

# *How to Become a Published Writer-- A Mystery Unveiled!!!!*

© By Sherry Stacy

Hi, I'm Sherry Stacy, and I'm here to bring you a workshop on How to Become a Published Writer, A Mystery Unveiled.



Or how to go from Page One to The End and from The End to Published Book.

I was teaching a class of homeschool students an eight-week course on how to write a five-page essay with footnotes. One mom watched her 14-year-old son sit down, then turned to me and said, "I'm sorry."

I thought that was odd. Then I asked **my class** to write me a paragraph on what the students did last summer. The 14-year-old young man wrote some lines, not complete sentences. He had no idea of sentence or paragraph structure or basic grammar. I understood why his mom said what she said. **But I also appreciated her heart.** She was, in a way, pleading with me to do something at which I was skilled at doing, teaching children to write. I had eight weeks to teach this boy everything he needed to know about the English language. I took the challenge seriously.

Before they left the class, I asked each of them if they could **tell me** about one thing, one passion, they would love to do if they could. I bit my lip, trying not to laugh when that young man said all he wanted was his parents to let him drink energy drinks when they were all hunting as a family.

I asked him if he wanted to write about why energy drinks were good for you. He asked me wonderingly, "You mean I could?" I said yes, but he would have to do all the research to prove

to his parents; it was okay to drink it. He left there walking five feet in the air, thrilled to write. And yes, he wrote me a five-page essay, with footnotes at the end of that eight weeks about why he decided that he shouldn't drink energy drinks. Smile, his momma thanked me for that, but I learned that **when we write about something, we are passionate about, it is never hard.**

The question I am asked frequently as a writer, how can you **get published?**

The first question should be, why write? What is your *why* for Writing? **Is it to get published and make a bunch of money?** Of course not, you say. Methinks you might be fibbing a little. Of course, you want to write and wouldn't it be nice to earn money at it? But if that is the only reason you write, soon you will find the truth that very few writers make a living writing. We can make some income writing, and that is always exciting.



Do you have a “why” you write? You will need one if you want to go from an unpublished passionate writer to a published writer because the writing journey is not an easy one.

I suppose many writers and writing coaches have an outline to becoming a published writer. And looking back on my journey, **I know that specific steps helped me to accomplish that goal.**

**There are Five P's about writing I will talk about. I hope this list will help you remember as you listen.**

- **Passion and Purpose** (Our “why” for Writing.) If you have a passion, use it to get you through the hard work of writing. But ask yourself before you dive into spending a year over a novel or a nonfiction book, who will read this? Why would anyone want to know what you have to say? Readers are your friends!
- **Plan and Process: Timeline to Completion, Instruction in the Craft of Writing.** There is no best course out there on becoming a writer, but there is a lot of resources that you can use to teach yourself good writing. We will talk about them.
- **Proof- How important is editing?**
- **Publish (Indie publishing or Traditional.** How to choose which is best for you.)
- **Paycheck---**Yes, you can get a paycheck, but writing usually produces an income, not a living. How does that work on Amazon and in article writing?

What is your passion?

Maybe you have heard of Mike Rowe, famous for TV shows *Dirty Jobs* and *Somebody's Got to Do It*, or his podcast *The Way I Heard It*, that has two million listeners.

**Mike Rowe said, “I think Paul Harvey was the first one to successfully combine biography with mystery. He called his broadcast “The Rest of the Story,” and once you started listening to one, there was simply no way you could turn the radio off before you heard him say, “And now you know the rest of the story!”**

**Mike Rowe speaking of his podcast, says, “The podcast bills itself as “a series of short mysteries for the curious mind with a short attention span. In each episode, I deftly weave a highly interesting narrative in a short period of about five minutes. These captivating stories about notable figures, pop culture, and history have attracted a dedicated following.”**

Why does Mike Rowe’s **message resonate** with so many? Because we all love to hear a good story, and in nonfiction, we like to listen to a true story that inspires.

