

The Writer's Workshop



from Diana Scimone
www.peapodpublishing.com
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Welcome to the latest issue of **The Writer's Workshop**, an e-letter designed to help you write your book.

1. How to Write a Book: Looking for Criticism

Notice the subhead does not say, "Dealing with criticism." It says, "Looking for criticism." If you're a serious writer (and I know you are), you've hopefully gotten past the point of author's pride, which says that every word you write is so brilliant that no one dare touch it.

My very first editor taught me that (thanks, Dudley!). I was working in Washington, D.C., and our clients paid us to write what they needed; there wasn't much room for ego-based pride. We were proud of what we wrote, or we wouldn't have shown it to the client, but we did so knowing there would be changes—and that the client knew their business a lot better than we did. We might not have agreed with their critiques, but if we wanted the product to do what it was supposed to, we had to learn to accept criticism.

In fact, I've learned I actually have to *look* for it. (I'm not entirely there yet, but that's my goal.) I'm not suggesting that you show your book manuscript to everyone you run into on the bus or subway, but you should have a circle of trusted friends, colleagues, and other writers to whom you can show your latest chapter...and who will give you their honest reaction. You may not agree with everything they say, nor make every change they suggest, but they are your unpaid focus group; if they react that way to your manuscript, your other readers (who have paid to read your book), will too.

Here's critique-seeking advice from book-marketing expert Dan Poynter: "Smart nonfiction authors take each chapter of their nearly complete manuscript and send it off to at least four experts on that chapter's subject." You can read more at <http://www.parapublishing.com/sites/para/information/writing.cfm> (under "As you complete your manuscript"), including Dan's suggestions for how to approach the experts.

"Learning to write well is a lifelong process," says Laura Backes, in a recent issue of Children's Writing Update (subscribe free at www.write4kids.com), "and the writers who get published understand that each manuscript, whether it sells or not, teaches them something. They're not afraid to be critiqued or edited. They've put their heart into a book or article, and then removed

their ego. They understand that if their critique group or editor says a plot is too predictable, it's far better to chuck the storyline and start over than to fight to preserve a mediocre manuscript. And they're grateful for the input that saved them from dozens of rejection letters."

I agree.

2. Links of the Month: How to Publish

Many readers have asked me for direction on how to publish. While that's not the focus of this e-letter—because you can't publish what you haven't written—if you're ready to publish and don't know where to begin, here are some sources for good advice:

About.com (on fiction writing, but helpful advice whatever your genre):
<http://fictionwriting.about.com/od/thebusinessofwriting/index.htm?nl=1>

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators: www.scbwi.org

Writer's Digest magazine: www.writersdigest.com

Also, the February issue of **The Writer's Workshop** has links to lists of book publishers divided by genre (travel, children's, fiction, how-to, inspirational, etc.). Each publisher's website tells you what they're looking for, and how to submit manuscripts to them. (If you don't have the February issue, you can download it free at www.peapodpublishing.com.)

And last month's issue has information on how to find an agent.

3. Inspiration: Cranes and Eagles

The nest is gone. It had perched in a tree across the lake since the day I moved in, surviving four hurricanes in one summer and two the next.



If I were a bird, I wouldn't build a nest on a branch sticking out in mid-air over a lake—yet this precarious, three-foot-diameter nest not only survived, but thrived.

It outlived two other nests in the same tree—nests built in much more "secure" locations.

It birthed three families of sand cranes, which I've watched (and heard) grow from

babies to three-foot high monstrosities strutting around the lake.

I'd gotten so accustomed to seeing the nest that it became symbolic of my life—staying put through many a storm, not always in the most secure (to the human eye) circumstances, but relying on the One who created me to produce life in the midst of it all.

If you've read *Who Moved My Cheese?*, you know where this is going. One day I looked out the window, and the nest was gone. "My" nest. Whoops.



And just now—exactly now as I'm writing this—there's a bald eagle on the very same branch where "my" nest perched for nearly two years. He must have heard me grab my camera, because he flew away.

Actually, he didn't fly—because eagles don't fly. They soar. God gave them an ability to discern wind currents, and they stay put until the right breeze comes along. Then they just let go, soaring on the wind. It's the wind that carries them. In fact, they can lock their wings in place, and soar higher and higher on the currents.

While other birds are afraid of storms, eagles look for the storms because the wind forces them to soar higher and higher. Much higher than sand cranes could ever go, I might add.

It's easy to stay in the comfort zone of a nice soft nest, but God is always calling us higher. Sometimes He has to yank us out of our nest to do that, or remove the nest entirely, but He gives us this promise: "Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired; they will walk and not become weary" (Isaiah 40:31 NAS).

Are you ready to soar?

4. The Last Word

Do you need additional help writing your book? Diana offers personalized coaching to writers all over the world. If you've always wanted to write a book, but didn't know how, a 90-minute coaching session by phone or in person will give you the tools and direction you need. Diana's practical and encouraging style will help you finally write the book you've dreamed of writing. To set up a coaching session: diana@peapodpublishing.com.

Back issues of **The Writer's Workshop** are on www.peapodpublishing.com. The first seven issues (along with much more information) are available as an e-book called **How to Write a Book**. Just \$14.95, it's a great investment that will help you write the book you've always dreamed of writing.

The Writer's Workshop is edited by Diana Scimone, president of Peapod Publishing, Inc. Diana is a writer, editor, journalist, children's book author, and writer's coach. Her writing has taken her to more than 40 countries, including Sudan, China, India, Kenya, Singapore, Korea, Thailand, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere. Diana is author of **Adventures With PawPaw**, a series of children's books about a little dog who travels to a different country in each book, introducing young children to other countries and cultures (www.adventureswithpawpaw.com).

Diana is also founder and president of **PawPaw's Pals, Inc.**, an international relief agency helping children in disaster and crisis situations around the world. Donate to **PawPaw's Pals** at www.pawpawspals.org. **PawPaw's Pals** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and all donations are tax deductible.

Diana recently traveled to Thailand to research what **PawPaw's Pals** can do to help end the multibillion dollar child sexual trafficking industry. Children as young as five are bought and sold, not just in Thailand, but all over the world. As a result of that fact-finding trip, **PawPaw's Pals** is developing a child-trafficking awareness campaign—called "Not For Sale"—for Thai children, parents, schools, and the community. We'll write children's books, comic books, posters, curriculum, and other anti-trafficking awareness material. Once we test "Not For Sale" in Thailand, we'll make it available to other countries where child trafficking is also a crisis.

To receive updates each month from **PawPaw's Pals** and learn more about the "Not For Sale" child-trafficking awareness program, click on www.pawpawspals.org. If you'd like to contribute to this ongoing effort, you may make a secure donation on the website or by sending your check payable to **PawPaw's Pals, Inc.**, PO Box 952949, Lake Mary, Florida 32795-2949. **PawPaw's Pals, Inc.** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and your donation is tax deductible. Thank you for partnering with us.

Diana's itinerary:

September 29-October 10: Israel

November: California (exact dates to come)

If you live in any of these areas and would like to schedule a Writer's Workshop or personalized coaching session with Diana, please contact diana@peapodpublishing.com.

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