
MY BOOK THERAPY

ONLINE STORYCRAFTERS

INTRODUCTORY LESSON

IS THERE A WRITER IN YOU?

In this introductory Online Storycrafter's lesson, we are going to explore the five key areas of a writer's life to measure whether you are ready for this journey.

- ✓ 5 Key Questions that stand between you and publication
- ✓ How to search inside yourself to discover the story or article you want to write
- ✓ How to find time and space to write
- ✓ How to get started on the writing process
- ✓ What to do next...

When you are finished, you will know whether you are ready to jump into the Online Storycrafter's course. Stick around for a **Roadmap** at the end to help you get started, And, an exciting offer to help you write the novel you've always wanted to write!

Let's get started.

My name is Susan May Warren. I'm an award-winning, best-selling author of over 40 novels in five different genres, and I'm the founder of My Book Therapy, a writing craft and coaching community for writers.

I have been all over this globe, in ten different countries, in nearly every state in America, and when I tell people I'm an author, nearly every time, someone's head gophers up from the edge of the room, or from behind the counter, or from the ring in the crowd...and I know...there's another writer in my midst. It's something in their eyes, that inner writer trying to get out.

Eventually, if they have the courage, they'll come forward and instead of saying, hi, how are you or making small talk, I say, Is there a writer in you? They'll give me a little smile, and I know...there's a writer longing to be set free.

Is there a writer in you?

Is there a writer in you?

Maybe you're reading this because you've been writing all your life, like I have. I wrote my first novel when I was 14 years old.

- Maybe you have a file cabinet full of stories you've written, or you've even sent them off to publishers.
- Maybe you've even gotten one of them published. Maybe you're a person who writes non-fiction – articles for your church, or magazines, maybe for a local paper.
- Maybe you're the girl who volunteers to write the newsletter for your organization or MOPs group.
- Maybe you're just the one in the family who also writes the Christmas letter.

I know you – because I've been there too. I've done all of those things. And even though I loved to write, I didn't really think I was a writer. That seemed too lofty. A writer was Hemingway, filled with angst and deep thoughts, and Fitzgerald, with his portrayal of humanity during turbulent times. I wasn't Shakespeare, the wordsmith, and Thornton Wilder the ponderer of deep thoughts, and or John Irving, with his insight into humanity. I was just a girl who had a rich imagination and a few voices in her head.

Do you hear voices? **There may be a writer in you.**

We all have goals, right? Dreams, desires, hopes that have been niggling at us for years. For aspiring authors, it's the dream of writing a novel.

- You're a writer if every time you hear an interesting job description or read a compelling story in the newspaper, you think, hey, that would make an interesting premise for a novel.
- You're a writer if, when you get introduced to someone new, you can't help but ask about their lives and can barely resist the urge to take out a pen and paper and jot down some notes.
- You're a writer if, when you're reading a novel, you occasionally take a breath and say, wow, I want to write like that.

I never thought I'd be an author. *I just let the writer inside walk through one door at a time, until 30 books later, I find myself here.*

I thought I'd tell you a little about my journey – and then I encourage you to keep reading through the five questions...they are designed to help you have a chat with that writer inside. See if he or she has the courage, or the desire to walk through the open doors to see what's out there.

I love reading – I think all authors should love to read, and I read constantly when I lived overseas, in Russia, while my husband and I served as missionaries. I soon ran out of books. However, without knowing it, I had begun to absorb the elements of a good book. I had also cultivated a desire to write my own stories. So, one snowy day, I sat down with a story in my head and began to write. I really had no idea what I was doing, but I knew in my heart what I HOPED to write, and I just followed my heart.

Is there a writer in you?

After I finished my story – with was about 150K, I had a James Michener epic, way too long that would be only be used as a highchair for my toddler. However, I HAD finished a book. **And in that, I was a success.**

From there, I submitted the book to agents and publishers and got good feedback – one agent suggested I write a much smaller book and see if I could publish that first. So I wrote a Heartsong, a story about my grandparents. And after they looked it over a few times, they published it. In the meantime, I kept writing, attending online classes, reading books and keeping a journal. I wrote a novella about an experience I had being trapped in an elevator in Russia, and submitted it to Tyndale. They bought (much to my great surprise) and then asked me what else I had. We're also going to talk about pressing on, and building up what I call your "bullpen."

