

The Proof Angel Summary of

Posts for authors: June 2014

The back cover blurb

The back cover blurb is a key part of your book marketing strategy. Get this wrong & people quickly move on to the next option.

Many people put the task of writing the blurb off until the very last moment. They hope inspiration will strike. Perhaps a more realistic approach is to start early & keep tinkering with it. That way it doesn't hang over you, and there is more opportunity to consider refinements.

Here are some thoughts on the creation process for a [back cover blurb](#).

Don't panic about self publishing

Does the thought of self publishing make you panic? For many people, the complexities of this relatively new area are quite scary.

If that describes you, read this post to [help you calm down](#).

Remember, most time spent panicking could be better spent doing something else.

So easy to say, but worth bearing in mind...

How to add layers to your historical romance

Here are some [basic points about historical romance](#). It isn't rocket science, but it is sometimes useful to remind ourselves of these things...

A new channel about the publishing business

This might be an interesting one to keep an eye on.

A new [YouTube channel](#) about the book publishing business.



The Proof Angel is the trading name of Sarah Perkins, freelance editor and proofreader.

How to write a book review

Book reviews make very good items for newsletters and blog posts.

When I was at junior school, this was the first task every Monday morning. For some reason we always had to start:

The main characters in this story are...

What we learn in school isn't always useful, is it? Here is how to write a [proper book review](#).

What you need to know about publishing scams

Publishing, like any other business, is full of jargon & complications. It can be difficult for a newcomer to see the way through the jungle. The more you understand about the processes involved, the less likely you are to get yourself into trouble. This post explains some of the [traps to avoid](#).

A way in to story design

If you are new to the idea of designing a story, there is a lot to take in. You need to be aware of some of the conventions, but at the same time you need to avoid reducing it all to a list of instructions.

You are not building from a kit here. You are crafting something original, different & exciting.

This post gives a [framework](#) that might help.

How to prepare images for ebooks

A good image always brightens up a piece of writing. But if you don't know what you are doing, all sorts of problems can arise. You can easily ruin the effect or annoy your readers. Find out [how to do it properly](#) with this post.

How to take criticism

Proper criticism is a valuable thing. I don't mean the vague hurtful comments that are often throw away remarks. I mean constructive comments coming from someone who has an interest in you and the subject, and is trying to make the result better.

But that doesn't make it any easier to take, does it?

There are strategies you can use to get the benefits while minimising the pain. The key is how you set yourself up. If you are careful whom you ask, and try to understand what they are saying, you are more likely to get positive results. Remember that you are very close to your writing, and it will help you to see how other people perceive it.

This post [explains how](#).

How to write a sex scene

Many people find this difficult. Here are some starting points:

- [Part 1](#): introduction
- [Part 2](#): male archetypes
- [Part 3](#): female archetypes

Writing about personality disorders

Obviously, this is a difficult area, and you should tread carefully. But if you want to add variety to your characters, sooner or later you will cover this ground. Writers Write have produced a nice [summary of the terminology](#) with a good framework for your ideas at the beginning of your research.

Writing for a younger age group

Some thoughts about writing for [younger readers](#).

How to make an audio book

Common sense tells you that you get more sales by reaching more people. You reach more people by being in more places & in more formats. So here is [how to make an audio book](#).

Expressing feelings

Believable characters have feelings. Writing about those feelings can be difficult. When words aren't flowing anyway, sometimes whatever you write about feelings sounds wooden.

This post on [how to express yourself clearly](#) discusses some of the words we use about feelings.

Self editing

Before you pass your work on to anyone, it is a very good idea to have a good go through it yourself. It is tempting to move on to something else, but making sure you are happy with what you have produced at this stage will always give you a better outcome. Finding and fixing problems yourself makes the work more personal, will save you money, and is less soul destroying than plodding through queries raised by someone else when you have moved on to something new.

Here are some thoughts on the [self editing process](#) from writer and blogger Sadie Hanson.

How to write about stressed people

The real world is a stressful place for most of us these days. Logically, to make our stories realistic we must be able to portray stress.

We all react to stress in different ways, so writing just from your own experience may get predictable quite quickly. Here is a post explaining the various ways the [human body reacts to stress](#).

Want to be paid to write?

Here are some ideas for [getting paid to write](#).

What to read

There are all sorts of reasons to read, particularly if you are a writer. But what should you read? Here is a [reading list](#) from Stephen King. And he should know...

How to get the best from beta readers

Getting other people to read your work is an excellent way of improving it. Other people will spot all sorts of things you don't notice yourself.

If you are going to get the most out of the process, there is more to it than just asking the readers what they think. Find out how to [make the most of beta readers here](#).

And just in case you need it, here are some ideas on [how to find beta readers](#).

Hiveword: a planning tool for writers

When you are planning a long piece, you need somewhere to jot things down. If your idea is hazy, or if the result will be complex, conventional techniques can get messy. Pieces of paper can get chaotic. Spreadsheets are useful, but after a while sorting can get complicated.

