

17 Signs Perfectionism Is Killing Your Writing Dreams

Mandy Wallace



It would be funny if it didn't hurt so much.

You strive for that perfect story or the perfectly realized character. You exhaust yourself studying plot techniques and character development. But when the time comes to write, you freeze.

Why?

Because the writing didn't live up to your expectations. You know it isn't quite there yet. And you think I can write better than this. I know I can. Only now you're too tired from the stress and disappointment to actually write.

"It's okay, I'll try again later."

Until later never comes. And your last attempt at that perfect story goes into the file. You know the one. It's where you hide all the other half-written stories and scene snippets you couldn't resist writing.

Because the passion for writing is there. Why else would you keep torturing yourself? Why would you keep thinking about writing and wishing you could write if you weren't a writer?

It isn't just you. Perfectionism lurks behind

many a writer's secret anxiety. And the worst part is our perfectionism secretly thrills us, even as it blocks us from realizing our writing dreams. Because being a perfectionist has its perks, doesn't it? Too bad writing isn't one of those times.

The reality is, perfectionism isn't worth it when it comes to writing. Because rather than make us write better, perfectionism stops us writing at all. And how can we publish if we don't write?

So here's how to know if perfectionism is behind your writer's block. And how to keep it from killing your writing dreams.

1. You're Hyper-Critical of Other Writers

Do you bash other writers for their typos and bad grammar? When we're highly critical of other writers, we assume that others are highly critical of us too. And that puts too much stress and pressure on our writing. So if you find yourself focused on another writers' mistakes, take a breath. Because it takes courage to put our work out there when we're still learning our craft. And when someone judges you for your writing skills, they're in the wrong. Not you. Same goes if you're the one who's judging.

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2. You Feel Stupid When Another Writer's Story Is Better Than Yours

"Your problem is how you are going to spend this one and precious life you have been issued. Whether you're going to spend it trying to look good and creating the illusion that you have power over circumstances, or whether you are going to taste it, enjoy it and find out the truth about who you are."—Anne Lamott

It's okay if you've felt this way. You're only human. Just don't let it hold back your writing. Remember that another writer's success reveals what's possible for you.

When writers around you write well or get published, your success is that much more likely. That's because success isn't a limited resource. Success breeds success. So stick around it, and keep writing. It will happen to you too.

Anne Lamott has a lot to say about this in [Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life](#), a book that many a writer swears by. *Pick up a copy to get writing.*

3. You Spend More Time Reading about Writing Than Actually Writing

It's easy to focus on what you don't know when it comes to writing. Especially if you're a perfectionist.

But if you feel like you can't write because you don't yet have the skills, your perfectionism has outgrown its usefulness. Because writing crap is how you get better at writing. Yes, books on plot and character development have a place in your writer journey. But nothing will improve your writing like practice.

So for everything you read about writing, try the technique out in a quick paragraph. It's an easy way to even out your ratio of *writing* versus *reading about writing*.

4. Your Writing Skills Are Far More Advanced Than the Rest of Your Critique Group's

If you do most of the work in your critique group and aren't getting much in return, ask yourself why you're sticking around. Be honest with yourself here. Wanting to help other writers is fine but not if that means holding yourself back.

If you let perfectionism tell you that you have to be the best writer in the group, then you're going to have trouble finding writers to learn from. Maybe it's time to move on?

Aim for a critique group where your writing skills land in the middle. That means half the writers are more skilled and half are less skilled than you. This way you'll solidify what you know when you teach writers whose skills are less developed. You'll also benefit from the guidance of more advanced writers.

This is how writers improve.

5. You Get Mad or Hurt When Someone Points out Ways to Improve Your Writing

This is a red flag that you see your writing as an extension of yourself. But you are not your story.

Your story is no more than the passion you have for writing (good on you!) + your skill level at the time you wrote it. The next story you write will be better. And you're still a writer when your writing skills aren't yet where you want them to be.

Since you are 100% going to write a better story next time, why not get the crap out of the way now? You'll get to the good stuff faster if you do.

6. You Think Your Story Has to Be the Next Great American Novel To Be Worth The Effort of Writing It

You've heard of those writers who made it big with their first novels? Yeah, those stories are lies. The truth is, those first-time published

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novelists weren't really first-time writers.

What?

I'm serious. So Ernest Hemingway made it big with his debut novel, [The Sun Also Rises](#). Yes, it was his first novel. No, he wasn't a writing newbie when he wrote it. Before his novel debut, Hemingway published a slew of short stories. He'd also honed his writing skills as a reporter for *Dateline: Toronto*. So by the time he'd finally published that debut novel, Hemingway was already a writing pro.

