

Glossary of Invented Terms

Stranger/Reader: The person who doesn't start out by caring what is happening to the storyteller. Writing for a stranger isn't like writing for yourself in a diary or for someone who already cares about you.



Page One Moment: Whatever scene the storyteller chooses for a first meeting with the **Stranger/Reader**. A strong **Page One Moment** will serve as a **Container** or **Springboard** for the larger story that is waiting inside you, as you discover how to frame your writing journey.



Book Time: The time in your life when each scene is taking place. For example: On page one, you might be a young adult making your first really important decision. On page seven, you might shift your **Book Time**, in order to become a small child (who of course doesn't yet know what you knew on page one). On page 12, you might shift once again, to become yourself as you are at this moment, looking back on it all. Playing with **Book Time** can help you find different techniques for each moment you choose to explore.



“There-ness” as opposed to “About-ness”: An expansion of the “show, don't tell” rule that includes the stories we tell ourselves. If you think of trying to be **THERE**, rather than writing **ABOUT** something, you will be able to enrich what you remember with whatever makes the scene more real: remembered fragments of dialogue; the sensation of someone's hand clasping yours; a mantra you repeated to yourself; a bit of a story you suddenly recalled; or a couple of lines of a song—whatever it takes to help the **Stranger/Reader** walk in your shoes.



Containers: Sometimes the scenes you are developing become the **Containers** for everything you want to tell about your life. Examples: Instead of moving forward to new places, you might find yourself staying with a walk that changes everything in your life or a simple scene at dinner for many more pages than you might have imagined, while all of your other stories weave through those scenes.

Springboards: Sometimes whatever you start with is only the **Springboard** for the story you want to tell, and you jump very quickly into a next scene and a next. You can usually tell if you have written such a scene by the fact that it is going so fast into whatever will happen next that you couldn't stop writing if you tried.



Backstitches are loops backward into memory passages. **Backstitches** can come into your story so quickly that unless you are looking for them, you might not even notice them. Or else they can turn into giant-sized stories within stories, extending for many pages.

► While **Background** is usually quite boring when it stands alone ("Now let me tell you all you need to know about my grandfather, since he figures in the scene"), there is no end to the richness of allowing **Backstitches** to weave through your scenes.



Memory Triggers cause us to leave our thoughts in the present behind, while we wind backward into a memory. Let us say you are writing a scene in which your grandfather is talking to you, and suddenly you remember something you did with him when you were little. Suddenly you start to write a whole new scene.

When you recognize a **Memory Trigger** in your writing, follow it wherever it leads, and you will be surprised with the stories that come up. If you are suddenly writing a memory without a trigger for it on the page, you might have to retrace your steps to see if there is anything you can use for a bridge into the memory scene. If you don't find a bridge, try to find another place for it.



Jaggedy is a word that was invented by a writer who had written a scene so smoothly that all of the feeling was squeezed out of it. When

something real is going on, our thoughts usually come and go in every which way. For example: If we are helping our grandfather to die, our minds do not logically list everything that we did with him. Rather, we might find ourselves lifting his hand to our cheek; and encountering its familiar missing fingers, so soon to be gone, remember his accident; and then just as suddenly hear in our head the melody of the lullaby he used to sing. If we write about a fight, we don't see where our hands and legs are going, but might "see red" or hear the remembered taunts that provoked us to fury.



De-organization is a word that was invented by someone who suddenly realized that she hadn't made her story **Jaggedy** enough. "Oh," she had said, "I just need to go back to **De-organize** it!"

If your writing came out too logical when you wrote your first draft, you can always go back to **De-organize** it.

As you read through this book, use the sidebars for your own made-up words, letting one word lead to another.



Weaving: Many writers like to weave several stories together. If you are a natural weaver, you will find that even before you have fully told one story, you are starting another. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, if you learn how to weave each story into what is actually happening on the page. This is where using **Memory Triggers** will come in handy. As you get better at weaving, your readers will have no trouble following three or four stories at a time, as you stop one and start another, creating suspense every time.

Nesting is a bit like weaving, only it involves placing a whole story—or even several whole stories—inside another story or scene. Although we all nest and weave as we tell our stories, it is interesting in terms of developing our techniques to figure out if we are primarily nesters or weavers.



Paw Prints are those embarrassing passages that make us think we are terrible writers. In the days before computers, writers would cross out these embarrassing passages right away, but often would return to these eyesores a day or a week later to figure out how to make them work.

If you've written something that you hate, try not to give in to the temptation to delete it before you have a chance to explore where it might lead. Even if it involves extra paper or computer documents, highlight those embarrassing **Paw Prints** so that later on, when you have had a chance to think it over, you can see whether they might be leading to something important that you have been trying to capture.

A lot of people do their best writing when they go back over passages that didn't come easily to them at first.



Tricks of Memory: As you start to write, you will be surprised by the various tricks that your memory will play on you. Certain moments will be elongated, even though in real life they were very brief. Others will seem to disappear entirely. A major event may be skipped over in a sentence, while a small detail may take up page after page. Memory can make people who were really there invisible, while others who played a minor role take center stage. For example, you might find yourself in the middle of a scene in which your father, who surely was present, doesn't show on the screen, while your mother looms alarmingly large. But don't worry. The most important thing is to recreate your truth as you imagine it happened to you—just so long as you don't claim that your truth is everybody else's truth as well. Sometimes you can find a way to incorporate your thoughts about the tricks that memory has played on you into your writing. This is half of the fun of writing memory pieces.



Teasing: We all know how intriguing it is to begin reading a book and, just as we think we are coming to the heart of story, the writer takes us into a different scene. Do not try to tell everything all at once, as trying to find out what will happen next is one of the main pleasures of reading. Even though you know how most of the stories in your life worked themselves out, the reader who picks up your pages wants to accompany you back to the time when you had no idea what would actually happen. **Teasing** is also a good way to get the reader involved in rooting for you.



This is just a brief overview of some of the words that have helped people look at their writing in a new way. As you read the stories in this book, I encourage you to make up any new words that might be helpful in your own writing journey, adding them to the sidebars wherever you wish.