[Hiveword](#) is an on-line tool for novel planning, but it can be used for all sorts of writing. The advantages are:

- It keeps everything in one place.
- It is all on the web, so it is accessible anywhere with an internet connection, so you always have the latest version.
- It is easy to export into Word. Once you are ready to start writing properly, you don't have a blank piece of paper. The outline is already there.
- It is our favourite price: free.
- You can move sections round easily. I find this really useful, as I usually know what sections I want to write about, but the order takes more time to work out.
- You can keep track of the key features of characters & locations.
- You can see how frequently characters & places occur, & how those occurrences are distributed.

- If you dither over names, there is a tool to generate names for characters & places.

I've been using it for a few weeks, & I'm finding it really good. Once I forgot to click on save before I moved on, so watch out for that. I wish it was possible to indent and use bullet points, but that is a minor gripe. I've just got into the habit of writing notes in that sort of format.

Next time I'm editing a novel, I'm going to try keeping my notes in Hiveword.

Do indie authors make more money?

Now here is an interesting debate. [Do indie authors make more](#) than those who are with traditional publishers?

It is really difficult to make generalisations with the data we have. Indie authors certainly have more control over their own destiny.

I'm not sure there will be a simple answer to this for some time yet.

Are you trying to sell articles?

Read how one writer gained success selling [her articles](#).

Tips for crime writers

I'm sharing this post because these [tips on crime writing](#) make sense, & it might help someone.

I'm just not very convinced that a beginner will be helped by them. They look to me as though they are easier said than done!

Dealing with an unsympathetic character

How to get your reader to identify with an unsympathetic character? If you fail to do so, your reader may give up on the story. Learn [how to do it here](#).

How do you start writing?

How do you start a story? Both aspects of this question are difficult. Getting round to it can be difficult, but once you have pulled yourself together & settled down ready to start, the other aspect comes to the fore.

How does the story begin? This post has some good [guidance aimed at short story writers](#). Actually, the application is much wider:

- A full length novel gives more scope. That is one of the attractions of the form. It also allows scope for diversion. You don't have the discipline of a tight word count reminding you that you have written a lot & said nothing. You can get so bogged down in the back story & the side plots that you don't

realise that your lengthy tome would be better if you started in the right place, stuck to the point, & used all those other ideas in another place.

- Business writers need to start in the right place, grabbing reader's attention with something useful & thought provoking.

What to do if your story is too long

Is your story too long? Here are three approaches to [solving the problem](#).

Keeping track of a mystery novel

Most people like a good mystery. It isn't easy to pin down what makes a really good one, but it is easy to spot the bad ones.

They have big holes in the plot. Holes that can be difficult to see if you are too close to the project. One way of getting a different perspective, if your brain works that way, is to map the plot out in a flowchart. After all, you want the story to flow, don't you?

If flowcharting appeals to you, you might find this one useful for checking whether you have [finished your story](#).

A source of inspiration?

They say that there are only so many story lines in the world, and writers are merely looking for a new angle. This post looks at ways you can exploit this idea by using an [old film guide](#).

Some e-publishing tools

Here are some ideas about [e-publishing tools](#). Does anyone have any experience of using any of these?

Do you really need a professional editor?

Do you really need a professional editor for your book? Can't you do it yourself? Try reading this [cry from the heart](#).

Want to avoid overwriting?

Find out how to [avoid overwriting](#) here.

A book production team

Teamwork is a good thing. It allows you to plug the gaps in your skills by relying on others, giving a better result. Together, you achieve more.

This post explains more about the value of [teamwork](#) in book production.

Turning your dissertation into a book

I like this post addressed to enthusiastic young academics. It is partly because it underlines the point highlighted by a visitor to yesterday's post: that it is [really important to think about your audience](#).

The main reason it appeals to me is that you can tell it is written by one who knows. The author has deliberately repeated the point, because she has seen so many people who have gone through the same thought process:

- I am interested in this subject.
- I have written a long piece about it.
- Someone says it is good.
- That means I've nearly finished my first book.

I suspect many of them have been told that a dissertation is not the same thing as a book, & conversion takes a lot of work. They probably mutter to themselves, "Mine is different."

It is surprisingly easy to think your own work has something special about it, so the general rule doesn't apply in your case.

General rules usually come from years of experience, an independent point of view, & common sense.

Think about your audience. Make it clear what they will get from reading your piece, & guide them through the process. If your work is easier to read, you will keep the audience you have, and attract more readers.

Getting an agent and a publisher

It used to be that getting [an agent & a publisher](#) were big steps towards becoming a "proper writer". These days technology has changed that, but the traditional route is still worth considering.

The short story

Many people think it is easy to write a short story, because it is short.

They are wrong.

It is true that a short piece will take up less of your life than a full length novel, but it is no easy option. Too many people give the impression that they have written for a reasonable length & then stopped.

There is nowhere to hide in a short story.

Read Bridget Whelan's thoughts about [how to write a short story](#).