

WRITE

to

PUBLISH

***Essentials for the
Modern Fiction &
Memoir Market***

Christopher Klim
Author of *Jesus Lives in Trenton*

WRITE TO PUBLISH

**Essentials for the Modern Fiction &
Memoir Market**

**Christopher Klim
Hopewell Publications**

**SAMPLE
NOT FOR RESALE**

WRITE TO PUBLISH: Essentials for the Modern Fiction & Memoir Market Copyright © 2003 by Christopher Klim.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher, with exception of reviews.

Published by Hopewell Publications, LLC
PO Box 11, Titusville, NJ 08560-0011 (609) 818-1049

www.HopePubs.com

Books by Christopher Klim

FICTION

Jesus Lives in Trenton

(ISBN: 0-88739-418-3)

Everything Burns

(ISBN: 0-9726906-5-4)

NONFICTION

Write to Publish

(ISBN: 0-9726906-9-7)

Coming Soon

Write to Publish Handbook

Revising from Idea to Final Draft

Hopewell Publications, ISBN 0-9726906-3-8

**Follow an award-winning author
through the crafting process
from idea to finished prose.**

Contents

FOREWORD	V
I. STORYTELLING IS THE ANSWER	1
WHO KILLED THE STORY?	1
SEARCHING FOR STORY	3
A STUDENT OF STORY	5
THE WRITING RITUAL	6
EXERCISES	8
II. ENGAGING OPENINGS	9
ENGAGE, ENGAGE, ENGAGE	10
WHAT IS A NOVEL?	14
EXERCISES	15
III. THE ESSENCE OF CHARACTER	17
SKETCHING CHARACTERS	19
USING THE CHARACTER SKETCHES	24
PROFILE THE CHARACTERS.	25
LOOKING FOR CHARACTERS	28
EXERCISES	30
IV. SELECTING POINT OF VIEW,.....	31
WHAT IS POINT OF VIEW?	31
FIRST PERSON	32
SECOND PERSON	33
THIRD PERSON (IN THREE FLAVORS)	35
SELECTING POINT OF VIEW CHARACTERS.....	39
EXERCISES	42

ii Contents

V. SETTING THE STORY LANDSCAPE	43
WHEN DOES THE STORY TAKE PLACE?	44
WHERE IS THE STORY LOCATION?	46
WHAT IS LIFE LIKE IN THE STORY?	46
APPLYING SETTING TO THE STORY	47
SETTING IS THE WRITER'S FRIEND	49
RESEARCHING SETTING	50
THE TRUTH ABOUT FICTION	52
EXERCISES	53
VI. PLOTTING FOR CONFLICT AND SUCCESS	55
SEARCHING FOR DRAMA	56
CONFLICT VS. PROBLEMS	58
CONSTRUCTING A STORY	59
STORY ENDINGS	64
SEQUENCING	64
THEME	66
EXERCISES	67
VII. PROFESSIONAL REVISIONS	69
THE FIRST LOOK	70
LEVEL ONE: THE OPENING	71
LEVEL TWO: STRUCTURE/CONTENT	72
LEVEL THREE: STYLE	76
LEVEL FOUR: PRESENTATION	80
EXECUTING REVISIONS	81
SOLICITING FEEDBACK	82
WHEN IS A STORY FINISHED?	83
EXERCISES	84
VIII. THE VIEW TOWARD MANHATTAN	85
A GLIMPSE INSIDE THE IVORY TOWER	86
THE EDITORIAL PIZZA PARTY	87
THE TITLE IS READ FIRST.....	89
EXERCISES	91

Contents iii

IX. CONNECTING WITH THE INDUSTRY	93
QUERY LETTER	94
SYNOPSIS	96
MANUSCRIPT	97
THE WRITER	98
WHAT IS AN AGENT?	99
LOCATING AGENTS & EDITORS	101
SUBMISSION ETIQUETTE	102
BREAKING INTO THE BUSINESS	104
EXERCISES	104
X. SEEKING CREATIVITY	105
SEARCHING FOR STORY IDEAS	106
WRITER'S BLOCK	108
EXPANDING CREATIVITY	109
WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW	110
FIND YOUR VOICE	110
WRITING SEX SCENES	111
INSPIRATION	112
EXERCISES	113
XI. LIFE SUPPORT	115
REALITY CHECK	115
REJECTION	117
SEEKING HELP	118
FINALLY	118
APPENDIX	121
THE FINAL INGREDIENT	123
CHARACTER SKETCH	139
SCENE & SEQUEL ANALYSIS	142
SHORT STORY QUERY LETTER	144
NOVEL QUERY LETTER	145
NOVEL SYNOPSIS	146
SHORT STORY TITLE PAGE & MANUSCRIPT...	148
NOVEL TITLE PAGE & MANUSCRIPT	151

iv Contents

BIBLIOGRAPHY, FILM & MUSIC155
ABOUT THE AUTHOR157
INDEX159

Foreword

*“Making a book is a craft, like making a clock;
it needs more than native wit to be an author.”
– Jean De La Bruyère*

Some people believe in the magic of writing. They recognize good stories. They may write, edit, sell, or teach writing and literature. They may talk about voice and dispense intangible rules about structure and form, and while no one perfect approach exists, they often fail to articulate the essential elements of a story. Storytelling involves the craft of writing. It is innate to certain writers but learned by most on the road to success.

