's all over, I've got a finished manuscript." John Gilstrap

"A good friend will help you move, but a true friend will help you move a body." Steven J. Daniels, *Weeds in The Garden of Love*<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0888TT4N5/>

"The mystery story is two stories in one: the story of what happened and the story of what appeared to happen." Mary Roberts Rinehart

"How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?" baseball legend Satchel Page

A Lot in "Of Interest" Today

Nothing earth-shaking, I'm sure, but there are several links in "Of Interest" today, some for knowledge, some for fun, some for the way they're written. I hope you will enjoy them.

I should also note that there are a lot of new posts over at [The Passive Voice](#) that I did not include in today's "Of Interest." You might want to take a look at those too.

A Turning Point

I've always found it fascinating how something as seemingly unimportant as a short "filler" blog post can provide the catalyst for a turning point in one's life.

Over on the Kill Zone blog today, Sue Coletta posted "[Reader Friday: Writer Friends](#)." In it she asks readers to comment on "one special writer friend in your life," who it is and why you chose that person. I left a comment, then decided to expand on it here.

I have several good writer friends, but in response to Sue's question, I decided to go with the one I call my mentor. I will always be grateful to Dean Wesley Smith. I first met him at a writers' conference in probably '95 (Tulsa or Tuscon) where we were both presenters, he on fiction, I on poetry.

At the time, I had two nonfiction books (ironically, on writing fiction) and two book-length collections of poetry published via traditional publishing. I had also been vaguely outlining a novel for at least three years. I hoped to write it "someday."

Dean, on the other hand, had approximately 100 novels published under various pen names, also through traditional publishing.

Years later in February 2014, I was fortunate to happen across Dean's blog, where he talked about Heinlein's Rules and a technique called writing into the dark. Back then, almost every post he wrote was about actual writing (as opposed to promotion).

Still, knowledge is only useful when it's applied. Having knowledge is a fine thing, but at that stage it's only theory, an exercise in thought, and you can choose to believe it or not as you wish. Only through application of that knowledge can you determine whether it's actually true.

Frankly, I was extremely skeptical, especially of writing into the dark. After all, like everyone else, I had been taught for years to doubt and second-guess myself.

But I also had absolutely nothing to lose. I could always go back to outlining that novel I hoped to write "someday." And the only way to know FOR SURE whether any technique actually works is to give it an honest try.

So I did. And WITD, combined with my dogged determination to prove or disprove its validity for myself, literally turned my entire life around.

After writing dozens of short stories between February and early October 2014, in mid-October of that year I took a deep breath and started my first novel. For many reasons, I wish I were just starting that first novel again. But that is not possible.

More than anything else, Heinlein's Rules and WITD are both about moving forward, not back. Sue's timely post and the memories it evoked brought that home to me. So today I'll begin my 67th novel.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "One More Vague Post..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/one-more-vague-post/>. Maybe some help on your own planning.

See “Our Brains Are Wired For Story” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/our-brains-are-wired-for-story.html>.

See “Death of an Earl” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/death-of-an-earl/>. Witty and entertaining.

See “6 Famous Writers Injured While Writing” at <https://lithub.com/6-famous-writers-injured-while-writing/>. I can only say if writing caused this much pain and despair, they were doing it wrong.

See “I Don’t Ask The Dangerous Questions” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/i-dont-ask-the-dangerous-questions.html>.

See “The If-Only Lawsuit” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-if-only-lawsuit/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Tentative Title (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 6760

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 185250

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 808532

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [LitHub.com](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Topic](#), [Writer Friends](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: Agents Want a Fresh New Voice

November 20, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Agents Want a Fresh New Voice
- * Don't look
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Great writers make their stories authentic by allowing us to experience what their characters hear, see, smell, taste, and touch—capturing the senses so we are fully involved.” Ellen Buikema at Writers in the Storm

“When agents are asked what they are looking for, their typical answer is ‘a fresh new voice’.” Steve Hooley in [“That Special Sauce”](#) at the Kill Zone blog

Agents Want a Fresh New Voice

Agents and publishers want a fresh new voice. Everyone says that. They repeat it like a mantra, and they teach it to each other, swapping it back and forth as if it's a brand-new concept that nobody's ever said before. And they don't have even a beginning clue what it means.

So having repeated the mantra, they all go back to carefully outlining, revising, rewriting and polishing. They do so harder and harder until their manuscript looks, feels, reads and sounds exactly like every other manuscript in the slush pile. And not one of them stops to think, *Wait. What's fresh and new about that?*

The fact is, not one time in 69 years have I heard a writer put those two concepts together. Not once have I heard even a brand-new baby writer say, “Ah! Agents want a fresh new voice, so I'm going to revise and rewrite and polish my manuscript until it reads like someone else wrote it.”

They can't say that because it makes zero sense. How can you create a “fresh new voice” by revising and rewriting and polishing? You can't. No matter the reasoning, an erasure is an erasure, and an eradication is an eradication. And more than that, you can't reveal a fresh new voice by slathering-on layers of King or Roberts or anyone else. To reveal a fresh new voice, you have to put on your big-person pants and be true to the author in the mirror.

But by and large, at least until they stumble across someone who's willing to tell them the hard truth—like Dean Wesley Smith or Stephen King or Lawrence Block or Lee Child or, you know, me—writers commit that silly paradox over and over and over again. Specifically because

“Agents want a fresh new voice,” they write, revise, seek critical input from critique “partners,” rewrite, polish and submit.

And when the manuscript is rejected, maybe even with a note attached that reads, “Sorry, but we’re looking for a fresh new voice,” they revise and rewrite again, and more conscientiously. They seek even more conscious-mind input from members of critique groups. Yes, just as if anyone else can tell the characters’ story better than the characters can.

But why do they do all this nonsensical stuff?

Because a writer’s own voice, which is fresh, new and unique to others, is boring to the writer. After all, we hear our own authorial voice 24/7/365. And especially after being taught for years to second-guess and even “correct” the voice of our creative subconscious, we can’t imagine that anyone else could actually enjoy it.

But we ourselves enjoy the voices of other writers, say Tom Clancy or Stephen King or Danielle Steele or whomever. Yet somehow we have no understanding that those writers got where they are by writing in their own unique voice.

So we strive in our revising and rewriting and polishing to sound as much like those other writers as possible. And in doing so, we obliterate our own “fresh new voice.” It’s a vicious cycle.

So listen, please: No matter how bored you are with your own voice—no matter how much you doubt that your voice is unique and that anyone will want to read or hear your stories—you’re just wrong.

Nobody else has your unique authorial voice, and nobody else has your characters in their head. The only way to get “a fresh new voice” is to let the characters tell the story that they, not you, are living. Let it out, trust it, and then don’t obliterate it with conscious-mind revisions, rewriting and polishing.

Do that, my friends, and you’ll be golden.

Don’t look for updated fiction numbers today. Yesterday got away from me. We were out much of the day, and by the time we got home I was too tired to give myself over to recording my characters’ story.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Steve Wozniak’s startup Privateer plans to launch hundreds of satellites to study space debris” at <https://www.space.com/steve-wozniak-privateer-hundreds-satellites-space-debris>. Um, anyone else see the irony in this?

See “Ultrahot ‘superionic’ ice is a new state of matter” at <https://www.space.com/stable-superionic-ice-made-first-time>.

See “December Regular Workshops Now Up” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/december-regular-workshops-now-up/>. If you’re interested in Dean doing another workshop sale, comment or email him.

See “How to Write the Sense of Smell” at <https://writersinthestormblog.com/2021/11/how-to-write-the-sense-of-smell/>. Thanks to The Passive Guy for the tip.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 7580

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 186070

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 809352

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writers in the Storm](#)

The Journal: “Natural” Storytellers

November 21, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * “Natural” Storytellers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“This is how I came to begin thinking about story-first worldbuilding.” Kelsey Allagood at Writer Unboxed

“Natural” Storytellers

While poking around the web this morning I came across [“Your Guide to a Weekly Creativity Time.”](#)

In that post, James Scott Bell says John Gilstrap is a “natural storyteller.” I couldn’t agree more. But Mr. Bell goes on to say that he himself is one of the “other writers” who “have to dig in hard ground to find, stimulate, and coax ideas. Then take the good ones to the workshop [critique group] and figure out the best way to develop them into stories.” Then he asks those who read the post to comment on what type of storyteller they are.

Wow. I’ve never thought of writing in that way. Naturally, I have a theory.

First, yes, of course I am a natural storyteller. So are all of you, and so is Mr. Bell if only he would trust himself. All of us were making up stories long before we were even aware of that group of symbols we know now as the alphabet.

And yes, a two-year old making up stories IS exactly the same thing as a person later in life writing short stories or novels. The only difference is that the 2-4 year old hasn’t yet been taught that making up things from his/her own creative subconscious is “bad” or that nothing good can come of it. That only with a lot of conscious thought and input from a lot of others can you deliver a story that is entertaining.

But the fact is, you as an adult CAN tell entertaining stories just as you did when you were a toddler. You only have to learn to let go of the fear and believe in yourself again, as you did before the world got its well-meaning claws into you and told you all the things you can’t possibly do by yourself.

Writers who believe they “have to dig in hard ground to find, stimulate, and coax ideas,” have chosen that path by buying-in to the myths. Either that or they’re far too invested in the drama of what it means to be a writer. Writing isn’t some elevated “calling,” folks. It’s just how the more fortunate of us make our living.

But writers who compare writing with the labor-intense digging in hard ground were taught at the beginning that’s the way to do it. And unfortunately most humans will not change or grow

until the fear of stagnation outweighs the fear of moving ahead into the unknown. Sadly, most choose stagnation and never realize the freedom and joy of writing into the dark.

And Mr. Bell himself illustrates that point.

Early in his post, he cites Dean Koontz' [How to Write Best Selling Fiction](#):

“He has a section in there on finding story ideas.” One of those ideas was to

“Write narrative hooks. Just sit at the keyboard and type hooks (first lines) until ‘you find one that is so intriguing that you simply must find out what happens next’. One day Koontz wrote: “You ever killed anything?” Roy asked.’

“He had no idea who Roy was or what he meant. But he sat there looking at it and it came to him (*‘out of my subconscious mind’*[emphasis added]) that Roy should be a boy of fourteen. From there his imagination started chugging and he wrote two pages of a conversation between Roy and a boy he named Colin. When he was finished he knew the book was going to be about the duality of human nature (good and evil), that Roy was the villain, and that the book would be fast-paced and suspenseful. Indeed it was, and became an early bestseller called [The Voice of the Night](#).”

Mr. Bell himself wrote the passage above in his post. Yet somehow the significance of Koontz' advice eluded him both back when he read it the first time and again when he posted this article.

Instead of fully embracing Koontz' wisdom and stepping into the light as a writer, Mr. Bell receded back into the confines of his shell, which he carefully constructed of various and sundry safety nets: outlining, revision, “workshop” (critique group) input and rewriting.

He even constructed an explanation: That he simply isn't a “natural storyteller.” That he has to “dig in hard ground to find, stimulate, and coax ideas.” Wow. What rarified air.

I'm glad I'm not that special. After a few false starts, I'm currently re-reading the last Wes Crowley Gap novel to get myself back into the flow of Wes' ongoing story. (Duh. I should've done that a month ago.) When I reach the end, I'll begin writing the next book in the series.

And I won't be “digging in hard ground, attempting to coax” anything, even a story from a stone with a hammer and chisel. I'll just write a hook, then an opening, then the next sentence and the next and the next. And roughly two weeks later I'll have five novels in the Gap series where there were only four before.

I can do this not because I received some blessing that's rare or unavailable to others, but because I embrace the joy and freedom of writing off into the dark. And so can you.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Aphorisms for Thirsty Fish: The Lost Writings of Wu Hsin” at <https://fs.blog/the-lost-writings-of-wu-hsin/>.

See “What Matters Most” at <https://fs.blog/what-matters-most/>.

See “The Easy-ish Way to Create Believable, Unforgettable Fictional Worlds” at <https://writerunboxed.com/2021/11/20/the-easy-ish-way-to-create-believable-unforgettable-fictional-worlds/>. Still too much conscious thought, IMHO. Parts of the world are part of the story, and other parts aren’t. Just write it. If your POV character notices it, write it down. If s/he doesn’t, don’t.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 970 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 8550

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 187040

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 810322

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [FS Blog](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writer Unboxed](#)

The Journal: What About Writing Are You Grateful For?

