

FIND YOUR MUSE



So, by now you've committed to RaiderWriMo. You're going to surrender to the writing muse for one month. But before you can surrender to your writing muse, you must first *discover* your muse.

Your **muse** is the thing that inspires you to create art. (That is what you're about to do this November, by the way: create some art.) The Ancient Greeks' muses were goddesses. If lyrics are any indication, most pop stars' muses are current or former love interests. Your muse can be any person, thing, image, idea, or animal that inspires you.

My muse is a cat. That's right, you read that correctly—a cat. I met him about ten years ago. He lived with a friend of mine. And the moment I learned his name he became my muse, and I've been writing stories about him ever since. Of course, in my stories he's a person and not a tabby cat, but that's a minor detail, people. Stay focused.

Where to Look

If you want to write a novel, but you have not yet found the inspiration for your story, here are some things to consider:

What objects do you hold dear?

Even the least sentimental people in the world become attached to *something* every now and then. Try keeping a sentimental object or two with you when you sit down to write. For me, it's the ring that my grandmother left for me. It reminds me of her every time I see it, and wearing it makes me feel brave and capable of doing anything.

When and where do you do your best thinking or daydreaming?

Do you ever let your mind just wander? If so, where and when? Think about the environment that inspires you to think or work through issues. Perhaps your muse is hiding there. I'm a perpetual daydreamer, but I do my best thinking when I'm alone in the car. While I do not condone writing while driving, there's nothing wrong with cruising around for a while and pulling over when an inspired thought comes your way.

Who brings out the crazy in you?

You know the friends I'm talking about here, the ones around whom you can be your absolute and true self. These are the friends that bring out a side of you that you rarely show the world. Spend time with these people. They just might be your muse.

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Inspiration By Proxy

Sometimes the best inspiration comes from people who have accomplished exactly what you're trying to accomplish, yourself. That being said, consider:

Which artists do you admire?

You can venture outside of authors, here. Are there any musicians, painters, glass blowers, tattoo artists, jewelers, clothing designers, auto body artists, etc., that you admire? Think of people who create things that are worthy of your admiration. Let their complete devotion to their art inspire you.

(By the way, have you ever heard of Yulia Brodskaya? She is a master at the art of paper quilling. It doesn't sound all that impressive until you see her work. She definitely inspires me to want to create.)

What stories do you have inside of you?

Everyone has a story to tell, even if it's something that never happened. Let your mind wander and find your story. It's there, go find it.

Which books made you stay up into the wee hours of morning thinking *just one more chapter . . . ?*

The stories that speak to you will serve as important inspiration as you undergo this crazy writing frenzy next month. Reread part or all of them. Burrow into the magic that held you long into the night one more time before you create some of that magic, yourself.

Your Personal Dos and Don'ts

As you venture into the world of novel writing, take some time to consider:

What do you love in a story?

Believe it or not, it's really easy to lose sight of what you love as a reader when you're caught up in the hysteria of RaiderWriMo. Take some time over the next two weeks to write out a list of things that you love to see in a novel. Some of the things I love are: main characters with unexpected quirks, extended families and the hilarity that ensues when they get together, and strong sibling bonds. What about you?

What bores or depresses you in a story?

It is surprisingly easy to get so caught up in your writing that you end up filling it with things that bore or depress you as a reader. Consider the things you dislike reading about in a novel, and list them, as well. As for me, intricate details about a character's feelings bore the heck out of me, so I definitely want to keep that out of my own writing.

GET READY



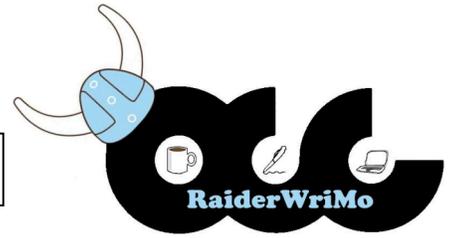
What You Should be Doing This Week

November is now only weeks away! If you've been keeping up with our workshops, you may have already done some of these things. But here's the master checklist, just for good measure.

The Master Checklist

- Sign up on <http://nanowrimo.org>
 - Find other RaiderWriMos on the site and become writing buddies
 - Choose USA :: Illinois :: Chicago as your home region
 - Set up your profile on the site
 - Get active on the NaNo forums! There are so many different forums for so many different purposes, spend some time reading around and get involved in a conversation.
- Check out <http://www.chiwrimo.org>
- Sign up on www.goodreads.com and join our RaiderWriMo group by searching for me (loster@oakton.edu)
- Convince your friends and family to join you—the more the merrier!
- Use the Time Finder (see Workshop 1 handouts) to figure out your writing schedule for November
- Find your writing zone, claim it, and fill it with things that will motivate you to write.
- Stock up on the writing tools you'll need to be successful in November:
 - Your favorite pens
 - Your favorite coffee, tea, snacks, music, etc.!
 - Find your **writing totems!**
- Find some inspiration books to keep nearby all November
- Brag shamelessly** about your plans to write an entire novel in one month
- Bet on your success
- Enlist writer friends, cheerleader friends, and skeptical friends
- Dump your Inner Curmudgeon
- Destroy the evil time suckers
- Find your muse
- List your story dos and don'ts
- Get excited!!!! November will be here before you know it!

RESOURCES



For More Information

November is almost here! If you've been keeping up with our workshops, you may have already done some of these things. But here's the master checklist, just for good measure.

- OCC's NaNo Guide: <http://researchguides.oakton.edu/nanowrimo>
- Lori Oster's RaiderWriMo page: <http://www.oakton.edu/user/0/loster/RaiderWriMo.html>
 - I'm keeping an updated calendar of all the local NaNoWriMo events on this page, so check it out and put the November write-in dates in your calendar ASAP!
- Contact:
 - Robin Dillow (rdillow@oakton.edu)
 - Ruth Whitney (rwhitney@oakton.edu)
 - Lori Oster (loster@oakton.edu)

We'll See You Next Week!

Workshop #4: Discover Your Story

Tu 10/25: 11 AM to 12 noon

W 10/26: 12:30 to 1:30

With just one week left before NaNoWriMo 2011 officially begins, we can now focus on doing a teensy tiny bit of pre-planning. This workshop will help you iron out some of the larger aspects of your story so you can sit down on November 1st with some semblance of an idea of what you plan to write. If you're a planner, this workshop is for you. Remember, you cannot actually begin writing your novel before November 1st, but you *can* do a bit of planning.