The one thing you can know for sure is that a novel can't become great if it doesn't exist. So write the damn thing!

7. You Compare Your Early Writing Efforts to an Established Author's Published Work

Did your second grade teacher give you an F when you couldn't write a master's-level thesis? Of course not. So why would you expect a perfectly-executed story to flow onto the page when you're writing a first draft?

Give yourself an A+ for performing well at the level you're at now. If that means [you get an A for showing up to your desk and writing 50 words](#), good. Wrote a paragraph using that new plot technique you found online? Great.

Besides, published work goes through many a draft and expert before you see it on the shelves. So don't compare your first draft to someone else's finished product.

8. Story Ideas Spring Up and Multiply When You're Away from Your Desk But When It's Time To Write, You Freeze Instead

"What I try to do is write. I may write for two weeks 'the cat sat on the mat, that is that, not a rat.' And it might be just the most boring and awful stuff. But I try. When I'm writing, I write. And then it's as if the muse is convinced that I'm serious and says, 'Okay. Okay. I'll come.'"—
Maya Angelou

First off, this is totally normal for writers. So welcome to the club. It's okay to feel stressed out at this stage. The blank page. The blinking cursor. It's intimidating even for pros.

Author, Isabel Allende says to just show up until it happens. And writing really is as simple as that. Sort of.

The harder part is that you have to be open to sitting through the discomfort until your mind relaxes enough to work. So try this. Observe yourself and your anxiety as though observing a character. It helps to distance yourself from the emotion long enough to get comfortable with it.

9. You Secretly Love Being a Perfectionist Because It's the Reason Your Work Turns out So Well

Yeah, that's not just you either. I love being a perfectionist. Not because it stresses me out. Or because it makes it hard to write. I love being a perfectionist because it often means the quality of my work is higher. It drives my ambition to be a writer. It drives my ambition to write well.

But when perfectionism gets in the way of writing, it's time to set it aside. You have to be willing to look stupid. You have to be willing to suck at writing if you want to get better.

10. You Procrastinate When It's Time To Sit Down and Write

I covered a few [ways to beat procrastination and finally finish your story](#) earlier this week. Another tip?

Password protect your story drafts. Tell yourself you'll never show it to anyone. Maybe you won't. Maybe this draft is one of the many crappy first drafts you'll write and never share.

11. You Thought "Why Bother Writing It Then?" When You Read That Last Tip

Perfectionists tend to be all-or-nothing thinkers. You think if the story you're writing now isn't

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“the one” then there’s little point in writing it. But this is when your perfectionism has gotten out of hand, writer.

Think of it this way.

Each day you don’t write something, you’ve failed. Harsh? Yep. But it’s my job to shake you out of your comfort zone and get you on the write track. And I want you to remember—to really, really remember—that writing nothing is worse than writing something that sucks.

12. You’ve Deleted Your Writing in Anger or Torn Up Your Pages

“Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane your whole life, and it is the main obstacle between you and a shitty first draft. I think perfectionism is based on the obsessive belief that if you run carefully enough, hitting each stepping-stone just right, you won’t have to die. The truth is that you will die anyway and that a lot of people who aren’t even looking at their feet are going to do a whole lot better than you, and have a lot more fun while they’re doing it.”—Anne Lamott, [Bird by Bird](#)

It’s tough to improve your writing skills if you notice only what you did wrong. Yet many a perfectionist does just that. So try the feedback sandwich instead. Heard of it?

The feedback sandwich is a simple but powerful approach to feedback. It’s when you offer one critical piece of feedback between two positives.

This approach does more than protect feelings. It keeps your focus on the big picture. Because knowing what you did right in writing is just as important as knowing where you need to improve.

Use this approach when you edit your personal work. Did you find the perfect word for a concept? Did you pull off a perfect turn of phrase? Is your character consistent in any two places?

Then pat yourself on the back. And keep writing.

13. You’d Rather Submit Nothing To a Critique Group Than a Story That Isn’t Your Best

“And now that you don’t have to be perfect, you can be good.”—John Steinbeck, East of Eden

Have you ever gotten a B on an assignment and thought it was no better than an F? I have. Second place is the first loser and all of the that, right? I get it.

But, listen. It’s really quitting that’s the worst kind of failure. And regret will hurt more than losing. I don’t want that to happen to you. So this is your new mantra, okay?

Write the story. Separate yourself from the story. Critique the story. Write a better story. Repeat.