Do you have a writer in your family? Someone like Christopher Paolini, a homeschooler who at 19 years old wrote *Eragon*, a fantasy about a dragon that was on the NY Times Children’s Books Bestseller’s list? Well, maybe you don’t have a writer like that *yet*, but perhaps as a homeschool mom, you want to help your child to find their writer’s voice and help them to find a way to publish their stories. When you read something written by your child, does it resonate so much with you that you wish that piece of writing could be published? How does the PATH TO PUBLICATION work? Maybe you have a passion for writing, and this will help you too.

What makes you as a homeschooling parent, the best person to guide your child’s work to publication? It’s the same motivation that guides you now. **You want your child to step over that threshold of launched into the world with the best tools possible to achieve success.** How we each measure success is different. I have four children. Each of them is successful in life, each in different ways. Two of my adult children are in the life-saving business. One is a pastor, and one is a fireman! IF you could help your child achieve some success as a writer, how does that work? Buckle up. I’m going to give you a few tools that can help you on that pathway to publication.

“New York Times Bestselling author Jerry B. Jenkins’s **first** book was about a judge who tries a man for a murder that the **judge committed.**” Just that sentence makes me want to read that book. It implies suspense and intrigue. We need to have a reason for readers to want to read a book.

How do we go from Page One to The End? First, you need a place to write. Does it look like this?



Or this?



Or will a private corner do?

Find a place to write, and make it your writing space.

Mr. Cole was my beginning journalism teacher in college. We were required to write 60 lines of type each week, or we got an “F” for that week. And then he would take those 60 lines and ridicule them in front of the class. We were terrified of him. Halfway thru the semester, he asked us what we thought of him. We were all too scared to say. **He said you might not like me, but you will never leave my class thinking you could write if you can’t.** You all, who haven’t dropped my class? You MIGHT have potential.” We had to be passionate about learning *how to* write to survive Mr. Cole. The only “A” I ever got from him was when I interviewed the janitor in a building that was near Fraternity Row. They used more toilet paper in that building than any building on campus because the fraternities and sororities would steal toilet paper out of the building. I “wiped up,” Mr. Cole said on high grades for that week.

Mr. Cole required us to **WRITE every week**. So, set up a schedule when you will write. For example, a novel is usually 80,000 words. If you wrote 1000 words a day, you would complete a novel in 80 days. But most people don’t work on the weekends unless, of course, you have a job. I usually write about 1,500-2,000 words in a four-hour time frame. If I wrote 2,000 words a day, say in a four-day week, it would take me ten weeks if I was faithful every day to write an eighty-thousand-word novel. But I don’t always write 2,000 words. It is essential to set realistic goals. If you want to write a book, set a “due date” that is realistic to your writing pace. Recognize there are Holidays, family vacations, illness, and time you will need to set back and evaluate, edit what you have written. **Write down how many hours a week you will write. Put it on your calendar. Stick to the Plan and the Place.**

**Process and Plan** go together. Every story has a beginning. Where do we begin? Are you writing fiction? Are you writing nonfiction or magazine articles? Maybe you have ideas for both. Recognize you need to go with the project you feel most passionate about.

Nonfiction? Do you want to tell people how to raise Rabbits? How to run a co-op? The best meal plan for homeschool families? I have a few horror stories on that, so you can always ask me about that. My best advice, don't write about that!

In fiction novels, we often begin by using **a technique called in media res**. The writepractice.com defines this as:

**“In medias res is a Latin phrase meaning “in the midst of things,” and true enough, a work that starts in medias res kicks off somewhere in the middle of the plot. When the story opens, the characters may be running from a dragon or sitting in the principal’s office after a prank gone wrong, or bailing water out of a flooding dinghy. I used to read Sue Grafton’s alphabet series for mystery. One book started, “Of the two dead men in the morgue, I only knew one.” A powerful beginning statement that makes you want to know how she knew the one.**

Do you have an idea that makes your friends lean in when you talk about it, or causes people to move away politely? Think of the best-selling stories you have read. Hunger Games? Any Marvel stories in graphic novels? What makes you want to reach for that book? How do you communicate that in a way that makes readers grab for that book? Write down some ideas of books you liked reading, and maybe **some ideas of books you would like to write**.