When I finally started selling, I sold about eleven books in one year – many of which were already finished. Which is why, only 7 three years after my first trade book came out, I have 30 books on the market.

What I learned through that first novel was:

1. Writing a good novel was harder than I thought, and I needed a lot of work.
2. I love to write and was willing to make the journey, whatever it took.
3. Even if I never got published, God could use my writing journey for good in my life.

That was my journey – but everyone has their own journey – I know people who honed one novel for years until they finally found a publisher. Others, like me, wrote book after book, until they finally got it right. Some authors write one masterpiece and stop – or maybe write one book every five years. I write three books a year because the ideas just keep coming.

Being published isn't magic; it's just hard work. Do you want to be published? Are you ready to do the hard work? Good. Then let's discover if there is a writer in you.

So...how do you discover if there is a writer in you?

I have 5 powerful questions to ask you as you begin your journey. Who are you? What are you? Where are you? When are you, and Why are you?

QUESTION 1: WHO ARE YOU?

I'm not talking about your job, or your hobbies – we'll get to those in a moment. I mean... what kind of writer are you?

Let's look at the big picture first.

Are you a writer?

Is there a writer in you?

Would you rather watch a documentary rather than a sporting event? ESPN versus the History Channel?

How about when you're in the mall – are you at the electronics' store....or Barnes and Noble?

A writer will often gravitate toward stories, and the opportunity for imagination. Do you people watch in a mall? Do you notice small things – the way people interact with each other? Do you like thinking about what if's? I was in Epcot Center in Florida and I kept thinking....what if there was a terrorist attack here?

People say that nothing is safe with a writer, and it's true –every tidbit of information is opportunity for a story. People can't sit down next to me on an airplane without me wanting to know about their life.

So, the question is: Who are you? Let's take it further...

Now, Let's say you ARE the guy who has to stop into Barnes and Noble at least once a week, you know, just to look around. *Where do you go first?* The magazines? The spiritual section? How about the sci-fi section, or even romances? **The kind of books we gravitate to, and the kind of books we have on our shelf at home often show us the kind of writers we might be.**

If you were to look at my bookshelf, you'd find some non-fiction, quite a few commentaries, a number of bible studies, and the rest...fiction.

But even more than that, you'd find a lot of contemporary suspense/romance, as well as world war two fiction. This is what I'm currently writing.

So...Who are you?

Let's define it a little bit further. I have this theory – people who are writers are either wordsmith or story-crafters. You can have leanings toward one or another, but usually you find yourself in one camp or another.

Test – Make two columns, or add it in your hand. S or W in the other.

I'm going to ask you five questions, and I want you to tally them up.

1. Would you rather listen to poetry or watch a documentary about a battle. Poetry = W, Battle =S
2. Are you more interested in the lyrics of the song, or the singability of a song. Singability =S, Lyrics – W
3. Would you subscribe to Dictionary.com, or This day in History? Dictionary = W, History = S
4. Dead Poets Society, or Star Wars – pick one. Star Wars = S, DPS = W
5. Gilmore Girls/House, or 24 and Law and Order? GG/H = W, 24/L&O = S

This is not a definitive test, but if you're the kind of person who wakes her husband up in the middle of the night so you can just “read them one line” – you're a **wordsmith.**

Is there a writer in you?

If you are the kind of person that calls up your mother to tell her the amazing story you just heard on Oprah – you’re a **storycrafter**.

A **wordsmith** loves the beats and nuances and meanings of words and how they are used. A **storycrafter** loves the drama, the characters and the gripping plots of life.

Storycrafters are often non-fiction writers because they can see the big picture and how the pieces fit together. A **wordsmith** is often the fiction writer – they love how the words evoke emotions.

A great novelist is both. But even they would admit to one area of strength.

Why is this important to know – because if you want to let the writer inside out, you’re going to want to know what you do best, and how to hone that, and strengthen the other. We’ll get back to that in a bit.

Who are you? That’s your first question.

QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE YOU?

