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March 2025

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- **OUTLIERS Publishing**
- **NEW COLUMN-Psychology & Writing**
- **NEW COLUMN-Social Media Tips For Writers**
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***Why You'll Love Our
Online Ongoing Writers
Conference Subscription***

Outliers Online Ongoing Writers Conference

What's Included:

- **Two Live, Interactive Classes per Month:** Led by bestselling authors and experts, delivered directly to your home via Zoom.
- **Recorded Replays:** Access any missed classes at your convenience.
- **Two Free Writing Workbooks:** Step-by-step guides for both fiction and nonfiction.

**Start your writing journey
today!**

Annual
Subscription (Best
Bargain): \$900/year





Compare the benefits of attending two classes per month versus a three-to-four-day conference:

Two Classes Per Month

1. Continuous Learning and Retention

Regular engagement helps participants retain and apply knowledge more effectively. Builds habits and reinforces skills over time.

2. Flexibility

Easier to fit into busy schedules. Less disruption to work and personal life.

3. Deeper Focus

Smaller, focused sessions allow for in-depth exploration of topics. Time between classes lets participants reflect and practice new concepts.

4. Cost Efficiency

Spread-out sessions can reduce travel, food and accommodation expenses. Eliminates the need to take multiple days off work.

5. Stronger Connections

Frequent, shorter interactions can foster ongoing relationships and collaboration. Opportunities for consistent networking. Sustains and builds support, motivation and inspiration.

Three-Day Conference

1. Immersive Experience

Provides a concentrated burst of knowledge and inspiration. Participants can dive deep into topics without distractions.

2. Networking Opportunities

Brings together a large group of professionals for meaningful connections. Access to keynote speakers and industry leaders.





Three-Day Conference cont.

3. Broad Exposure

Covers a wide variety of topics and sessions in a short period.
Great for gaining a high-level overview of trends and ideas.

4. High Energy and Motivation

Intense environment often sparks creativity and enthusiasm.
Participants leave feeling recharged and inspired.

5. One-Time Commitment

Requires blocking out a specific timeframe, making it easier for some to plan.

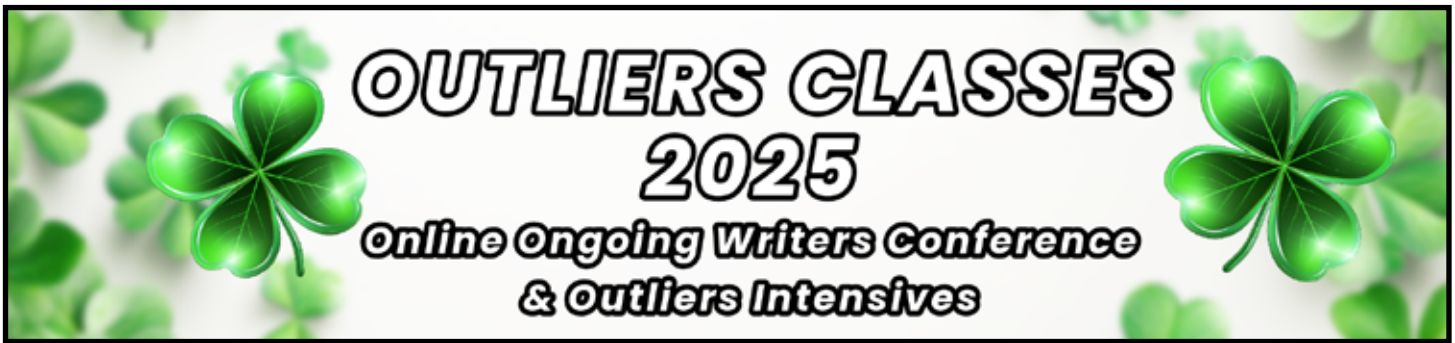
Which is Better?

It depends on the goals and needs of the participants.

Two Classes Per Month is ideal for sustained inspiration, growth, motivation, skill-building, and long-term application.

Three-Day Conference works well for networking, exposure to trends, and a motivational boost.





Check Out Our Cost-Saving Class Bundles!

Outliers Forensic Science Month Bundle

(Purchase individually or save with a [bundle of all 3](#))

Outliers Intensives Bundle

*(Purchase individually or save with a [bundle of all 3](#))

04/02/2025

Katherine Ramsland, PhD
Evolving Methods of Criminal Profiling

04/07/2025 INTENSIVE

Katherine Ramsland, PhD
& Tracy Ullman
Book to Doc: The Making of a True Crime Series

04/09/2025

Jennifer Dornbush
History of Criminal Investigation & Forensic Science

04/16/2025 INTENSIVE

Paul Guyot
Screenwriting is WRITING

04/23/2025

D.P. Lyle, MD
The Cause, Manner, and Time of Death

05/21/25 INTENSIVE

J. Todd Scott in Conversation with Stacy Woodson
Writing Character Driven Stories



OUTLIERS CLASSES 2025, cont.

03/04/2025

Meg Gardiner

Plot Twists

[Register Here](#)



03/18/2025

D.P. Lyle, MD

Setting as
Character

[Register Here](#)



04/01/2025

D.P. Lyle, MD

Simplify Your
Storytelling by
Writing to the
Midpoint

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Jennifer Dornbush

History of Criminal Investigation
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OUTLIERS CLASSES 2025, cont.

04/15/2025

Cody Blocker

**Thriller
Elements of
Writing**

**Registration
to Come**



04/16/2025
***INTENSIVE**

Paul Guyot

**Screenwriting is
WRITING**

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04/23/2025

FORENSIC SCIENCE INTENSIVE

D.P. Lyle, MD

**The Cause, Manner,
and Time of Death**

[Register Here](#)



05/21/25 - *INTENSIVE - J. Todd Scott in Conversation with Stacy Woodson - Writing Character Driven Stories - [Register Here](#)

06/03/25 - Hank Phillippi Ryan - Great Beginnings: How Your Book's Opening Can Make All the Difference - [Register Here](#)

06/16/25 - INTENSIVE - Nicholas Harvey & Douglas Pratt - Collaboration: Making Sure Murders Only Happen on the Page
Registration to come.

