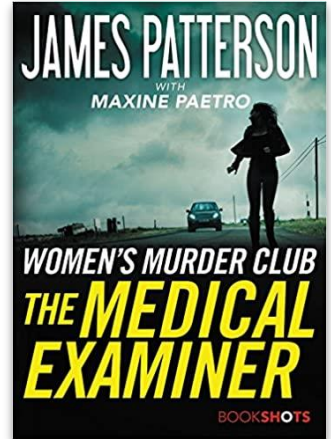


## What is Co-writing?

Joanna: In this video, we're talking about what is co-writing because there are lots of different definitions. So, J., I guess you could just say it's basically writing with another person and it's very

common in the publishing industry. But what are some of the examples that we have seen?

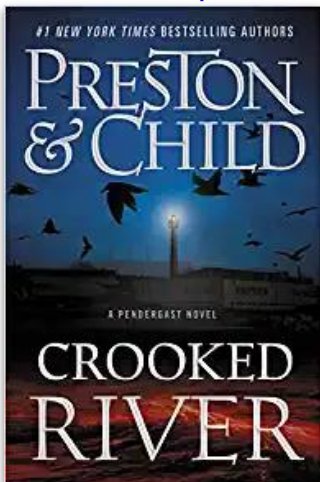
J.: There are some, surprisingly, very high profile examples of co-writing. They've been around for a long time. So, this is something that is **relevant to both the traditional publishing world and the independent publishing world**. You have James Patterson, who might be the biggest name co-writer you've ever heard of. He co-writes with a lot of people including Maxine Paetro, many others, including one of my friends, J.D. Barker, they have a book coming out.



You have Clive Cussler, Janet Evanovich. These are very big, big name high profile authors who have co-written with 'lesser-known authors,' or maybe 'less experienced authors.'

Joanna: I'm just going to come back on Clive Cussler because I was at Thrillerfest a few years back and someone asked him, I think it was when Boyd Morrison started writing with him, and Clive — rest in peace and everything — as we speak. But Clive says, 'I really got into co-writing because well, if Patterson can do it, I can do it.' It was this funny thing where he basically said, 'I'm going to expand my world and my business.'

<https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2015/07/16/thrillerfest-2015/>



So that's a really good example. Like, if you have a big name, you can do that. But of course, what are some of the other ways?

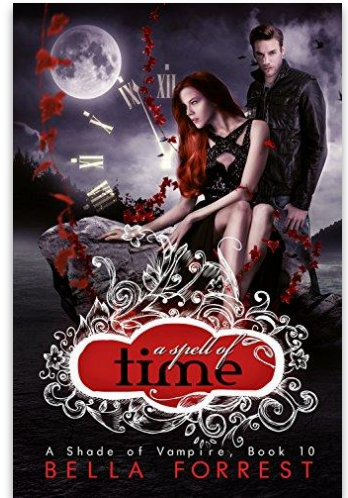
J.: You have **pairs, people who pair up whether for one book or on a regular basis**. So you have, you know, Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, Bella Andre, Melissa Foster, Neil Gaiman, and Terry Pratchett had a book together, Stephen King and Peter Straub.

There are a number of different pairings that you can look at as examples. And you also have **authors who write under a single name** and this might be more of a marketing decision or a branding decision. But somebody like Nicci French, a crime writer, who is really a combination of a husband and wife writing team.

Joanna: Bella Forrest, I think we could say, in the indie author space who I don't really know, do you know any more about Bella Forrest than me? Certainly, a book every couple of weeks in a universe with so many urban fantasy books. But the general feeling is that Bella Forrest is a group of authors writing under one name, what do you think?

J.: That's my assumption too, yes.

Joanna: I'll just mention Penny Appleton again! My mum didn't want to write under a new individual name, so we made up a name but also I didn't want it to be the author names that I usually use.



So, I think one reason to come up with **a separate name that you write under is because that becomes its own brand**. So you have to do everything separate under that brand when it's a completely new name. Is that something you've ever considered?

J.: I have considered it, but haven't really tried it yet. I think there's something to be said for tying a name to a brand, especially in a co-writing situation. But not something I've tried yet. So, there are many different ways that authors can write together, and I think you're going touch upon a few of those different ways.

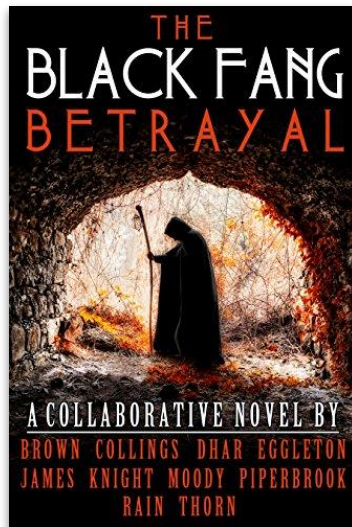
Joanna: It's going to depend on personality type. For me, **each author taking a completely separate role is the one that I feel most happy with**.

So for example, with *Sacrifice*, the one we did, the four of us, I came in with my control-freakery which we'll return to, and we ended up writing four different characters where basically we all wrote separate parts of the story. Because they all had a different voice, it came together actually quite well.

