

Help! I'm Stuck In A Dry Well! Getting Past Writers Block

Overcoming writers block... Whenever I write, inevitably I get to a place where my creative well seems to not only dry up, but cave in on me. This is usually around page one-hundred; right after my story has gone off like a shot. I'm not alone in this discovery, am I?

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Many other writers have experienced this exact same phenomena. That's why we come up with artful ways to describe what happens — the sagging middle, muse-go-bye-bye, and worst of all—Writers Block.

The problem, as I see it, is far simpler and less traumatic than those phrases make it out to be.

Writers frequently sit down to write because we had a great idea for a story. In actuality, what we had was a great idea for a scene. We rush to our keyboards or paper frantic to begin the process. After you've expended all your energy on the brilliant scene you realize, you have to tie that scene to a beginning and an end.

My friends a scene does not a story make.

At this point is where the real work of being a writer begins. Anyone can create a scene, only writers know how to craft those few ideas into a masterpiece.

When you reach the "I'm stuck" place, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I know where to begin?
- Do I know where to end?
- Do I have one great climactic scene to anchor all the others?
- Do I have several smaller climax scenes leading to the big scene?

My guess is the answer to at least one of the questions will be, no. In addition, I bet the question most frequently creating obstacles is the last.

We know we have to open by introducing the characters in their natural habitat. We know we have to wrap everything up at the end. The huge crisis scene is what set us off on this adventure in the first place. What's left are the foothills leading to the mountain.

The foothills are the trickiest because they have to do with A) motivation—what drove the person who kills twelve people in the final spectacular scene to that point? (which is usually straight forward) and B) conflict—this seems to be the hardest. After all, you've spent a lot of time giving birth to these characters, and making them decent people. Then you have to torment them. What kind of a monster are you?

It's okay. It's your job to torment your characters, and their job to suffer.

If plot is a four-letter word to you, then mull over the dilemma, let it simmer until you know all the scenes that build your story. If you're a plotter, send your charting skills into high-gear, and map out what you need to do to get from a to b to c.

Whether your process is organic or mechanical, don't force the answers. If you do, the results will ultimately be stale and predictable. Take your time and wait for the answers to come.

Getting stuck happens, but we don't have to treat it like it's the end of the world. Instead, redefine being stuck as not yet ready to create, or an opportunity to dig deeper and discover you're not in a dry well but a mineshaft full of gold.

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