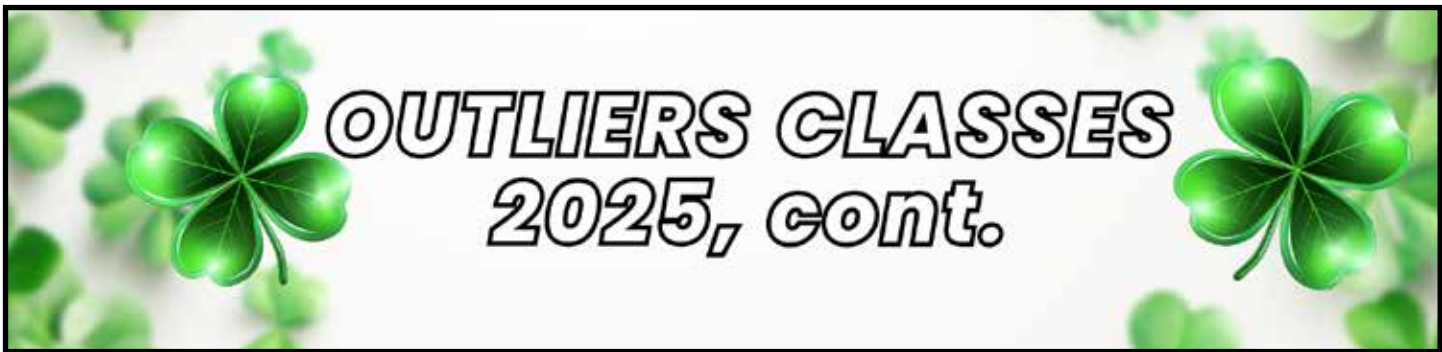
06/17/25 - Jenny Milchman - What Scares You? Putting Fear on the Page to Thrill Your Readers - [Register Here](#)

STAY TUNED...

05/06/25 - Steven James - Scene Study: How to Make the Most of Every Scene - [Register Here](#)

05/20/25 - Dr. Katherine Ramsland- Cooking Up Hooks: The Psychology of Grabbing Your Readers - [Register Here](#)





07/01/2025 - Steven James - How to Write Your Way Out of a Corner
[Register Here](#)

07/15/2025 - Hank Phillippi Ryan - Managing the Muddle in the Middle - [Register Here](#)

08/05/2025 - K.J. Howe - Worldbuilding & Voice - [Register Here](#)

08/19/2025 - Hank Phillippi Ryan - Secrets of Suspense - [Register Here](#)

09/02/2025 - Allison Brennan Romantic Suspense v. Romantic Mysteries - [Register Here](#)

09/16/2025 - James Rollins - Writing the Blockbuster Novel - [Register Here](#)

10/07/2025 - J.D. Barker - Indie, Traditional, Hybrid - How to Level-up Your Publishing Game - [Register Here](#)

10/21/2025 - Michael Bracken & Stacy Woodson in Conversation - Tips for Writing and Publishing Short Crime Fiction-[Register Here](#)

Have you missed any classes you'd like to watch?

If so, you can now buy 2-week access to older classes for only \$45 each.

Check it out [here](#).



OUTLIERS PUBLISHING COMPANY



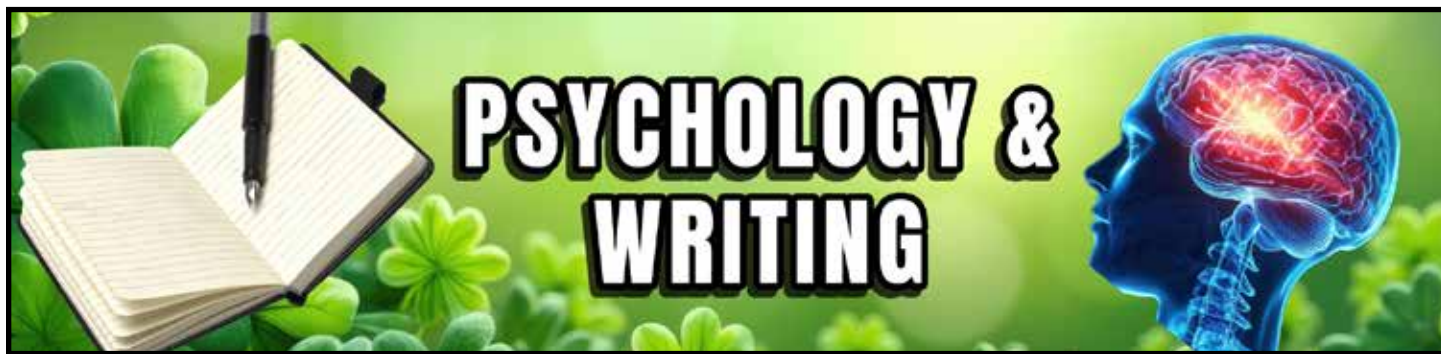
Outliers Writing University has merged with Suspense Publishing to create **OUTLIERS PUBLISHING COMPANY**. Outliers Publishing Company will launch several imprints, including **OUTLIERS•SUSPENSE PUBLISHING** (publishing suspense and thriller genres) and **OUTLIERS PRESS** (publishing nonfiction with an emphasis on writing education). We will expand the types of genres as we move forward.

OUTLIERS IS CURRENTLY ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS:

FOR FICTION: please send the first 3 chapters of your manuscript and a synopsis through query manager [HERE](#).

FOR NONFICTION: please send a comprehensive book proposal and 2 sample chapters through query manager [HERE](#).