November 22, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * What About Writing Are You Grateful For?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

What About Writing Are You Grateful For?

With Thanksgiving Day rapidly approaching, over at the Kill Zone blog Kay DiBianca posed a question: What one thing about writing are you grateful for? She then suggested, "It can be a book you've read, a mentor who's inspired and helped you, a blog you love, or any other person or thing you're grateful for."

For me, the response was immediate and definitive: I'm grateful to my characters for enabling me to experience their stories and live vicariously in so many times and places.

Through them I've traveled faster than light through space and helped colonize a distant planet. Through them I've solved crimes, been involved in wars, and defended this Earth from alien invaders. And through them I've ridden wild on a sorrel stallion in a just cause, a Navy Colt in either hand and a repeating carbine in my saddle scabbard.

In this world where you (probably) get only one extremely brief turn at life, who could ask for more than that? Yet in this whole "living your life" thing, once is definitely not enough.

Not that I would want to extend my current life beyond whatever it will be anyway. I wouldn't, even if I could do it through an "age exchange," as I did in my free SF short story ["Going Back"](#).

So what about writing are you thankful for? Share your thoughts in a comment at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-what-about-writing-are-you-grateful-for>, or swing by [Kay's post](#) and leave a comment there.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "We Live By a Unit of Time That Doesn't Make Sense" at <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2021/11/weeks-seven-days-david-henkin/620712/>. I seldom know or care what day it is until I give it some thought.

See "Natural Born Killer-Story Teller" at <https://www.robertjsadler.com/post/natural-born-killer-story-teller>.

See "The Commas That Cost Companies Millions" at <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20180723-the-commas-that-cost-companies-millions>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 320 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 8870

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 187360

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 810642

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlantic](#), [BBC](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Robert Sadler](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: All Knowledge is Pertinent

November 23, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * All Knowledge is Pertinent to WITD
- * Moaning No Longer
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There are four kinds of homicide: felonious, excusable, justifiable, and praiseworthy.” Ambrose Bierce

“November, n. The eleventh twelfth of a weariness.” Ambrose Bierce, [The Devil’s Dictionary](#)

Welcome to Lexy, and any others who subscribed recently. Good to have you all aboard. If I can do anything to help, don’t hesitate to leave a comment or email me.

All Knowledge is Pertinent to WITD

The Kill Zone blog has made the Journal a lot recently, and today is no exception. When I read the opening paragraph of Debbie Burke’s [“Timing and Punchlines”](#) I actually got excited at what she missed. Debbie wrote

“Note: Today’s discussion concerns later drafts when you rewrite, edit, and polish. It doesn’t apply to first drafts where the main job is to get the story down.”

With all due respect to Debbie, a good storyteller in her own right, yes, her post DOES pertain to the first draft. It pertains to writing fiction, period.

Those of us who write into the dark—meaning we’ve learned to write a clean, finished draft the first time through—understand that we have to trust what we know.

We have to trust the knowledge we’ve internalized about writing fiction, and we have to trust that our creative subconscious will draw on that well of knowledge as necessary while we’re racing through the story with our characters.

Our entire writing process in a nutshell:

1. We write a story from our creative subconscious to the best of our current ability. We never allow our critical, conscious mind to intervene.
2. To do that, we write for a session, then cycle back through what we just wrote (reading as a reader, not a writer, with the creative subconscious) to allow the characters to clean up any little glitches. Then we write the next session. We continue in that way until the story is finished.
3. We submit or publish the story, then take a class or lecture or read a post or book on writing to learn something new. Anything will do as long as it speaks to us and excites us. (If it speaks to us or excites us, we will internalize it. If it doesn’t, we won’t.)
4. We practice the new technique while writing a story from our creative subconscious to the best of our (new) current ability. We never allow our critical, conscious mind to intervene.

So the information imparted in Debbie Burke’s article is ABSOLUTELY pertinent to “first drafts.” It’s knowledge—valid, valuable knowledge—about writing fiction.

The difference is, we who write into the dark will read, study and internalize the information. Then we'll simply trust that it's there as part of our new knowledge base.

Those who have bought into the myths that they must second-guess their creative subconscious (revise, seek the opinions of other critical minds, then edit and rewrite etc.) probably will go back and re-read the article, then attempt to apply the information with their conscious, critical mind. Some of the more doubtful in their own abilities probably will even go article to story, article to story, article to story.

All of which is fine, of course. To each his or her own. But that's far too much work for me, especially given that All We Do is provide readers with a few minutes' (short story) or hours' (novel) entertainment. That's it. Nothing more important than that.

For we who write into the dark, THAT we write is all-important. But WHAT we write, the individual story, isn't important in the slightest. Not to the writer. Any importance is assigned by the reader.

To improve our craft and become better storytellers, we read and consider new information (Yes, engage the conscious, critical mind for learning). Then we allow what we learn to sink into our creative subconscious. Then we fuggidaboutit. The information will reside there until our characters need it.

Trust me. It works.

Moaning No Longer

As I wrote above, "trust me, [writing into the dark] works." Thing is, I've been moaning a lot here about my inability to write fiction for the past four months, ever since I quit cigars. That was a major life change. Obviously more major than I expected.

But even with that four months off, I've written well over 600,000 words of fiction this year. At present I'm finally working myself back into writing again. And I have to say I'm enjoying every somewhat excruciating minute of relearning all the techniques I took for granted four months ago.

So thanks for hanging around. I'll be fully back before you know it.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Workshop Question..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/workshop-question/>.

See "Ghostwriters Come Out of the Shadows" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ghostwriters-come-out-of-the-shadows/>. A nod to my friend, Dan.

See “Art and Commerce Need Not Be at Odds” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/art-and-commerce-need-not-be-at-odds/>. Just in case this helps or speaks to some of you. See PG’s excellent take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 840 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 9710

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 188200

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 811482

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Debbie Burke](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Returning to Writing](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A “Fresh New Voice” Revisited

November 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Happy Thanksgiving
- * A “Fresh New Voice” Revisited
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Happy Thanksgiving

I'm posting today mostly so I can wish you an enjoyable Thanksgiving tomorrow. I hope it's a good one for you and that you get to share it with friends and family.

A "Fresh New Voice" Revisited

Not quite a week ago, I posted a topic titled "Agents Want a Fresh New Voice."

Yesterday, I received an email on the topic from another prolific fiction writer, Dawn T. Her anecdote added so much to my original post that I wanted to share it with you, with her permission, of course. Here's Dawn:

"A close friend was seeking acceptance by the trad pubs a few years back, and every bit of the feedback she received was about how she NEEDED to sound like everyone else. She even had to provide comparables—tell them what other authors her style and story matched.

"They were especially pushing for her to write like their A-list authors, following THEIR style and voice. She kept getting rejected because she didn't 'sound' like them. Meanwhile, she was told they were seeking authors with a "fresh voice". Repeatedly!

"How in the world can an author be a 'fresh voice'" if they're expected to write like everyone else? I finally convinced her to go indie, but man, it took some doing! She's really glad now that she did."

Thanks for the validation, my friend.

Folks, we can't "think" our way to originality. If we can consciously think up a plot twist, so can the reader. When you're reading along in a story or novel and realize you know what's going to happen next (and then it does), how boring is that?

The only path to a unique, original voice is to trust your creative subconscious and not allow your (or anyone else's) conscious, critical mind to second-guess it.

Then you need only follow Heinlein's Rules: write, publish, and write the next thing. Your stories, and your voice, will find readers.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "How authors are finding success on Kindle Vella" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-authors-are-finding-success-on-kindle-vella/>.

See "A Very Happy Thanksgiving" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/a-very-happy-thanksgiving.html>. Not about writing but some turkey-cooking tips you might find useful.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 370 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 100800

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 188570

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 811852

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [A Fresh New Voice](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Originality](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Thanksgiving Sale

November 25, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Thanksgiving Sale
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Thanksgiving Sale

So Dean has decided to have another lecture/workshop sale. It runs from today through Thursday, December 2nd. The code is **HolidaySale** (one word). To use it visit <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>.

There, “just find whatever class you would like, hit purchase, and then put in the code HolidaySale on the top of the next page to get 50% off the price.” You can get more than one class, lecture or workshop, but you have to repeat the process each time.

Enjoy the rest of the day. Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “An Incomplete List of Virginia Woolf Puns in Pop Culture ” at <https://lithub.com/an-incomplete-list-of-virginia-woolf-puns-in-pop-culture/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 110 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 10190

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 188680

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 811962

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [LitHub.com](#)

The Journal: Peter Brandvold

November 27, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Here's to Boring and Uneventful
- * Peter Brandvold
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Gratitude is a quality similar to electricity: It must be produced and discharged and used up in order to exist at all.” William Faulkner

Here's to Boring and Uneventful

I hope everyone had an enjoyable Thanksgiving. Ours was boring and uneventful, in a good way. Meaning there was no undue, unnecessary excitement and no drama. One more thing for which to be grateful. Unfortunately, Dean's was something less than boring, as reported at [“Well, That Was Fun”](#).

But as a bonus, yesterday my youngest son drove down from Flagstaff, so we'll get to visit with him for a couple of days.

Peter Brandvold

This morning, a friend (Thanks, Patrick) brought to my attention Peter Brandvold. Mr. Brandvold is a prolific novelist who has written over 100 novels since his first was published by New York in 1996.

The first link in “Of Interest” will introduce you to him and provide some great advice about dealing with New York publishers.

Those of you who have a Facebook account (I don't) might want to look up Peter Brandvold. Especially for an article he posted titled “Let Your Wolf Howl.” I hope to have him guest post on the Journal at some point.

Of Interest

See “Running off the leash” at <https://peterbrandvold.com/2020/02/running-off-the-leash>. Some stark truth from another prolific fiction writer.

See “True Crime Thursday – Thanksgiving Wine Heist” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/true-crime-thursday-thanksgiving-wine-heist.html>. I love posts about stupid criminals.

See “What is Buckshot?” at <https://leelofland.com/what-is-buckshot/>.

See “Tachyons: Facts about these faster-than-light particles” at <https://www.space.com/tachyons-facts-about-particles>.

See “Antifa Member Who Took Axe to Senate Office Given Probation and his Axe Back” at <https://jonathanturley.org/2021/11/26/antifa-member-who-took-axe-to-senate-office-given-probation-and-his-axe-back/>. You can’t make this stuff up. Of course, we don’t know all the details, but the photo of the perp that accompanies the article says a great deal.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 290 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 10480

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 188970

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 812252

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jonathan Turley](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [New York publishing](#), [Peter Brandvold](#), [Space.com](#)

The Journal: “Fill a Stein....” Guest Post

November 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * “Fill a Stein and Grab a Bloody Haunch!” Guest Post
- * More on Peter Brandvold
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Fill a Stein and Grab a Bloody Haunch!

a guest post by Peter Brandvold

That, in a heraldic nutshell, is my approach to writing. Simple as a Zen painting and elemental as a pissed-off bobcat.

In other words, when I pour that first cup of morning mud thick enough to float a lumber drey, wrestle onto the floor amongst my snarling curs, and pick up my Macbook Pro which I prop atop my knees while said curs cozy up against my ribs and growl themselves into rabbit-rending dreams—yes, I write on the floor, close to the beasts and cold, hard earth!—I do not pad meekly but bull headlong into that netherworld of my own fevered conjurings of wild-assed adventure.

I throw my head back and bellow as loudly as I can—albeit to myself, so as not to arouse the carrion-eaters—”FILL A STEIN, MERRY LISTENERS!PULL UP A COLD ROCK BY MY HOT FIRE, GRAB A BLOODY HAUNCH OF ROASTING VENISON, AND PRICK UP YOUR EARS FOR THE STORY I’M ABOUT TO SING!”

Unless you’re trying to be Agatha Christie, that’s really the only way to do it.

Why whimper? Whimpering writers cause whimpering readers.

Admittedly, as on most subjects, I have narrow views on writing and literature. I think a story, whether it be short or long, should be a little wild and scary, sort of like the tattooed, Harley-riding jake your parents live in dread of your sister marrying. It should blow some cigarette smoke in our faces, flex its ghastly biceps, make us gasp in shock and giggle in delighted horror at the cheerio it just spun in our driveways.