*Now I’m talking about your profession, your hobbies, your life. **What makes you interesting?** See, when you first start to write, you’re going to write about things you know – mostly because the learning curve for writing for publication is pretty steep and you’ll be spending your time learning THAT and you’ll need to focus on writing about things you know well. However, you’ll still be tapping into that WHAT as you journey further. Especially if you become a novelist and have to learn how to write emotions into your character. *You’ll tap into emotional moments you know personally to help you put them on the page.**

What are you?

It’s not just what are you know – but what have you been in the past?

What interesting things have you done, or experienced?

What kind of life did you live?

On my list, I have some big ones – I’ve been a missionary to Russia, during that time I got held hostage, and we had a home invasion. I’ve also travelled to Taiwan and backpacked around Europe with my children. I grew up in Minnesota, and I’m adopted. I also lived in the south, which is interesting if you’re a Yankee. I spent my summers on the north shore of Minnesota, backpacking and canoeing. *These are all things that I drew on later as I began to write articles and books.*

What are you?

Is there a writer in you?

Try this exercise: I want you to take out a piece of paper, and number it 1-3. Then, I want you to write down 3 unique and interesting things about yourself that you could possibly use as a springboard for an article, a devotional, or even a novel.

My first novel was built off the summers I spent on the north shore. But my first published novella – was taken from an event where I was locked in the elevator for 2 ½ hours.

So...What are you?

QUESTION 3: WHERE ARE YOU?

I'm not talking about Fargo, North Dakota, or Kalispell, Montana, or Orlando, Florida. **I'm talking about where you are in life's journey.** A lot of times, people want to write, but they haven't experienced *enough* life. It's hard to write authentic emotions if you haven't experienced some of them. I think writers need to always expand their horizons – try new things, challenge themselves. I took *self defense classes*, and *joined the theater*, and learned *how to dance*, and *jumped from an airplane* – all so my experiences might be richer on the page.

Where are you?

- Are you in a place in your life where you have something to say about it?
- Have stopped on your journey to ponder your life, and what it means?
- Have you looked back and seen truths that you could talk about?

A writer has to be able to interact with truth in some way, and deliver that into the page in a profound and meaningful way. I have often had ideas for books, but not been ready to write them because I know God had more work to do in me before I could successfully carry that story off. I needed to grow as a writer, and as a person. *Do you keep a journal of your life, and what God's teaching you? Where are you on your spiritual journey?*

Where are you?

Tonight when you go home, I want you to get a journal, and I want you ponder some of the truths that God or life is teaching you right now.

Our journey with him is not stagnant and old, and if yours is, I challenge you to start there, and ask God to make fresh and alive, and to show you some truth that will breathe new life into faith. *Then, write it down. Ponder it. Struggle with it. Great books are written because of great struggles.* What issues in your life can you bring to the page?

Try this exercise: Write 3 issues in your life that you've wrestled with in the past ten years. These are the themes you can write about.

So...Where are you?

Is there a writer in you?

QUESTION 4: WHEN ARE YOU?

I'm not talking about your age here. **But when are you in the journey of life?** Are you a high school student? Or a young mom? Maybe you're the father of three, and you have responsibilities to put food on the table and pay the mortgage. Are you middle aged woman who's taking care of her elderly parents? Are you a retiree?

When are you?

The reason I ask this is because a writer has to carve out time to write. It's takes...time. And something I call White Space. Time to think, to mull. A writer has to be able to shut the door to others and say please let me think. Alone.

That's hard to do when you're a mother of small children. I know, I was there. I first started writing on Saturday mornings – as a gift to me from my husband. Sure, the house was a wreck when I came out of my office but I had my protected writing time, and that's what mattered.

When my children were homeschooling, I worked with them, and then in the afternoon sent them to their rooms to play for two hours while I wrote. I remember writing with children on my lap, reaching around to the keyboard.

When are you?

If you are going to be a writer, you have to find a time to write. Maybe it's in the evenings, after the children go to bed. Maybe it's on Sunday afternoons. Maybe it's early in the morning before work. Maybe it's at lunch break. I don't know – only you do, *but you have to figure out your When.*

It can feel selfish, I know. I tell my people – listen, I'm a better person when I write, and they know it's true, but here's a hint that might help with the selfishness.

