

LIVE CHAT HTTS LAUNCH CLASS OF 2015

My Daughter's Writing

Holly, you said that your daughter is writing 3 to 4 stories per week. What word count are these stories, on average? Is she selling them as individual stories, or as collections?

What role, if any, do print editions play in your daughter's career structure? What kind of situation, for a writer of short stories, would make it worthwhile to create a collection large enough for a print edition?

I'm interested in how to increase my sales. How does your daughter make enough sales to bring in an income?

Can you refer us to some of your daughters stories? If she's like you I'm sure I'd love to read it... AND...

If you're not comfortable with answering I understand, but I'm curious about your daughter's stories now. Could you share the name she's writing under, and a good title to start with?

...AND...

Where can we see your daughter's writing?

The Writing Process

BEING CREATIVE

What is the best to get started writing creatively? I am following your 3 day HTTS launch lesson right now, and have done research on writing before, but I wanted to hear your input on this subject.

My inner editor keeps interfering while I write (he's asking me to check the spelling of interfering right now!). How do I stop myself from constantly checking grammar, punctuation, etc, and just let myself write. I get that I'll have to correct all that later, but it's really stopping the flow of my writing as half of me checks what I just wrote instead of helping write the next line

Do you have any advice for a non-morning person to become one? I've heard plenty of authors suggest writing first thing in the morning, but currently every time I try I curl right back under the covers.

How important is a “writer’s space” to writing? Does a writer need to have some place they can go to be away from everyone else in their family to write? Are there tricks to writing and working with the muse when other people are around, even if the other people aren’t directly interacting with you?

I have become blocked for the last month and it seems the muse has withdrawn for a bit. I am stuck on the question I am asking myself which is . . . What AM I writing? What do I want this to look like in the end? I just don’t know. I don’t seem to be able to define exactly WHO are the primary characters in my work (there are too many in my head) Also WHAT is my story line or purpose in this? HELP!

If you’re just re-finding a love for writing again after 25 years, what would you absolutely avoid doing?

DEADLINES

The ideas of stories are easy for me, but when you work at it for a living, your courses all speak of working to a dead-line. Is that from the very start, or comes more into play after you have established a market/published your project?

CRIT GROUPS

I second Paula’s question, especially as a young writer (I get scared when I hear people say “good thing I didn’t publish until I was older”): If I decide to self-pub, how do I know I don’t suck?

AND...

“If I decide to self-pub, how do I know I don’t suck?” This question made me laugh out loud, but it’s an awesome question. For authors going Traditional, the sign that we don’t suck is when an agent agrees to represent us and an editor agrees to publish us, and a reviewer gives us a great review. I’ll be interested to hear Holly’s answer to this!

AND...

In the same vein, how do you know you’re ready to self-pub in the first place? My biggest fear is that I start putting stuff out there before my writing actually reaches a professional level, and I turn off hoards of would-be readers with a slew of amateur stories that should never have reached the light of day.

How is the best way to get feedback on my WIP so I don't end up with a published work containing mistakes I've overlooked in the revision process?

One author suggested finding an author in residence but I live in a small town. There are very few writers in this area. My favorite author is too busy (which I certainly understand).

How can I get authors to give my books a blurb? Some, like Barry Eisler and you, don't give blurbs. I understand that an author's time is valuable, but the blurb benefits both parties, and can often lead to a reader buying the books of both. BTW, two of the books in DS Kane's Spies Lie series (Bloodridge and DeathByte) have been Amazon Bestsellers. But, I still want author blurbs for my books.

I've belong to dozens of writing sites and crit groups. Put my time into each and everyone of them and I never get feedback on my own writing. Sure I've gotten the few "it's good" crits but nothing more. Yes, I've gotten better at seeing things as I write and edit, by belonging to these groups. But nothing to tell me if I'm moving in the right direction in the story or as a writer. So my question is when is it the time to call it quits on beta readers/crit groups and move forward?

<http://hollylisle.com/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-or-how-to-choose-a-writers-group/>

RHYTHM

Is there a rhythm to writing a novel? What do you want to accomplish in the first third of the book? The middle? The end?

Is it different for a short story?

<http://howtothinksideways.com/shop/free-three-week-flash-fiction-class/>

Is there something important that needs to be at the beginning of the book? In other words, what are the two or three things you can't leave out?

FINDING YOUR READERS

How do I know which audience I should target my stories towards? How should this affect my writing while I'm creating the story?