Not that good fiction—I ain’t so looney as to say I write anything close to lit-ra-chah—shouldn’t also be thoughtful and reflect on our place in the cold, lonely universe in which there may or may not be a god and a reason for our being here enduring all the bullshit.

But it should also entertain the bejesus out of us. Cause our hearts to race. Interrupt our sleep with bizarrely vivid dreams. It should cause us to daydream, if for just a few minutes each week in our office cubicles, of telling the boss to stick it in her ear, we’re joining a carnival.

As a writer of relatively “traditional”—I really hate that word, because I don’t see myself as traditional at all—westerns, I write to entertain. But I got into this racket after beating a circuitous path through several improbable canyons.

I grew up wanting to be the Hemingway of North Dakota. Or at least the John Updike of the Great Plains. I loved poetry, Tolstoy, and Guy de Maupassant. I was an English major at the University of North Dakota and finagled an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona with a passel of what one would call “literary” short stories.

They weren’t half bad, either. One was published in a university quarterly and even anthologized later, and though it first appeared nearly twenty-five years ago now, I’ve recently received letters about it.

I say they weren’t half-bad, but I don’t think I could revisit even the best of them now without falling asleep. And that’s how I feel about most of the mainstream literature, and even most of the genre fiction, sorry to say, that is published today. It puts me to sleep. And that’s a bad, bad thing.

Because writing—even literary writing—should entertain or at least send some blood to our organs.

As a wide-eyed young English major fresh off the lonely prairie and wanting to read and write adventurous things, tales that made me feel eager and vibrant, I found myself nodding off over most of the novels I was assigned in college.

There were many that I liked, even some that inspired me. *Moby Dick* and the old Icelandic sagas, for instance. (The first was a wonderful if sometimes slow-moving and overly detailed story of one man’s war against the universe; the latter yarns were, as Michael Dirda described them in his Barnes and Noble.com review of one of my old favorites, *The Long Ships* by Frans G. Bengtsson, “spaghetti westerns with swords—only more thrilling.”)

But so many more I slogged through, blubbering. You can take Faulkner and George Eliot, and throw them in the same river.

After reading reams of those colorless and only marginally meaningful stories in the “small” magazines, I was deluded into thinking that that was the kind of stuff I needed to write to be taken seriously. That good writing had to be slowly plotted, overly ponderous, filled with self-conscious devices, and downright boring.

I was among those who sneered at anything that smacked of unheeled entertainment. Even at those I’d grown up reading, those wonderful storytellers who’d first inspired me to spin my own yarns all those years ago on the prairie. Writers like Alexandre Dumas, Rafael Sabatini (*Captain Blood!*), Ray Bradbury (*The Illustrated Man!*), Jack Williamson, Leigh Brackett, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Max Brand, C.L. Moore, Robert E. Howard, H. Ryder Haggard, and countless others of the pulp variety.

Good, old-fashioned entertainment.

But wait a damn minute—isn’t that the stuff that inspired us to sing around our cave-mouth campfires all those eons ago in the first place?

Entertainment? The stuff that made us laugh, cry, scream, dribble down our legs? That set the boys wrestling, the damsels dancing, and the dogs howling?

Now, I'm not saying it all has to be pulp. Or that when I sit down on the floor with my savage woolies to write my own brand of western entertainment that I don't try to include more than just thundering .45's, bulging corsets, and fisticuffs.

Not at all.

I think a story should entertain first and foremost. But it should also cause us to reflect, however briefly and genuinely, without being maudlin, on what it's like to be humans in a world that is largely unknown and unknowable to us, and filled with tragedy and suffering.

If we genre writers draw our characters well, make them more than just types, but give them flesh and blood and their own unique way of speaking and living and loving, and give a little voice now and then to our own cares, our own angst, then readers will naturally find the depth that is there in the yarn between the shootouts and mattress dances, the depth that reflects the writer and the larger world that we and our tales grow out of.

Writers who do that—specifically western writers who do that—are my favorites of the genre.

H.A. DeRosso does that. (Just read his novel .44 and his novella "The Bounty Hunter," and tell me he doesn't.) Often, T.V. Olson does it, too.

Others include Dean Owen, Merle Constiner, Donald Hamilton, Giles Lutz, and Giles Tippette. My good friend Kit Prate does that as well. See her wild and sexy *Hot Night in Purgatory* (as by Steve Travis) as well as Jason Kilkenny's *Gun*. You'll never find more harrowing violence or deeper, more compelling western characters.

Jack Vance and C.L. Moore do that in western's brother genre, science fiction.

What about Louis L'Amour?

Don't care for the Jake. He started out as a fair to middlin' pulp writer and then, taking himself too seriously, became a pompous blowhard. Oh, he was all right when I was fresh from swaddling clothes and before I discovered better, more compelling western scribes like those I listed above, and Mickey Spillane.

But to me he's the western equivalent of Agathie Christie. His heroes are wooden and sexless. His women are even more wooden and sexless. His plots are as bland as *Bonanza*, and they rely too heavily on coincidence and the infallibility and moral impeccability of his heroes.

And the biggest sin of all—they're bloodless!

I like sex and violence in my yarns. Lots of it. Interspersed with the tender moments, mind you. But I like the stuff that makes my eyes pop and my loins happy. I'll take a hearty dose in every chapter, please!

If I want to be put to sleep, I'll take a pill.
That's just who I am.

I'm sorry if I've offended you, caused you to shake your heads and stich your brows in reproof. Or even to slam my books closed with the ear-splitting blam! of a .44 triggered in the tight confines of a whore's crib.

No, I'm not.

Evoking a visceral response is what I set out to do. And I suggest that if you're trying to write, you do the same thing.

Kick off your slippers and go barefoot. Add a little firewater to your mud.

Crowd in amongst the beasts and shout at the tops of your wicked lungs: "FILL A STEIN AND GRAB A BLOODY HAUNCH!"

Note: As a reminder, you can find Pete's author website at <https://peterbrandvold.com>. I also recommend Pete's articles on writing at his blog: <https://peterbrandvold.blogspot.com/>.

If you enjoy common-sense advice on writing delivered with appropriate levels of emotion, wit and intelligence from the vantage point of experience, I suggest you bookmark both. I have, and I've linked to both as writer's resources on my author site.

Finally, if you're still looking for a traditional publisher, I suggest taking a close look at Wolfpack Publishing, especially their "Unsolicited Manuscript Submission Guidelines" at <https://wolfpackpublishing.com/submissions/>.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Funny Business" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/funny-business.html>.

See "Reindeer Fun" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/reindeer-fun.html>. Fun facts about reindeer.

See "Let Your Wolf Howl" at <https://peterbrandvold.blogspot.com/2015/07/on-starting-action-novel-or-drop-some.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1610 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 12090

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 190580

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 813862

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Peter Brandvold](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: WITD and Writing Again

November 30, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Holiday Sale
- * Writing Into the Dark
- * Writing Again
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Holiday Sale

With the holidays coming up quickly, I thought I'd remind you of the half-price sale over at WMG Publishing's Teachable account (<https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>). Workshops and lectures and classes make excellent gifts for writers, even if the writer is yourself.

For details, see “3 Days Left in the Holiday Sale” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/3-days-left-in-the-holiday-sale/>. Of the lectures, the knowledge you’ll glean from Heinlein’s Rules (Lecture 1 if I remember right) is absolutely priceless. That lecture is literally what started me on this journey. Just sayin’.

Writing Into the Dark

For many years, I’ve looked for other writers who strive to follow Heinlein’s Rules, who don’t obey the nonsensical myths about writing, and who aren’t Dean Wesley Smith or Stephen King. And who aren’t someone to whom I taught the technique or for whom I validated it.

So I was more than a little surprised and excited to stumble across two such authors in short order. Both are highly successful but relatively unknown. And at least one—Peter Brandvold—talks at least occasionally about WITD.

Shortly after Patrick D introduced me to Pete, the latter asked whether I knew prolific writer Stephen Mertz. Apparently Pete knows or believes that Stephen lives near where I live. Yet everything I could find during my exhaustive, 10-second internet search said Stephen lives in “the American southwest.” That’s a pretty large area.

Anyway, I have to admit I hadn’t heard of Stephen Mertz, though I suspect many of you have. So Pete offered to put me in touch with him so we might get together and talk shop. Should Stephen reach out, I’ll report any relevant details here.

Writing Again

As I was telling a friend earlier this morning, it’s been a rough road back to writing. Giving up cigars (not nicotine, the actual cigars) was such a massive physiological hit that I’ve been mentally paralyzed, unable to concentrate on anything other than remembering to walk more and eat less and control my mood for the past 4 months. Now I’m back.

That’s the general overview. The less curious may skip straight from here to “Of Interest.”

Some of you, unfortunately, know what I mean about physiological addiction. Even now, 4 months later, if I was faced with the decision again, I wouldn’t quit cigars. I won’t go back to them now, but only because there’s no guarantee things would be the same as before I quit them. But for me, the payoff has not been worth the complete disruption of my life.

Yes, I thought of my characters now and then during the past 4 months, but I haven’t been able to care enough about them or about storytelling to write a story. Remember, for a writer, *what* you write is not important at all, but *THAT* you write is the most important thing in the world.

That’s what a big deal quitting cigars was for me: I was no longer a fiction writer. I had the desire to write, but not the ability.

The importance of telling a story paled in comparison to the things I mentioned above: remembering to walk more and eat less and control my mood. Doing those things, and chiming in here on the Journal now and then—primarily to retain that sense of the keys moving beneath my fingertips—was all I could manage.

But now I'm ready. A week or so ago, I was finally able to sit down and re-read the last novel in the gap series. Since then, I've been messing about with openings, getting a feel for the characters, their voices, etc. So today my new writing year begins. I'll write at least a million words of new, published fiction this year, which will end on November 29, 2022.

If you're wondering, I'm starting today mostly because I wrote recently in this Journal that I would start this month. Otherwise I'd start on December 1. But as some of you know, the fact that I can *choose* when to start is a clear signal that I'm back.

Thanks for hanging in there. Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Waitin' on a Woman" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-C-IbkuNWs>. Not about writing, but one of the sweetest and smartest songs I've ever heard.

See "First Page Critique: Time to Stop Thinking And Start Screaming" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/11/first-page-critique-time-to-stopthinking-and-start-screaming.html>. I didn't read this at all but offer it up in case it speaks to some of you. The sisters who are PJ Parrish usually offer valid advice.

See "Why Writing Second Person POV Appeals To Marginalized Writers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-writing-second-person-pov-appeals-to-marginalized-writers/>. Okay, I didn't read this one either, but here's a mini-topic: Writing second person POV is a valid, advanced technique that is often—but *sparingly*—used by advanced Stage 3, 4 and 5 writers, primarily to indicate something about the character who's using the technique, even if that character is also the narrator. It's more often used in dialogue by one or more particular characters in a story. This is a very special skill that takes a lot of practice and a lot of reading aloud to be sure you haven't overdone it.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 830 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 623282

Total nonfiction words for November... 12920

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 191410
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 814692

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Going Wide vs. Exclusivity

December 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * StreetLib
- * A Slow Start
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Writing is a lot easier than getting up onstage and singing and dancing, I’ll tell you that.” Mel Brooks

A Long Quote on Wide Distribution vs. Exclusivity

In a comment, a reader recently asked Dean Wesley Smith, “[Can you explain] why authors should go wide instead of Amazon exclusive? I always click on the links of authors who comment here and noticed so many of us are devotees of most of your methods [but] we still go exclusive for fear of not being ‘discoverable’.”

Dean’s reply was the best explanation I’ve seen thus far:

“In Select, you are exclusive to about 3% of the world's readers in English, and most of those readers don't read for author, they read for free stuff. You do not build a long-term audience and it is not the readers who are buying your book, it is Amazon giving you money to help them promote their site. Nothing more.

“You go wide, with almost no work, you can get to over 80% of the world's English readers and they know your name and buy your book with their own money, so you can build long-term readers of your work. And with even more work, and some time, you can get to about 91% of all English readers. (That last 9% or so is a tough road.)

“Anyone deciding on Select exclusive is making a very short term and bad decision for their writing. However, there are a couple other subscription services that are not exclusive and they are great. If Select took off the exclusive feature, it would be great. But as it is, it is stupid, plain and simple.”