14. You Forget To Celebrate The Small Success, Like Starting A New Story or Writing a Paragraph

Focus on effort, not results. I know, I know. Your whole body is rebelling, isn’t it? It’s like I just gave you a trophy for participation. You’re thinking that mindset is for losers and new age hippies.

Sorry, writer. Whoever taught you that was soooo wrong. Because the people who focus on effort are the most resilient, self-mastered people. They try new things, and engage more fully. That’s why they succeed with ease.

So steal their technique. Take more pride in the seeds you plant than what you reap. That’s the key to success.

15. You Feel Like You Never Get Enough Writing Done in One Sitting

Be proud of time in. If you worked for 30 minutes and only got 30 words, accept that as progress. Practice pride.

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16. You Feel Like You Can't Write If You Don't Know Where The Story Is Going

"Writing is like driving at night in the fog. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way."—E.L. Doctorow

Writing is a process. It doesn't spring fully formed from your mind like some Greek god. You build it, word by word. Then you delete those words and write better words. A thousand times until it's done.

There is no room in this process for getting it right the first time. There are simply too many steps. So release control, and trust the process.

17. You Prefer Having Written To Actually Writing

This is not always a bad thing. Writing is catharsis. Writing is hard work. Both are great reasons to love the relief and sense of accomplishment that comes from having written.

But if you find that you dread the writing process more often than not, maybe you're taking it too seriously. Try to remember why you wanted to write in the first place. And use the techniques throughout this article to achieve that state of peace during the writing process.

You may just find you like writing again.

*This article by **Mandy Wallace** was reprinted with permission. To learn more about Mandy, visit her at mandywallace.com. Mandy Wallace is a freelance writer and blogger. Her blog, where she shares writing tips, was listed on *The Write Life's* 100 best websites for writers. Grab a free copy of her character design guide at <https://goo.gl/zgRPgW>*

Woo & Hoos!



Samantha Charlton's (w/a Jayne Castel) contemporary romance set in Italy, **ITALIAN UNDERCOVER AFFAIR** was released on 25 November 2016, and is now available on Amazon.

Nicola Davidson's next book, **SURRENDER TO SIN**, an erotic Regency, is out 12 December from Entangled Scorchd.



Jude Knight has two novellas in the box set: **Holly and the Hopeful Hearts** with the Bluestocking Belles: **A SUITABLE HUSBAND** and **THE BLUESTOCKING AND THE BARBARIAN**. They were released on 8 November. Jude also has a romantic historical suspense, **REVEALED IN THE MIST**, due on 13 December.

Karina Bliss' **FALL**, the second 'big book' of the Rock Solid series, released 15 November, and is part of the anthology **You Had Me At Christmas**. Read an excerpt on her website: <http://www.karinabliss.com/>



Jane Madison-Jones w/a Maddie Jane has just signed a contract on her third book, **TRANSFIXED**, to be released by Escape Publishing in February 2017.

Karen Johnson w/a Catherine Mede has **RUNNING AWAY**, a contemporary romance, being released 1 December.

From The Editor



New Zealand isn't the only country in the world experiencing shaking and upheaval the last few weeks. The political turmoil of the American elections has left people all over the world in shock.

I know we're worried about the ramifications here in New Zealand. But what can we do about another country's choices? Absolutely nothing.

We can, however, do something about our own. So here are the three choices I believe should be ours as writers in the coming days.

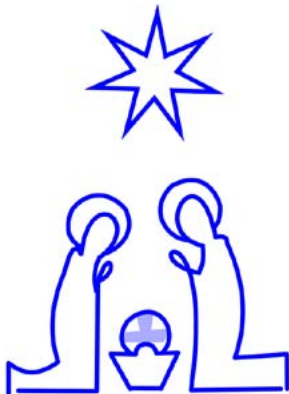
We must choose to **remember**. Remember that it's our job to make people's lives better. Through our gifts of storytelling we don't simply provide escape from the hard, cold facts of life. We offer our readers the chance to experience another way of handling difficult situations in a safe, non-threatening environment. We teach them that love and diversity are not enemies to fear, but friends to embrace.

We must choose to **recognise**. Recognise that the world needs our gifts now more than ever. You and I can't change the entire world immediately, but we can offer one reader respite, make one reader smile, build one reader's confidence in who she is. Sooner or later we will make a difference, but we'll do it one reader at a time.

We must choose to **reaffirm**. Reaffirm that, as writers of romance, we're in the right business. Because the world is crying out for hope: hope for couples, hope for families, hope for peace. A Happily Ever After isn't just an ending for fairytales. It's a possibility for everyone who chooses to reach through the blackest moments and show true loving kindness to a reeling, punch-drunk world.