<http://hollylisle.com/writing-integrity-why-everyone-shouldnt-like/>

DOING THE WORK

You seem to stay busy. You are always putting out new work in some form or another. Out of curiosity, how much time per day or week do you devote to writing, your planning, etc? How do you balance the rest of your life with your writing/career? (Ex. I have a one-year-old and he is my responsibility. It is difficult at this stage of his life to to get things accomplished while he's awake and his nap-times are precious and not as long as I'd like. I'm interested in advice on how to make that time work for me. Is it just a matter of training my muse?) Where does your drive come from? You are like the Energizer Bunny — you just keep plugging away no matter what happens. How do you do that?

How do I balance the tasks of writing, replying to email (both personal and professional), keep up with my Twitter account and author website, and still take care of my personal life (helping my mother-in-law), and exercise?

I understand that to be a successful writer one must be devoted and disciplined, but I wonder... Are there writing workflows that leave time for, you know, life away from the computer once in a while?

When you are already working full time, finding time to write is not always easy. So if you want to go from any full time job to a writing job, you have to be really efficient in finding your readership. How do you go abouts getting your name around when you sart from scratch ? Do I have to go through Amazon exclusively, or webzines, or other ? How do you advertise your work ?

TOOLS

I need a word processing program designed for novel writing, and instruction in how to use it. Is there such a thing?

<http://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.php>

<https://www.literatureandlatte.com/video.php>

<http://www.amazon.com/Take-Control-Scrivener-Kirk-McElhearn-ebook/dp/B00530SE00>

GOALS

How do you set realistic goals and not overwhelm yourself? How do you make your personal deadlines matter, in particular if you are not needing the sales to survive?

Concepts & Ideas

How do you figure out what story to focus on? I have anywhere from 8 to 15 different stories running around vying for attention at a time. Some of them are about the same characters even.

I have multiple story ideas that twist a universal concept, like magic, and rename it but it's basically magic with a new name on top. Is that ok to do or would it just over complicate things for the reader? Should I keep those over arching concepts of the world to the universal ideas people will understand understand?

Many times, I find myself at a crossroads within a story. My brain usually generates more than two possible outcomes, sometimes as many of 10! How do I sort through all the mess in my mind and really tighten my lens so I can tell the best version of my story that I want?

I am right brain dominant, this means I have stories in my head all the time. I find myself going over dialogue between characters in my head, all day especially during lull periods. I end up quite excited about writing something but within a few days my mind has already worked itself through the story and I no longer feel the need to write that story, do you have any suggestions?

Its an opinion question. Adverbs, in reading your work Ive noticed you do use them and I know all authors do but as a starting author do you think it better to keep the pandora's box of Adverbs locked away as much as possible? Id like to avoid, he said sadly, or he yelled angrily obviously but it seems are cases where an adverb is needed.

The live chat ended here.

So I'll be doing either two or three workshops to cover the rest of the questions. I'll keep the cost way down on these workshops, and add them as an unplanned bonus to How To Think Sideways.

Here's the link to the How To Think Sideways Class Page:

<http://howtothinksideways.com/shop/https-ultra-career-survival-writers/>

Here's the YouTube video with the answers to these questions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceWebZST1ic>

The rest of the questions are on the next pages...

These Are The Questions That Will Go Into Several Live-Online Workshops

Story Planning

How many scenes should a novel have? Does it matter?

When writing about the setting in a story, is it important for the place to be an identifiable one, or based on an identifiable one, such as a fictional town in a particular state? How important is it to readers to read about a locale reflective of a place they can find on a map?

How can i stop changing the plot of my book. How do I start to “trust” that the direction I’m going on is a good one. I’m pretty sure reading other books is part of the problem, but I’m an avid reader at night and would be lost without it.

How helpful is using an editorial calendar to the average writer? I know that it helps me keep on track with small things, but it isn’t very reliable with bigger WIPs, and doesn’t help me with life’s interruptions. Those simply become frustrations for me.

Is it possible to plan and plot a novel in about three months? if so, how?

Any advice on the length of the first novel in the series for an unpublished writer?

Is it better to make an e-book with 10 short stories, or two e-books of 5 short stories?

Bob Salvatore mentioned he will outline even if he doesn’t follow it, Stephen King says that plotting is pointless, and having read your work I know that you are a plotter in a big way. My problem is I feel like once Ive plotted a novel down and outlined it on index cards there is no energy left for writing. How do you keep yourself focused on writing after you have done all this work?

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

What is the most important thing to bring to a character? What are the things all characters should have?

Ive read a lot, not as much lately with a 9 month old as I would like, I have noticed a propensity to tell stories from multiple characters view points. An excellent example would be Bob Salvatore (R.A. Salvatore) he transitions to multiple characters to tell a story. Do you find this style of writing effective?

