

**STOCK UP!**



**Your Writing Tools**

Go on, admit it. You have a favorite pen. You love that pen so much that you'd chase someone out of the classroom and down the hall if they accidentally took it at the end of class. It's okay, I'm with you. I have a favorite pen, too. And I will chase you down if you try to steal it.

Take this time to stock up on the writing tools you'll need to be successful in November. It could be a pack of your favorite pens, a particular type of paper or notebook for jotting down ideas. Do you need a new jump drive to save your work? Go out and buy it now!

Whatever you need, collect the items now so you will be ready to go come November 1<sup>st</sup>.



**It's Not Just About the Writing**

Writing tools extend beyond the things that we use to write. Maybe you like to listen to Indigo Girls on repeat when you write. That's cool, just make sure they're on your iPod or whatever it is you use to listen to music.

In *No Plot? No Problem!* Chris Baty talks about **writing totems**, objects that you wear while writing to "inspire your super heroic abilities." (76) Maybe it's your older brother's college hoodie, or a wide-brimmed sunhat you bought for a vacation you never took years ago. Whatever the object is, a writing totem functions to help you get into the writing zone. You put it on, and wearing it changes you, it inspires you to buckle down and write.

I have a writing totem, but you're going to have to show up to our write-ins to see what it is.



**Fuel for Fiction**

Writers cannot survive on words alone. This is why we consume copious amounts of coffee. Or tea, Kit Kats, coffee, water, coffee, cookies, green peppers, coffee. Okay, so you may not love coffee as much as I do, but you still need something to fuel your writing fits. Figure out what it is you'll need, and prepare. I make sure I begin November with a fresh bag of my favorite coffee beans so I don't have a meltdown during Week 2 when I realize I'm out and cannot spare the time it takes to run out to Costco to buy more. We can't have that sort of disaster, now, can we?

## ROLE MODELS



### Models as Inspiration

Chances are you are going to need some inspiration at some point during NaNoWriMo. As a writer, your best writing inspiration will come from a book that you love to read. *Haven't read any books that you loved?* Well, then you should seriously consider spending the next few weeks before November searching for a book to love. First, it's a real shame to make it this far in life without a book to love, and second, a good book serves as the best kind of role model for an aspiring writer.

The more obvious model for writing is the writing guides. Chances are you've seen a writing guide or two during your time as a student. Writing guides have all sorts of handy information about usage and mechanics, and if you find yourself stuck in the middle of a write-in because you can't figure out how to format a dialogue scene, you can seek out a writing guide for help.



### Shame as Inspiration

While a great book can serve as wonderful inspiration for a writer, let's face it: There is nothing more inspiring than the desire to avoid public humiliation. The good news is that you can use this knowledge to force yourself to win this November. Here's how:

**Brag shamelessly** about the fact that you are planning on writing a 50,000 word novel during November. Tell your friends. Tell your family. Tell the barista who sells you your latte. Tell every single person you encounter that you are writing a novel. This way, they are all going to expect you to produce the goods on December 1<sup>st</sup>, so when you're in a slump in the middle of November, and you're thinking you might as well just quit, you'll remember that everyone is expecting you to finish, and you'll persevere. It all comes down to this: Write or be ridiculed. Relentlessly. What's more inspiring than that?

In addition to bragging shamelessly, it's a great idea to **bet on your success** during NaNoWriMo. Do you hate doing laundry? (I do!) Bet your significant other (or roommate, parent, sibling, etc.) that you are going to write 50,000 words in November or you'll do his or her laundry for an entire month. This way, you'll be faced with the decision of either finishing NaNo (and getting all *your* laundry done for you for a month) or quitting and folding someone else's underwear for 30 days. See how easy it is to inspire yourself?