Psychology and Writing: Your Inner Muse

By [Katherine Ramsland, Ph.D.](#)

Welcome to my column on how psychology and writing interact. I've been writing and publishing since the 1980s. Initially, it was for academics. Then in 1991, I published a commercial book, Anne Rice's biography. Over the years, I've shifted between these frames, adding fiction and learning much about the writing process. In this column, I'll offer tips for your work from clinical, cognitive and forensic psychology, sometimes for process, other times for product. Let's start with process: how to prime your brain for creative insight, especially when you've run out of juice.

You know the feeling. You're at an impasse with a character or plot point and you can't seem to break through. Or you've stalled at that sagging middle. You're frustrated, maybe desperate. Your deadline looms and you can't entice your muse.

Consider doing this: relax. The less you push, the better your chance of getting what you need. The prolific sci fi author, Isaac Asimov, knew this. He'd learned that whenever he felt blocked it was useless to force the issue. So, he'd go to a movie. Focusing on something else allowed his subconscious to process the mental material in its own way. Once he returned, he invariably had new ideas.

Many writers, inventors, scientists, artists, musicians, and mathematicians have

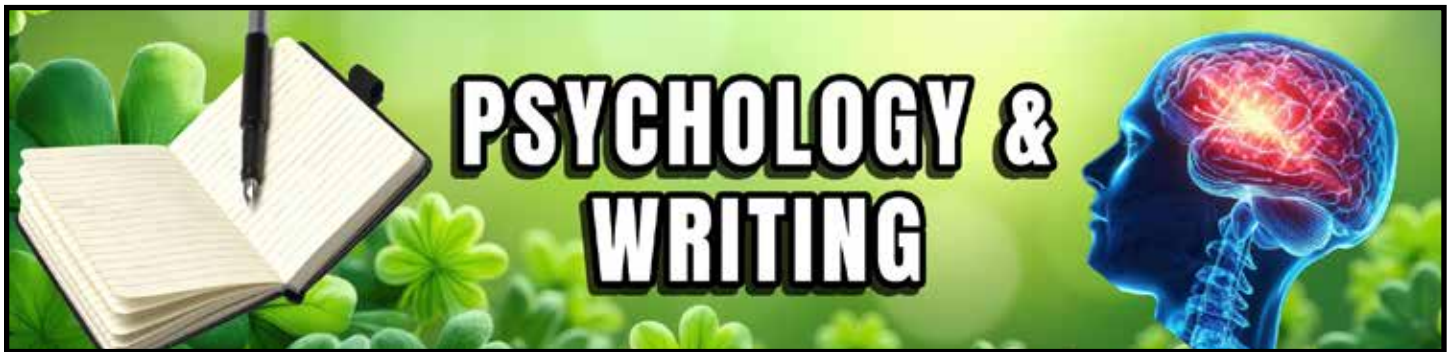
experienced the same thing. The solution arrives—aha!—seemingly from nowhere. But these flashes seem so random, we say. Those people just got lucky.

Not true. According to neuroscience, you can prime your brain for creative insights, and you can get them on a regular basis. They come from balancing work with play.

So, what's the secret?

First, you make an idea stew. For this, you must gather the ingredients. Even under a deadline, you have to take time for this part. Read, watch, learn. Absorb lots of different types of information. Be diverse. Immerse in material relevant to your current WIP but also explore something new. Travel to new places. Pick new podcasts. Watch a documentary or read an article you'd ordinarily pass up. Give your muse—the cook—many different ingredients, the more the better.

Now, for the fun! Read through the material that leads up to your impasse. Then disengage. Go do something else. See a movie, make a cake, take a walk, play with your dog. Relax the calculating part of your brain so you can let the inner muse mix the stew. You've shown it what you need; now leave it alone and let it play. It will reshape the ingredients you've gathered into new combinations. Ideas will bump against one another and interlock in



ways you hadn't anticipated.

So, here's the science behind this process. Neuropsychiatrist Nancy Andreasen, a former professor of literature, studied the brain in its creative mode. She found that a fresh approach is the foundation for a creative impulse. Those who embrace novelty have little use for the comfort of routine and predictability. They want to explore. They can tolerate ambiguity. They're energetically curious. "In fact," Andreasen says, "they enjoy living in a world that is filled with unanswered questions and blurry boundaries."

She views the brain as a self-organizing system of feedback loops that constantly generate new thoughts. Using positron emission tomography scans, which measure the brain's regionalized blood flow, she found a very active association cortex. This network of regions in the frontal, parietal, and temporal lobes is responsible for complex cognitive functions. It integrates information from various sources, including the primary and secondary sensory and motor cortices, the thalamus, and the brainstem, to help us process the world.

In other words, this is where the brain generates novel associations. First, it disorganizes the input into elemental parts. Then it integrates data items not previously linked. "Possessors of extraordinary creativity," says Andreasen, "are apparently blessed with brains that are more facile at creating free association." They can more easily perceive the world in unique ways