POV

Regarding POV: Any suggestions on how to handle two protagonists, who start the journey in magic land together, then get separated and take the portion of the story later in their own direction in series format?

I have found through revision of work that I sometimes slip out of third person or out of past tense to present tense. I know this is quite common especially for newer writers. I think its because dialogue is present tense, action is past tense. Do you have any insight or tips on this?

WRITING MYTHS

What would be the best way to start a novel? Is it inciting incident or after the incident happened?

Revision And Editing (Are NOT Synonyms)

How do you know when a piece is overworked? After 3 drafts, when I read my work aloud, it sounds great to the ear. When I revises 1 or 2 more times, the work gets 'blocky' as the pace jams up. Do I keep revising to clean up the 'blockiness', or should I have left well-enough alone, sooner?

How long typically does an edit take? On average? How many revisions for a story? On average? For a traditional publisher, how long before you should expect your book to come out? On average?

How do you go about finding quality beta readers? I work with writers every day, but I feel I need readers of YA to get solid feedback. Am I way off base here? And for serious writers nearing the end of the revision stage (thanks to HTRYN :)), is it better to just go ahead and hire a professional editor? I've come so far, but now I'm just spinning my wheels. Thanks!

Publishing

PROMOTION

How does one scale promotion for short stories?

What type and length of bonuses would you recommend offering for buyers/subscribers when the story itself is very small?

What kind of promotion/launch would you do for the collections of previously published stories?

For someone putting out stories very frequently, such as weekly, what is a good approach to something equally fast-paced like blogging? How can I keep blogging from feeling like a full-time second job I never wanted to have?

How on earth does a new author get her book noticed when even the “traditional” authors are lowering their ebook prices making the marketplace even that more competitive.

How do you find a credible reviewer for the back cover?

I'd like to know if your course is for inspiring bloggers who do not have any writing skills, I mean zero skills.

WEBSITES

Any marketing advice for writers who don't have an interest in social media? Is that a fatal blow to success?

At what phase of writing a novel should I start building a website, blogging, marketing, creating a presence? I have a feeling I've left it awfully late...

What is a good way for one to go about building a website with limited funds? I know if I want to be a professional writer I need a website, but I have NO idea where to start.

BUILDING A BACKLIST

Since I don't have any backlist to publish now, my plan is to write two novels and two novellas over the next several years without publishing them. Once I have those works completed, I'll publish them over a period of several weeks or months to build momentum. Then my goal would be to write a novel, followed by a novella or several short stories and so forth, so I can get some work out on a regular basis each year. Does this sound like a good strategy to overcome not having a backlist?

In today's market, realistically how many novels would I need to publish to start seeing traction and being able to “pay bills”.

EXISTING BACKLIST

I have a backlist of 8 books and several shorts. Would you recommend putting them all out at once? Or putting them out once a month? Or what sort of schedule should I be looking at to self-pub them? I do all the formatting and uploading myself to pinch pennies, so I want to maximize my earnings when I getting them out there.

INDIE PUBLISHING

On a short story (as compared to a novel), how well can one get away with using friends/family as beta/proof readers?

What services should a short story writer plan to start paying for when they have the needed funds? Proofing? Formatting? Cover art?

Because of the potentially much smaller returns on a single story, what services, if any, are just too costly to spring for?

How do I start self-publishing and how do I protect my stories while doing so? (To make sure I get all the credit for writing them)

What is the average age of people who start publishing, and what should young (17 and under) writers expect for feedback? (harsh, easy-going, brash etc.)

BETA READERS

What are the best 5 questions to ask a prospective beta reader? To make sure they will be of value? This is an especially hard question, because I've learned that some times, the people you least expect turn out the best. =) What should a beta reading group be made up of?

EDITORS

How do you pick out an editor? Meaning, who is right for you? Is there a process? Questions? How do you know if an editor is right for you? This leads to, should you self edit?

Are there budget editors out there? Or is there a way to barter to get them to read a whole manuscript? At the moment a complete edit is out of my price range, but a grammar edit will only get me so far. I need a complete look at my work.

ISBNs

Would you suggest the use of ISBNs in indie publishing? I'm from the Caribbean and would have to give one copy of my books to the local library as a condition of obtaining the ISBNs. The thing is, I'm creating e-books, and don't have physical copies, so am tempted to skip the ISBN step.

COPYRIGHT

In regards to copyright: I know that if you trad publish, the publisher will register it under your name, but what about indie publishing? Do you need to register your work to protect it before indie publishing it?

