

# My Top Twelve Cool New Course Ideas

By Holly Lisle

I had my year planned, writing-wise. Then I realized that I hadn't asked your opinion, and the things that I think are incredibly cool may not be the things that you think are incredibly cool.

So. I'm going to list out my top six small-course ideas, and then my top six big-course ideas in a tiny bit of detail, and at the bottom, I'll post one 1-question survey for each. Please read the course descriptions, then let me know what you think. And I'll replan my writing year.

## Small Writing Courses

- **How to Start Your Novel**
- **How to Finish Your Novel**
- **How to Polish and Submit Your Novel**
- **How to Pitch Your Novel to Pro Markets**
- **How to Make Your Story Break Their Hearts**
- **How to Write Page-Turning Scenes**

## BIG Writing Courses

- **Create A World Clinic**—Including e-book, mapping videos, work sheets, checklists, ways to keep from going overboard (some of you know what I'm talking about), and

more.

- **Crit of the Month Club**—This takes some ‘splaining, Lucy\* (\*an *I Love Lucy* [old TV show] reference for those of you who are, erm... young).

Here’s the thing. I don’t do crits anymore. I don’t have time. But I do really, really good crits. And at one point, I offered manuscript crits on Ebay to raise money to get us over a shortfall, and got \$300-\$600 for each one. In spite of which, I don’t do crits anymore.

However, it’s entirely possible to learn how to fix your own work by seeing how someone else is shown how to fix his. Or hers. And a lot less stressful, because you won’t find yourself getting defensive and arguing that the interminable infodump really **MUST** stay.

So...

I would accept submissions from the first group of people taking the course for each of the various steps in the novel-writing process—brainstorming ideas, outlining, theme and prelim work, character development, worldbuilding, first chapter, twist chapter, event chapter, “a-hah!” chapter, climax chapter, conclusion chapter, and synopsis and proposal package. I would turn one or two of the submission into a lesson, with my crits and suggestions, and these would go out to subscribers once every two weeks for a year. (Yeah I know I called it Crit of the Month Club. Crit of the Every-Two-Weeks Club sounds stupid.

The course would take twelve months, would include some extra goodies at semi-random intervals, and would include a nice graduation gift from me at the end.

You could sign up at any time, but only the folks in the

early-adopter group would get to submit—those crits would become part of the permanent lessons. (Yes, I'd be testing the model for the serialzine in a smaller format.)

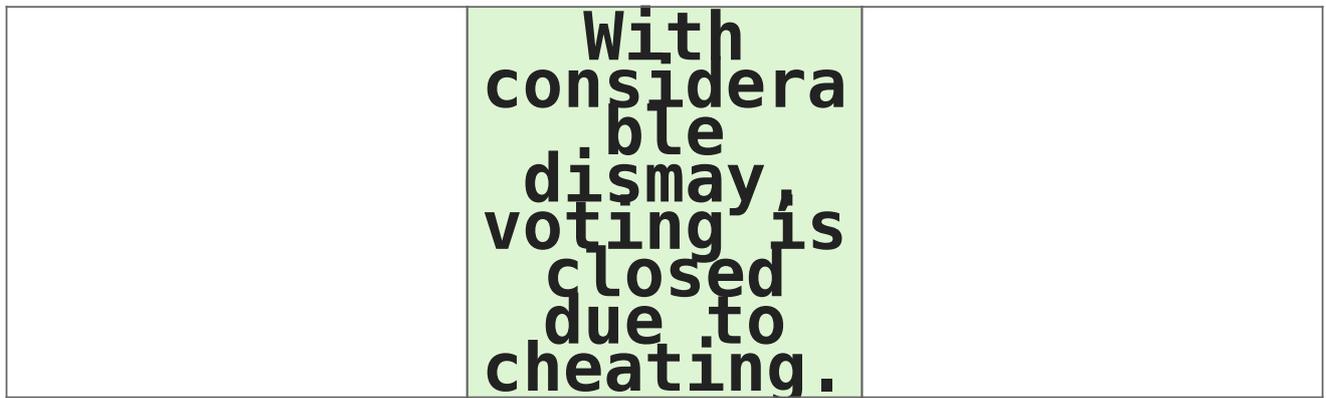
- **Novel Writing Secrets**—Huge course including step-by-step complete system from first idea through mailing the sold and completed manuscript, with every step in between—plus audio with transcripts, video demos, templates, and possibly a private members-only community for course takers to work through with each other
- **How to Think Sideways**—Again, some explanation necessary. My first editor, Toni Weiskopf, attributed the quality of my work and the success of my stories to my “twisty mind.” At the time, I shrugged it off with a comment that it was something anyone could do, and she vehemently disagreed. In the many years since, I've had plenty of time to consider that, as I've read and not finished hundreds of books that lacked any sort of twistiness, sideways thinking... It's a bit tough to explain, but you know it when you see it. Or don't. And I've come to the conclusion that she was sort of right, and so was I. Clearly thinking sideways is something most writers don't do, and in that regard she was very right.

But I still hold my ground that it's something anyone COULD do. This course would teach, through any means necessary and through every medium available, the skill to which I attribute the majority of fact that I have a career—my ability to think sideways.

- **Character Clinic Upgrade**—The book would stay the same, but the upgrade would add a Quick Start System, Character Sketcher, Timeline Tracker, and audio plus

transcript “Get Your Characters Talking To You” demo lesson

- **Learn to Write in a New Genre in One Month**—If you’re in the midlist, the ability to write what you love while jumping from genre to genre one step ahead of the Three Book Death Spiral is a critical skill, and one that’s kept me in print, and my family fed. The process of learning to write in a new genre at salable quality in a short enough time to not starve is intensive, focused, and scary to learn if you’re learning it on the edge of a cliff with bills pushing hard. Learn it early, and sleep better.



And on the e-zine... Yes, I’m going to go ahead and do at least one season. I figure it’ll take about six months to get things set up before I’m ready. The courses above will help fund the e-zine start-up. DO NOT SUBMIT STORIES YET.

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