**First: TIPS ON PROCESS:** Read ten good books on the craft of writing. Don't stress; I will give you a list in a minute.

Do you want to write a suspense thriller novel? A fantasy along the lines of R. R. Tolkien? Or C.S. Lewis? A graphic novel? First, learn something about the craft of writing.

What is the **PROCESS** of learning writing? I took six months to go through a course by NYT bestselling author Jerry Jenkins, called Your Novel Blueprint, a webinar-based program to go from page one to The End. Jerry Jenkins, taught newbie writers the process of writing, the pitfalls to avoid, and the necessary techniques known to experienced writers. It was invaluable.

So how can you begin your journey or process? Here is the first tip that is easy and very helpful in writing. Make a list of your ten most favorite books and re-read the first ten pages of each of them. Sometimes you can go online on Amazon and do the “Look Inside” feature. **What was the “hook” that made you read more?** Is there an author you like? What makes you want to keep reading? Sometimes it's a character. When I think of Mark Twain, I remember his unforgettable character, Huckleberry Finn. In R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, we love Frodo Baggins. The most exceptional character of all time, we sometimes think of him as a real person, Sherlock Holmes, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Maybe it was the story that hooked you, like The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis, one of the top ten bestselling books of all time.

In the first ten pages of a novel, there is usually the “Terrible Trouble” that the main character finds themselves thrust into. That terrible trouble continues to get worse and worse the whole book until often there is no hope. Then suddenly there this surprising win-win climax where the main character triumphs over the evil person or the horrible circumstances, and there is the classic “**good ending.**”

I went to Barnes and Noble. I grabbed the top TEN books off the New York Times best-selling list and read the first ten pages in each book. They caught my attention right away. I like Thrillers, which is what I write.

**What is a genre? Webster’s defines it as:**

**“A category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.”**

**Wikipedia (OKAY BUT WE ALL USE Wikipedia, yes, you do!) says this about the genre,**

**“Genres form by conventions that change over time as cultures invent new genres and discontinue the use of old ones.”**

An excellent example of that is the Graphic Novel. In my day, I would have called that a comic book. My twenty-something son looks at me in horror when I say that. I am NOT TRENDING when I say such things. However, those comic books told a story, stories that sold in the millions, and later became colossal blockbuster movies and Netflix series under the label of Marvel.

Most fiction genres are familiar to us because they are the genres of the books we like to read. I read Suspense and Thriller novels. My first novel is a thriller. *Deadly Pursuer*. What are some common fiction genres? Fantasy, Science Fiction, Thriller, Mystery, Western, Romance, Horror, Adventure.

For the first half of my life, I wrote non-fiction. I loved to write articles about meaningful stories in my life, funny stories about kids. I had a radio show for six years, and it was called Recipes for Life. I told stories about my kids, life and in every way tried to encourage my audience to laugh and think, not always in that order.

One day my then four-year-old son Sam was playing with some tennis balls. He rounded them all up and then **promptly laid on them.**

“What ya doing, Sam?” I asked, puzzled.

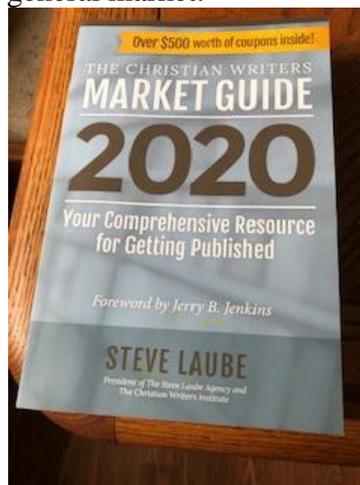
“I’m hatching Mom. I’m hatching.”

So, my question to you all is, **what are you hatching?** The comic books of my day became the blockbuster movies like Spiderman and the Netflix series like Daredevil. Will you hatch an idea like that?

Do you have a fantastic story idea? Every story has to have an interest-catching idea.

