

RESOURCES FOR WRITERS

KATE LAHEY'S FAVORITE BOOKS, WEBSITES & COURSES ABOUT WRITING FICTION <https://www.katelahey.com>

General Fiction Guides

- *Mastering the Process: From Idea to Novel* by Elizabeth George (2020)
- *Writing 21st Century Fiction: High Impact Techniques for Exceptional Storytelling* by Donald Maass (2012)
- *Writing the Breakout Novel: Insider Advice for Taking Your Fiction to the Next Level* by Donald Maass (2002)
- *205 Things You Should Know About Writing* by Chuck Wendig (2011) (Kindle only, adult language)
- *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott (1995)
- *Story Trumps Structure: How to Write Unforgettable Fiction by Breaking the Rules* by Steven James (2014)
- *Between the Lines: Master the Subtle Elements of Fiction Writing* by Jessica Page Morrell (2006)
- *The First Five Pages: A Writer's Guide to Staying Out of the Rejection Pile* by Noah Lukeman (2005)
- *The First 50 Pages: Engage Agents, Editors and Readers, and Set Your Novel Up for Success* by Jeff Gerke (2011)
- *The Scene Book: A Primer for the Fiction Writer* by Sandra Scofield (2007)
- *The Art of Subtext: Beyond Plot* by Charles Baxter (2007)
- *A Writer's Guide to Active Setting* by Mary Buckham (2015)

Plot & Story Structure

- *Save the Cat! Writes a Novel: The Last Book on Novel Writing You'll Ever Need* by Jessica Brody (2018)
- *Structuring Your Novel: Essential Keys for Writing an Outstanding Story* by K.M. Weiland (2013)
- *Story Genius: How to Use Brain Science to Go Beyond Outlining and Write a Riveting Novel (Before You Waste 327 Pages That Go Nowhere)* by Lisa Cron (2016)
- *Plot Your Novel From the Middle: A New Approach for Plotters, Pantsers and Everyone in Between* by James Scott Bell (2014)
- *Writing the Heart of Your Story* by C.S. Lakin (2014)
- *Story Engineering: Mastering the Six Core Competencies of Successful Writing* by Larry Brooks (2011)
- *Plotman to the Rescue: A Troubleshooting Guide to Fixing Your Toughest Plot Problems* by James Scott Bell (2019)
- *Layer Your Novel: The Innovative Method for Plotting Your Scenes* by C.S. Lakin (2017)

Crafting Believable Characters

- *Creating Character Arcs* by K.M. Weiland (2016)
- *The Emotional Wound Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Psychological Trauma* by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi (2017)
- *Getting Into Character: Seven Secrets a Novelist Can Learn from Actors* by Brandilyn Collins (2015)
- *The Complete Writer's Guide to Heroes and Heroines: Sixteen Master Archetypes* by Tami D. Cowden, Caro LeFever & Sue Vidars (2013)
- *Building Believable Characters* by Marc McCutcheon (1996)
- *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery* by Don Richard Riso (1996) (the main text is fairly interesting but the Appendix is especially helpful for writers)
- *Creating Unforgettable Characters* by Linda Seger (1990)

Pacing & Suspense

- *Writing with Emotion, Tension and Conflict: Techniques for Crafting an Expressive and Compelling Novel* by Cheryl St. John (2013)
- *Mastering Suspense, Structure and Plot* by Jane K. Cleland (2016)
- *Mastering Plot Twists* by Jane K. Cleland (2018)
- *Elements of Fiction: Conflict and Suspense* by James Scott Bell (2012)

Revising Your Manuscript

- *Intuitive Editing: A Creative and Practical Guide to Revising Your Writing* by Tiffany Yates Martin (2020)
- *The Last Draft: A Novelist's Guide to Revision* by Sandra Scofield (2017)
- *Troubleshooting Your Novel: Essential Techniques for Identifying and Solving Manuscript Problems* by Steven James (2016)
- *Revision and Self-Editing for Publication: Techniques for Transforming Your First Draft into a Novel That Sells* by James Scott Bell (2012)

Writing & Creativity

- *Light the Dark: Writers on Creativity, Inspiration, and the Artistic Process*, Joe Fassler, editor (2017)
- *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* by Julia Cameron (1992)
- *Writing on Both Sides of the Brain: Breakthrough Techniques for People Who Write* by Henriette Anne Klauser (1987)
- *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* by Natalie Goldberg (1986 & rev. 2016)
- *Writing the Natural Way: Turn the Task of Writing Into the Joy of Writing* by Gabriele Lusser (1983)
- *The Writing Life: Writers on How They Think and Write* by Marie Arana, editor (2003)

Websites & Podcasts About Writing Fiction

- amwritingpodcast.com: Once a week, KJ Dell'Antonia, Jess Lahey and Sarina Bowen dive into a free-ranging discussion about all aspects of writing, publishing and promoting fiction and nonfiction. Fascinating guests add to the fun.
- helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com: K.M. Weiland's website is a treasure trove of writing advice.
- jessicabrody.com: Jessica Brody's blog and newsletter are always informative and engaging.
- LiveWriteThrive.com: C.S. Lakin's website is full of timely and helpful writing advice.
- writershelpingwriters.net: Good content and a helpful list of recommended books on writing.
- diymfa.com: Lots of useful articles on writing and the writing life on this site.
- thecreativepenn.com: British author Joanna Penn provides a wealth of advice about writing, publishing and marketing your books.
- nybookeditors.com: Excellent source of guidelines about writing, editing and publishing your book.
- onestopforwriters.com: Lots of helpful tools and templates here. They offer a free trial.
- writerunboxed.com: Helpful blog and guest articles about writing and the business of writing.