May 2017 bring us hope, peace, and love.

Gracie



Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home.

—G.K. Chesterton

The Badass Guide To Making Natural Dialogue

Laura Toeniskoetter

Dialogue is so important to your characters and story, and I think that's why I love it. The words your characters speak are just as important as the way they say those words. Sometimes, though, dialogue can be a tricky little sucker, right?

Especially when you're writing about an area you don't know. For instance, if your character is from another part of the country, she's going to speak differently than you do. This is definitely an instance where you kick the idea of "write what you know" in the butt. Or if you write fantasy and create your own world (read *She's Novel's* awesome [post about world building](#) here), you need to create some dialogue.

Today, I'm going to take a look at eleven tips to creating that natural dialogue.

1. Dialect

For this, I'm going to use the example of my main character, Cassie, and me. Both of us hail from Texas, so it's totally natural for her to drop a "y'all" in the conversation, even if she lives and works in Washington, D.C. Little tidbits like that can help give your character a more realistic sense in your story. Or create a fish out of water scenario which is fun to play with. If you're still struggling on where to place your book to begin with, [read this post about picking your book's setting](#).

2. Do your research

If your character is from somewhere else, try to find primary sources of people from that area talking. If your character is from New York, watch videos on YouTube of people from New York and take note of some of the words they say, how fast they talk, etc. You want to style

your dialogue in a similar way. Now that you have the tools to find out the dialect, you want to make sure it sounds natural, even if you are unfamiliar with the area.

3. Even with Dialect, Don't Go Overboard

In my creative writing class last semester, one girl wrote a short story almost completely in dialect. While it was a brilliant idea, too much dialect can be a huge distraction. Dialect is something you use sparingly. It can help you create a sense of belonging to your character, but too much of it and your reader will feel exhausted and won't continue reading. If you use dialect, I'd suggest only using it dialogue, not in the narration.

4. Read it Back

This is to make sure you have a good balance of "normal" English and your dialect, more favoring to the "normal English." If you can't read the dialect naturally within your dialogue (and I mean read it out loud), you can probably ditch it. The whole point of creating natural dialogue is to have it sound like an actual conversation that could really happen anywhere, with normal people.

5. Use Contractions

I read a book a few years back, and while I don't remember the book, I remember it being set in the [American South] and having a total lack of contractions. All the dialogue was very formal. Use contractions to help break up the pace, and because people talk with contractions. "Do not" and "cannot" are all fine and dandy for a formal paper for your English class, but not for two people talking to one another.

6. Stay Away from Monologues

People don't (DO NOT) talk in monologues,

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unless they're ranting. Even then, you can break up a person's monologue with some inner-thoughts, or body language. Which leads me to my next point.

7. Body Language can be Dialogue too

Body language is a dialogue of its own. Make sure its reflected in the way your character talks. If your character is mad, not only will the words convey that, but adding body language like "she slapped the plates down on the counter" helps build the tone of that dialogue. Even though body language happens in the narration, it's still a major part of creating that dialogue.

8. Break it Up

This kind of goes with tip #6, but break it up. Conversations and dialogue are between two people. Even if you are ranting in a monologue, break it up with body language, something happening, or internal thought.

9. Add some Distractions

In life, it's easy to get distracted and start a whole new conversation without realizing it. Make this happen, and it's okay if it's often. We have meaningless conversations every day. Even though some may argue they're pointless to the story (which they are), adding these meaningless conversations help make your characters human.

10. Don't be afraid to drop a few Bad Words

Most adults cuss at least every now and then. Don't filter out the bad things just because you're afraid of a few four-letter words. If your character talks tough, you need to make it authentic. Now, don't drop "fucks" and "shits" just for shits and giggles, but make them a part of your character's natural language.

And my final tip:

11. Go On Instinct

If it sounds funny, it probably is funny, as in, if it sounds wooden, or unreal, it probably is. You're human, you know how humans talk to one an

other every day. Don't overthink it to make it perfect. People are wonderfully, imperfect projects.



*This article by **Laura Toeniskoetter** was reprinted with permission. Laura is the blogger behind **Ginger & Co.**, where you'll find advice on launching your career and launching*

*your book. Laura also writes novels under the pen name **Laura Teagan**, including [THE ASSASSIN](#).*



Great Beginnings Finalists Announced

Thank you to all the entrants for waiting patiently and for all the judges who have worked very hard to get all the entries scored. We had fifty entries this year and only twenty-nine judges, each of whom judged an average of five entries each. As you can imagine with only five finalist spots, competition was fierce.