StreetLib

For those of you who are still looking for your first ebook aggregator and/or exploring new “wide” possibilities, take a look at this [StreetLib Newsletter](#) that I received yesterday.

I also suggest you take a deeper look at StreetLib. Their distribution is wider even than that of D2D and broader and more significant than that of Smashwords. Something to consider, especially if you're just getting started.

Well, I had a slower start than I would have liked, mostly getting back into feeling the chair and the keyboard, putting my conscious, critical mind in its place, etc. It feels really good to be in the story and excited about the characters again.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “The Daily Routines of 12 Famous Writers” at <https://jamesclear.com/daily-routines-writers>.

See “Engineering A Novel” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/engineering-a-novel.html>. I don't have to do any of that. My characters figure it all out.

See “Face Surveillance Was Always Flawed” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/face-surveillance-was-always-flawed/>. Story ideas, perhaps, especially in this time when faux offense is given greater weight than honest intent.

See “This Guy Just Found a Faster Way to Multiply” at <https://cacm.acm.org/news/240289-this-guy-just-found-a-faster-way-to-multiply/fulltext>.

See “Mel Brooks Writes It All Down” at <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-interview/mel-brooks-writes-it-all-down>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 470 words

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 2602 words. Total words to date..... 2602

Total fiction words for November..... 2602

Total fiction words for the year..... 625884

Total nonfiction words for December... 470

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 19610

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 817764

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Back to the Future

December 3, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * First, a quick welcome
- * Topic: Back to the Future (sigh)
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Some of the biggest cases of mistaken identity are among intellectuals who have trouble remembering that they are not God.” Thomas Sowell (via The Passive Voice)

First, a quick welcome to Leanna L, Philip, and anyone else who’s joined us recently. Very glad to have you aboard. (grin) Now on to the topic.

Topic: Back to the Future (sigh)

Sorry for the seemingly hokey title (grin), but as you will see, it fits in this case. I’m sharing this not to whine in public, but just in case you find yourself in the same or a similar leaky boat.

First, a brief setup: A short while back someone mentioned either in a comment or via email that maybe my conscious, critical mind (CCM) was sewing doubt and that’s what was keeping me from starting to write again.

Nope. That wasn’t it.

As I explained, I was unable to write fiction At All, so my critical mind had nothing to do with it. The CCM doesn’t engage until you’re attempting what it sees as a risky venture: writing fiction for public consumption. The CCM’s job is to protect you, and if it can keep you from writing or from finishing what you write, then it’s succeeded. It will have saved you from the possibility of criticism or embarrassment. At least that’s the CCM’s take.

Okay, so I brushed away the last few wisps of brain fog and started writing again on November 29. But the first two days of writing on the new novel illustrated that I’m more than a little rusty on the writing front. What’s worse, my CCM came roaring back with a vengeance. I honestly didn’t anticipate that, at least not to such a degree.

Then I made another mistake in judgment. I thought I could just shove my CCM aside like I used to. But after 4 months, I discovered I’m a little out of practice. (grin)

At first, that seemed odd. After all, I have all the same knowledge I had before I took my forced hiatus. I have all the same skills, the same computer, a better writing surface, and so on. All I’m missing is Practice for that four months: practice writing and practice dismissing the CCM, right?

Nope. Wrong. Before I stopped writing, I was dismissing the CCM and putting words on the page. But those things were only the result of what I was practicing. As I’ve talked about here before, I was practicing TRUST.

Trust is what enables me to put 1000 to 1500 words on the page per hour, every hour. (If that seems like a lot, it’s actually only a snail’s pace of 17 to 25 words per minute.) And Trust is what enables me to shove my conscious, critical mind aside. If I’m struggling to get back up to speed (and I am), it’s because I’ve lost that trust. So I have to relearn it. I have to relearn what I practiced up until August 6th and what I’ve been teaching everyone else for the past several years.

Though there are minor variations, fiction writers write in one of only two basic ways:

— In their hubris, they don pristine, godlike authorial robes, then ascend into an ivory tower to plan and control every aspect of the storyline and the characters. (Most writers, after being educated, start out this way.) But eventually, the more fortunate ones go a different route:

— They climb down out of the authorial tower and donate the robes to homeless shelters for use as sheets. Then they slip into jeans, sneakers and a t-shirt, roll off the parapet into the trenches and race through the story with the characters, laughing and trying to keep up. In other words, they control nothing. They TRUST the characters to tell the story that they, not the writer, are actually living. Then they record that story as it unfolds.

Trust is what makes writing fun. And if sitting alone in a room making stuff up can't be fun, I don't want to do it. It's just that simple.

Reestablishing trust in my characters will also enable me to recognize and subdue the critical mind. At present, I find myself wanting to edit (CCM) as I go, which of course cuts my production from 1000 or 1500 words per hour down to a few hundred words per hour. Bleh.

I've said more than once that sometimes I wish I was back at the very beginning of the process, learning to trust myself and just about to write my first novel. This is a perfect example of being cautious about what you wish for.

All that said, this is not a big thing, by which I mean This Too Shall Pass. As I said at the outset, I shared it only in case it might help someone else who's in a similar boatwreck. It's just gonna take a little while, maybe as long as a few weeks. Or a few stories. Of course, your results might vary.

To explain what's going on in "Numbers" below, for now I've put the current novel on hold. I'll write short stories and/or vignettes, explore characters and situations, and use those venues to retrain myself. (You can do this too, to train or retrain yourself.)

So we're back to the P word: It all boils back down to practice. Most importantly, practice in trusting and not second-guessing my characters. That will help a lot toward the other, lesser thing I have to practice: pushing down the conscious, critical mind. The more I trust the characters, the less room there will be for CCM in the first place.

During this relearning process, when the critical mind rears its ugly head, I'll consign it to a dark corner of my brain. If it refuses to go, I'll get up and walk away for awhile, then return to the story a few minutes or hours later and start writing again.

I'll keep track of my progress below as I write, and I'll keep track of my numbers (more to get back in the habit than for any other reason), but I probably won't talk about this setback again. And I'll defer the start date of my new annual goal to January 1. That should give me time to get fully back up to speed.

Finally, for now, I'm not going to worry about publishing. Publishing is a strictly mechanical endeavor. For now, my sole focus will be putting words on the page, dismissing CCM, and passing along to you whatever I happen to learn along the way.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "The Astounding Secret Behind Leonardo Da Vinci's Creative Genius" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/the-astounding-secret-behind-leonardo-da-vincis-creative-genius.html>.

See "A-Z of food storage" at <https://lovefoodhatewaste.com/article/food-storage-a-z>. Maybe story ideas.

See "A Simple Acronym Sums up What's Wrong With Social Media" at <https://qz.com/1427738/acronym-sums-up-problem-with-twitter-facebook-other-platforms/>. Ignore the trite acronym, but the article is definitely food for thought.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1160 words

Writing of "The Jimson Stage" (opening)

Day 1..... 2454 words. Total words to date..... 2454

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 2602 words. Total words to date..... 2602

Day 2..... 1081 words. Total words to date..... 3683 (set aside)

Total fiction words for December..... 3535

Total fiction words for the year..... 629419

Total nonfiction words for December... 1630

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 20770

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 822459

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [characters](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Trust](#), [Writers vs. Authors](#)

The Journal: Flip-Flop?

December 4, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A good article
- * Topic: Flip-Flop?
- * How About You?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The first thing that I seek in a great story is originality.” David Farland (I had to laugh, given that Farland is one who advocates outlining, revising, editing and rewriting, all of which quickly obliterate any chance of originality. [Here's my recent post on originality.](#))

There's a good article today at The Passive Voice about who owns the copyright of derivative works in what amounts to shared worlds. Take a look at “Inside the Realms of Ruin” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/inside-the-realms-of-ruin/>. And don't forget to check out PG's take.

Topic: Flip-Flop?

My mind works fast, which is often more of a curse than a blessing. When an idea for a Journal entry occurs to me, if it's something I think might interest you or that you might find useful in your own writing life, I write about it in the Journal.

Of course, a big part of the purpose of this Journal is to share my journey as a professional fiction writer. And frankly, that would be just silly if I didn't share the setbacks and possible solutions as well as the successes.

The problem is, often by the time I've finished writing the Journal entry, I've resolved the issue and moved on. Then sometimes I share the resolution or the attempted resolution in the next Journal post. That isn't me being indecisive (flip-flopping). That's just me sharing maybe too

much too quickly instead of sitting back and waiting for the situation to resolve (or not) fully before sharing information about it.

More often than not, writing about an issue here actually helps me resolve it. Which of course gives me something else to write about, which maybe again leads to the appearance of flip-flopping. You can see the conundrum. Sometimes, though rarely, my commitment to sharing in the Journal even gets in the way of resolving the problem.

All of that is to say at present I'm very close to writing fiction again at my old rate. I won't pretend to know when or maybe even how it will happen. And ironically, given the didactic purpose of the Journal itself, I can't really explain it even here. I can only say I "feel" it—which is a good sign, really, since trusting what one intuitively is the basis for writing into the dark in the first place.

So I'm going to take a few purely selfish days to concentrate on getting my writing self back in order. I'll also set some goals for 2022, and maybe even come up with a few challenges. Maybe even an interactive challenge or two in which you might participate if you want. (There goes my brain again. We'll see.) When I come back, I'll be well underway on something and will have left behind the appearance of any indecisiveness.

How About You?

But the above was all about me. How about you? What are you doing to start writing again or to increase your productivity or to write more or publish more? Feel free to share your setbacks and solutions, successes, and goals for the new year in the comments or via email.

Just remember the difference between goals and dreams: Dreams (selling a million copies of your book) are outside your control. Goals (writing 2 or 4 or 6 novels next year, or writing a new short story every week) are within your control.

For just one example of helpful sharing, see [the comment Maggine King left](#) back in mid-November on my post about "Fiction Writing and Pulp Speed." Suffice it to say, if you're considering being a professional writer, math is your friend.

Here's to new beginnings. Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Getting Your Books Noticed" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/getting-your-books-noticed.html>.

See "Imagination" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writingtip-imagination/>. You can also be original by simply trusting the characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 660 words

Writing of “The Jimson Stage” (opening)

Day 1..... 2454 words. Total words to date..... 2454

Day 2..... 803 words. Total words to date..... 3257 (nah, tossed out)

Writing of WCGN 5: Carmelita Ramos (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 2602 words. Total words to date..... 2602

Day 2..... 1081 words. Total words to date..... 3683 (stalled and thrown out)

Total fiction words for December..... 3535

Total fiction words for the year..... 629419

Total nonfiction words for December... 1630

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 20770

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 822459

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Goals](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [New Beginnings](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Learning and Challenges

December 5, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Nothing about my nonsense
- * Topic: On the Process of Learning
- * Topic: On the Value of Challenges

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The halt on the road before the journey serves an important dramatic function of signaling the audience that the adventure is risky. It’s not a frivolous undertaking but a danger-filled, high-stakes gamble in which the hero might lose fortune or life.” Chris Vogler

“[T]he difference between amateurism and professionalism is you have people looking after you and holding your hand as an amateur. Professionally, no one does. ... What matters is, what you do and how you apply yourself consistently.” Farnam Street blog

Well, I’m back a lot sooner than I thought I’d be, but nothing about my personal nonsense today. I’ll work that out when I can and the numbers will start appearing below again. (After all, the Journal is my place to report, and you are my monitors. More on that later.)

But first, just a couple of brief topics prompted by other blog posts: one on learning and one on challenges.

Topic: On the Process of Learning

Over at the Kill Zone blog today, James Scott Bell posted “Mythic Structure: Refusal of the Call to Adventure” (see <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/mythic-structure-refusal-of-the-call-to-adventure.html>). This is a good article in a “valuable tidbit of knowledge” kind of way. (For the tidbit, see the first quote of the day.) But on the surface the article seems to champion a conscious-mind approach to writing.

That’s fine. We’re all different, and some folks feel a need to see writing as hard work, I suppose as a way to give it value. Again, that’s perfectly fine. I’m sure we all have different definitions of a personal hell. Considering writing fiction any kind of “work” would be high up on my personal list.

But remember, even those of us who write into the dark learn with our conscious, critical mind. The difference is that we trust ourselves and we understand the learning process. As we read such an article, what makes sense to us and what we need to retain seeps into our creative subconscious—actually, just as it does even for those who attempt to “remember” it consciously.

