

Mid Michigan Writers, Inc.

February 2020  
Volume 2, Issue 2

# THE INK DROP



Greetings Inkslingers:

Need to apologize for “Inkspots”. It is a perfect example of why editing your own material is a bad idea. After I had mailed it out, I found several mistakes I should have caught. My husband usually reads my copy before I print, but since his heart attack I have gone a little easy on him and tried to do it myself. Will do better next time.

I will be featuring a continuing series on the technology developed for writers and began with software available for novels/script-writing. Even though I prefer the old fashioned paper and pencil to begin I have bought software that has helped me improve my syntax, grammar, and vocabulary. Let us not forget writing is a craft as well as being creative and the more we learn about our craft the more creative we can become. In our case we can “teach an old dog new tricks.”

Mystery and crime writers will be definitely interested in the 2020 MurderCon being held in Raleigh NC. It has hosted such notables as Tami Hoag, Lisa Gardner, and Lee Child. Check it out!

Don-



## 2020 Essay Contest

Writer  
CONTEST

SUBMIT YOUR  
BEST ESSAY  
TODAY!

DEADLINE:  
March 3

ENTER NOW

Submit your best essay in 2,000 words or less. Any topic or subject is fair game as long as your submission is a work of nonfiction.

Deadline: March 3rd, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. EST

Grand prize: \$1,000 and publication in our magazine

Word count: 2,000 words or less

[Read the official contest rules and guidelines at https://cdn.writermag.com/2020/01/2020-ESSAY-CONTEST-RULES.pdf](https://cdn.writermag.com/2020/01/2020-ESSAY-CONTEST-RULES.pdf) before submitting or your work may be disqualified. We use Submittable to accept and review our submissions.

## Tech Products to Help Writers

By K.L. Romo

The mechanics of writing have evolved from using pen and ink, to pecking away on a typewriter, to fingers flying over computer keyboards, making the process easier. Writers are more productive. Although Microsoft Word is the standard software for word processing, it also has its drawbacks. Writing a novel using Word gets messy and cumbersome when trying to piece your chapters together into a cohesive work. For those who prefer more choices and flexibility, there is a wealth of software available that improves efficiency, facilitates organization, helps with story and development, and lets a writer tailor the process to their own tastes. Here's what we've found that might make your writing process easier, more effective, and possibly even more fun.

### Creative writing for novels/screenplays

#### 1. Scrivener

Word processing software geared to novelists and screenwriters. Has the capability to organize scenes and chapters, compile, and save all research and description documents in one place. Can also convert files to different formats. **Best for:** Novelists and screenwriters who want to have all documents in one place, and easily organize and revise their writing. **Cost:** \$40 for PC, \$45 for macOS [literatureandlatte.com](http://literatureandlatte.com)

#### 2. Ulysses

Word processing software and writing organizer. Currently only available for macOS and Apple mobile products. **Best for:** Apple fans who want to have their writing and documents in one place, and easily organize and revise their writing. **Cost:** Mac app – \$44.99; iPhone and iPad app – \$24.99 [ulyssesapp.com](http://ulyssesapp.com)

#### 3. Power Writer

Writing software advertised as “the convergence of organization and creativity.” Includes word processing, integrated outlining, the ability to save and organize notes and research, and story development tools. **Best for:** Writers who want to write their stories/novels, organize, and save research all in one place. **Cost:** \$99.95 [write-brain.com](http://write-brain.com)

#### 4. Final Draft 11

Writing software for screenplays, stage plays, and teleplays. Includes over 100 templates as well as options for collaboration and alternate dialogue. **Best for:** Screenwriters and playwrights. **Cost:** From \$99 to \$249 [finaldraft.com](http://finaldraft.com)

#### 5. Dramatica Story Expert/Dramatica Pro

Story development tool that addresses both story analysis and creation. **Best for:** Writers who want to sharpen their story structure and get help with character interactions. **Cost:** \$129 to \$159 [dramatica.com](http://dramatica.com)