I'm pleased to announce the five finalists. They are:

Lisa Matthews

Samantha Charlton

Jennifer Raines

Marija Jukich

Jackie Rutherford

Huge congratulations, ladies, and the very best of luck with the final judges.

Gillian St. Kevern

From the President

It's hard to believe that 2016 is coming to a close and I'm already past the first quarter date of my presidency year. It has been a crazy, intense, revelatory year for me—so much fun and hard work. I hope it's been a roller coaster of a year for you too, because without the lows how do you recognise the highs? 'Did the earth move for you' seems like a cliché romance term, but for those who reside in the area from Wellington to Christchurch, I suspect you've had enough ups and downs for this year. I hope the moving ground has slowed and that you are all safe with not too much damage.

Often when we get to the end of the year we focus on what we didn't achieve instead of celebrating what we did. I hope you all take a moment to reflect on the wonderful things you've achieved. It might be as simple as 'I planned a book', or 'I wrote 1 page', or 'I took a course', or 'I entered a contest', or the ultimate, 'I finished a book/s'. Remember, each one of us have different lives, and we achieve at different paces. But always focus on the saying, "Mighty oaks from little acorns grow."

The current Executive has a vision for RWNZ and we are progressing well. In our first quarter since taking office, we have completed the Membership Survey, sorted out the RWNZ tax situation, reconciled membership, written a new website proposal and appointed the developers who have started the new website. We're to meet mid-December to develop the Strategic Plan.

Every member of the Executive is working hard and for this, I am grateful. **PLUS** RWNZ is so lucky to have dependable and generous volunteers. I thank you all so much.

RWNZ will always need RWNZ members to volunteer because the subscription revenue we receive is not enough to support permanent paid roles (\$10.3k as at 31 March 2015 and \$13.5k as at 31 March 2016 net of GST). Our current Membership Secretary and Treasurer—having reconciled the Excel spreadsheet membership list to our financials going back

over the past two years—can show that at 31 March 2016 we had around 260 members. This is a 38% increase on the year before (201 as at 31 March 2015). After closing the renewals this financial year, we have around 250 members as at 30 November 2016. You can see, with only 250 odd members we need for everyone to think of volunteering for a role in the organisation at some stage, or the work keeps falling on a small number of conscientious members ... which is a tad unfair.

By developing our Strategic Plan, making some of the RWNZ committee and volunteer roles clearer and smaller, and positioning ourselves as an organisation for charitable purposes for the education of romance writers, we open potential opportunities to offer exciting new educational functions that could grow our membership, and/or allow us to apply for funding grants. At that time, we can re-evaluate how this money might be spent. If the membership votes to institute paid positions such as organisations like NZSA have, so be it. Until then, we work with what we have and look at a sustainable financial model moving forward.

Many of you have put in time for RWNZ this year—as committee members or volunteers in other capacities—and for that, all RWNZ members owe a huge thank you. The 2016/2017 Executive is really looking forward to the New Year so we can continue the legacy of service and responsibility that has come to be RWNZ's hallmark. I'm honoured to be serving, and I see great things ahead for RWNZ. I hope you do, too.

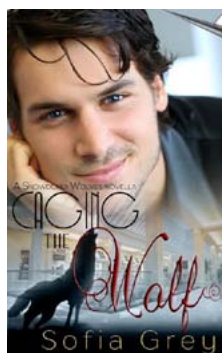
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Here's to a wonderful (and shake free) 2017!



Bronwen Evans
RWNZ President



Get To Know Our Authors

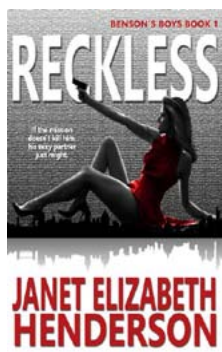
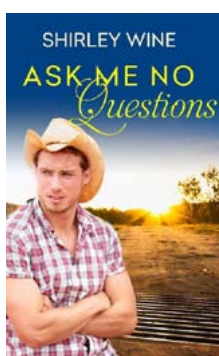


Sofia Grey
www.sofiagrey.com

Sofia Grey spends her days managing projects in the corporate world and her nights hanging out with wolf shifters and alpha males. She's been a member of RWNZ for 6 years and has published 21 solo titles, and 11 short stories in anthologies.