Is there any rules for using well-known character in the story? For example, can the character, who favors a superhero toy (e.g. Batman or Superman, etc.) be turned physically into that toy, but he won't have any powers and won't be recognized as such superhero, or it's better to create your own "popular" toy?

PRICING

How do you decide on prices for short stories; by wordcount, theme, something else? AND

How does one know how to price a self-pubbed work? Is it based on the market, or the length of the work, or the time put into it, or what?

Indie pubbing is wonderful in so many ways, but at the same time I feel like readers are much more reluctant to spend money on a new, self-pubbed author's work than a new, traditionally-pubbed author's (the logic being, anyone can self-pub even if their work is bad—at least with a publisher there's some added credibility). What's the best way(s) to combat this?

MARKETING

How should time be split between writing and marketing? Is it a 50-50 thing? Does it change over time? (That is, do writers need to spend more or less time marketing as time goes on?)

I am finishing the revision of my first novel with HTRYN, and I have written 10 flash stories. Should I already create a blog ? What kind of thing do you write on your blog when you are just a beginner, with nothing published yet, or very little published ? How do you make it interesting when you don't have a long list of achievements ?

I've been doing this a long time. I'll have book #4 going live soon and book #5 in June (book #5 is short childrens non-fiction)and I've tried everything I can think of to get seen. To step out from behind the curtain. To sell. I get good reviews. Not enough of them but what I get is 4 and 5 star. I keep telling myself that quality will count and the books will sell but I am running out of time. I need income and if the writing doesn't bring it to me I have to use my time somewhere else. I'm not ready to give up but I need exposure. I've advertised, I've blogged, I've used a publicist, I've started a youtube series. I intend to create an hour long webinar on non-verbal communication. but I'm losing faith and I'm not quite sure how to keep going. So I guess my question is: How do I keep striving when I have so little coming back to me? I can't live on less than 100 views. I need 10,000. (You need more product, not more publicity.)

INDIE vs. COMMERCIAL PUBLISHING

What are the pros and cons of commercial writing vs. self-publishing?

How do I start self-publishing and how do I protect my stories while doing so? (To make sure I get all the credit for writing them)

Is it even possible to sell fiction through the traditional avenue to a publishing house? It seems all I hear about is self-publishing online.

Is this the most viable way of being published and being paid for my writing? If so, how do you suggest tackling this market?

If you are offered a traditional publishing offer should you take it or self pub?

Is the process of publishing and getting paid the same for novels, poems, and short stories?

How long can a short story be before being considered a novella?

Is there a traditional publishing path for short stories? What are the pitfalls? What are the benefits? What about the pitfalls/benefits for indie publishing of short stories?

Would YOU use or create a magazine for publishing your work? Why/why not?

- Where are great places to start to get published?
- Who pays? How much?
- How much can I expect to make?
- How are you getting deals and making money?

COMMERCIAL PUBLISHING

Where do I look for publishers. Do you have an available list of recommended publishers for different genres?

Are there specific publishers a person wants to take note of in the Sci-fi Fantasy world? If only going the traditional Publisher route?

My question is regarding the series of novels. You've mentioned in your How To Write Sideways Course, which is great BTW, that the publisher cut short your series at the third book instead of seven as you've planned it. Can you continue to publish your series at your own expense, indy style, from here on or it will be violating legal bonds you had with the publisher? Thanks

CONTESTS AND COMPETITIONS

Are short story competitions a sensible way to try and get published? Googling short story competitions for instance brings up a long list, a lot of which sound pretty dubious.

GENRE

I'm having a problem with focus. I've made a pretty decent run off my fantasy novels, but I've discovered I'm much better with novella sized stories. That said, I've wavered in my brand, going from straight fantasy, to novella length romantic fantasy, to children's chapter books, a middle grade fantasy and... well, I'm all over the place. I've produced works that I haven't even published since they don't match my current works and I'm already juggling 2 pens. I know this is hurting my fan base and ability to produce what readers want, not to mention producing enough to sustain sales, but I just can't get my head around what I should be writing and how that matches my skill set, my time limits, and my creativity — seems that my ideas aren't perfectly matched up to my original "brand" and I'm worried about alienating readers who want fantasy if I write romance, or writing something with sexual content and having readers who read a YA fantasy read it. Any ideas on how to proceed without all the crazy making (of my own doing) and still produce enough under one pen to sustain sales which are already waning due to not only KDP unlimited releasing, but also my own lack in releases? Lack of focus also slows me down to a miserable pace due to the confusion. AND

You've had success writing across genres. Is that something that's achievable for all writers, or is it best for newbies to stick to one genre?