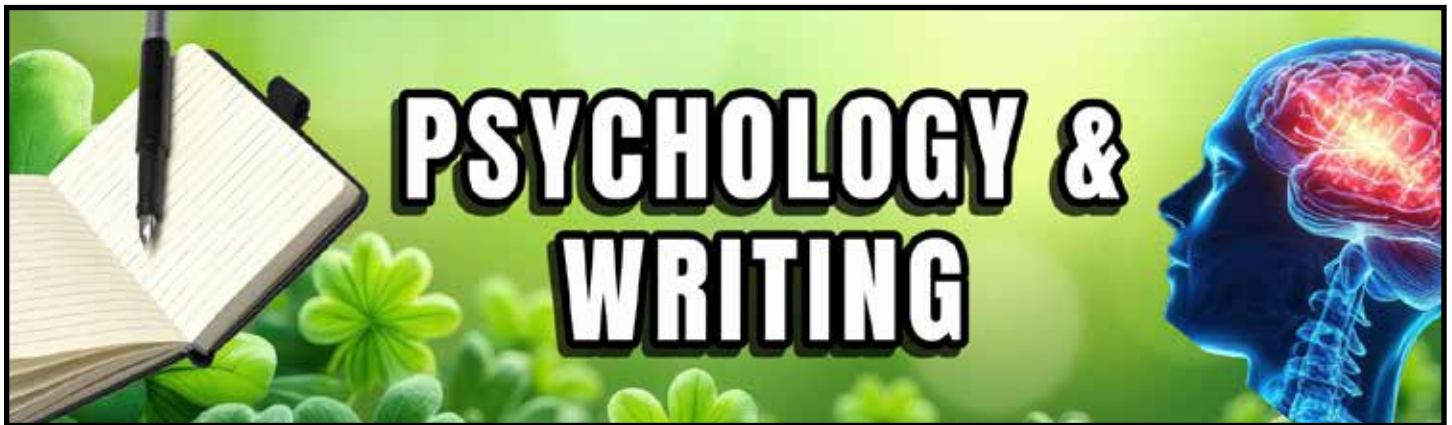
because they can let go of familiarity and control. "The associations are occurring freely. They are running unchecked, not subject to any of the reality principles that normally govern them."

As mental master chefs, creative people can experiment with their ingredients and cook up a combination that others never thought of. Once they fill the pot with diverse ingredients and no controlling expectations, they receive flashes of insight fully formed, ready for application.

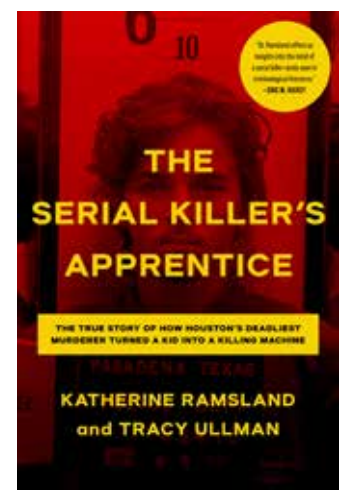
Back to *your* muse. What this idea stew delivers for you will depend on what you toss in. If you want truly novel ideas to emerge, you must add a variety of ingredients.

I formed this process into three memorable steps: Scan—Sift—Solve. Acquire the stuff (scan), let your brain stir it (sift), and behold the breakthrough (solve). Your inner muse can't make stew without stuff. Go get some and taste the magic.

Dr. Katherine Ramsland teaches forensic psychology and behavioral criminology in the graduate program at DeSales University, where she is Professor Emerita. She has appeared as an expert on more than 250 crime documentaries and was an executive producer on *Murder House Flip*, A&E's *Confession of a Serial killer: BTK*, and ID's *The Serial Killer's Apprentice*. The author of more than 1,800 articles and 73 books, including *I Scream*



Man, The Serial Killer's Apprentice and *How to Catch a Killer*, she pens a regular blog for *Psychology Today*. She has also written a fiction series based on a female forensic psychologist, Annie Hunter, who consults on death investigations. *Dead-Handed* is her most recent novel.



& Coming Soon...



Sign up for the Outliers Newsletter & get a **FREE** fiction or nonfiction workbook. These workbooks break down the process of writing a book into easy steps that take you from conception to finished draft





Building Your Author Brand on Social Media

By Magen Minchev

In today's digital world, having an author brand isn't just for bestselling writers—it's for anyone who wants to grow an audience and sell books. Social media is one of the best ways to establish your brand, but it takes more than just posting occasionally. Here's how to craft a strong and recognizable presence.

1. Define Your Author Brand

Before you start posting, clarify your brand. Ask yourself:

- What themes or messages do I want to be known for?
- What emotions do I want my readers to feel?
- How do I want to present myself—polished and professional, quirky and fun, or somewhere in between?

Your brand isn't just about your books; it's about you. Readers connect with authors, not just their work. If you write dark thrillers, your brand might lean into suspenseful storytelling and moody visuals. If you write rom-coms, your brand might be playful and engaging.

2. Choose the Right Platforms

Not all social media platforms are equal

for writers. Focus on the ones that align with your strengths and audience:

- Instagram: Great for storytelling, aesthetics, and engaging Reels.
- Twitter (X) / Threads: Ideal for networking, quick thoughts, and engaging with the writing community.
- TikTok (BookTok): A powerhouse for discoverability, especially for fiction writers.
- Facebook: Best for building reader groups and long-form engagement.
- LinkedIn: A strong choice for nonfiction authors and industry networking.

Pick one or two platforms to start, and be consistent. It's better to be active and engaged on one platform than spread thin across five.

3. Create a Consistent Look and Voice

Your visuals and tone should match your brand. Choose a color palette, fonts, and imagery that align with your writing. For example, a horror author might use dark, moody tones, while a cozy mystery writer might lean into warm, inviting visuals. Your voice matters, too. Are you witty and humorous? Deep and introspective? Play to your strengths and make sure your captions, posts, and interactions reflect your personality.



Social Media Tips For Writers

4. Engage With Your Audience

Social media is about connection, not just promotion. Engage with readers and fellow writers by:

- Responding to comments and messages
- Asking questions in your captions
- Participating in writing-related hashtags and trends
- Supporting other writers by sharing their work

The more you interact, the more visible and approachable your brand becomes.

5. Share the Right Content

Your content should be a mix of writing-related and personal posts. Try a blend of:

- Behind-the-scenes: Writing process, desk setup, drafts
- Book updates: Cover reveals, release dates, excerpts
- Personal insights: What inspires your writing, your favorite books
- Engagement posts: Writing prompts, Q&As, polls

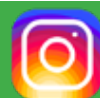
Avoid constant self-promotion—people follow accounts that add value, not just those that sell.

Final Thoughts

Building your author brand on social media takes time, but consistency is key. Stay authentic, engage regularly, and remember that your brand is more than just your books—it's you. When readers connect with you, they'll be more likely to read what you write.

