

The Writer Within – Embolden Your Writer with a Plan

Article One: Prepare Your Writer’s Toolbox

By Janice Alonso

I am the author of over 200 published short stories and articles and my work has appeared in anthologies, periodicals, online magazines, websites, and eBooks. In the last four months I’ve had four stories/articles published, five accepted and scheduled for publication later this year, and these numbers do not include the four columns that were included on the Georgia Writers Association website and the ten I have roughed out for the next five months. I also have several pieces “out there” looking for a home, and more stories in various stages of the creative process, the process that allows me to write continuously and to be published frequently. In this second series, I will lay out this plan for you.

None of these stories developed by chance or were published by accident. The reason these pieces have gained lives of their own is because I’ve equipped my writer within with a plan to keep her working and productive. I have created a revolving door of sorts that allows her to be creative and have tangible resources at her fingertips at the same time. I will share this plan with you and hope it will benefit your writer within as well.

The first set of articles in The Writer Within series was “What Kind of Writer Are You?” If you have not read these articles and followed each article’s suggested step, I recommend you do so before you begin the second series. In the first series you became familiar with who you are as a writer and how to build a partnership with this creative soul residing inside you desiring the opportunity to be set free.

After much thought, I decided to title series two “Embolden Your Writer with a Plan.” After years of writing and being published, I believe a good story does not spring full-blown from my mind through my fingertips, and magically appear on my computer screen. Many writers say it does happen for them, but in my experience this has not been the case. For the majority of my work there has been a conscious and deliberate plan at the heart and for the entirety of the creative process. I should mention here, that this plan has nothing to do with the actual writing process: the plan simply structures my writing

life. This plan keeps me on track with the direction in which my writing should proceed. I want to make two points about this plan.

First, the plan I employ is the same for every piece I write. I've been published in the following categories: devotionals, essays, literary short stories, mystery short stories, sci-fi short stories, Christian short stories, children's short stories (ages 4-6 and ages 7-10) personal experience pieces, instructional pieces, and memoirs. I've listed all these examples *not* to try to impress you with my background but to illustrate the plan's versatility and how it has worked for each of the above genres. Whatever you desire to create, your writer within can use this plan for his/her specific needs and modify to suit individual purposes.

Second, adhering to this plan will not hamper your free spirit and creativity. The structure and routine it brings leaves the door wide open for what you write to blossom and grow into any direction you select. In fact, I believe this plan fires up your imagination and in turn energizes your writer within.

This is my plan. I divide my writing time into four basic parts: idea-gathering, researching, "actual" writing, and organizing. Each story I produce goes through all four stages, and all of the stories pass through each stage several times. Each passage is vital and provides small steps toward building that completed manuscript. What helps me stay on task is that the plan provides stability while at the same time providing flexibility for my schedule and "writing moods." There are days when my writer can't seem to get off page one, so rather than waste the thirty minutes I have to write, I'll turn to another segment, such as researching. On the other hand, I'll have a day where my fingers can't keep up with my mind-flow so I'll forfeit what might have been an organizing session to capture the story that is unfolding.

In this second set of columns we will look at each specific area of the plan, examine what it means, and learn how you can teach your writer within to use it to his/her purpose.

Step One: Reread series one