But there’s another important difference: we don’t “think about” when to apply what we’ve learned. We don’t force it because we don’t have to. We trust our characters and we trust our creative subconscious. In other words, we trust that we’ve gleaned what we need from the article. As a result, what we need comes out as-necessary as the story unfolds.

So I personally recommend you read this article and learn from it what you will, but then forget about it while you’re writing. Trust that your creative subconscious will provide what you need as you write. And if you need to do it another way, that’s fine too.

Topic: The Value of Challenges

Today also, Dean Wesley Smith posted “Figuring Out a Challenge” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/figuring-out-a-challenge/>. I strongly recommend you read it, maybe two or three times.

First, consider that this is December. There’s no better time to think about setting one or more personal writing and/or publishing challenges for yourself. Challenges can hold incredible value.

And the overall beauty of a challenge is that even if you fall short, you will have failed to success. If you set out to write six novels in a year and end up with only four, that’s still four more than you would have had without the challenge, right? And if you set out to write a short story every week for a year and fall short by a few stories, what’s wrong with having 49 or 50 new short stories in your inventory?

Second, Maggie King was kind enough to comment on my previous post, which talked, in part, about a previous comment she made. In her more recent comment, she mentioned how much the writing and publishing challenge she took from Dean helped her. In fact, she’s planning to sign up for another challenge with him.

That’s great, and the payoff is wonderful: aside from what you learn while writing for the challenge and how much you add to your personal inventory with the results, you can win a lifetime subscription to his online workshops.

But you don’t have to go through Dean or me or anyone else. You can set your own challenge. No motivation is better than a personal challenge and the resulting streak. What Dean really provides with his challenges is a place to check in, a person to whom you must report re your writing habit.

Having a place to report is invaluable. As many of you know, that was the main reason I started this Journal 7 years ago or so. And even when the primary purpose of the Journal changed to one of sharing my own journey to illustrate what is possible, it still provided me with a place to report my numbers.

So you could start a blog in which you report your numbers. At a bare minimum, I suggest starting a spreadsheet to which you report and post your numbers. Watching them grow can be very rewarding.

But you can also get into a challenge with another writer. You can be each others’ place to report. Years ago, Dean did this with Nina Kiriki Hoffman. That’s when they came up with the “Dare to be bad” concept.

They agreed they would both write a story every week and that they would not rewrite (Heinlein’s Rule 3). They would “dare to be bad” by submitting the story as-is, and then they’d write another one. Both were thrilled and surprised to find that when they stopped rewriting the stories, the stories started selling. Go figure.

But however you choose to set up a writing challenge, it's a good thing. The challenge drives you to the keyboard, and by the time the novelty wears off and you're tempted to quit, the challenge itself has become a streak. Then the streak drives you to the keyboard. As some of you probably know, streaks are nothing if not self-perpetuating.

As an example, when I started writing into the dark in April 2014, I started with short stories. I set a challenge to write a new short story every week, as Ray Bradbury famously recommended. My streak lasted for 70 or 72 weeks. I forget which.

But in mid-October of that year—so after the first 24 or 25 weeks (and the first 24 or 25 short stories)—I started writing my first novel. Now, how powerful are streaks? Even after I started the novel, I continued writing a short story every week. That's how powerful streaks can be.

For some stupid reason that I still can't fathom, I intentionally ended my streak of short stories at 70 or 72 in September 2015. But by that time, I'd also written 9 novels and I was hooked on the longer form. Back then my normal time for writing a novel into the dark was around 30 days. So for a few months I inadvertently had two streaks going.

My point is, you can do the same or better. It doesn't take "hard work" or discipline. It takes attitude. If sitting alone in a room and making stuff up is a fun escape for you, that's all you need to get started.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "The Kindle Vella Experience: Is It for You?" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/the-kindle-vella-experience-is-it-for-you/>.

See "Artists on Trial" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/artists-on-trial/>. What PG says.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1240 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 4338

Total fiction words for the year..... 629419

Total nonfiction words for December... 3530

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 22670

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 825162

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Challenges](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Learning](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: More on Challenges and Writing

December 6, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: More on Challenges and Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: More on Challenges and Writing

Ironically, one of the big problems with being a prolific writer is publishing. You can’t make money on what you write unless you (or someone) publishes it. That’s why Heinlein’s Rule 4 exists, and that’s the one I almost constantly fall off of. Not that I care, but more on that later.

Maggie King mentioned in a comment that a prolific writer might have a problem finding enough proofreaders (or first readers) to keep up. She suspects that’s her critical mind talking, and she’s probably right. So how to overcome it?

Write, First Read, Copyedit, Publish—all of those are separate steps. But without step one, the others have no reason to exist. If you’re a writer, writing is king.

If you don’t write, you can’t publish. But if you don’t publish, you can still write the next story. So Maggie’s critical mind is actually right. But so what? The inability of others or even your publisher-self to keep up with your output is absolutely no reason to not write in the first place.

Really, what's the actual harm of having completed short stories or novels stacked up unpublished on your desk or in your computer? It's all practice, and you were already "paid" by being the first to see those particular characters' stories. I honestly don't see the down side.

Of course, when you DO get around to publishing them that will mean more readers and more royalties, and that's definitely an up side, but again, there is no down side.

As Maggie mentioned,

1. a prolific writer might have a problem finding enough proofreaders (or first readers) to keep up; likewise,
2. a prolific writer might not have the money to pay even an adequate copyeditor, and
3. a prolific writer literally can't write for traditional publishers because, well, Traditional-Publisher-Antiquated-Thinking, so
4. a prolific writer must indie publish all his or her own work. Anyone hyperventilating at this point?

You're only one person. I can empathize, and I do.

But I'm also in a unique position. I still write primarily because it's a great deal of fun and because I'm curious to see what my characters are up to in their world.

I can do that because I stopped worrying about making money off my writing. Don't take me wrong. I very much enjoy finding new cash in my account from royalty payments, and I spend it with glee. I do still publish. I just don't make publishing a priority, and I definitely don't make it a priority that my critical mind can use to stop me from writing.

The fact is, I'm counting on my grandchildren to be able to make a TON of money from my writing, so the more I write the better, regardless of whether I publish it.

Anyway, as a result of that attitude, my stories and novels occasionally stack up. But every now and then the thought hits that nobody can read them if they're on my desk or still in my computer. Oops.

That's when I grudgingly take a little time to design covers, write sales copy, and publish what I've written. It's almost an assembly line sort of thing. But I count myself fortunate that I'm able to keep the writing a fun escape. And I'm glad that, for me, the publishing is only an occasional drudgery.

For an interesting extension of this topic, see the comments on Dean's "Figuring Out a Challenge" post from yesterday at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/figuring-out-a-challenge/#comments>.

Also see Dean’s “More On Challenges For 2022” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/more-on-challenges-for-2022/>.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Festina Lente!” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/festina-lente.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 610 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 4338

Total fiction words for the year..... 629419

Total nonfiction words for December... 4140

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 232870

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 825772

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [critical mind](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Few Brief Notes

December 7, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * A Few Brief Notes
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A Few Brief Notes

Pearl Harbor Day—For those of you who are interested, may you experience a thoughtful and reflective Pearl Harbor Day. To commemorate one of the worst days in this nation’s collective memory, I recommend this article: “Rare photos capture the attack on Pearl Harbor from the Japanese perspective, 75 years ago” at <https://mashable.com/feature/attacking-pearl-harbor#JMtgRVkmfkqZ>.

On Challenges—I also recommend reading the comments on Dean’s post from yesterday. You can find those at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/more-on-challenges-for-2022/#comments>.

Then see “Getting Ready for a New Year Or Challenge: Tracking Time” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/getting-ready-for-a-new-year-or-challenge/>. If you find you don’t have enough time to do something, I strongly recommend tracking your time in 15-minute segments for a few days. I suggest at least Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday.

Scam Publishers—Finally, see “A Complete Expert Guide to the Amazon Self-Publishing Costs for New Publishers” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-complete-expert-guide-to-the-amazon-self-publishing-costs-for-new-publishers-2/>, mostly for PG’s take.

If absolutely ANY publisher asks you for up-front fees to publish your book, it’s a scam. Stay away. Email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and I’ll offer you several viable alternatives, none of which will cost you a dime.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “80th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/80th-anniversary-of-pearl-harbor.html>. Much more than only Pearl Harbor.

See “A Pay to Play Bookstore Scheme: The Reading Glass Books” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-pay-to-play-bookstore-scheme-the-reading-glass-books/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 230 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December.....	4338
Total fiction words for the year.....	629419
Total nonfiction words for December...	4370
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	23510
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	826002
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pearl Harbor](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Links to Share

December 10, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Nothing to talk about
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Some memories are realities, and are better than anything that can ever happen to one again.”
Willa Cather, My Ántonia

“Writers ... brag about the years they worked on something or the number of drafts they’ve done. It’s as if they aren’t making art but operating a plastic pellet factory.” Lincoln Michael

I have nothing to talk about really, only a thought on goals and a few links to share.

We’re a third of the way through December already, so I hope you’re thinking about what you want to do in 2022 re your writing. Once you’ve established your daily/weekly/monthly and/or

annual goals, feel free to share them here. Sharing them can help motivate you to achieve them, and you never know whom you might help or influence along the way.

To the links—First, there are some great comments on “Getting Ready...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/getting-ready-for-a-new-year-or-challenge/#comments>. Some of these might help you in your own writing practice.

Dean also recently announced “Motivational Monday” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/motivational-monday/>. Sounds like a good thing for a lot of folks. Check it out.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Using Magnets to Attract Readers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/using-magnets-to-attract-readers.html>. Surprisingly, some useful information here.

See “Short Stories: Small and Twisted” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/short-stories-small-and-twisted.html>.

See “Millions of followers? For book sales, ‘it’s unreliable.’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/millions-of-followers-for-book-sales-its-unreliable/>.

See “Writing Is about the Right Words, not the MOST Words” at <https://countercraft.substack.com/p/writing-is-about-the-right-words>. Not what you expect. And you get to watch Paul McCartney compose “Get Back” out of thin air.

See “25 Words That Are Their Own Opposites” at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/57032/25-words-are-their-own-opposites>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 270 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 4338

Total fiction words for the year..... 629419

Total nonfiction words for December... 4640

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 23780

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 826272

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lincoln Michael](#), [mentalfloss.com](#), [Setting and Sharing Goals](#), [The Passive Voice](#)

The Journal: Goals and Challenges

December 12, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Note
- * Goals and Challenges and Getting Ready
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You cannot push any one up a ladder unless he be willing to climb a little himself.” Andrew Carnegie (via The Passive Voice)

“Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas.” Joseph Stalin

“Perfectionism isn’t about being perfect; it’s about the fear of appearing imperfect.” Heather Campbell

“You only need to know the direction, not the destination. The direction is enough to make the next choice.” James Clear

Note: You will have noticed that the Journal was delivered late today. I rescheduled the delivery time from 10 a.m. Arizona time to 4 p.m. Arizona time. I wanted to put the day’s writing on the current post instead of always being one day behind. I apologize for any inconvenience.

Goals and Challenges and Getting Ready

It's almost the middle of December. If you have set your goals and/or challenges for 2022, good for you. I'm glad. If you haven't, you might want to start thinking about it.

Dean Wesley Smith finally pulled the trigger on his personal writing challenge for 2022. I won't spoil it for you, but I will tell you it's a fairly long post with a lot of moving parts.

Without spoiling the surprise, I will also say I found it interesting that he set a "Fall-Back Base Challenge." Sounds like he's allowing self-doubt to creep in right at the beginning. Critical mind intruding a little maybe. Proof that even a long-term professional fiction writer isn't immune.

Anyway, I read his post more than once, and I probably will read some parts of it again. The best part of the post is the process he followed in order to decide on the challenge.

Getting Ready—I haven't set my own goals yet, but I will set them over the next week or so, and of course I'll report them here.

For now, for me, it's back to the basics. I'm using what's left of this month to dig myself out of the lazy, do-nothing-but-cope routine I slipped into over the past four months.

At the same time, I'm working to re-develop my work ethic and get back into a routine of writing and taking regular breaks. It's more difficult than I expected it to be, and more difficult than I remember from the first time I learned it.