I had never written a book before. I wanted to, but I needed instruction. So, I took an online course from New York Times Best Selling author Jerry B. Jenkins. I had read many of Jerry's books and even read his series of sports fiction for kids to my son's when they were growing up. So, when I heard about Jerry's course, *Your Novel Blueprint*, I was excited about it. It was a reasonable price for a lifetime of access, fifty-plus webinars on how to write a book. I loved it. I learned from it. AND it included a private Facebook page where we could interact with Jerry himself, and he would occasionally edit work we had submitted on the page, and other writers in the group could also offer advice and edit. It was a learning journey that helped me complete my book.

I also needed to remember that authors need a platform, a way to show they have published and are serious about writing. So, I bought an essential book for me. I purchased *The Christian Writers Market Guide* by Steve Laube. I write for the inspirational market, and there is also a Writers Market that is for the general market.



This book gives so much help for any writer, where you can find markets to sell your work, how you can enter and find writing contests, where you can find agents. Like the cover says, a comprehensive resource for getting published. I found a market for a story that I wanted to write about a little girl from my Sunday School teaching years. I wrote the article and sold the piece to a magazine (*LIVE*) that I had researched in *The Christian Writers Market Guide*. Next, I entered a Writing Contest that I also found in the Guide. This article is now a finalist in the **2020 Blue Ridge Mountain Christian Writers Conference Published Article Contest**. If you would like to read, the article is on my website, and I will give you that address in a minute. I also entered my book in the American Christian Fiction Writer's National Genesis Contest and was a semi-finalist in the contest. The great thing about writing contests is the judges will give you some pointers on your writing and how to make it stronger or better. And if you place, you begin to build your platform of being an award-winning author.



Next, I used the book to look up Writing Conferences. Every good writer needs to learn more about writing craft. A writing conference can be expensive, but a great place to network with writers, agents, listen to informative workshops on becoming a better writer.

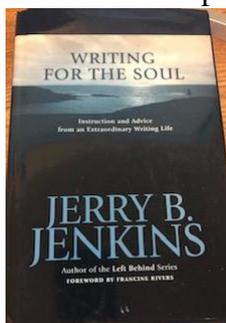
You can listen to workshops given at writer's conferences for a fraction of the cost of attending a conference. The Christian Writers Institute has recorded workshops that previously presented at writer's conferences for a very reasonable price, some as low as ten dollars. This is a great way to listen to excellent instruction on writing while you are doing dishes or chores or exercising.

Google christianwritersinstitute.com. They have both a fiction and a non-fiction bundle of classes. Additionally, Jerry Jenkins Writer's Guild is a great place to find the same kind of writing instruction. You can join for six months or a year and see many different types of writing instruction by famous authors and mentors. However, if your budget is slim for getting training to become a writer, JerryJenkins.com and stevelaube.com has a lot of free resources and articles.

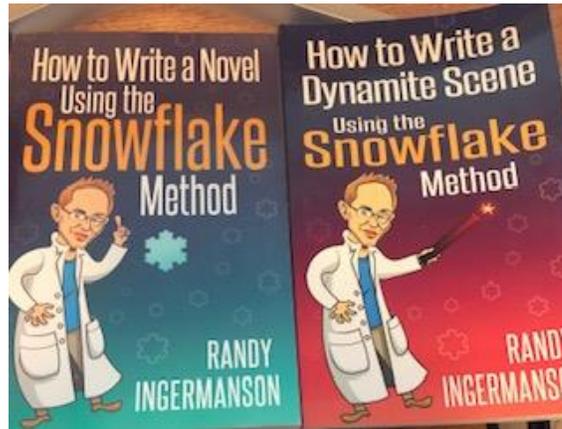
Okay, I have given you an idea you need to have a Passion and a working Plan to set aside writing time.

