



Outside the Square
Fiction
Workshop

«« An Interactive **Workshop** for writers »»

Written by

Award-Winning Australian Author

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Author of "Think Outside the Square:
Writing Publishable (Short) Stories"

Outside the Square Fiction Workshop Mini-Ecourse

~ An Interactive Workshop for Fiction Writers ~

Written by Cheryl Wright

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Table of Contents

Lesson One – Introduction & Making Money from Writing

Lesson Two – Writing Dazzling Openings

Lesson Three – Motivation and Conflict

Lesson Four – Finding Ideas

Lesson Five – Show, Don t Tell

Lesson Six – Choosing a Title

Lesson One – Introduction & Making Money from Writing



This is Cheryl Wright, and I'd like to welcome you to my 'Outside the Square Fiction Workshop' mini-ecourse.

This mini-ecourse will give you a taste of what is included in the full-version ebook, and includes entire lessons – without the exercises or summaries.

I've also added some bits and pieces here and there for explanation, but apart from that, you've got the full quality lessons. And of course, only a small sampling of lessons are included in this mini-ecourse.

Over the next few lessons, I'm going to reveal some of the tips, tricks, „secrets“ and techniques I use to produce publishable fiction.

Before we begin though, I'll tell you a bit about myself.

I'm an Australian writer, and until about four years ago I struggled to produce any publishable stories. I took literally dozens of courses, and read heaps of books on fiction writing, but not one of them taught the fundamentals of writing.

The way things were going, I thought I would never get published.

One day I was in a really strange mood – well, stranger than normal (lol) – and wrote the type of short story I never dreamed I would ever produce. When I showed it to my writing buddy, we both agreed it would be the story that got me published. And it did.

That story took less than two hours to write, and I received over AUD\$500 for its publication. My entire writing career took off following the publication of that story.

Since that time, I've written lots of short stories, and even better, had them published, I've had novels, short stories, and poetry published. As I write this, I'm putting the finishing touches on another contracted non-fiction book, and have just had a novel accepted. The latter two will be published 2007.

At the time of writing I have two novels under consideration, and a request for another two from an agent.

But I don't stop at fiction. I also write non-fiction books and features, and have recently started writing for an Australian magazine. For three years I wrote for an American magazine, but decided to stop when the entire focus of the magazine was changed, and I wasn't interested in the subject matter – wines. I'm a tea-totaler, so it would have been extremely difficult to continue.

I also write for businesses from time to time, and do quite a bit of freelance editing. Oh, and I write (and often teach) courses for writers, and present workshops at schools, libraries, and conferences.

As you can see, I'm constantly juggling projects.

I'm a full-time writer, and have been for four years. This followed the difficult decision to leave my day-job because of a medical condition. I have a lung disease called Bronchiectasis, as well as a major immune deficiency that requires four-weekly transfusions. The positive to all this is that without the condition, I would still be working sixty hour plus weeks, without time to do what I love best – writing.

Becoming so ill was one of the turning points in my writing career. It's a tough way to do it, but with hard work and tenacity, I now live a pretty normal life – apart from the infrequent hospitalizations and monthly transfusions. (I use that time to edit, and often to write.)

To continue... in addition to writing, I do quite a bit of web design, and own some writing-related websites:

www.writer2writer.com

www.aussieauthors.com

www.authorsunlimited.net

I also produce a monthly ezine for writers called *Writer to Writer*. If you haven't done so already, I suggest you subscribe by going to <http://www.writer2writer.com>

If you find it's not for you, it's easy to unsubscribe as a link is provided with every email that is sent. *Writer to Writer* is totally free, and you'll get lots of writing-related tips and resources with each issue.

If someone had told me four years ago I would be writing for a living, I'd have told them they were crazy. I still can't believe my life-long dream has come true.

Why Outside the Square? I've been asked that same question so many times so I'll beat you to the punch. My philosophy is to not write like every other writer. I strive to be different and teach my students the same way.

Most people say „outside the box“ so I decided to veer away from the cliché terminology.

Can I make money writing? Sure you can. But don't be fooled, writing is hard work. You have to learn the fundamentals, constantly write and improve your craft, and take courses regularly. I'm still taking courses despite the fact I teach writing on a regular basis.

Apart from the writing itself, you can also make money from taking classes and speaking events such as conferences, schools, and so on – once you've established yourself as an „expert“. I generally charge a minimum of \$90 per hour for speaking/teaching events, and have no trouble whatsoever getting this amount. Depending on what is required, the cost is sometimes much more.

Take heed though – you must treat your writing as a business. Otherwise it will become a hobby and you won't be taken seriously. But that's a lesson for another course.

Apart from the monetary side of things, the satisfaction of writing – a book, article, whatever – is incomparable. Holding that book or magazine in your hands cannot be equaled. The thrill of publication never goes away. Believe me.

In the next lesson we will begin learning the fundamentals of writing. And you will have some homework!

Cheryl

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Lesson Two – Writing Dazzling Openings

In this lesson we are going to explore opening sentences.