Specifically, I'm focusing on spending more time (comfortably) in the writing chair, on redeveloping my interest in my characters and their stories, and on trusting them to tell those stories. So pushing down the critical mind again.

As I wrote here recently, I've often said I wish I were starting all over again. Be careful what you wish for. Starting over isn't all it's cracked-up to be. (grin)

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "My 2022 Challenge" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/my-2022-challenge/>.

See "Status of Classes On Hold" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/status-of-classes-on-hold/>.

See "Adverbs, Brrr...." at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/adverbs-brrr.html>.

See "How to Overcome Perfectionism to Achieve Your Writing Goals" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-to-overcome-perfectionism-to-achieve-your-writing-goals/>.
Critical mind, anyone?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 520 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 2786 words. Total words to date..... 2786

Day 2..... 2536 words. Total words to date..... 5322

Total fiction words for December..... 9660

Total fiction words for the year..... 635544

Total nonfiction words for December... 5160

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 24300

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 832114

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Goals and Challenges](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Little More on Goals and Myths and My Goal

December 15, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Going Back
- * A Little More on Goals and Myths
- * My Writing Goal for 2022
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[C]ritical voice is non-existent for me. I just do the very best I can every time and release and move on.” Dean Wesley Smith

Going back to the earlier delivery time. I enjoy writing this in the morning and then reporting fiction the next day. Reporting the same day adds pressure, and nobody needs that. (grin) I should have known better than to mess with something that was working.

A Little More on Goals and Myths

First, if you haven't (or even if you have), read Dean's "My 2022 Challenge" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/my-2022-challenge/>. Then read the comments. There aren't many, but some of them might help you.

Then, read "Three Weeks Until The First of the Year" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/three-weeks-until-the-first-of-the-year/>. Especially read the section titled "Check in with yourself."

My friend Robert Sadler also posted his goal for 2022: See "Quandary-#of Pages & Writing Goals" at <https://www.robertjsadler.com/post/quandary-of-pages-writing-goals>.

My Writing Goal for 2022

Over the past few days I've tried to get serious and set some writing goals, but honestly, I just haven't been all that motivated. In fact, I'm still running purely on faith and hope that my former excitement about sitting alone in a room making up stories (via my characters) will return full force by January 1.

I really hope it does. I used to hate having to stop for the day because my brain was just too muddled to go on. (grin) And absolutely nothing beats the eager anticipation of rushing back to the story the next day to start writing again and find out what happens next. I sincerely hope at least some of you know how that feels.

Four months ago feels like an eternity. Flashing forward to today, every time I sit down at the writing 'puter I hope that excitement will return, but thus far it's made only a couple of cursory appearances.

When I'm actually writing it's almost as good as it used to be, but when I get up to take even a short break, I really don't care whether I come back. Often I go off and do something else. And yesterday I didn't write at all. Unfortunately, I can't make myself care by simply wishing it were so.

And of course, critical mind comes creeping in. For just one example, am I really writing a story at all, or am I only tapping the keys to put words, any words, on the page so I'll feel like I'm doing something? And there's more critical mind input. A lot more. I can still shut it up, but the fact that I have to shut it up is annoying and distracting. For a long time, I didn't have to do that, at least not routinely.

Anyway, I'm sure it will all work out soon one way or the other. I'm in no big rush to call time of death on my fiction career, and I hope I can eventually get back to the way things were.

Bearing that hope in mind, I thought about challenges. Challenges and the streaks they create are great motivators. I thought about doing the Bradbury challenge of writing a short story per week, but I've already done that for either 70 or 72 weeks. So nah.

Hmm. Maybe I could write TWO short stories per week. That would enable me to beat my previous record and do so inside of a year (104 stories), but why would I want to do that? Short stories are fine, but I'd really rather write novels. So again, nah.

In 2021, I got into the subconscious habit of writing a novel in 2 weeks, so I thought recently about setting a challenge to write 20 novels in a year (2 novels per month and 2 months "off").

But again, why? For what purpose? Bragging rights? Seriously, who cares? Besides, "novel" isn't a precise quantity, is it? If I were to write 1,000,000 words of fiction but every novel were exactly 100,000 words long, I would have written 10 novels.

So will I have somehow accomplished more if I write the same number of words but it's all in *25,000 word novels (so 40 novels) or 50,000 word novels (20)? Other than having 10 or 30 more titles on the marketplace (so better discoverability) than if I'd written ten 100,000 word novels, no. A million words of fiction is a million words of fiction no matter how you divide it.

**Note: Everywhere in the world besides American Traditional Publishers (and the professional organization that are still feeling their influence), a "novel" is anything from 25,000 words on up. Hence my own fiction lengths:*

<i>Word Count</i>	<i>Genre</i>
Up to 99	Flash fiction
99 to 1999	Short-Short
2000 to 7999	Short Story
8000 to 14999	Novelette
15,000 to 24,999	Novella
25,000 to 44,999	Short Novel
45,000 to 79,999	Novel
over 80,000 words	Long Novel

All of that said, none of it really matters. A story should be whatever length it needs to be. I use the above only to guide me in pricing.

Anyway, none of the challenges I considered interested me. I don't really need to be motivated or psyched up. I just need to find a way to flip the switch, and the only way I know to do that is to keep showing up until it flips or I know it isn't going to. Re challenges, even the idea of achieving something new or "bigger" doesn't excite me, except hitting that 1,000,000 word mark for the first time.

So I finally did set a goal, but it's anticlimactic. Beginning on January 1, I'm going to write 2800 words of publishable fiction every day, on average. Yawn. That's what, two and a half to three hours of "work" every day? (During most of 2021 my daily goal was 3000 words. The slightly lower number will keep me more focused and be less forgiving of me skipping out on it.)

If I achieve that goal exactly, at the close of business on December 31, finally I will have written over one million (1,022,000) words of publishable fiction in a year. I will also flash past any personal record I set previously for the number of novels written in a year, no challenge necessary.

None of this is a stretch for me. I don't have an outside day job or people to take care of aside from my wife and myself. So I have all the time I want to put toward my writing.

Back in advice mode for a moment, I do recommend you do yourself a favor and break down any elephantine annual goal you set into a bite-sized daily goal.

I suggest that a great first-time annual goal for beginners is 365,000 words of publishable fiction in a year. (For comparison, SF Grand Master Jack Williamson wrote only 200,000 words per year, but he did that year-in and year-out for around 60 years, and on manual typewriters for the first few decades.)

Anyway, if 365,000 words sound like a lot, it isn't. To do that would mean you'd have to write about an hour per day (1000 words per hour, or 17 words per minute) on average every day of the year. Almost anyone can find one hour per day to write, if they want to be a writer.

So the idea is, just set your intended annual goal and then do the math. Whatever number you start with, if you want to write every day of the year (on average) divide by 365. If you want to write only five days a week and take weekends off like a normal person, divide by 261.

So if you want to write 250,000 words in a year, you'll want to write 685 words per day every day, or 958 words per day if you're writing only five days per week. If you want to write 500,000 words per day, obviously, those numbers are doubled.

Breaking a large annual goal down into daily bites makes the prospect of eating that elephant seem a lot more appetizing. Bon appetit!

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Merry Misdirection" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/merry-misdirection.html>.

See "What I Learned From Nora, David and Jean: You Have To Connect" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/what-i-learned-from-nora-david-and-jean-you-have-to-connect.html>.

See “A Christmas Miracle” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/a-christmas-miracle/>.

See “Online Copyright Registration Services: Writer Beware” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/online-copyright-registration-services-writer-beware/>.

See “Booksliced” at <https://booksliced.com/>. Looks like it might be a good resource.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1340 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 2786 words. Total words to date..... 2786

Day 2..... 2536 words. Total words to date..... 5322

Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 6527

Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 10865

Total fiction words for the year..... 636749

Total nonfiction words for December... 6500

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 25640

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 834659

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Booksliced.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Goals for 2022](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Robert J. Sadler](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Reflections

December 19, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Reflections 1-5
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“To move past obstacles, you need to move.” Lost Attribution

“The author is having such a good time in telling his tale that he gives us necessarily a good time in reading it.” Clayton Meeker Hamilton in *A Manual of the Art of Fiction* (1919) about *Treasure Island*

“The willingness to accept responsibility for one’s own life is the source from which self-respect springs.” Joan Didion

Reflection 1—On My Silly Goal

Reflecting on my own goal of writing at least one million words of publishable fiction in 2022, I realized how completely trivial that goal is.

How can a professional fiction writer who has no outside job, no children left to raise, etc.—how can that writer NOT hit at least a million words of fiction every year? Yet thus far I haven’t.

Again, the math is indisputable. If you write even 2740 words of fiction on average every day for 365 consecutive days, you will have written 1,000,100 words.

In other words, if you are able to write a blazing-fast 17 words per minute (1020 words per hour), and if you spend three hours per day in the chair actually writing, you can’t KEEP from writing over a million words in a year.

Writing 17 words per minute leaves a lot of time for staring off into space. That’s useful for those times when your subconscious doesn’t automatically deliver the right word. But for most of us that happens very seldom.

Reflection 2—Writing Into the Dark (Duh)

So all that’s left is to trust the characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. You must trust that even though *you* don’t know where the story’s going, They Do. I can vouch for that from long experience.

If you do trust them, the writing is almost automatic. The story is being written for you. The words and sentences and gestures and facial expressions are being handed to you. All you have to do is remember to Write The Next Sentence. And then leave it alone. Trust it.

Reflection 3—But Not Knowing Is Scary

Yes, not knowing what will happen next—not being able to “see” where the story’s going and feeling like maybe it’s dead in the water—is frightening. Which is another word for thrilling.

When fear has real consequences, such as it would if you were attempting to make your way around a skyscraper on a windblown ledge that’s one foot wide and 30 stories straight up, well, ahem, that’s at least a *reasonable* fear.

So reasonable that it might even give you reason for pause, a pause you could use to attempt to ascertain why you’re on a windblown ledge 30 stories above a very hard asphalt street in the first place.

But if your fear stems from sitting in a comfy chair at a desk in your room with a cup of coffee or tea and simply not knowing in advance what’s going to happen next in your characters’ story, that would be an *unreasoning* fear, which is why I personally would characterize that fear as “thrilling” or at least “anticipatory” rather than outright “frightening.”

Because no matter WHAT happens next in the story, you’re still going to be sitting in your comfy chair sipping tea or coffee and congratulating yourself on not completely freaking out. Well, or grinning about how clever you suddenly seem.

So I’m just saying, maybe that unreasoning fear is not something to be avoided. Maybe it’s something to be welcomed and embraced and plowed-through. Because it means you’re on the right track. The characters are writing the story, you’re transcribing it, and all is well in the world. Well, at least in your room.

For the record, once I have the initial idea that grabs me and propels me into the story, I welcome the thrill of not knowing what will happen next.

Reflection 4—An Illustration About Unreasoning Fear

Consider, when your neighbor or friend or family member (but not boring old Uncle Bob) is telling you a story, maybe relating what happened during a recent trip, can you foresee what’s going to happen next in their story?

Of course not. Other than maybe suspecting a surprise ending is coming (because why else would they tell you the story?), you don’t have a clue. So now the question becomes, Does your inability to foresee what’s going to happen in their story fill you with fear?

Nope. In fact, if it did, you’d probably recognize the fear as unreasonable and seek professional help.

It’s exactly the same with your characters. They’re telling you a story. Again, it’s one that they, not you, are living in their own little world. Just like your neighbors or friends or even weird Uncle Bob. You aren’t experiencing what’s happening in your characters’ story. You’re only recording it for them.

Reflection 5—Two Ways to Start a Story

A few paragraphs ago I mentioned that once an initial idea grabs me it propels me into the story. That's true. And that's how all of my short stories and novels have started for the past six years or so. It's kind of like waiting for "inspiration" but I've been fueling that inspiration pretty much every waking moment for around 60 years. But there's another way.

I've mentioned here before that all you need to start a story is a character with a problem (doesn't have to be "the" problem of the story) in a setting. That's true too. And in my first year of writing fiction seriously, I used that technique. When I tackled the Bradbury Challenge (one short story per week) and was successful for 70 weeks in a row, that's how I started most of those stories, a few of which turned into novels.