1. **Share little victories with the people who believe in your dreams.** I always celebrated with my children when I finished a chapter – we ate ice cream, or went for a bike ride, or even went swimming. Whatever it was that made them feel like they could celebrate with mommy. I also told them that if I was ever published, I would take them to Disneyworld. And I kept that promise. Share your victories with your people.
2. **Keep a log of what you are doing.** In the early days it can feel overwhelming and fruitless to just type out stuff that may/may not go anywhere. But you're working out. Training. Getting stronger. And you need to remind yourself of what you're doing so....*get a spiral notebook, date it, and write down what you did every time you sat down to write.* Then, if someone accuses you of just surfing the internet, you can say – hey, I was doing research – see? I found out

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the kind of shoes women wore in 1942! More than that, if you set goals for yourself as you write, word count, etc, then you can watch yourself complete those goals. And it feels good to complete a goal.

So...When are you?

QUESTION 5: WHY?

Why do you want to write?

I meet people all the time who want to make sense of their lives, and they believe that if they just tell their story, that will complete them. I don't disagree that writing is therapy, and it helps you sort out your emotions and the events in your life. *However, when you write, it not unlike undressing in front of the entire world, because a great story takes pieces of yourself and lays them out for the entire world to see.*

Writing is not the destination. It's a journey. It's a rich and rewarding journey. It's a journey of discovery of who you are, what life's about, and what God is teaching us in the journey.

Why?

It is true that writers have something to say. *It's what makes us want to write – we've learned something and there is a fire inside us to share it with the world.*

Even novels are a journey of the hero and his discovery of some truth. And that's a great start.

If you're writing a novel, you'll apply that truth to the journey of your characters in some way.

If you're writing an article or non-fiction, you'll be able to come at it more straightforward.

But if you are writing ONLY because you have an agenda, then you will burn out. Because writing is a lonely, long, and often painful business.

Why?

I meet people who say, "Oh, if I just get published, everything will change." Yes, it will. **It will get harder.**

- The world will look at you differently, with closer scrutiny.
- The next thing you write will have to be better, because it will be compared to the last thing you wrote.

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- You will be open to the review of and judgment of people who don't know you, and don't know your heart, and they may say cruel things.

Hear me on this – if you are not satisfied with the person you are before you publish a book then publishing a book will not complete you. It will only make you search further.

So...Why?

(Here's a hint: A writer writes because they'd rather write than breathe.)

Who, What, Where, When, and Why.

Is there a writer in you? These are the questions I want you to ponder. Because you need to consider the cost before you start the journey.

Now, if you are a writer, then next question is: HOW.

The publishing Roadmap consists of three steps:

- ✓ Learn the Craft
- ✓ Join a Writing Group
- ✓ Get professional coaching.

That's where MyBook Therapy comes in.

MBT is excited to present our premier, private Storycrafter's retreat in an online Coaching format. It's an 8 module, 40 step roadmap to discovering, creating and publishing the novel in you. It's in-depth teaching by me, award-winning, best-selling author, Susie May Warren. I've written over 40 novels, in nearly genre and I've been teaching people how to write for nearly a decade. Many of my authors have landed on the best-seller list and won awards. I love to coach people on their journey and I have put together a program to help you get published.

Presented in both audio format for your consumption on your ipod, mp3 device or your computer, and PDFs, it is available online or you can download it into your computer and keep it forever. In other words, you consume on your terms, at your pace.

THE ONLINE STORYCRAFTER'S COURSE WILL COVER:

Writer's Life Training-Finding the time and creating discipline to write.

The Theme and Story Question of your book that will make your book worth reading

The Basic Plot and step-by-step instruction on creating your character, from the inside out.

Then I'll teach you how to plot and you'll see your story come to life.

Is there a writer in you?

You'll learn how to craft the Inciting Incident, and the powerful elements of a scene, from the type of scenes to scene structure to scene flow, POV, storyworld, dialogue and the all important scene HOOK.

We'll teach you how to edit your story, and then put together a powerful proposal to sell your novel.

It's almost like having a coach, right there, in your living room, cheering you on as you create your story.

But we don't stop there. After you've completed your course, you can enroll for free into our **Storycrafter's Challenge** and join a community and get coaching for a year while you write the novel in you!

Is there a writer in you? If the answer is yes, then you're ready for the Online Storycrafter's course.

Join the Online Storycrafters and start writing the novel in you today.

Blessings on your journey!

Susie May Warren