The majority of writers demonstrate suitable inspiration, but skilled craftsmanship delivers the possibilities in a salient manner. Talent cannot be taught, but you can learn the basics of story structure and craft. Through discussion, example, and exercise, this book explains the craft of storytelling in the written form and ways for reaching editors, agents, and ultimately, readers in the modern fiction and memoir market.

II. Engaging Openings

“Look twice before you leap.”

– Charlotte Brontë

Television is a good indication of where we are headed in the story form. We are trained to receive the major story elements in the first minute of the program. We immediately know who and what the story is about and where it takes place. A skilled writer makes the best use of the reader’s instinct for this information.

Story openings have been likened to a contract with the reader. The framework proposed from the outset builds reader expectations for the ensuing pages. So why not be honest, as much as a storyteller can, and set the stage for your tale from the start. It will go a long way to clarity and the possibility of getting noticed.

Engaging Openings

ENGAGE, ENGAGE, ENGAGE

Students often ask me how to begin a story, and if they don't, I tell them, "Engage, Engage, Engage." Grab the reader from the start, and I'm not suggesting that you tackle someone in a bookstore, sit on his or her chest, and begin reading from your chapbook of poetry.

This chapter contains a checklist of items to look for in a story opening. These are the essential elements of a healthy story, but don't try to tell the whole story on the first page. The opening entices the reader to turn to the next page and so on. It is a delicate balance. Too much detail bogs down the story progression. Too little information confuses the reader. These are losing scenarios and good reasons to put down the story. When the author poses the right questions, we keep reading to find the answers.

The following sections reveal the elements to consider in a story opening. I introduce each, and describe them in more detail throughout the book.

Introduce the Main Character

The main character is whom the story is about. It is what readers look for first in the story. Try introducing the main character in the starting paragraph, like the opening scene of a movie. When people approach a group of strangers, they seek the most amiable or interesting personalities. We are looking for intrigue. The possibilities range from heroic to downtrodden. We want to be guided to the most compelling soul in the story.

It is the writer's choice to sketch the first impression

Engaging Openings

of the main character. Have the character demonstrate an element of his personality or the story through action, and unless it is absolutely stunning, avoid long expository paragraphs of physical description and personal history. We will learn those details soon enough, just not all at once and at the lead of the story.

Show the Predominant Point of View

Who is telling the story? This is often the main character, although it doesn't have to be. In *The Great Gatsby*, the story narrates from a friend's perspective. In some stories, we never learn the narrator's name. In others, the narrator is not even in the story; it is an omniscient voice peering down on the world, such as the author himself. In each scene, the point of view is critical to the story. It is how the story is told.

The author may choose to switch the point of view throughout the story, but in most cases, one will dominate. Readers accept this and become comfortable with this vantage point. Try using it in the opening scene, even if it switches during the course of the story.

Reveal the Story Question

Every character has a goal or desire, and the main character's goal is the story question. This goal arrives as a result of internal or external pressure.

As readers identify with the main character, they attach to that character's hopes and dreams. Readers follow characters through the framework of the story, until the story

Engaging Openings

question is resolved in a satisfying fashion. This does not have to be a happy resolution, but it needs to make sense for the character and plot. Nothing cheats readers more than a preposterous conclusion that surfaces at the last moment.

The goal of the main character must be the most compelling in the story. If a secondary character's goal surpasses the main character's goal, it hijacks the storyline. Let's say the story is about Bob's desire to become a professional stock car driver, while his wife battles breast cancer at home. His wife's life and death struggle is more dramatic than Bob's concerns, unless he nearly burns to death in a fiery crash, and that desperate attempt to rescue Bob's story is pathetic.

When a secondary character takes over the story, there are two solutions: extract the secondary character and her goal into their own story, or refocus the story on the secondary character and her goal. The most compelling character in a story cannot be suppressed. Chalk it up to fate. Most writers consider it a gift from the muses. The real story has emerged.

Preview the Setting

Where does the story take place? If it is a Hawaiian locale, begin the story there. The bulk of the story probably occurs in the same or a similar place. Don't fool the reader. Let them see this wonderful and intriguing setting, which only the author can bring to life, right from the start. If this isn't an exciting place on some level, consider another location, although a talented writer can turn a coin operated laundry into a carnival of details.