## **YOU GOTTA HAVE FRIENDS**



### **Writer Friends**

If you joined us for our last workshop, you heard me discuss the importance of joining or creating a local writing community. Writer friends are not only helpful in encouraging you to keep on typing away throughout the month, it's also nice to know that you have someone who understands what you're going through. When you show up to class mid-November in the same clothes you wore last week, your RaiderWriMo friends will understand.

It's also worth remembering that the people with whom you surround yourself have influence you, whether you like it or not. Chances are you'll be far more motivated to reach your writing goal if you have writer friends who share it with you.

### **Cheerleader Friends**

So, the chance of any of your friends sitting down to write *anything* may seem as unlikely as a snow-free January in Chicago. That is okay! Your friends can still help you make it through November by being your cheerleaders. Or, worst case scenario: offering a shoulder to cry on should you need it at some point.

Tell all of your friends about RaiderWriMo, and see which ones seem to be the most supportive. Ask those friends to check in on you during November. A quick question about your word count may be all you need to get motivated to keep on writing. Maybe someone will even offer to bring you a dinner or two when the going gets really tough. You'll never know until you ask!

### **Skeptical Friends**

The best thing about someone who doesn't believe in you is that you have the option to prove them right, or better yet, to prove them wrong. You know the friends I'm talking about—the ones who scoff whenever you tell them your plans to do something big. The ones who will tell you you're crazy for even thinking you could write a novel, let alone a 50,000 word novel in one month.

These friends can be your secret weapon against the muffled muse. When you find yourself parked in front of the television with little motivation to continue writing, think of the friends who are going to take pleasure out of saying "I told you so. I knew you wouldn't be able to do it." And then prove them wrong.

## WHAT TO PURGE



### Dump Your Inner Curmudgeon

Anyone who has taken my writing class is probably thinking “Wait a minute! We spent all that time *developing* our Inner Curmudgeons. Now you want us to dump them!?” Yup, you got it. It’s time to call it quits. You need to break up with your Inner Curmudgeon.

Anyone who hasn’t taken my writing class is probably thinking “What is she talking about?” Sorry, let me explain:

Every writer has an Inner Curmudgeon. Your Inner Curmudgeon is the critic who lives inside your head, and judges every single word you write down on paper. He’s a real jerk, that Inner Curmudgeon. He hates you. He hates your writing. He’s basically always hoping that you will fail, and he has no qualms about telling you just how close you are to doing that. My Inner Curmudgeon is an angry, crotchety, irritable old man named Hal who wears a cheesy homemade knit vest over an old flannel shirt. He has a big nose, and his arms are always crossed over his chest. And he has a huge vertical crease between his eyebrows from frowning all the time.

As a student, your Inner Curmudgeon can be quite useful, because he helps ensure that you don’t submit garbage to your professors. But as a WriMo, your Inner Curmudgeon will do nothing but wreak havoc on your word count. Whomever your Inner Curmudgeon is, whatever his name, whatever you call him, you will need to silence him for the month of November. Remember: NaNoWriMo is about getting that first draft written, no matter how good or bad it is. We’ll welcome our Inner Curmudgeons back in December. Until then, no self-criticism allowed.

### Destroy the Evil Time Suckers

Nobody likes to admit it, but we are all guilty of allowing things that don’t really mean all that much to us to take up our precious time. Ideally, you’ve already identified the Evil Time Suckers in your life by completing the Time Finder we discussed in last week’s workshop.

Everyone has different Evil Time Suckers, but regardless of what yours are, the important thing is to identify them, and purge them during November so you can focus on your writing. (If you end up giving them up indefinitely, even better!)

Evil Time Suckers are easy to spot: They’re things that require a lot of time investment, but they pay very little rewards. My Evil Time Suckers are a bit embarrassing, but I’m going to share them with you to show you just how much I care: reality television and jewelry forums. That’s right, I watch *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*, and I go on jewelry forums and look at people’s jewelry. But not during November, no siree. In November, I am down to business. The housewives will have to wait, and I can pine away for pretty baubles come December.