@socialwithmagen

SOCIAL
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OUTLIERS WRITING UNIVERSITY proudly announces our award-winning, bestselling instructors for the **ONLINE, ONGOING WRITING CONFERENCE; INTENSIVE CLASSES;** and **OUTLIERS BOOTCAMP.**

Our Instructors

Jeffery Deaver, Meg Gardiner, Heather Graham, Kathleen Antrim, D.P. Lyle, John & Shannon Raab, Hank Phillippi Ryan, Steven James, James Rollins, Tosca Lee, Don Bentley, Jon Land, Boyd Morrison, J.D. Barker, Jennifer Dornbush, Harry Hunsicker, Allison Brennan, Tamara Grantham, Tim Maleeny, Cody Blocker, KJ Howe, Joseph Badal, Stacy Woodson, Michael Bracken, Matt Witten, Mark Tavani, Terry Shepherd, Vincent Davis, Lt. Brandon Watkins, Amy Scher, John Ferriso, Dr. Katherine Ramsland, Tracey Ullman, Paul Guyot, Jenny Milchman, Tammy Euliano, David Putnam, Magen Mintchev, Sara Divello, and more to be announced soon. [Learn More!](#)





Outliers Has a YouTube Channel

GET TO KNOW: Hosts DP LYLE, MD, & KATHLEEN ANTRIM

Fun interviews with best-selling authors. Recent guests include Jeffery Deaver & Isabella Maldonado, Anthony Horowitz, Reed Farrel Coleman, Laurie R. King, Tori Eldridge, Charlaine Harris, John Connolly, Don Bentley, Linwood Barclay, Zoe Sharp, and Mark Cameron. **Upcoming guests include James Rollins, Joe Finder, JD Barker, Allison Brennan, Thomas Perry, and many others.**

CRIMINAL MISCHIEF: Host DP LYLE, MD

The Art & Science of Crime Fiction, exploring the worlds of forensic science, criminal investigation, and storytelling.

**ALSO NOW ON [LAUNCHPAD](#),
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OUTLIERS BOOK TALK

Free discussions on everything books & writing.

WRITING TIP

To find the heart of your story, ask yourself what your character desires more than anything else. Once you've landed on that, decide if you're going to give it to him at the start of the story and then snatch it away, let him seek what seems just out of reach, or force him to deal with the opposite of it.

- From **STORY TRUMPS STRUCTURE** (Fiction Key Series Volume 2) by Steven James **COMING IN 2025**





[DELVE, PIVOT, PROPEL](#)

350 WRITING SECRETS TO ELEVATE YOUR STORYTELLING AND TRANSFORM YOUR NOVEL

Fiction Key Series Vol. 1

by Steven James

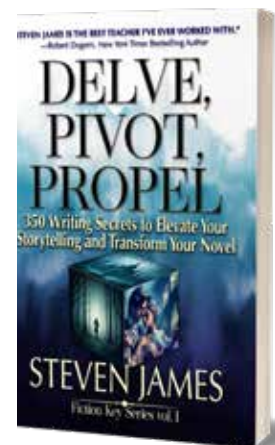
Released December 3, 2024

Unlock the secrets to powerful storytelling with **DELVE, PIVOT, PROPEL**, the groundbreaking resource from award-winning novelist Steven James. After decades of teaching fiction writing intensives and addressing countless questions from aspiring authors, James finally distills his insights into this essential guide for novelists at every level.

Packed with practical tips, charts, and time-saving strategies, **DELVE, PIVOT, PROPEL** offers fresh perspectives and unorthodox advice that challenges conventional wisdom.

But the advice isn't always what you might expect.

- How to write a scene even when you don't know where it will lead or what will happen within it.
- 6 things—besides “hooking” readers’ attention—that your opening needs to accomplish, no matter the genre.
- 12 ways to make a villain more formidable (and what to do if he becomes more interesting than your hero).
- Why conflict does not equal tension, difficulty does not equal dilemma, and structure does not equal story.
- 5 reasons why readers keep flipping pages (and which one to always avoid!).



[Order here](#)

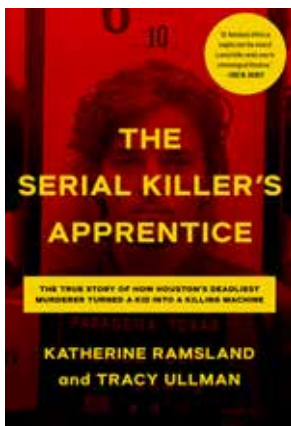




The Serial Killer's Apprentice

By Katherine Ramsland & Tracy Ullman

Paperback Release date: February 18, 2025



Elmer Wayne Henley, Jr. was only fourteen when he first became entangled with serial rapist and murderer Dean Corll in 1971. Fellow Houston, Texas, teenager David Brooks had already been ensnared by the charming older man, bribed with cash to help lure boys to Corll's home. Corll baited Henley with the same deal he'd given Brooks: \$200 for each boy they could bring him.

The true story of how Houston's deadliest murderer turned a kid into a killing machine. [Buy it here.](#)

The Writer

By James Patterson & JD Barker

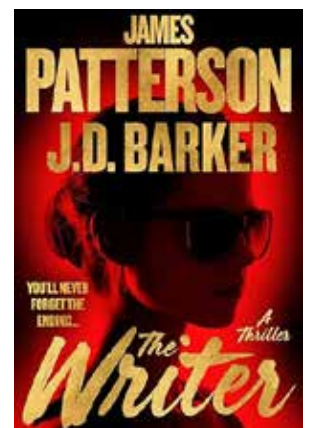
Release date: March 17, 2025

NYPD Detective Declan Shaw gets a call: How fast can you get to the Beresford building on Central Park West?

In the tower apartment, Shaw finds a woman waiting for him. She's covered in blood. A body is lying dead on the floor of the luxurious living room. Every book in the apartment's floor-to-ceiling shelves is by the same author: bestselling true-crime writer Denise Morrow.

