

Welcome to the fifth installment of "Becoming a Better Writer" An investigation into the art of creativity - in ten easy lessons!

ASIDE: Before we go on, I want to mention quickly that I've released another book. (I think I've already mentioned I'm a writing junkie!)

This one's about Internet Marketing - specifically about writing and selling ebooks on the web. People tell me they love it.

Now, I know not everyone is interested in this kind of thing, which is fine with me!

However, if you've ever thought about writing for profit go to:  
<http://www.howtobeaninternetguru.com>

No obligation, but it does have a \*320%\* guarantee!

Check it out. Thanks.

"The first step toward having your own bestseller is to write it!"

Go to: <http://www.easywaytowrite.com/novel.html>

Lesson 5:

An Act of Magic.

You have thoughts. You write them down as words. Later, others read them and your thoughts become theirs. Spooky, eh?

I'm sure it was once, when the Druids roamed prehistoric Europe, exchanging information in the form of archaic symbols.

I imagine the illiterate masses looked on with awe and not a little fear, convinced these markings the magicians called "words" had power in themselves.

It's interesting that the echo of the magical context of writing is still with us, contained in the word "spell", with its double meaning.

If you think about it, the question, "How do you SPELL that?" literally means, "How do you conjure that image with symbols?"

The science of semiotics is a broad subject - one that is way outside the scope of these lessons, but I want to share with you its basic premise:

Ahem. The human brain needs to NAME something before it becomes REAL.

The idea is that, before something is named, it doesn't really exist because either our awareness of it is too dim to understand it, or, if we haven't noticed it yet, it might as well not be there.

BTW, I'm not making this up, honest, this is Major level philosophy!

Anyway, the important thing is that once named an object can then "exist" to someone who hasn't actually seen it!

This is a pretty neat trick, unique to the human race, but also one we take completely for granted.

It's only words that make this possible.

And it's also why writing works.

Your job as a fiction writer is to place invented objects, images and emotions into other people's heads. Do this well and your career will prosper.

Good writing is a form of hypnosis. You use the rhythm of words to put your readers into a kind of trance, so that they are more receptive to your ideas.

When a reader is happy to experience this, they are said to be in the "fictive dream".

In order to keep your reader "entranced", there must be nothing in your writing that might startle them out of this dream.

Your reader must trust you and be able to give over their imagination to you. You, in turn, must honor that trust by playing by the "rules" of good storytelling.

I cover the "rules" in detail in "The Easy Way to Write a Novel" but in general terms, anything that jars the reader out of their dream is bad.

There's one technique in particular that can destroy a reader's confidence in your storytelling skills.

"Authorial intrusion" is where you express a personal opinion about a character, situation or scene. Or where you describe anything your characters could not be aware of.

Although you, the author, is considered to be an omniscient viewer and recorder of events, you must also be seen to be objective - and invisible. Though it would seem to contradict common sense, the reader should be unaware of you, the writer.

I'm sure you've heard of the phrase, "Willing

suspension of disbelief". This is the state of consciousness you're after.

The reader "knows" that they're being told a story but, because, they like and trust you, they are willing to make a slight shift in their minds and accept what you're saying as the truth - for the time being.

Therefore, during storytelling, you must never break the spell - that word again - by offering witty asides, stating your views or commenting on the action.

Of course, rules are made to be broken. There are times when authorial intrusion does work.

Some authors use it as a way of introducing a story but quickly retire to the sidelines. A technique as old as storytelling itself!

Others use it at the end of a story, to wrap up events like some movie voice over. It works sometimes - as long as you don't sound over smart or condescending!

But if you really want your reader's trust, keep them in the fictive dream. Let them live the characters and situations without distraction. Let them enjoy the feeling of being swept along by a story and taken out of themselves for a while.

They'll love you for it.

2004 robparnell

This is the fifth of ten short lessons on "Becoming a Better Writer." They arrive weekly. You may unsubscribe at any time - but of course, I'd much prefer if you didn't!

Also, you may like to forward this email to writers and colleagues who might find it interesting, fun and educational. No problem but - no editing please!

Best regards and keep writing.

Don't forget, you can contact me for advice, information and indeed, for any reason at [rob@easywaytowrite.com](mailto:rob@easywaytowrite.com)

PS: Next time, the secret key to making your books "unputdownable"!

Till then, keep well and happy.

Ciao