Shirley Wine
www.shirleywine.com

Shirley Wine writes Contemporary Rural Romance and is part of our Coast to Coast Chapter. She's been writing for 20 years and is currently working on Book 4 of the series which is due out in the new year.



Janet Elizabeth Henderson
<https://janetelizabethhenderson.com/>

Janet Elizabeth Henderson writes romantic comedy with a dash of suspense. She's been a member of RWNZ for more than a decade. Right now, she's writing the final book in her Scottish Highlands series and trying not to kill off any much-loved, but uncooperative, characters while she does it.

To have your cover/s on this free page, please email **EITHER** one **OR** three covers **PLUS** bio **PLUS** buy links (preferably via your website) to heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz. First in, first featured.

People say I don't write books, I make Christmas presents.

—Bryce Courtenay





Lesley Marshall Christmas Raffle



Dear everyone

It's nearly Christmas again, so it's time for my refuge raffle. As I've been doing for some years now, I'm offering a **Christmas Raffle for a critique** (or the equivalent time in editing) in memory of my son, with funds to go to Te Puna Women's Refuge.

To enter from New Zealand, simply send a cheque (made out to Te Puna) to me (Editline, 20 Beverley Cres, RD 9 Whangarei 0179), and I'll put you in the draw.

Alternatively, you can direct debit money into Te Puna's account (Account: 123101 0056429 00; name: Te Puna o Te Aroha Women's Refuge) and send me confirmation of payment amount so I know how many chances to give you.

If an overseas writer wants to enter they can donate to their local refuge equivalent and send me confirmation of payment amount.

I'll do the draw on 20 December (NZ time) so that gives you lots of time to get your entries in.

The critique is for a novel or any similar piece of work, and the winner can send it any time in the next year, either on paper or by email. The costs for entries are as follows:

One chance=NZ\$20;
3 chances=NZ\$30;
6 chances=NZ\$40;
10 chances=NZ\$50;
15 chances=NZ\$60.

I hope the refuge makes lots of money—I know they get very short of food during the festive season, though one year they used the money to create a children's playground for the families there, and another year they bought

clothes for the children. Whatever they use it for, rest assured you're creating a lot of Christmas joy with your entries.

These are people who have suffered hugely, and have often walked out of what should have been their safe, happy homes with only the clothes they stand up in. They really do need all our support. And Christmas is unfortunately the refuges' busiest time.

A heartfelt thank you from both me and the refuge. And please pass it on around any of your writing contacts—the more entries the better! Between us we made \$1190 last year and I'd love a similar amount this year.

Lesley Marshall



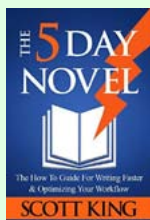
Contacts

Bronwen Evans: president@romancewriters.co.nz
Catherine Robertson: vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz
Kendra Delugar: secretary@romancewriters.co.nz
Karen Browning: treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz
Rachel Collins: publicity@romancewriters.co.nz
Gracie O'Neil: membership@romancewriters.co.nz

Heart to Heart will be published in the first week of each month except January.

The deadline for every issue is the 20th of the month prior (e.g. 20th August for September issue). Please have all articles, news, reports, and advertising to Gracie at heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz on or before the deadline.

The Bookshelf



The 5 Day Novel **Scott King**

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MDN3015>

Through easy-to-follow tips and helpful examples, Scott takes a theme and shapes an entire story around it. Let him walk you through the pre-writing process, slogging through a first draft, and doing the rewrites.



The One With The Writing Advice **Johnny B Truant & Sean Platt**

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01KONSVOS>

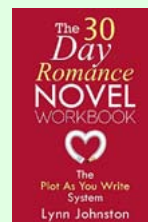
Johnny B. Truant and Sean Platt examine definitive episodes of the TV classic Friends, sharing the lessons that every novelist—from aspiring to experienced—can apply to create believable characters and develop story arcs that will captivate their readers from start to finish.



Book Signings and Events for the Lesser Known Author **Sherrie Giddens**

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MXLLSKR>

Sherrie Giddens shares the personal step by step plan she uses to fill her calendar with book signings and other events. This easy to use guide shares everything an author would need to take the steps in scheduling events, and taking their book marketing to the next level.



The 30 Day Romance Novel Workbook **Lynn Johnston**

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01M8MXQIM>

A Plot-As-You-Write System. Combining three-act structure with a romance arc, character growth arcs for your couple, and elements of the Hero's Journey, this story blueprint is extremely flexible and has been successfully tested by both plotters and pantsers.