But despite knowing how well that technique works and despite recommending it here, I haven't used the technique myself since I ended the Bradbury Challenge. Ever since then, my own catalyst has been that "inspiration," a line of dialogue or a part of a scene that suddenly appears from a story that's still in my future.

In other words, I don't come up with a character with a problem and drop him or her into a setting. The character or the setting itself initiates contact.

Maybe I hear a character's voice (and attitude) as the character says a line of dialogue in a setting in the Bronx or Amarillo or LA. Or maybe a shuddering cataclysm fills the dying atmosphere of a populated planet with hot ash tinted red by the multitude of fires. Or maybe two bone-weary riders dismount in front of a livery stable after a days-long journey. Or maybe something else. Almost anything else.

Now, the story coming to me instead of me "creating" the story (character with a problem in a setting) might seem like a minor difference, but believe me, it isn't.

The question "What will happen next?" is solely a function of the conscious, critical mind. When I create a character and a problem and drop him or her into a scene, some tiny bit of my critical voice way back in the recesses of my mind wants to know what happens next. Of course, I'm able to push that voice down and get on with what I'm doing, but still, at first, it's there. It's something I have to overcome. Every time.

But when a character tugs on my sleeve or says something to me or I "see" part of a scene unfold, my creative subconscious is *already* invested. I'm already deeply engaged in the story, just as I would be if I were reading someone else's story or watching scenes unfold in a film.

So the question of what happens next never comes up. It isn't my story. It didn't even initiate with me. It's my characters' story, and whatever happens, happens. I'm just the guy who gets to write it down. And yes, I consider myself very fortunate.

So I guess I'm saying yes, the character + problem + setting = story equation is perfectly legitimate. But if you exercise your idea muscle and your imagination and your intuition, inspiration will also visit you directly and bring the characters and problems and settings to you.

Next time, probably, I'll talk a little more about goals.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Getting Set Up for 2022" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/getting-set-up-for-2022/>. Just in case something speaks to you. I also recommend reading the comments if you want tracking software for sales.

See "How Am I Losing Weight?" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/how-am-i-losing-weight/>.

See "Merry Writing and a Snappy New Year" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2021/12/merry-writing-and-a-snappy-new-year.html>.

See "The Bizarre Death of the Toxic Lady – Gloria Ramirez" at <http://dyingwords.net/the-bizarre-death-of-the-toxic-lady-gloria-ramirez/>.

See "StoryGraph Plus: The perfect gift for book lovers!" at <https://app.thestorygraph.com/plus>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1460 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 2786 words. Total words to date..... 2786
Day 2..... 2536 words. Total words to date..... 5322
Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 6527
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 10865
Total fiction words for the year..... 636749
Total nonfiction words for December... 7960
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 27100
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 836119

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays

December 24, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays
- * Another WMG Workshop Sale
- * A Note from Mona
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays

Good morning! Sorry it’s been awhile. I just haven’t had much to say. Anyway, I wish all of you a happy Christmas Eve and a merry Christmas, even if you personally don’t celebrate the actual holiday. I understand that not everyone does.

If you celebrated Hannukah, I hope that was a rewarding time for you. The same for those who will celebrate Kwanzaa or any other holidays at this general time of year. And whatever your personal beliefs, may you and we all have the best new year we’ve ever experienced. I’d say we’re about due.

Another WMG Workshop Sale

To enhance the holiday season, this morning Dean announced another workshop sale. It begins tomorrow on Christmas day and continues for ten days, to end on January 4, 2022. You can read all about it at the link in “Of Interest” below.

This might be an opportunity to obtain a great gift for a writer in your life or a belated gift for yourself. Knowledge is the one thing no person or entity can ever take away from you, and increased knowledge in your chosen craft is invaluable.

As for other sources and resources, the Kill Zone blog is on hiatus until January 3. The Passive Guy is posting less at this time of year, and Neil Gaiman and others I check on regularly, like most people who have even a modicum of sense, are taking time off right now.

A Note from Mona

Paraphrased slightly and otherwise quoted from our Christmas letter for this year, Mona wrote

During the past few years, we've sorted through storage places in loved-ones' homes plus boxes and boxes that were mailed to us. ... That caused me to wonder, How much of what we've accumulated over the years will our kids want to sort through when we're gone?

This morning I woke up from a dream. In it I was viewing a slideshow of past Christmas memories:

- * Jason, 5 a.m. after Santa had come and gone and before anybody else was awake, sitting on the floor looking at but not touching all the filled stockings with absolute wonder in his eyes.
- * Jimmy, a candy cane in one hand and a video camera in the other, wandering around, filming the extended family while "Barking Dogs Sing Jingle Bells" blared over and over again on the stereo.
- * Roy, three years old, pulling a big, red Christmas stocking onto each foot. They're socks, right?
- * Audrey wearing a crop top, pleated jeans, leggings, and a Santa hat—singing "Santa Baby" while performing her very best Madonna act.
- * Heather helping me fix a cooking goof, then continuing a tradition at the table saying, "It might look bad, but I'll bet it tastes good!"
- * Harvey surveying the mass of ripped paper, ribbons, empty boxes, orange peels and the odd half-eaten candy cane on the living room floor. Then grabbing a huge garbage bag and the vacuum to clear it all away.
- * Mona—eight years old—waking up in the middle of the night on Christmas Eve to the sounds of presents being wrapped and an elf humming "Silent Night."

My dream contained all these plus hundreds of other slides. None of them were pics of stuff anybody got.

So it made me realize the problem is not the stuff—the stuff in the packages at Christmas or the stuff that's left behind when we go. What matters is the emotional attachment we form to the stuff and the being together, being ourselves—the memories.

This year we intend to make more memories—albeit long distance and via the internet because we’re all scattered across the country—but memories none the less.

And we wish you all love and joy and lots of MEMORIES!

Ditto from me. Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Workshop Sale Starting Christmas Day” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/workshop-sale-starting-christmas-day/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 270 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

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Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 6527
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 10865
Total fiction words for the year..... 636749
Total nonfiction words for December... 8230
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 27370
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 836389

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13
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Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66
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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#)

The Journal: Reader Taste?

December 26, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Posts about Christmas
- * Topic: Reader Taste? I Don't Think So
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It’s very important to know what you don’t like. A big part of innovation is saying, ‘You know what I’m really sick of?’ ... ‘What am I really sick of?’ is where innovation begins.” Jerry Seinfeld

“You don’t question your standards based on what anyone else is doing. You don’t look over at someone else’s race and think, I’m doing a bad job because you’re going faster. You just focus on your own pace.” Carrie Moyer

For some beautiful posts about Christmas, see The Passive Voice at <http://www.thepassivevoice.com/>.

As a minor and belated Christmas gift from me to you, for fun please view <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsvOrtcrA5c>, and be sure to watch to the end.

Topic: Reader Taste? I Don't Think So

Friend and scriptwriter Matt wrote, “I have noticed that the more I learn about craft and the more I practice, I’ve been able to spot things in books and stories that the layman (for lack of a better term), doesn’t see.”

First, a disclaimer—In the following diatribe, I’m talking about reading for pleasure. I’m not talking about those times and circumstances when a reader intentionally sets out to “spot things” in a story vs. reading it for pleasure. If you’re “deconstructing” a story in a college class or if you’re studying what the writer did or how he did it in order to create a particular effect, that’s a whole different topic.

Now, you will have noticed Matt didn’t even mention reader taste, and that’s a good thing. To me, the implication of his comment was only that he couldn’t get into a story as a reader so he went looking (as a writer) to find out why.

I'm actually glad he didn't automatically assume he couldn't get into the story because of his own tastes as a reader. But that's the stock answer these days, and in my opinion, it's an intentional and ridiculous attempt to shift blame for poor writing from the writer to the reader.

I responded in part with this:

"I've heard writers (including Dean Wesley Smith) say that whether a reader likes or dislikes a story is always a matter of reader taste. That's another way of saying the writer bears no responsibility for the quality of the work or for whether a reader is engaged in the story, and that's just not true.

"For my money, if you set out to read and enjoy a story but you aren't able to, that's the writer's fault, period. He or she simply didn't pull you into the story."

Now, at the point of losing interest because he wasn't pulled into the story, a "layman" reader (one who isn't also a writer) will go find something else to do. More than likely he won't wonder why the story didn't grab him because wondering why isn't his job. His only job is to be entertained. He might even assume, wrongly, that the story simply wasn't to his taste. On the other hand, a reader who's also a writer might wonder why he wasn't able to get into a story, and he might go looking.

But let me explain—I think this sort of blame-shift nonsense bothers me so much because it harkens back to the foolish notion that one must "interpret" poetry to understand it. In other words, if you can't read a poem and come up with the "correct" interpretation, that's your fault as the reader. Dumbest thing I've ever heard.

That idiocy was started in the first place by would-be, false poets who were more interested in being recognized as "avant garde" than in actually writing poetry, and in the second by literature professors who were required to publish or perish. The professors wrote papers on generally unintelligible poetry that made less sense than a grocery list. Of course, only they were able to truly "understand" the poet, so they brushed aside and sometimes even ridiculed their students' "interpretations." The professor's understanding and interpretation must remain unique and exclusive.

And generations of readers were taught by those haughty, selfish professors that they were literally unable to "understand" poetry. How very sad.

I always taught that the poem is started by the poet but it's finished by the reader. The poet's personality, beliefs and life experiences go into the poem when it's written. But on the other end, the reader gets whatever he gets, because the reader's so-called "interpretation" depends on his *own* personality, beliefs and life experiences.

And who's to say the reader is "wrong"? Certainly not the poet, and absolutely not some idiot professor who claims to know exclusively what the poet "meant" because the professor has to harbor some special understanding or not make tenure.

So just in case some of you labor under the misconception that you “can’t understand” poetry, here’s the truth: If the poem is written in a language whose words you recognize and understand, then what you get from the poem is what you get, and your reading is the right one. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.

How does that tie in to stories written in prose mode, specifically short and long fiction? Well, if the reader is unable to get into the story, it isn’t the reader’s fault. It isn’t because the reader’s too stupid to understand, and it isn’t because of reader taste. It’s because the writer failed to pull the reader into the story.

Think about it. It’s human nature to wonder what happens next. We actually want to suspend our sense of disbelief. Given the choice, readers would rather be entertained than be finagled into working as a critic. But being drawn into a story doesn’t happen automatically. The reader has to care about the character(s) and be engaged with the setting.

And again, that’s where the writer comes in. If the writer doesn’t cause us to care about the character(s) and doesn’t let us see, hear, smell, taste and feel the setting, that won’t happen.

So the bottom line: If we as writers spot why we aren’t drawn into a story, it’s because we know something about the craft. But if the author had drawn us into the story in the first place, we wouldn’t have noticed. We would be enjoying the story.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “What Makes a Story Feel Like a Story?” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/what-makes-a-story-feel-like-a-story/>.

See “Life’s Work: An Interview with Jerry Seinfeld” at <https://hbr.org/2017/01/lifes-work-jerry-seinfeld>.

See “Run Your Own Race” at <https://ava.substack.com/p/run-your-own-race>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1100 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 2786 words. Total words to date..... 2786

Day 2..... 2536 words. Total words to date..... 5322

Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 6527

Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December.....	10865
Total fiction words for the year.....	636749
Total nonfiction words for December...	9330
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	28470
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	837489
Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date.....	13
Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	66
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Reader Taste](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Reader Taste—The Final Take

December 28, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Reader Taste—The Final Take
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[T]he big money, I think, for long term is probably in self publishing.” New York Times bestselling author Kat Martin

“I think after Christmas would be better for publication: I am hardly a Christmas present.” Oscar Wilde

Topic: Reader Taste—The Final Take (and a question for you)

In an email regarding my recent post on reader taste vs. writer skill, my young friend wrote, "... what if one reader doesn't like a book but another reader does? Do you mean the writer fails the reader individually?"

Nope, that isn't what I mean at all.

Certainly, one reader might enjoy a story and another reader might not enjoy the same story. That's an indisputable fact, right? But with such a small sampling, whether the result is down to writer skill (or lack thereof) or reader taste is anybody's guess. So I don't think you can go one reader at a time. One reader liking something and another reader not liking the same thing is essentially an invalid sampling.

But say 1000 readers buy your book. Say you get 50 five-star reviews (they love it), 50 one- or two-star reviews (they hate or dislike it) and the other 900 reviews are all three and four stars. Would you tally all of those up to reader taste? Did the book just *happen* to suit the taste of 950 readers while not appealing at all to 50 other readers?