"This is you?" Shaw asks the woman. "You're a writer?"

Only one person knows the ending to this story. Is it the victim or the killer? [Preorder here.](#)





Something I Keep Upstairs

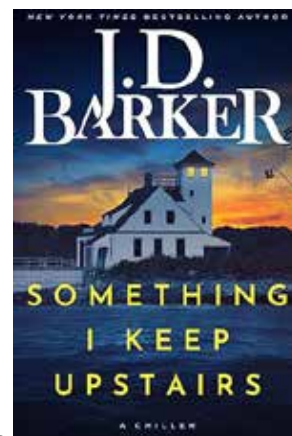
By JD Barker

Release date: May 13, 2025

For a haunted house to be born, somebody has to die.

In the sleepy coastal town of New Castle, New Hampshire, seventeen-year-old Billy Hasler's life is about to take a terrifying turn. When his best friend David Spivey inherits a mysterious house on a nearby island, it seems like the perfect place to spend their final summer before heading off to college. No parents. No police. No responsibilities.

As they dig into the island's dark past, they awaken an ancient evil that has influenced generations. What begins as an innocent summer adventure quickly descends into a nightmare. [Preorder here.](#)





Left Coast Crime 2025: Rocky Mountain High Jinks, Denver, Colorado March 13–16, 2025

Outliers will be in evidence at the Left Coast Crime conference. **Authors, do you want to be interviewed at LCC?** Look for our author interview suite at the venue and watch our social feeds for the opportunity to be a guest with D.P. Lyle, MD, Kathleen Antrim, and Terry Shepherd. You can also email us [here](#). See you in Denver!



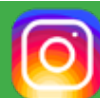
Meg Gardiner's Shadowheart Longlisted for Award

Bestselling author Meg Gardiner's novel, Shadowheart - the newest in the Unsub series - has been longlisted for the Reading the West Award (awarded by the Mountains and Plains Independent Booksellers Association). Winners will be announced in June!

J.D. Barker's Upcoming Thriller, Something I Keep Upstairs, Sports Outside-the-Box Marketing

Bestselling author J.D. Barker has come up with an immersive fan experience to coincide with the book's release in May 2025. Win the contest and spend the night in the haunted house on a remote island which inspired the book.

See the article at LA Weekly [here](#).





Steven James Invites You to the Storytelling Keys Leadership Summit April 8-10, in Johnson City, TN

Your Stories can Convey ...

... Your Origins

Every story has a beginning. What's yours? Who had the idea for a company, who breathed it to life, and where did they come from?

... Your Challenges

To become what they are today, virtually every company had to overcome challenges—sometimes, things that seemed like a brick wall between them and success. Walt Disney created his first successful character (no—not a mouse), only to lose him to his distributor. Steve Jobs was fired by the executive he recruited to lead Apple. Lee Iacocca had to lead Chrysler out of bankruptcy. And all became stronger as a result. What was the challenge that strengthened you?

... Your Epiphany

What was your “Eureka!”—your “aha” moment? Kohler, a Midwestern manufacturer of cast and forged agricultural implements, mentioned in their one-page catalog that their enameled hog scald “... when furnished with four legs will serve as a bathtub.” That

was all it took to make the company's name synonymous with high-quality plumbing components. More than a century ago, hundreds of automakers produced cars that were nothing more than unreliable playthings for wealthy customers; Henry Ford resolved to create a reliable automobile that a working family could afford. What was your leap?

... Your Values

People are attracted to high-quality products, offered by organizations they admire. When customers choose a supplier, a track record of ethical business practices, community responsibility and caring about others can often be the deciding factor. In the 1980s, when hundreds of brands offered clothing and equipment for the outdoor recreation boom, Patagonia pledged to dedicate one percent of sales revenue or ten percent of profits—whichever was greater—to environmental causes, and paid employees to work fulltime with pro-conservation nonprofits. What do you do that your customers admire?

... Your Heroes

Your people are the heart, soul and face of your company. They are who your customers

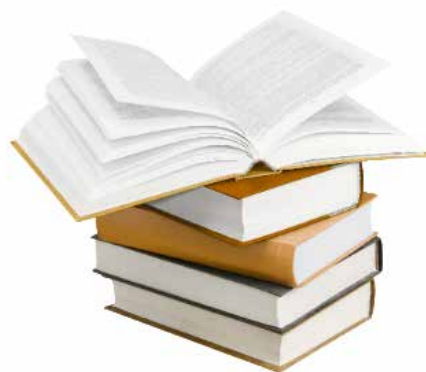


think of when they hear your name. From the C-suite, to the sales team, to the shop floor, those people—and their stories—constitute the character of your organization. More than anything else, people are the beating heart of your company's saga: the living evidence of its integrity. What heroes live within your company?

... Your Dreams

Thriving companies do not settle for the status quo. Staying significant and remaining relevant involves vision, plans and goals. What are yours, and what stories do you have as evidence of this? Your people, your patrons and your prospects want to hear them.

Click [here to register](#) or learn more about the [Storytelling Keys Leadership Summit](#)



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THE CAIN/HARPER THRILLERS

1 "TERRIFIC—TRULY SINISTER, SCARY AND SUSPENSEFUL. LYLE NEVER LETS YOU DOWN."
—Lee Child, #1 New York Times Bestselling Author

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—Jon Land, USA Today Bestselling Author

3 "A ROLLER COASTER OF TENSION AND SUPERIOR CHARACTERS TO THE VERY END."
—Joseph Badal, Award-Winning Author

4 "KEEPS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER. FANS OF ORPHAN X WILL LOVE IT."
—David Putnam, Bestselling Author

DOING THE RIGHT THING CAN BE COSTLY. AND DEADLY.