1000 Plot Twists For Your Next Novel **S L Lethe**

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01M7W1HC8>

This is designed for writers who need help progressing their characters and plotlines, offering 1000 different plot twists to be used in any genre.



THE NEW ZEALAND
SOCIETY OF AUTHORS
(PEN NEW ZEALAND INC) TE PUNI KAITUHI O AOTEAROA

And now, some exciting news!

Introducing the

Daphne Claire de Jong First Kiss Contest

In February, we'll be taking entries for the inaugural Daphne Claire de Jong First Kiss Contest.

The contest is sponsored by the Northland branch of the New Zealand Society of Authors in honour of their longtime member Daphne Clair de Jong. Daphne has written over 76 romance novels as Daphne Clair, Daphne de Jong, and under the pseudonyms Laurey Bright, Clair Lorel, and Clarissa Garland.

Entries will be the **first kiss from unpublished manuscripts**, and we'll take entries from both **published** and **unpublished** authors.

It'll be fun! For more details, watch the website and the members' loop.



Every gift which is given, even though is be small, is in reality great, if it is given with affection.

—Pindar



Reminder

There is no January edition of Heart to Heart, but never fear. We kick start 2017 with the February edition. Send your articles to Gracie, and Woos and Hoos to Jean Drew by the 20th January, 2017.

Have a lovely Christmas and a safe, happy holiday season,
from the *Heart to Heart Team*

The Welcome Mat!

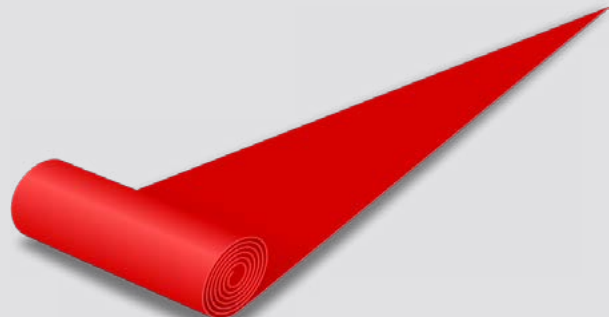
Roll out the red carpet! A huge welcome to our new and returning members! It's lovely to have you with us.

Joanna Jastrzebska—Auckland

Sian Liege—Auckland

Holly McCloy—Wellington

Sally Stone—Arrowtown



12 Gifts For Authors

Stuck for a gift idea for an author friend? Fret not! Look no further than this helpful gift guide, which will help you find that perfect prezzie!

1. Audio Books

Buy them an audio book from the fantastic selection available at <http://audible.com>

2. Critique Raffle

Give them an entry into Lesley Marshall's critique raffle (see page 11). Range of options and prices available. Starting from \$20.00.

3. Chocolate Scrabble

Has anyone invented chocolate Scrabble? Yes! They have! Don't like that word? Make them eat it. Available from Amazon - <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B004BUAXVG> or locally from Whitcoulls - <http://www.whitcoulls.co.nz/scrabble-chocolate-game-6150473>

4. Audible Gift Subscription/Membership

A 3-month Audible Gift Membership (US\$45) is a great gift and a great way to catch up on your reading when you don't have time to physically sit down with a book. Go to - http://audible.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/5178/c/3086 for more details.

5. Personalised Kumara

Are they vegetarian? Send them a special message via kumara. No, I'm serious. <https://www.kumarapack.co.nz>

6. Gift Cards

Get them a gift card from their favourite bookstore, local or online.

7. Prepaid Coffee Card

Get one of these from their local cafe. If the cafe hasn't thought of this, then they should have!

8. Waterproof Notebooks

Do they get all their good ideas in the shower? Then get them a waterproof notebook so they jot down ideas as they wash. Available from Amazon <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B003W09LTQ> or Whitcoulls <http://www.whitcoulls.co.nz/aqua-note-waterproof-notebook-medium-6046404>

9. Books Books Books

Know what they like to read? Have it delivered direct to them—or to you—from a New Zealand source - https://www.fishpond.co.nz/Books/Fiction_Literature/Romance

10. You Can Pop A Lot Of Trouble With The Storymatic Bubble...

No, not Trouble the game, but Storymatic! The Storymatic gives you six trillion stories in one little box. It's a writing prompt, a teaching tool, a parlor game, and a toy—all intended to beat writer's block and get you inspired. It has a Kids edition that's family-friendly. Go to <https://www.writersstore.com/the-storymatic/> for more details.