I posit that both this and the opposite effect are down to the writer. The more skilled the writer, the more likely he is to get that sort of positive result. And the less skilled the writer, the more likely he is to get the opposite result (950 one- and two-star ratings and 50 three-, four-, and five-star ratings).

As you know, I believe reader taste primarily determines which genre(s) and type(s) of stories the reader will even attempt. If a reader doesn't like westerns or SF or romance, for example, he won't chance buying and reading them. But otherwise, as I wrote above, I believe the work of a skilled writer will suffer far fewer reader-taste casualties than will the work of an unskilled or less-skilled writer.

But if we wanted to nitpick, I suppose there's really no accounting for reader taste. Hey, we might even recognize there are different *kinds* of readers. There are those who only skim, for example. I suppose getting into any kind of depth for those who skim would do no good. And there probably are millions of other subsets of readers out there, each with their own little reader-quirks and sets of reader-expectations.

Now remember, we're talking here about unwary, unsuspecting readers who are reading strictly for pleasure, not those sticks in the mud who are focusing on each individual word and punctuation mark, looking for any reason to stop reading. So overall, I'll stick with my earlier reasoning: the more skilled the writer, the better his chance of weathering reader taste.

I advocate writing with depth in order to pull the reader into the story and keep him there. I believe by controlling what the reader sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels (physically and emotionally) as he reads, the writer can cause the reader to be more likely to continue reading. I also believe if the writer does *not* control those things, the reader is more likely to leave the story and go find something else to do.

I also advocate continual learning to improve one's craft in depth and in other aspects of storytelling (pacing, tension, etc.), all to the same end: to give the reader a more interesting experience and to render the reader less likely to punch out early.

But I promote all of that because I believe that I, not the reader, am responsible for my own success or failure. I am solely responsible for how well or poorly my stories are written, and that, not reader taste, is the factor that determines the success or failure of my career.

If I believed that I had zero control over the reader or that the control I levy has no effect—that my own success or failure as a writer was down to something so arbitrary and unaccountable as reader taste—I probably wouldn't write at all. Or I would write primarily to entertain myself, which is what I do anyway. But I *definitely* wouldn't invest money and time in learning and improving a craft that makes no difference.

I suppose all that's left is to determine what all of this means to you as a writer. So I put the question to you: Can you learn to write well (and does that matter), or is your success or failure determined primarily by reader taste?

And for goodness' sake, pick a side, even if you do so privately. Don't cop out with "Both." Everyone knows there's a certain amount of reader taste involved, just as there's a certain amount of reader mood or reader piety or reader drunkenness etc. involved at any given time. The real question is whether to bother with learning the craft at all.

No matter how you choose, here's my final bit of advice on the topic:

1. If you believe skill matters, invest some time and money in learning how to gain the reader's interest from the first line of your story and how to ground the reader in the story and pull him to depth so he'll be less likely to leave before the end. And study the business side too, especially how to write compelling sales copy.
2. But if you really believe your success as a writer is subject mostly to the whims of reader taste, then more than likely you also assume things will work out to about 50/50. In that case, may I suggest you save the money you might have spent on learning the craft and focus instead on learning the business side: how to get more stories to more readers more quickly. Learn how to inundate the market. Oh, and learn to write compelling sales copy to entice potential readers to actually buy the story.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "On "Significant Authorship:" Writing as a Team" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/on-significant-authorship-writing-as-a-team/>. And see PG's take.

See "The Sad State of the Traditional Publishing Backlist" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-sad-state-of-the-traditional-publishing-backlist/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1070 words

Writing of WCGN 5: (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 2786 words. Total words to date..... 2786

Day 2..... 2536 words. Total words to date..... 5322

Day 3..... 1205 words. Total words to date..... 6527

Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 10865

Total fiction words for the year..... 636749

Total nonfiction words for December... 10400

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 29540

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 838559

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: In this blog, I provide advice on writing fiction. I advocate a technique called Writing Into the Dark. To be crystal clear, WITD is not “the only way” to write, nor will I ever say it is. However, as I am the only writer who advocates WITD both publicly and regularly, I will continue to do so, among myriad other topics.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Reader Taste](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: On Daily Word-Count Goals

December 29, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Sympathy
- * Thanks, I needed that
- * Topic: On Daily Word-Count Goals
- * A Final Word on Goals for This Year
- * The Journal Archives
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

First, my heartfelt sympathy for the family, friends and fans of Coach John Madden, who passed away unexpectedly yesterday morning at the age of 85. I was fortunate that I got to witness much of his career as a coach and then as a coach in the broadcast booth. Coach Madden will be sorely missed.

My sincere thanks to reader Larry P who emailed me out of the blue. The subject of the email was “[The] 13 Month Turn” (one of my SF novels), and the email read only “Loved this book. Is there a sequel to it? Also, I’ve read and enjoyed the Wes Crowley series.”

Wow, did I ever need that! Thanks, Larry! And in a way, with his brief email, Larry also informed this post. It will be a long one, as it turns out. My apologies in advance, but I hope you will glean something useful from it.

Topic: On Daily Word-Count Goals

Today is already the 29th of December, and like many of you I’m starting a new annual writing goal on January 1. Unlike most of you (I hope), frankly I’m still in a bit of a funk. I will snap out of it, of course. In fact, Larry P might have provided the catalyst I needed.

Recently in this Journal we’ve been over and over how one reader might love a book whereas another might hate it, with most reader-opinions falling to the plus or minus side in between. I don’t often give ratings or reviews a nod either way, good or bad.

But Larry P enjoyed that little novel so much that he took the relatively rare extra step of finding my email address and actually emailing me. As I said at the beginning, wow, did I ever need that.

Now, my annual goal is to write 1,000,000 words of publishable fiction in 2022. That’s it, and really it ought to be a snap. It’s a good goal, but I’m not fooling myself. It’s no challenge at all for a guy who has no outside job, no small children at home, and really no interests other than writing. Well, and following college football, primarily the SEC. (grin)

Anyway, to achieve my annual goal, I set a daily word-count goal (average) of 2800 words per day. I’ve done better at 3000 and even 4000 words for a goal per day, but I didn’t maintain it for a full year.

And maintaining that daily goal is what really matters. It’s something that’s easy to do, one day at a time. The trick is to never fall short of the goal, and if you go over, run with it. That will pump up your average and tide you over on those days when Life doesn’t allow you to write at all.

Why a Word-Count Goal Is Important

1. *My word-count goal drives me to the computer.* This is probably the most important thing about it. If I don’t sit down at my writing ‘puter, I won’t write even one word of fiction, much less 2800 words of fiction.

2. *Priorities matter.* If I make my daily goal my number one priority, it will help me manage my time. For example, if there's a game I want to watch on a particular day, my writing goal still takes priority. So I either have to get my writing done before the game begins or do it after the game ends. And I won't risk waiting until after the game ends because we never know what Life has in store.

3. *The word-count goal keeps any one project (story or novel) from becoming "important."* When I'm at the writing 'puter I'm not writing a story or novel. I'm just writing words, striving to meet or exceed my goal of 2800 words per day.

4. *Having a word-count goal feeds my trust in myself,* and in WITD and Heinlein's Rules. Writing 2800 words is easy. I just write 1000 words, then do it again. Then I have only 800 words to go, and that's barely more than 500, and 500 is around a half-hour's work. Shrug. But if you want, you can write for five half-hour periods in a row (or even not in a row), and then add whatever's left to make up the 2800 words. Easy peasy, right? Either way, to write 2800 words in three hours or less, you only have to write whatever comes. Then you write the next sentence, write the next sentence, etc.

To write 2800 words in three hours or less, you only have to write whatever comes. Then you write the next sentence, write the next sentence, etc.

5. *Finally, having a word-count goal provides me with the perfect opportunity to create and benefit from a streak.* How many days in a row can I meet or exceed my word-count goal? The more times I reach it, the stronger it will become, the more important writing itself will become, and the more times I will reach it in the future. Streaks are self-propelling.

A Final Word on Goals for This Year

As I wrote above, my only goals are my annual goal and the rounded-up minimum daily word-count goal that will enable me to reach it. I did not set a goal to write a certain number of novels or stories. There's a reason for that.

If I set out to write a particular number of novels and/or stories in a year, the pressure from wanting to write even one story to get started might thwart my ability to write the 2800 words per day in the first place. And the whole house of cards would come tumbling down.

As I've said here many times before, THAT we write is all-important, but WHAT we write isn't important at all. So even as I'm re-starting, I don't want to risk making any particular story or novel "important." Doing so might cause me to freeze-up.

I suspect that's what's been going on here in the Hovel for the past month or so. I've wanted so badly to write the fifth Wes Crowley Gap novel that, thus far, writing it has been a grinding chore. I've had what, three false starts? Maybe four or five? And any of those could have launched me into the novel if only I'd have let it run. I'm having no fun at all. And for me, that's just silly.

So I'm taking the rest of the year off (all three days, grin). For the second time, I've thrown out what I wrote before on WCGN 5.

On January 1, I'll start fresh, and at the moment I have no clue what I'll write. If it's WCGN 5, I will not include anything I've written before.

But I might write a sequel to *The 13 Month Turn*, or I might return to one of my other series or write something completely different. To be honest, this is the first deep, clean breath of creative energy I've had in almost 5 months.

I still won't set a goal of a certain number of stories or novels, but then, I've been there, done that. My average time for writing a 35,000 to 50,000 word novel is two weeks. Really, how many folks have written enough to even know how long it takes them, on average, to write a novel?

But if I was just starting out, and if I hadn't settled into writing a novel in two weeks, I probably would set my sights on writing 2, 3, 4, or even 6 novels in a year, depending on the time constraints of my life. Or if I was a short story writer instead of a novelist, I might attempt 2 or 3 short stories every week, again depending on those constraints.

In another way, I really am just starting out. Or starting out again.

Like some of you, I have to learn (in my case, again) to write into the dark. I have to learn (again) to trust myself. The only difference is that I've done it before, so I don't have to hope it will work. I know it will work, and I know the benefits first hand.

If you hadn't noticed, at the moment I'm fired up (grin). But on January 1 I might not be. And that brings up another good thing about having a daily word-count goal. If you're serious about the goal, then you'll do the work.

Naturally, I hope it's easy for you. I hope you'll fly through the writing and past your word-count goal, have a ton of fun and end up wondering where the time went.

But if the writing does feel sluggish at first, use that to your advantage. Know that's your critical mind struggling against you, and force your way through the struggle to learn to trust yourself. Be determined to win and achieve your daily goal anyway.

To do that, just stick with it. Keep reminding yourself to write whatever comes. And don't edit. Don't allow your conscious mind to critique what your creative mind has created. Write it and leave it alone, then write the next sentence, and the next. Soon you will have achieved your daily goal and the critical voice will be slower next time to leap up to try to stop you.

The Journal Archives

Finally, a New Year's gift for you, if you want it. I have the rough Journal archives in PDF format for every year since 2014. If any of you would like any or all of those, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and I'll send them out to you.

The archives are exactly as they're published to the Journal, so they're a little rough. But because they're in PDF format, you can search them for "Topic" or for particular topics (WITD, Scene, Setting, Characters, etc.).

I probably won't be back until January 2, when I will report on my fiction numbers from January 1. I wish all of you a safe and enjoyable New Year's Eve, and us all a much better 2022 than 2021.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "I Think I Am Ready" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/i-think-i-am-ready/>. Note "I'm going to make each month a mini-challenge inside the big challenge." That's how to do it.

See "Indestructible 'Black Box' will record our planet's demise in minute detail" at <https://www.space.com/earth-black-box-records-planet-demise>. Wouldn't it be awkward if, instead of the planet succumbing to global warming, it was struck by a massive meteorite? One that was attracted by, and hit precisely at, Earth's Black Box? (grin)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1750 words

Writing of (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 10865

Total fiction words for the year..... 636749

Total nonfiction words for December... 12150

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 203560

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 840309

Calendar Year 2021 Novels to Date..... 13

Calendar Year 2021 Novellas to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2021 Short Stories to Date... 3

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 66

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Daily Word-Count Goal](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Goals](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

DECEMBER 29 WAS THE FINAL ENTRY FOR THE YEAR 2021.