One of the most crucial parts of a story is the opening sentence. If it doesn't grab the attention of an editor, then my friend, you're in trouble.

Most editors will tell you that if they're not caught up in the book within the first three paragraphs, they simply don't – and won't - read on.

One way I learned a lot about writing was to read other people's books. So that's what we're going to do now.

So go ahead and grab a book from your private collection. Any book – it doesn't matter what the genre is, or who wrote it. Just grab a book.

Open at the very first page of the story. Does the opening sentence draw you in to the story? Do you want to read on, to find out what will happen to the character you've just been introduced to?

My bet is that it does. Few publishers contract books that don't pull the reader in from the first few words.

You'll quickly learn that the title and first line are extremely important to your story. When I write a story – whether it's a short story or novel I need to have some of the storyline in my head before I can begin the characterisation. That's because I need to fit my characters to the story.

So, for your first exercise, I would like you to consider the story you would like to write.

Now write the very first line of your story. It needs to be short, sharp, and to the point. Don't ramble, keep it as condensed as possible

Give your opening sentence some thought, and ***don't*** write the first thing that comes into your head.

Write it down, think about it, and then work on it. Look at your sentence and ask yourself some questions:

- 1) Is it too long, and will the reader lose interest?
- 2) Is it to the point?
- 3) Does it give a sense of intrigue?
- 4) Does it leave the reader wanting to read more?
- 5) Does it give too much information, losing the reader's interest?
- 6) It is a „teaser“ ?

Remember, some of the best opening lines are less than ten words long. That doesn't mean you have a limit; it's more of a guide.

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Here are a few examples of opening sentences that I have used in stories and books:

Heart pounding, Rosie sat up abruptly in bed.

"D a m n, d a m n, d a m n, d a m n, d a m n!"

"G e t y o u r s t i n k i n g h a n d s o f f m e, y o u c r e e p!"

"P h e w, t h a t w a s c l o s e!"

"C u t t h e c r a p, J a s o n."

Now that you have an idea of what you need to do, get to work!

Lesson Three – Motivation and Conflict

In this lesson we are going to explore motivation and conflict.

Motivation and conflict are extremely important aspects of your story, but most writers simply cannot understand the concepts.

Without them, the story will not survive.

The bottom line is that each character needs to have a valid reason for their actions.

If, for instance, you have Joe murder Mary, you need to tell the reader why Joe would want to murder Mary.

Let's say Joe is a police informant, and Mary is an undercover detective. Joe's given Mary some extremely sensitive information that if disclosed, could get him killed by other underworld figures.

There you have your motivation.

But, on the other hand, Joe has fallen in love with Mary, or maybe Mary has saved Joe's two year old son from certain death.

That's conflict.

In ***Saving Emma*** – my suspense/romance novel – there are a number of examples of conflict – I'll give you just a few. First though, I'll set it up for you; Emma Larkin's husband has been murdered by the underworld. Along with her four year old daughter Sally, she's being harassed and followed. Their home is ransacked regularly, so they flee Melbourne to a relatively large country town. Obviously she's scared - for both herself and her daughter. Then she meets Gary Bedford. They meet, fall in love, but she keeps her distance. He's an undercover detective, but doesn't tell Emma.

So... let's start with conflict: Emma doesn't want to know anyone in this new town, she's on the run from the underworld. She sure doesn't want to fall in love. After all, who can she trust? She has to think of Sally; Emma can't risk Sally's life. She has her doubts about Gary; he's keeping something from her.

All of these are conflict. Why? Because they're reasons the two can't get together. At least that's the way Emma sees it. Now let's look at Gary's situation:

When they meet, Emma pushes Sally behind her and walks backwards as Gary walks toward her. She's scared, and being a cop, it comes through loud and clear to him. She gives a fictitious name – Sally contradicts her. As he gets to know her, Gary is convinced that Emma is keeping something from him; when they go on dates, they go in separate cars, never together. Everywhere they go, she scans the area and constantly looks over her shoulder. She never looks him in the eye when she says something he finds far-fetched, and won't tell him about her past life.

Gary is in love with Emma, but can't get close to her because of her problems, but she won't tell him what her problems are. Catch 22.

These are all examples of conflict. Put simply, conflict is the reason or reasons that keep your main protagonists from achieving the required result/s. That may be getting together once they fall in love, it might be having a baby, it might be buying a car, it might be finding a murderer, or escaping from the bad guys – anything you want your characters to achieve.

In ***Saving Emma***, there are various areas of conflict because there are a number of subplots as well as the main plot. But the main conflict is finding the person who killed Emma's husband so that she and Sally are safe. Because of that conflict being resolved, (Emma telling Gary about her husband's murder) they can get together. But Gary hasn't told her he's a cop. She finds out accidentally later. In the meantime, the killer is still on the loose, so the problems are still there.

(The plot is very complicated and has lots of twists and turns – being a suspense/romance – so without giving the story away, I can't tell you too much.)

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