Am I correct in suspecting that the majority of short stories published are romance stories? I am interested in short story writing ...but...not romance.

GOING TO WAR

When you get a publishing deal, a traditional publisher. How do you know when you can push back? In other words when do you know you should stick to something? Or should you go along?

Writing As A Business

What's an off-the-top-of-the-head list of resources and/or professional human contacts a starting writer should have? For example: a website person, social media person, etc in addition to an editor and cover artist?

Regarding editors, mine has finished a university editing course and edited her husband's novel trilogy, but hasn't edited for money before. She's someone highly intelligent whose opinions and feedback I respect and she definitely seems to know what she's talking about, but should I be instead seeking out a big name editor? I've been looking around in my area but so far have found none who work in my genre or are willing to work in my genre.

Once you've written a handful or two of short stories, where do you sell them? Do you go exclusive with Amazon and Kindle Universe to get the borrows and exposure, or do you distribute to any place that you can?

Do you write under pen name(s)? Why or why not? Do you start a publishing imprint or register as a DBA for a pen-name/publisher? Is a new DBA required for every pen name if you have more than one? AND...

Is there any reason to use a pen name when you are just starting out? I know that it might make sense when you branch out into multiple genres but beyond that, is there a good reason to separate your real identity from your writing (if it's even truly possibly to separate them)?

I'm extremely partial to the smell and feel of physical books, and while I'll gladly read ebooks as well, I feel like I'll be missing out on something if I go the indie route, as opposed to the traditional one. Is there a way to indie pub that doesn't completely eradicate use of the printed word? I'd love to be able to sell my work in both electronic and print formats, but I don't know if that's even possible as an indie publisher.

What do you think of Amazon CreateSpace to get your book published on paper as well as in e-format? Is it worth doing, or should I stick with the e-format for a while after I get started?

I'm a slow writer. I'm not talking about being blocked, though that happens too. I just mean that the words often come slowly to me, and it's rare that I hit "the zone" and churn out a high word count in a single sitting. I fear I might never be what anyone would call prolific. Does that mean I can't make a living off my writing? It seems like producing new material quickly is really important if you want to pay the bills.

Any thoughts on crowdfunding of the series for self-publishing?

What is the right balance of time between writing, blogging and selling?

I have a blog where I post a free story every week, last year I published 6 books, and did the year before as well. I've been going to book festivals to sell and to meet potential readers and develop a newsletter list. I have several short stories that I put out to ezines and magazines and add stories to that queue every year. What else can I do?

I'm curious about the real financials of the business and if its possible to make a living- even a small one.

Products: Novels, Short Stories, Ring Cycles, and Everything Else

I enjoy short story writing but can't find many avenues that pay for these. Any suggestions on where to submit my short stories?

The Job

Hello! I am student in high school. I'm interested in writing as hobby. Do you think it is possible to have a job (that isn't writing) and write to earn money as well?

How do you know when it's time to take the plunge and go full-time? Any advice or suggestions on making the leap?

The Class Itself

How do you get over the fear of perfection? My inner editor is a vicious little beast constantly reminding me how far I need to go in my writing. I want her to shut up so my muse can help. Any advice?

Is there a secret to letting go of your writing and letting other people see it? I'm so afraid of getting laughed at (see previous comment about perfection). Any advice for dealing with criticisms, especially when they're right?

Which of the lessons prove most helpful for non-fiction writing?

Holly, I want to be a working writer. I have done *The Artist's Way*. I have tried *Bird by Bird*. I have *Written Down the Bones*. I have a degree in writing. I have been a voracious reader and frequent starter of writing projects since primary school. I want to believe HTTS will be the key to getting my right brain to cooperate with my left brain, but I've been disappointed so many times before. I took the recommended right brain/left brain quiz and your description of my Empress Right Brain's insistence at throwing shiny new characters and premises at me and her refusal to revise or edit washed over me like a wave of peace and recognition. However, I'm terrified of failing again and feeling worse about my "lazy" self. I don't even know if you can answer this question, "But is it possible to find left/brain peace through HTTS when I feel so lousy about myself or should I just invest in additional sessions with my therapist?" (SAFE never starts: PERFECT never finishes: VICTIM never acts: FEEL never thinks)

How would you suggest incorporating having taken your HTTS course in a resume, or for professional purposes?

What is the single most important thing students who graduate from HTTS will be able to do?

To get updates on when these workshops will happen, go here:

<http://HollyLisle.net/LiveWorkshops.html>