Engaging Openings

Create Action

This is truly the point of engagement. In the opening, get the scene moving. People are defined by their words and actions. Instead of stagnant descriptions of setting and character, put the scene in motion, including the people in it. In a movie that takes place on a sailing vessel, do you prefer a thirty second lead-in of the ship sitting at the dock, or one where the sails are billowing in the wind, the hull is cutting water, and the crew is hopping from port to stern? Activate the scene.

Set the Tone

This is the most logical of all. Introduce the story's major tone (i.e. dramatic, humorous, romantic, etc.) at the outset. The tone may shift at times during the novel, but selling one type of story and delivering another is akin to fraud. A dramatic story that turns comic in chapter two, or vice-versa, is really funny but not in a desirable way for the author.

Shorten the Timeline & Establish Order

Begin the story as close to the ending as possible. The increased pace will heighten the drama. Don't feel constrained by real life examples. The writer is the architect of the story. Readers will accept incredible events in a short span of time, if presented in a logical manner. Haven't we all had incredible days or weeks? All stories are a slice of life.

Engaging Openings

Also, try to keep the story in a straight line. Time occurs in a straight line, at least for now. Readers expect the pace of a story to proceed in fluid increments. Each time the story jumps, even if it is merely forward along the storyline, the narration makes an abrupt shift. If this is a difficult transition, the writer is under pressure to reestablish the storyline. This involves the overall structure of a story or the sequencing of scenes, which is discussed at greater length in the section on plotting.

WHAT IS A NOVEL?

Years ago, I was posed the following question. What is a novel? It was quick and to the point. In the dictionary, novel means unique. A story is a unique collection of words, structure, and ideas. You may avoid the suggestions in this book and still be a successful storyteller. The aforementioned checklist of story elements is only a guideline, and it is certainly not inclusive. There are times when you cannot adhere to the rules either. The annals of literary classics are filled with examples that break the rules and win, but be leery of the pitfalls. Going against the tide is often a master's trick. I hope you are up to that.

When the opening scene concludes, is the reader hooked? That is the magic to which people refer. A writer creates a place that readers want to inhabit. There are people to appreciate, landscapes to explore, and questions to answer. Readers go along for the ride, and the writer is driving.

A skilled writer establishes consistency or suspension of disbelief. He creates a world that readers never question, no matter how fantastical or absurd. Every word builds anticipa-

Engaging Openings

tion toward the conclusion, and inconsistencies or abrupt shifts in the story will grind like the gears of a sticky car transmission. It is another opportunity to lose a reader.

Many writers have compact and concise writing styles, and this translates to their storytelling. The world bustles with activity, and writers can't create more time for readers. In story openings, efficient writers rush to the point, hitting only the highlights needed to get the story rolling. They achieve clarity in a preponderance of words, as opposed to the poundage of the pages. Smart writers are greedy with words. They try to relate more things in the same space than other writers use for less information. Readers quickly get up to speed and are engaged much faster.

If you accept my advice and include much of what I relate in this book, you will go far in presenting a cogent and fluid story. Hopefully, readers of your particular brand of storytelling will notice and cheer. Then you may dazzle them with groundbreaking new work.

EXERCISES

Go to your bookshelf and pull down your favorite stories. It doesn't matter what you like – fiction, biography, Dr. Seuss. Read the openings. If you remember them well, chances are they are solid stories. They will demonstrate many of the elements mentioned in this chapter. After the first few paragraphs or pages, you will know who the story is about, who is telling the story, and what they want to accomplish, if not a great deal more.

Engaging Openings

May I suggest a few terrific openings? *The World According to Garp* by John Irving breaks a few rules and succeeds. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens is a classic, considered the perfect story by many. *Exposure* by Kathryn Harrison is a gripping psychological thriller.

***Learn more about the book and
get free writing tips:***

www.Write-to-Publish.com

[Buy Now!](#)

[Read Reviews](#)

Thank you for checking out

Write to Publish

and let me know what you think:

Author@ChristopherKlim.com

About the Author



Christopher Klim worked on observation and exploration satellites for the space program, until departing for the private sector to develop leading-edge communications technologies. He now teaches and mentors emerging writers. He is the senior editor of *Writers Notes Magazine* and primary architect of www.WritersNotes.com. In his lectures, writings, and workshops, this award-winning storyteller entertains with contemporary tales that extend the American experience while transcending the ordinary. His first novel *Jesus Lives in Trenton* was released to critical acclaim.

Contact the author:
c/o Hopewell Publications
PO Box 11
Titusville, NJ 08560-0011
Author@ChristopherKlim.com

www.ChristopherKlim.com

www.WritersNotes.com

www.Write-to-Publish.com