The **Process** of writing often requires some training to write in a professional style. I have listed some places to start. If you can't afford much, the library is always the friend of the homeschool mom and anyone. So, check out some of the books that I list here as those which have helped me the most:

1. A book that inspired me to write is by Jerry B Jenkins, called *Writing for the Soul*.

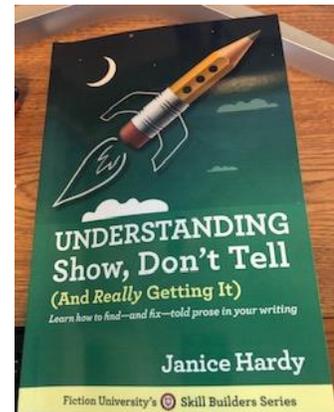


2. *How to Write a Novel Using the Snowflake Method* by Randy Ingermanson. An easy and fun read, beneficial. He also has a book, *How to Write a Dynamite Scene*, which is a



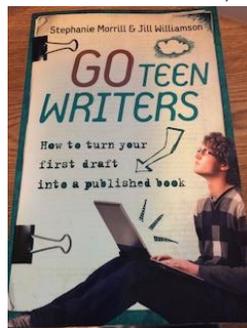
must-read.

3. *Understanding Show, Don't Tell (And Really Getting It)* by Janice Hardy. When we tell the reader our writing, IT is boring. Here's an example. "John was angry about getting fired. He yelled at his wife, his kids, and even the neighbors." But what about this? "John slammed the door behind him. Who did that stuffed shirt think he was anyway? Fire *him*? That cesspool of an office would wither and die without him. Which



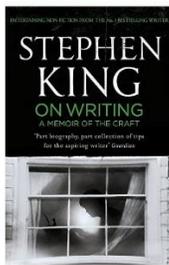
paragraph makes you want to keep reading? Show, don't tell.

4. A great book I found at a writer's conference was *Go Teen Writers, How to Turn Your First Draft into a Published Book* by Stephanie Morrill and Jill Williamson. If you have a writing teen, this is an excellent book on craft, written by young women who did write

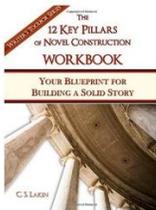


a book and market it.

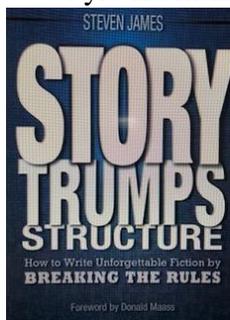
5. Almost always, Stephen King's book *On Writing* tells how he became the writer we know today. A bit dated but always listed as a top resource for writers of fiction.



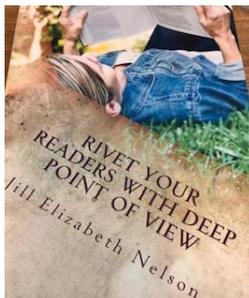
6. Anything by C.S. Lakin. She has a series of books called Writer's Toolbox Series. This one is helpful. *The Twelve Key Pillars of Novel Construction*. She has eight in this series, and many can be found free on Kindle Unlimited.



7. *Story Trumps Structure, How to Write Unforgettable Fiction*, by Steven James. I love most things by Steven James and have taken a workshop on writing suspense by him. I do like his effortless writing style that makes points that stay with you.



8. *Rivet Your Readers With Deep Point of View* (Only 61 pages, fast read.) by Jill Elizabeth Nelson



9. This is not a book, but a website, [JaneFriedman.com](http://JaneFriedman.com). She has lots of resources. Her book, *The Business of Being a Writer*, is a great resource. Her blog is free, and she also

is co-founder of the Hot Sheet, a paid publication for writers that give many insights into the publishing industry. This is a book that can be found in your friendly local library. Remember, the library has also made available magazines on writing, an excellent free tool.

10. Sign up for several blogs. Stevelaube.com is a good one. Steve is often listed in the top 100 agents in the nation. His website is full of helpful blog articles. Another useful web site is HelpingWritersBecomeAuthors.com by K. M. Weiland.