11. Coffee Mugs

Let's face it - all writers drink coffee or tea or whatever. So get them a coffee mug - starting with this one - <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B017TCN18E>

12. A Writer Themed Gift From CafePress

Go into <http://www.cafepress.com.au/> and search on WRITER for all sorts of things from clothing with quotes (*I'm a Wordsmith, which is kinda like a blacksmith only without all the tools and fire and stuff*) to jewelry, to baseball caps (*Unreliable Narrator*) and tote bags (*Oh, this is SO going in my next novel*).

Regional Round-Up Reports

Auckland

Convenor: Pamela Gervai (pamelagervai.com)

It was a considerable honour to have (ex) Judge Barrie Travis as our speaker. As I promised, he proved that he is a raconteur extraordinaire. Barrie gave us incredible insight into the development of NZ law from the time he participated until his retirement. He spoke of his passion, with enthusiasm, using a superb Power Point presentation of the second War of the Somme.

This was our last Chapter meeting for the year except for our End of Year party—10 December at mid-day at the home of Kathy Servian. Her address is 210A Glenmore Rd, Coatesville. Please bring a luncheon plate and a drink to share. Also bring a wrapped gift so each of us attending will have a mystery gift to take home after the party.

Coast to Coast

Convenor: Vivienne Matthews

(viviennematthewswriter@gmail.com)

The Coast 2 Coast Chapter had its final meeting for the year in November in Hamilton. This meeting was part Christmas party and part workshop. Thanks to Caroline for hosting and Jen for running the workshop. The starter sentence Jen gave us inspired many different variations on the theme of moths and flames. That courgettes and kinky boots featured in some of the pieces written, merely proves the level of creativity in our chapter.

Vivienne Jones was elected unopposed to the position of convenor. Thank you Vivienne for taking on the role. We discussed ideas for next year, and it sounds like the topics will be varied and interesting and enable us to learn about our craft and meet like minded people.

Hawkes Bay

Convenor: Kendra Delugar

(kendraonthemove@hotmail.com)

Our November meeting was held at Ginny's place. We compared courses we'd done that had enhanced our writing and that we'd recommend to others, and then we talked about the market for paper books versus e-books. Lastly we took turns reading the first two pages of our WIP for comment—and with everyone writing such different sub-genres it was a lot of fun.

Our December meeting is going to be held at Jackie's house on Sunday the 11th of December at 12pm, with everyone bringing something for a pot-luck lunch and their list of goals for 2017. Look forward to seeing everyone there.

Wellington

Convenor: Kris Pearson (kris.p@paradise.net.nz)

Our November meeting took place at Kris's. Gudrun brought along her two new knees, and is looking very well. Diana showed us the sophisticated new covers for her sheikh books, and we spent some time spying on other people's covers to see what we could learn. The meeting then became a conference planning discussion, and speakers and possible workshops were given a good going-over.

Next get-together will be at the earlier time of noon Saturday December 3rd at Ellie's (135 Milne Drive, Paraparaumu.) This is our Christmas lunch, and an email will be sent so members can elect what they will bring to ensure a nice variety. Whereas twelve desserts would be delicious, we do need something savoury!

Nelson

Convenor: Annika Ohlson-Smith

(nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz)

A very busy agenda at our November meeting. We decided we want our meetings to be as creative as possible next year. Saturday 26/11 is to be our Xmas Lunch and last meeting of the year. It will be a pot luck picnic at the Tahuna back beach.

We have an exciting start to 2017 with Yvonne Lindsay here to take a full day workshop. We talked about how and when to do the promoting. For the rest of the meeting we enjoyed cutting out 'Fairies' to hang in our Romance Xmas Tree, and sticking 'Fairy stickers' onto red and pink hearts—all for this year's theme 'LOVE IS A FAIRY TALE' at the Nelson Cathedral's Christmas Tree Festival.

Otago

Contact: Samantha Charlton (samanthacharlton@hotmail.com)

Our last meeting was on Saturday 15 October at Maria King's home in Wanaka. The meeting theme was 'conference debrief' - we went over the highlights and the key things we learned. An inspirational afternoon!

A group of around 6-8 of us will be meeting for an afternoon tea catch-up on Saturday 3 December, at Rhubarb cafe in Dunedin. We're going to be talking about the pros and cons of using programmes like Scrivener to aid the writing process (as well as sharing some tips for organising ourselves during the first draft!). We'll also be having a chat about the next RWNZ contest—the Pacific Hearts Award—which opens in March 2017.

Christchurch - Contact: Jane Madison-Jones (maddie-jane@xtra.co.nz)

Blenheim - Contact: Iona Jones (ionajones@xtra.co.nz)