Outliers PUBLISHING SUSPENSE
WWW.DPLYLEMD.COM





Not Yours to Keep

By [Zelly Ruskin](#)

There is probably nothing more wonderful, or more painful, than motherhood. But what if you lose your chance to be a mother? In her debut novel *Not Yours to Keep*, Zelly Ruskin explores both the joy and the agony of parenthood.

Billie Campbell desperately wants a baby. She's a social worker and adoption specialist. Although extremely satisfying, her job at Burkhead Family Services reminds her daily that she and her husband, Tyler, can't have their own. They've had two failed pregnancies to prove it.

Anne Neuman grew up just wanting love and protection. Her father had sexually abused her for years. In eighth grade, Anne met a nice boy—Tyler Scott—who treated her like she was special. Treated her like no one else did, so tender and loving. Having sex with him felt right. Until she got pregnant.

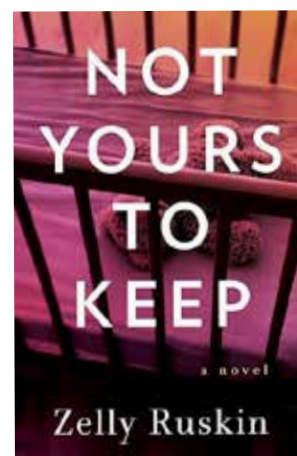
When her father found out, Anne and her mom had to run, moving in with a foster mom named Mama Sue in another town. Before Anne gave the baby up for adoption, she saw the birthmark on her baby girl's arm; she'd spend the next 20 years looking at the arms of girls, young and old.

Now, Anne has a plan to have the family she's always wanted. If she can find Tyler and convince him, they can find their daughter and be together. But will he listen?

Will Billie and Anne each find the child they long for? And at what cost?

Ruskin uses her experiences as a social worker in adoption services and foster care to write about the complex relationships between parents and children. She deftly examines multiple perspectives about teen pregnancy, infertility, and motherhood, and enlightens readers about the complex relationships surrounding adoption. Readers feel empathy for the characters—Ruskin has done an excellent job of portraying their inner struggles as they try to deal with the life-altering decisions that each has made. A book well worth the read. [Buy it here.](#)

Reviewed by Outliers Staff





I Know She Was There

By [Jennifer Sadera](#)

A true “Girl on the Train” experience, where voyeurism spirals into madness. Or does it?

In her debut psychological suspense novel, *I Know She Was There*, Jennifer Sadera ratchets up the suspense with an unreliable narrator—on steroids.

New mom Caroline Case loves to walk through the upscale suburban New York neighborhood of Deer Crossing with her baby Emmy snuggled into her gold-standard Babyzen buggy. Her former best friend, Muzzy Owens, lives there, and Caroline just wants to renew the connection they used to share.

Between her post-partum depression, and the gaping hole her mother left when she died, Caroline struggles to get through each day. Her husband Tim had left her months ago; her loneliness fuels her late-night walks. If anyone asks why she walks with a buggy in the dark of night, she’ll just tell them it’s the only way to soothe her colicky child.

But Caroline’s dangerous hobby becomes an addiction: she loves to spy on the wealthy, privileged people who live in Deer Crossing. While her own neighborhood is drab and boring, the residents of the exclusive suburb seem to live magical lives—the kind Caroline wants for herself. She loves to hover in the

dark, between the bushes, and just watch. She’s even made-up names for the people she doesn’t know. Their lives—and their secret indiscretions—are what Caroline lives for. And after all, if they’re too stupid to close their blinds at night, they’re fair game.

Those poor husbands who don’t see their wives sneaking away for a late-night tryst, or dancing in the window with another woman’s man. Caroline has seen it all—she thinks. Until she spies a woman who appears to be in trouble. When her snooping turns up nothing, Caroline tries to convince herself that she must be mistaken. But the woman’s distressed face keeps creeping into her mind. What did she see? And would anyone even believe her?

Sadera has expertly crafted an unreliable protagonist, with a story that jettisons readers into the bizarre workings of Caroline’s mind. How much is real and how much isn’t? The ending will cause your mouth to drop open in surprise, saying, “Wow, I didn’t see that one coming.” A great read for fans of Paula Hawkins’ *Girl on the Train* and A.J. Finn’s *The Woman in the Window*. You’ll love it!

Voyeurism at its finest! [Buy it here.](#)

Reviewed by Outliers Staff



My UnderSlumberBumbleBeast

By [Zoje Stage](#)

Isn't almost every under-the-bed space littered with the detritus of daily life? Bits and pieces? Dust bunnies? Broken pencils and crayons? Dropped goldfish crackers? And what about the infamous "monster under the bed"? In Zoje Stage's middle-grade tale of imagination, *My UnderSlumberBumbleBeast* takes under-the-bed clutter and creates a world of magic and wonder.

While cleaning her room (under protest), nine-year-old Pru notices things sticking out from under her bed and raises her bedspread to look. She's always thought the dim and messy area would be the perfect environment for who-knows-what-kind of creatures. Pru has heard scratchings and pitter-pattering noises coming from under her bed for a long time. When she peers into the dimness--expecting the usual "stuff"--she sees something different: it's about the size of a potato, but it resembles nothing she recognizes.

The creature wears blue knitted shorts, has a jingle bell for a nose, one candy-corn for a peg-leg, and a lollipop for an arm and hand. He seems shy, not scary at all. She says hello, and Lollipop Hand jingles in return. Pru is delighted!

Later, while eating dinner, Pru hears jingling coming from the staircase. She excuses

herself and finds Lollipop Hand making his way downstairs. When she takes him back to his lair under the bed, she finds more creatures, all crowded together, with hardly room to move. They need more space. Pru is determined to find them a new home, but can she move them without her parents finding out?

Because Pru loves big words, she uses them while telling her story, and includes a glossary at the end of the book so readers can learn the words she loves to use.