**What kind of writer are you a “write by the seat of your pants,” writer?” We call that a pantser, that would be me.**

**Or are you a detailed outliner? Outline every chapter and scene. No wrong or right, just whatever you are comfortable with, and maybe a little of each.**

NOW you’ve DONE IT! You had a great idea, you studied writing, you looked to see what books were the best selling, and you wrote a book!

### **Now What?**

Edit. All writing is re-writing. You have the first draft. Now you need to read it through and clean up that first draft until it’s polished like gold. You’ll need some tools that a professional writer uses. The best tool you can buy is a grammar or writing program that helps clean up your writing mistakes in grammar and spelling. I use Grammarly. It is invaluable. Several of my writing mentors and friends recommend Pro Writing Aid. Both programs are writing editors that will be the first line to improve your writing. Not only do they help in grammar and spelling, but they often point out overused words and suggest similar words. I would not write without these excellent tools.

Next, many writers invest in an editor to go over the manuscript and find errors in your writing structure or do more “copy editing” that the electronic tools do. I would say, if you can’t afford an editor and they can be up to \$3,000, join a critique writers’ group. Here you can offer to read other writer’s work and trade editing. While you may not think you have something to offer, you will find that you do. Helping other writers is the best way to help yourself. Make sure you can receive criticism of your work. Some writers don’t understand the way to become an excellent writer is to see your work as others see it. Sometimes you don’t need to change what you have written. Sometimes it’s vital that you do. Just thank those who offer a good critique and learn as much as you can from it.

So, if you do select an editor, shop around for a good one. If you aren’t sure by their profile, see picture below (smile) be sure and use a reference to find one. The Christian Market Guide lists some in the Support for Writers section. Also, Reedsy.com is a writer’s online clearinghouse that you can search for reviews and find an experienced person.



Typical Editor...

Once you have improved your work as much as you can, select some “beta” readers. Those folks, ideally who are your writing friends, or people who love to read your genre, and ask them to read your book and offer their comments. Was it a good read? Did you have any questions? What did you like the best or the least? Would you buy the book? Would you recommend the book? Come up with a list of questions you would like them to answer. Use their suggestions! Good readers always have an idea of what makes a book a good read.

What have you learned in this process of writing?

NOW, are you finally ready to publish?

A few things that at this point, you need to keep in mind. Do you have a website? Many people do not find setting up a website difficult. I went with someone who was good at web design and fit in my budget. I liked her design. **You can check it out at [sastacy.com](http://sastacy.com).**

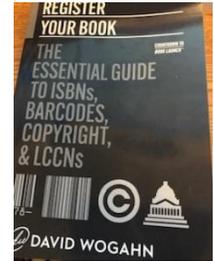
Two ways to publish. Traditional publishing where you go to writer’s conferences and get appointments to see agents, and pitch your book to them or one sheet to them. A “one sheet” is a page with all the pertinent parts of your book, Title, series, your author bio, and a short back cover copy of your book. If you get an agent, your agent pitches your book to publishing houses. It’s a long process because many agents already have a full client load in their agencies. This makes it challenging to find one, and if you do, with the traditional publishing market production it’s hard to find a publishing house that will take on a debut author. Not impossible, but hard.

So, with that in mind, I took a course from Indie Publishing guru Mark Dawson called Self-Publishing 101.

Self Publishing 101 is an extensive course with everything you need to know from the moment you type THE END on your manuscript. It's a straightforward, easy-to-follow guide that will take all the guesswork out of how to publish your book and to get your indie author career off to the best possible start. (Suitable for beginner to intermediate levels, fiction, and non-fiction.)

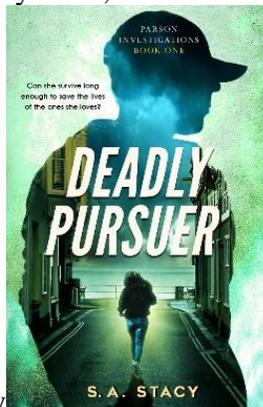
Mark Dawson has a proven track record being a best-selling author on Amazon and an Indie (independently published) publisher of over 25 books.

