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Adelle Bradford— www.AdelleBradford.org
Adrian Ludens— www.myspace.com/adrianludens
Brenda Wooley— www.onekentuckywriter.blogspot.com
Byron D. Howell— www.freeewebs.com/persistentmirage
C. Wolf Forrest— www.cwforrest.org
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Colin Meldrum— www.colinmeldrum.com
Daniel Gallik— www.danielgallik.com
Daniel Wilcox—<http://seaquaker.com/poetry>
David James— www.oaklandcc.edu/or-eng/dlames/djhome.htm
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Eva Marie Ann Dunlap— www.apoeticjourney.com
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F. William Broome— www.fwilliambroomewriter.com
Janet Butler— www.janetleebutler.com
Jason Ericson— www.jasonericson.blogspot.com
Kerry William Parsons— www.taskstream.com/ts/parsons13/kwp.html
Kiki Stamatiou— blog.iwr.co.uk/2006/11/web_20_nic_newm.html
Kimberly D. Robinson— <http://jpicforum.info/>
Lyn Lifshin— www.LynLifshin.com
Marcia Miller-Twiford— http://thewritingforum.net/html/newest_submissions_and_links.html
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Shawn Nacona Stroud— www.authorsden.com/shawnstroud
Susan J. Ashdown— www.splash-of-ink.co.uk
Shawn Luke— www3.telus.net/public/smluke
Valerie Bean— www.valeriebeanonline.com
Virginia Emrick— www.virginiaemrick.com
Wendy Brown-Baez— www.wendybrownbaez.com

Working Backwards Moves Writing Forward —Valerie Bean

Like many creative writing hobbyists, too often I have to put personal projects on hold in favour of paid work. For me, paid work means professional writing assignments.

It's always a joy to return to my pet projects after a three or six month contract, but getting back in the swing of creative writing after months of drafting business documents sometimes takes a good deal of effort. And to make sure they don't languish on the side for months, I recently discovered a trick in my professional writing life that transfers nicely to my sideline.

Last month, with a publisher's deadline safely in the distance, I became stymied by a case of irrational copy jitters. For whatever reason, in the final draft stage I began to struggle; I couldn't complete the article. Since much of my writing has moveable deadlines, I panicked. I began looking in all directions for help finding solace in a trusted technique - procrastination.

After hours of Internet surfing, I gathered my senses. Reaching for something else to take my mind off my writing troubles, I turned to an old friend.

When in need of a creative boost, I usually re-read passages from Julia Cameron's books on my bookshelf. I'll grab *The Artist's Way*, *Right to Write*, *Vein of Gold*, or *Walking in this World* for inspiration. And for a giggle, I'll flip through *How to Avoid Making Good Art* - a book filled with 125 illustrated avoidance facts/excuses.

This time around, though, I needed something new, something different, so I hopped back online and ordered her latest book - *Letters to an Artist*. The deadline loomed, but two days later my saving grace arrived by courier.

Or, so I thought.

From the get-go, I had a hard time getting into the book. Usually, the author's engaging writing style and barebones understanding of the artist - be it writer, sculptor, painter, or quilter - buoys me, gets me working again, but not this time. There was a thread of similarity to her previous books that made most of what I read seem reshaped.

My creative slump persisted.

Nevertheless, I continued to read, if only because I didn't want to return to work. I slogged through three quarters of the book, until I found a nugget to push me forward "...all artists are both easily encouraged and easily discouraged."

Within a few pages (at 131/163), my true test of reading value: I reached for my yellow highlighter.

Here's my turning point, I thought, my "light bulb" moment: "If I want something completed in one year, what must then be done by nine months, six months, three months, one month, one week, today?" counselled Cameron.

The concept of working timelines in reverse seemed so uncomplicated it alarmed me. Could I really meet deadlines by counting in terms of daily production?

Professional writers are used to juggling many projects at once while working toward a deadline, but backtracking to daily efforts seemed, well, backwards.

What the heck, I thought, something needs to pull me out of my saggy state and push me towards my deadline, now only a week away.

What have I got to lose?

I looked at my to-do list -an overdue class assignment, daily blogs, two half-finished freelance articles and query letters, novella revisions, résumé updates, novella manuscript in various stages of editorial requirement - and calculated daily production.

C'mon folks, what're ya waiting for? Order your print copies online of this and/or past issues of the Mississippi Crow magazine for family and friends at:

<http://stores.lulu.com/RiverMuse>



All contributors to the Mississippi Crow Magazine will receive as payment, an e-book copy of the issue in which their work appears and a free listing of their website as space allows.

Broken down to each work's simplest terms, I was no longer overwhelmed, but motivated to return to the keyboard.

With a daily to-do list in front of me, I had enough time for paying gigs as well as my personal creative writing projects. In addition, I'd built in some downtime, something I usually overlook until I feel overworked bringing production to a standstill.