Interestingly, readers first meet an *UnderSlumberBumbleBeast* in Stage's two adult novels about a young sociopath named Hanna who treasures her slumber-buddy named Skog. Stage's story highlights the odd, sometimes bizarre, little bits and pieces of our lives that make for those small moments we'll remember forever, and their magical possibilities. And her message: we often find joy in those mundane, cobbled-together moments that we might not recognize at first glance. [Buy it here.](#)

Reviewed by Outliers Staff





Tell Me What You Did

By [Carter Wilson](#)

Love true crime podcasts? In bestselling author Carter Wilson's newest thriller, *Tell Me What You Did*, Poe Webb loves them too. So much that she creates one her audience can't resist. It's not an investigation into the crimes. It's way more sinister than that.

Poe invites callers to confess their crimes. She's still shocked people would admit to doing something horrible, regardless of the potential consequences. Is it to pacify their conscience, to brag, or to steal a moment of fame? She doesn't know. But she makes no promises about paying the price for what they've done. Her listeners are excellent at finding out the specifics and tracking people down.

But when a caller confesses to killing her mother years ago, she's sure he's lying. After all, she witnessed the murder. How could he be her mother's killer? Poe killed the man herself? But this man knows specifics about the murder. Could she have been mistaken? Who is the man hunting her, and who did she kill? When Poe finds herself the star of her own show, there is only one thing left to do: survive.

Wilson does an excellent job of ramping up the tension using unreliable memories and possibly mistaken identities, taking the premise of true crime podcasts to a tension-filled "what if" on steroids. The story jumps from the present to the past, and back, and alternates with the transcript of Poe's forced confession on a live broadcast. Who's telling the truth and who's

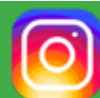
hiding it? You won't know for sure until the very end. Loved this book! [Buy it here.](#)

Reviewed by Outliers Staff

A Bit of Writing Wisdom

The purpose of a writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself.

- Albert Camus





Left Coast Crime 2025: Rocky Mountain High Jinks, Denver, Colorado
March 13–16, 2025

Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP), Los Angeles,
California March 26-29, 2025

Las Vegas Writers Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada April 3-5, 2025

Pikes Peak Writing Conference, Colorado Springs, Colorado, May 2-4,
2025

SWA 2025 Writers Conference, St. Simon's Island, Georgia, June 6-10,
2025

ThrillerFest XX, New York City, June 17-21, 2025

Romance Writers of America Annual Conference, Niagara Falls,
Ontario, Canada, July 16-19, 2025

Writers Digest Annual Conference, Baltimore, Maryland, July 24-27,
2025

Killer Nashville, Nashville, Tennessee, August 21-24, 2025

Bouchercon, New Orleans, Louisiana, September 3 - 7, 2025

Author Nation 25, Las Vegas, Nevada, November 3 - 7, 2025

Kauai Writers Conference, Lihue, Kauai, November 17–19, 2025





It's All in the Name

By [DP Lyle, M.D.](#)

News flash—characters need names. Not just any old name, but their name. It has to fit. It's personal. If you mis-name a character, they'll fuss at you until you fix it. Usually in the middle of the night.

Has this ever happened to you? You finish your first draft and dive into the initial rewrite. Where you meet Martha, Who the hell is Martha? There's no Martha in this story. After a bit of digging around you remember that there was a Martha, but somewhere in your writing she became Carmen.

How did that happen?

When you begin your story, you might select a character name that seems to work. But, as you live with that character for the weeks and months it takes to write the story, once you really get to know them, the character protests loudly and you realize you chose the wrong name. Thus, Martha becomes Carmen.

The importance of names was best amplified to me during a couple of conversations I had with the late great Elmore Leonard. My favorite

author and someone every writer should read. This was many years ago at the now defunct Maui Writers Conference. During that week, I sat down with Elmore on two occasions for about 45 minutes each. One was on a quiet patio beneath a Plumeria tree. I felt like Plato at Socrates' knee.

We discussed writing and storytelling and characters and everything that writers chat about. One question I asked him was: "Your characters are so quirky and so much fun. They're mostly bad guys doing bad things and seem to have no socially redeeming value. Yet, we love them. How do you create them? Do you do character outlines or anything like that?"

Elmore said, "No, I don't do that. It might take me a couple of weeks or even a couple of months to come up with a name, but once I have the character's name, I know the character."

The brilliance of that struck me immediately. He lived with these characters in his head for the weeks or months he needed to know who they truly were. Once he knew



them, the name became obvious. The importance of this can't be overstated. Your character names must reflect who the character is and must "be the right fit."

Take some of Elmore's characters. Chili Palmer is not a US President. He's a loan shark. Raylan Givens is a US Marshall, as is Karen Cisco. Jack Foley is a bank robber, Boyd Crowder a redneck thug, Ernest "Stick" Stickley a con-artist, and Linda Moon a lounge singer. Each of these names fits the character.

Names, and nicknames, give the reader an identification handle and often reveal much about that character. Things like gender, nationality, regions of the country, social and cultural background, sometimes occupation, personality, even religion, and more. A feel for who the character is.

The Swiss Army Knife of names is Elizabeth because Elizabeth can morph into so many other names: Beth, Betty, Betsy, Liz, Lizzie, Liza, Eliza, Elise, Ellie, Ella, Lettie, Lizbeth, Libby, and others. Each of these conjures a different image. Don't you see a different person if they say their name is Elizabeth as opposed to Lettie? There are other names that undergo such contractions and alterations, but Elizabeth is the queen of names,

no pun intended.

When creating names, consider who your character is: gender, physique, age, location, job, background, and personality. Then move on. Write your story and live with them for a while and only then will you know if you chose the right name. And just the right name is critical.

As a side note, from a writer's point of view, choose shorter names for major characters, particularly your protagonist. They're easier for the reader to remember and much easier to type over and over and over. Think Ted, not Bartholomew. Unless, of course, the character tells you his name in Bartholomew. If so, deal with it. It's his story, not yours.