Also, in *The Healthy Writer* with Dr. Euan, we tried writing things together, but it just didn't work because he's a medical doctor, I'm not. It was very clear that each chapter would be written differently. So, I wrote two chapters, he wrote two chapters completely differently and even when we edited it, we didn't touch each other's voice same as we did it with *Sacrifice*. And with my mum, the different roles are basically my mum likes to write the sweet romance and I do a lot of editing. But I do enough editing to make myself a true co-writer.

When I do the writing, it really is quite separate. With *Risen Gods*, we wrote different chapters, we wrote different point of view characters. So, I naturally fit

into this 'author takes a completely separate role' phase. So, what are some of the ways you've done it because you do it quite differently?



J.: There are a number of different ways. One of them is the **author as the conductor**. So this would be something that you would see specifically in something like the *Black Fang Betrayal* or anthologies where you have a point person, and that author then guides and directs what other co-writers are writing. So this is often what happens too when you have more than one co-writer.

When you have a single co-writer, and we'll talk a little bit about the **A/B style**. You can pick certain scenes, or one author can write from one POV, one character's POV and another author writes from a different character's POV. So there's a lot of flexibility within all of these collaborations that you can find the one that suits you best.

Joanna: You mentioned anthologies there, can you just be very clear because a lot of anthologies are not co-writing. So what do you mean when you're actually **co-writing an anthology**?

J.: An anthology is quite a loose term. You can put out an anthology as a single author and have a collection of short stories that is an anthology for just you.

You can also have anthologies that are completely standalone written stories that are compiled by one author and put together into a book. Then you can have an anthology that's like what we do for Authors on a Train where you have **co-writers writing short stories that are then bundled into a collection of short stories**. So there's a lot of variation within that.

The key with the anthology is that, no matter what it is, if it involves at least one other person, **you need to have a conductor or someone in charge** to make sure all the pieces get into the right place.

Joanna: So just explain Authors on a Train for anyone who might not know that brand.

J.: Authors on a Train: you coined the term. So grateful for that, because it's so catchy and memorable. But Authors on a Train is a retreat that Zach and I run and we take authors from one location to another on a train.

<https://authorsonatrain.com>



We've gone from Chicago to New Orleans, we've gone from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The idea is you're paired up with another partner who you meet ahead

of time, and you determine what genre you're going to write in. Then when you're together on the train, and at the destination, you build out a world together and you co-write the story. We help, we guide them along, and when all of the co-written stories are done, we put those all into a collection and then sell them for charity.

Joanna: Fantastic. Give us the title of one of the books that have come out in the 'Authors on a Train' series.

J.: *Dark Shadows* Book 1 and 2, those were New Orleans themed anthologies from the first two Authors on a Train retreats that took place from Chicago to New Orleans.

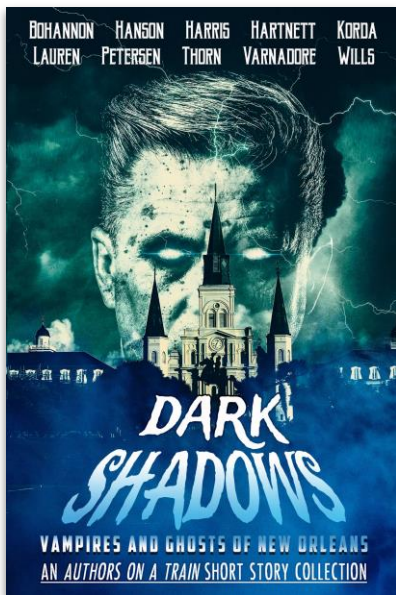
Joanna: Fantastic. So you mentioned that A/B drafting and

revising process, I guess that's quite similar to what my mum and I have done. She wrote the 100,000-word draft and I edited it down to 50,000, which didn't do great things for our relationship! We'll come back to the relationship side of co-writing later on, but certainly one person drafting, another person revising, that can be a way. So what do you mean by the A/B process?

J.: It's short for taking turns, right? There are a number of ways you can do it. With *Risen Gods*, we were reading what was written the previous day or the previous evening and then writing our words. So in other words, we're going from A to B, A to B, back and forth, so that we maintain the thread of the story throughout.

But A/B drafting and writing and revising can take other forms as well. So, for example, you could have AB, AB to drafting and revising. So you could have one person drafting in A and then the next author revising as B. So that you have the same author always drafting and the same author always revising. So there's a little variation between the A/B format too.

Joanna: Indies are doing some exciting things now. People like Michael Anderle, Craig Martelle who have these universes and co-writing within them. A few years back we had Kindle Worlds, where there was a world and then other writers could write in that world which I don't feel is true co-writing but I think Michael Anderle, Craig Martelle, they do have both names on the covers.



They share these universes. Do you think that kind of thing is true co-writing?

J.: I think it absolutely can be. In the situation you described, especially with Martelle and Anderle, it's not necessarily co-writing as much as a shared universe.

We talked about *American Demon Hunters: Sacrifice*, I have six or seven novellas in that world. I collaborated with other authors, and we plan together and then they went and wrote the best story they could set in that world and then I revised it. That was all within the same universe. So I think in that circumstance it is certainly co-writing. **It really just depends on how you define the responsibilities when you're writing within a shared world.**