Online Fiction Courses & Webinars

- Jessica Brody's courses from Udemy website (<https://www.udemy.com/user/jessicabrody-2/?kw=Jessica+Brody&src=sac>) are excellent. (Note: Udemy often offers discounts and sales.)
- Master Class (masterclass.com) offers several beautifully produced fiction courses with prominent writers like Margaret Atwood, David Sedaris, Joyce Carol Oates, Aaron Sorkin and Neil Gaiman.
- Jennie Nash's Author Accelerator (authoraccelerator.teachable.com/courses) offers several pricey but well-organized and helpful courses, especially the "How to Revise a Novel" course and the shorter "Inside Outline" class. They also offer book coaching services. Jennie's *Blueprint for a Book* (2011) is also excellent.
- Jane Friedman's blog and reasonably priced webinars on publication and promotion (at janefriedman.com) are excellent.
- Holly Lisle's short inexpensive classes and her pricier "big classes" (at hollyswritingclasses/courses/.com) are engaging and thorough, especially "How to Write a Novel," "How to Revise Your Novel" and "Thinking Sideways."
- Gotham Writers Workshop (writingclasses.com) offers a wide range of online and in-person courses on all aspects of writing. It's one of the oldest and best-known of online writing schools.
- Some bookstores and literary organizations offer online author readings and interviews. For example, check out the events schedule at the Book Passage bookstore (in San Francisco and Corte Madera, CA) and the Politics and Prose bookstore in Washington, D.C.

Publishing & Promoting Your Fiction

- *Before and After the Book Deal: A Writer's Guide to Finishing, Publishing, Promoting, and Surviving Your First Book* by Courtney Maum (2020). Highly informative and often hilarious.
- janefriedman.com: Jane Friedman is indefatigable in teaching writers about all aspects of the publishing industry, from query letters and synopses to choosing an agent and marketing your book. Her website and webinars are the best, and her book, *The Business of Being a Writer*, is equally helpful.
- queryshark.blogspot.com: For years, agent Janet Reid has examined and critiqued hundreds of query letters, and explained why they succeed or why they don't. Reid died in 2024 but the website is still up and contains hundreds of invaluable posts.
- *How to Land (and Keep) a Literary Agent* by Noah Lukeman (2014) (helpful and **free** on Kindle)
- *How to Write a Great Query Letter: Insider Tips and Techniques for Success* by Noah Lukeman (2014) (**free** on Kindle)
- *The Forest for the Trees: An Editor's Advice to Writers* by Betsy Lerner (2010) (a classic)
- **Best sources of information about literary agents:**
 - publishersmarketplace.com: Pricey, but the most comprehensive source of information about agents and deals in the industry.
 - querytracker.com: Query Tracker is a good source of information and helps writers track their submissions.
 - pw.org/literary_agents: Poets & Writers magazine has a smaller but **free** database of literary agents.
 - manuscriptwishlist.com (and on Twitter: #MSWL): Agents explain what they're looking for right now. (**free**)
- **Helpful Advice About Publishing Contracts:**
 - The Authors Guild offers guidance on rights that writers should protect and problematic provisions to look out for in publishing contracts: <https://www.authorsguild.org>
 - *Closing the Deal on Your Terms: Agents, Contracts and Other Considerations* by Kristine Kathryn Rusch (2016)

Legal Considerations for Writers

Fiction writers who publish—whether they're publishing books, stories or social media posts—need to be aware of potential problems in these areas of the law:

- Copyright (including “fair use” exceptions)
- Defamation of character (libel and slander)
- Invasion of privacy and portraying someone in a “false light”
- Publishing contracts

Please note that the sources listed below deal with U.S. law. The laws in other countries may be similar or they may differ substantially.

- **Books About Writing and the Law:**

- Jacqueline D. Lipton's *Law and Authors: A Legal Handbook for Writers* (2020) provides a wealth of easy-to-understand information about all of these topics. Lipton is a writer, an attorney and an agent. I highly recommend her book.
- Matt Knight's book, *The Writer's Legal GPS: A guide for navigating the legal landscape of publishing* (2020) is also comprehensive and helpful about all aspects of writing and the law. Knight specializes in intellectual property law and his book focuses on publishing contracts, libel, and the business of being a writer. Check out his website about writing and the law: <https://www.sidebarsaturdays.com>
- Less current but still helpful is *The Writer's Legal Guide: An Authors Guild Desk Reference* by Kay Murray and Tad Crawford (4th ed. 2013). It's offered free to members of the Authors Guild. The annual membership is \$135 (as of August 2021) but membership also includes a free review of your publishing contract, which is a squeal of a deal. The book is also available (much less expensively) through IndieBound, Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

- **Helpful Resources About Copyright Law:**

- The U.S Copyright Office has a wonderful website dealing with all aspects of copyright law and the fair use of copyrighted material. Go to <https://www.copyright.gov>
- The website of the Copyright Society of the USA has an excellent explanation of the basics of copyright law: <https://www.copyrightsociety.org>
- Cornell Law School provides a good overview of copyright law at <https://www.law.cornell.edu/copyright>
- *Copyright Handbook: What Every Writer Needs to Know* by Stephen Fishman (NOLO 2024). Kind of pricey but helpful and many libraries carry it.
- Jane Friedman's website (janefriedman.com) offers several helpful articles, many of them by attorney Brad Frazer. Examples:
 - "A Writer's Guide to Fair Use and Permissions, and a Sample Permissions Letter"
 - "Is It Fair Use? 7 Questions to Ask Before Using Copyrighted Material"

- **Helpful Online Advice About Defamation/Libel Law:**

- Writer's Digest has good articles on libel and invasion of privacy.

**Your favorite writing guide isn't listed here? I'd love to hear about it!
Leave me a message at katelahey.com**