If you decide on Indie Publishing, I also purchased three books in a series that I would highly suggest, as they are a cheap Kindle buy. Countdown to Book Launch by David Wogahn. I especially recommend “*Register Your Book, The Essential Guide to ISBNs, Barcodes, Copyright, and LCCNs.*” Here when you have specific questions, it’s always good to join a Facebook page group where you can post a quick question and often find another writer who can answer it. I like Clean Indie Reads, Writing Gals, and 20Booksto50K. Many writers there have gone the Indie publishing route and will offer help and advice just when you need it.



I recommend you do purchase your ISBNs from Bowker and apply for your Library of Congress number, all good things to identify your book as belonging to you, that final step after you publish to purchase copyright. The copyright is usually only about \$45. Also, if you do not know how to format a book to be on Kindle (Mobi format) or formatted for a paperback for Print on Demand, then you will need to hire a formatter. I hired one for around \$150 for both formats from Reedsy.com.

Also, you will need to do the **Most Important Thing, is find a good book cover designer.** Expect to have a designing time where that person submits to you some ideas, and you work with them to produce a cover which may not be all that is in your head, but one you like and of which you are proud. I paid about \$1,000 for this service. You CAN go much cheaper. Shop around for that fits your budget. Here is my book, now available on Amazon.



Deadly Pursuer by S. A. Stacy

The Back-Cover Blurb says:  
Working undercover, Seattle private investigator Katie Parson stumbles into the middle of a horrific scene that makes her the next target of an international assassin. A powerful storm of fear shadows her as Katie continues to work her cases. Searching for a missing woman and trying to solve a hundred-year-old mystery puts food on her table. But while she seeks answers, someone stalks her.

Her investigative skills keep her one step ahead in the heart-stopping pursuit. She finds help from a rival PI, Dan Beck, an ex-Army Ranger. Despite Dan's irritating ways, he's the kind of dangerous man you want on your side. Hunted, Katie discovers her old friend, the President of the United States, is also in mortal peril. Can she and Dan beat impossible odds to save those closest to them? On the run for her life, God live-streams His faithfulness into the most desperate terror Katie has ever known. It can be found at this link <https://t.co/CO12Q17r2R?amp=1>

Or [amazon.com/author/sastacy](https://www.amazon.com/author/sastacy)

Writers write what we know about, and we do research too. I researched an unsolved crime that happened in my community almost a hundred years ago. I also homeschooled for 17 years. So, in the middle of this book, I took this mystery, fictionalized it, and now a bunch of homeschoolers studying history are on the case to solve a historical mystery and find millions of dollars? Mum, you will have to read the book to find out what happened!

Go forth, publish, and then wait for a paycheck. If you are looking to sell an article, check with your Writer's Market to see how they pay. Some publishers pay WHEN the article is published, which could be a year. Some pay on acceptance, which is when they tell you they want to purchase.

If you are an indie publisher, Amazon sets out their royalty payment plan based on each book sold, around 70%, I believe of a Kindle book price. At 5.99, my kindle on Amazon means I make about \$4 a book. To make up all my production costs, I would need to make about \$2,000 to break even. I need about 500 kindle books to sell or about that many paperbacks to see. Homeschool moms, there is MATH HERE!

**Your Passion for writing will see you through the journey.**

**You need to have a Plan and develop a Process for learning the craft of writing**

**Proof or Editing is vital to a professional piece of writing**

**Publish, whether to seek traditional publishing or to Independently publish your work**

**Paycheck, the joy of that first paycheck that no matter how small, is such a joy. We will not often make a living writing, but the fact that sometimes we are paid to do what we love is fantastic.**

I hope I have given you a taste of the journey of writing, as I have tried to bundle three years of my writing journey into this short workshop. My goal was to shorten your adventure by giving you tips. I hope I have encouraged you to begin, and if you have comments, please email me at [sherryastacy@gmail.com](mailto:sherryastacy@gmail.com) Please reference in the subject line the workshop How to Become a Published Writer—A Mystery Revealed. Writers, go forth, and Write! Smile, Sherry Stacy.