I turned the assignment in on time and returned to my other writing projects.

By paying attention to daily work, I focussed on completion of small tasks, rather than on a looming deadline somewhere in the future.

I turned my to-do list, into a "ta-dah" list building an impressive list of finished work: The articles were published, the query letters mailed; I submitted my class coursework early, wrote and published two additional assigned articles and shipped off my novella to an editor while continuing with daily blogs. I even managed to write content for my new website.

There were other writing activities, but I can't recall them; I'm well into my current daily yield and now I can cross this article off the list! ●

Writing to Live, Living to Write —J. Williams

What is writing? Well, that's a complicated question. Writing is meticulous, sometimes stressful, and always eventful. It is hardly simple and very challenging. Writing is everything to some and nothing to many. Writing is physical creativity rolled up into a ball of cosmic questions desiring to be answered, understood, perfected and hopefully, appreciated. Writing is the art of finding the universal in the ordinary, every-day things of life.

Writing, in book form is now considered by some to be a dying form. Writers were doomed to be as outdated as video cassette recorders. Writing is trickery. Writers have an obligation to their readers to captivate from start to finish, front to back, without fail. It's trickery but not impossible trickery. While writing in book form may be dying, writing online, such as blogs or the like have breathed new life into the written word. Thanks to the invention and development of the internet, writing is evolving everyday, endlessly.

Writers are always competing. We *must* continue to weave our way through the daily advances of the Internet and adapt to a whole new way of thinking, which leads to a new way of writing. We *must* adjust ourselves to the ever-changing expectations of the public.

Blogs have resuscitated the writing world. Dare I say: "it is one of the main factors in the revival of writing." Contrary to popular belief, writing is far from simple. Anyone can throw words together and call it a piece of writing. But it is us, the true students of this wonderfully creative art form that realize, without prejudice, that writing takes days, weeks, months and, in many cases, years to perfect to even a mediocre level at best—if we're lucky.

Some of us write for many reasons such as insomnia, boredom, fear, excitement, sadness, happiness, and the list goes on and on and on. We writers have to cope on a daily basis with the fact that some people take us for granted as useless artists holding on to a dead pastime. To these people, I remind them that their favorite movie, song, television show (reality shows included) and radio shows have one thing in common; they are the creation of writers.

While it is the stars who receive all the glory, it is the writers who do all the work within the shadows, behind the scenes. Writing isn't, nor should it be, a task, chore, assignment or duty. Writing is a way of life! Writers *do not* have the ability to turn off their creative minds. If we had that ability, we'd probably use it from time to time just to sleep through the night. But just as with most addictions, good

or bad, we writers would definitely run back like a moth to a flame. Writing demands your undivided attention; it demands to be heard. Writing is a passion and desire not to be taken lightly. Writing is a need and a release. Writing needs our support to stay alive and remain strong.

Before the tremendous success of the Harry Potter series, it had been a long time since writers have been spotlighted and books actually read out of joy and not necessity for a passing grade or a promotion. We writers are ready for our resurgence. We are ready to once again answer the question: "why do you write?"

Why? Because we love the written word and the process it takes to form a story that is compelling and interesting. We are writers because we love to create worlds of our own devising, to give life to characters we create, to play god. ●

Michael Lee Johnson's first chapbook of poems and prose is available for preview and download at:
<http://www.lulu.com/content/936633>
"The Lost American: A Tender Touch & A Shade Of Blue"

Repetition Insults Your Reader —Mary Deal

When descriptive words are used repetitively in writing, it makes the reader wonder why they have to be told something they've already learned earlier in the story. Repetition can kill your reader's interest.

On Page 2 of my new novel, *River Bones*, the reader learns that Sara, the protagonist, is blonde when the real estate salesman describes her to someone else:

"Some middle-aged blonde woman—a real looker out of Puerto Rico—just bought that damnable eyesore down along the river."

On Page 9 I say, "The breeze whipped her hair across her face and wrapped it around her neck."

I had originally written that sentence like this:

"The breeze whipped her long blonde hair across her face and wrapped it around her neck."

Because I mentioned Sara's hair color on Page 2, no need exists to mention the color again anywhere else in the book, with rare exceptions, of course.

Notice, too, her hair length was not mentioned on Page 2, but on Page 9 if her hair is long enough to whip across her face and around her neck, no need exists for the word "long" to describe it. Surely from reading that one corrected sentence, a reader knows Sara's hair is not cropped off at the nape of her neck.

The word "long" was not needed due to the description of how the hair reacted in the wind.

To further prove the point, read the sentence from Page 2 with the correct sentence from Page 9. Then go back and read the sentence from Page 2 with the *incorrect* sentence from Page 9.

Analyze your sentences for superfluous words. Cut ruthlessly, or improve the action in your sentence to show what you mean. Your readers will love you for it. ●