#### 6. Truby's Blockbuster 6.0

Story and character development software for screenplays. Can customize with genre-specific add-ons. **Best for:** Screenwriters who want specific storyline development and help in keeping up with plot, structure, and characters. **Cost:** \$179 [truby.com](http://truby.com)

#### 7. Storyist 3.4

Novel and screenplay writing software that includes word processing, the ability to organize chapters and scenes, and a process to outline your story using notecards. Formats and compiles final manuscript. Currently only available for Macs, iPhones, and iPads; users can also work from the cloud. **Best for:** Apple users who travel often or appreciate a more visual-minded way to organize their work. **Cost:** \$59 [storyist.com](http://storyist.com)

#### 8. Writeway

Novel-writing software that includes word processing, the ability to organize your manuscript, and tools for creating outlines, synopses, and story notecards. Also includes a function that will read your manuscript out loud. Note: For Windows only.

### 2020 MurderCon Details

Writers' Police Academy/MurderCon.

**Dates:** Aug. 6-9, 2020

**Cost:** \$435

**Location:** Raleigh, North Carolina

**Discount:** For first-time attendees with Sisters in Crime membership

**Contact:** Conference director Lee Lofland at [leelofland.com](http://leelofland.com).

When attendees graduate from MurderCon, they'll have the knowledge to describe what really happens—and doesn't happen—in a homicide investigation."



### 8 writing exercises to boost your creativity

1. Bypass blank-page pressure.
2. Open the door to truth-telling.
3. Enlarge your capacity for empathy.
4. Engage a new vocabulary.
5. Stumble onto a meditation practice.
6. Receive permission to enter the page just as you are.
7. Charm and disarm your inner critic.
8. Play with possibility.

by Hope Lyda

## Five Ways to Turn Your Short Story into A Novel

### 1. Search the Main Plot to Reveal New Stories

Examine the main plot of your story to see if it lends itself to more intense development. Any additions to the story should be organic, so seek out tangential elements that could benefit from embellishment or conflicts that can be altered to further the main themes and story. Is there any part of your story that offers more possibilities for your characters to discover?

### 2. Explore Your Setting

Walk around the world you have created. Notice every single detail. Take what you know about the setting your characters live in and give it life. Some of the best novels use a dynamic setting that changes as the story progresses (or forces the characters to act) to influence the main conflict and give more depth to the characters. As you get more adept at this, you'll notice that the setting acts like a character itself.

### 3. Add New Characters

This one can be tricky, so be cautious. Only add characters if they can occur organically. You want these additional characters to contribute to the flavor of the story, not detract from it. If a new character is just rehashing another character's struggle or simply functions as a "real world" narrator, it may be a sign to go in a different direction.

### 4. Include More Subplots

Sometimes more is better, and sometimes more is...too much. Adding too many subplots may convolute your main plot. Look at your existing characters' backstories for something from the past that makes them act the way they do. Then, explore that underlying motivation as your character learns over the course of the story to better understand him- or herself.

### 5. Look Beyond Your Story's Conclusion

This might be a little different than the other tips, but it's just as effective. Think of your short story as a prequel to the "main" action as opposed to something that needs lengthening. What happens to the characters after your short story's conclusion? Is the conflict really resolved? Determine the future timeline of your characters and use that as the basis for your novel.


### Common Pitfalls When Turning A Short Story into A Novel

**Over-embellishment:** Don't describe a scene just for the sake of describing. Find a natural stopping point and stop. Verbose language will make your audience want to stop reading.

**Endless Dialogue:** Never extend conversations longer than necessary. If a point has been made, move on. Readers will notice when the pacing of your novel changes from lively to mind-numbingly slow.

**Too Many Characters:** Be selective when adding new characters, because having an overabundance of story lines will only confuse your readers and complicate the plot. Also, the more characters you introduce, the more characters you must create resolutions for. We can't all be George R. R. Martin.

**Unnatural Subplots:** Subplots need to happen naturally and somehow relate to the main plot of the novel. If your subplot has no connection to



**"Books  
are the  
treasured  
wealth  
of the  
world"**

- Henry David Thoreau

[www.bookprotest.com](http://www.bookprotest.com)