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**Jumpstart Your Writing Career**

**By Laura Backes**

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\*\* Jumpstart Your Career by Asking "Why?" \*\* by Laura Backes,

Publisher of Children's Book Insider, the Newsletter for  
Children's Writers

When developing a story or article, writers learn to incorporate the "who," "when," "where," and "how." But what often gets overlooked is the "why." Without examining why a story takes place, or why an article would be of interest to the reader, the entire writing experience can be a fruitless exercise.

Why this character?

At a writing conference I once critiqued a manuscript featuring a character in a situation where you wouldn't normally expect to find him. When I wondered why he was there, the author answered, "He just is." "But how did he get there?" I asked. "One of the other characters put him there," the author stated. "Why?" I pushed. The author didn't have an answer.

If you arbitrarily think it would be cute to have a monkey, a doll, or a policeman as your story's protagonist, the reader's not going to care unless it makes sense to have that character inhabit your particular plot. And if a monkey shows up where he shouldn't be—at school, for instance—why he's there has to be an integral part of the story. But more than that, the reader has to know why this monkey is suddenly sitting in a first grade classroom. What's unique about the character that makes him the only monkey who could possibly appear in this book?

### Why this story?

Just as important as knowing why your character inhabits your book is understanding why this character experiences the conflict or problem that fuels the plot. Your readers have to believe this protagonist would encounter these obstacles, and not be able to resolve the problem in a few lines of text. Not every child is afraid of the dark, so if your character hides under the covers when the lights are out, plant something in her personality that causes this behavior.

How the plot conflict is resolved also harks back to "why." Why does your character take these particular steps, instead of an easier or more obvious route, to reach his goal? What fears, hang-ups or quirks does the character have to overcome to get what he wants? Would a child understand and care about these traits? Have you laid the groundwork in the beginning of the story so the reader believes the character could not possibly act any other way, thus never forcing the reader to question you in the first place?

### Why this article?

Virtually any nonfiction topic can hold a child's interest if it's presented in the right way. But first ask yourself why you're writing this article or book. Does it have a direct application to the experiences of your readers? Can it tie in with what they're learning in school? Will it enrich their lives in some way? If your motivations are clear, then take a hard look at your audience. Why would kids this age be interested in this topic? How can you present the material in a way that's entertaining as well as informative? If you find you're working hard to shape the information to fit a specific audience or format, perhaps you need to rethink your approach. Maybe you're trying to write too young, and the subject really requires an older reader. Or perhaps you assume middle graders will be fascinated with an animal alphabet book, but after researching other ABC books on the market, you learn they're really targeted to much younger children.

Laura Backes is the publisher of Children's Book Insider, the Newsletter for Children's Writers. For more information about writing children's books, including free articles, market tips, insider secrets and much more, visit Children's Book Insider's home on the web at <http://write4kids.com>

## **Top 7 Writers' Sites for 2005**

**By Jinger Jarrett**

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If you dream of turning your book into a best seller, or you're looking to become a best selling author in your field, then these sites promise to help you do just that.

Whether you are a reader or a writer, you'll find something here that will help you build your writing career, or lead you to a great book.

**Book Bonuses** – <http://www.bookbonuses.com> – Have you read a good book lately? If not, this site will definitely encourage you too.

If you're a writer, you'll definitely want to contact the site owner about your writing. This site offers a newsletter with over \$300 in bonuses just for signing up, and you'll find out about some of the best titles, and authors, when you read the newsletter.

**Author's Den** – <http://www.authorsden.com> – Although this site requires a membership, it's free to join. If you want to promote your writing, you can sign up for a premium membership that is an absolute steal. You'll also get your writing in front of readers who are looking for what you have to offer. Not to be missed.

**Dawnstar Books** – <http://www.dawnstarbooks.com> – Want to really learn how to market your books and writing? Then book marketing expert and science fiction writer Anthony Hernandez will show you how.

His no holds barred newsletter is one of the best I have ever read. He will tell you the truth about self publishing, vanity publishing, and a whole lot more. His style is brash, and you'll want to read every word he has to say.

**Book Coaching** – <http://www.bookcoaching.com> – If you write books, author Judy Cullins will show you how to get the most out of your marketing efforts. Her articles are clear and concise, and she can show you how to market just about any kind of book you could imagine. Excellent newsletter with lots of tips, and you can sign up for teleseminars that are reasonably priced to help you today to jumpstart your marketing campaign for your book.

**The Wellfed Writer** – <http://www.wellfedwriter.com> – Regardless of what kind of writing you do, fellow Atlantan Peter Bowerman will show you how to market and build the kind of writing career that pays your bills and brings you the satisfaction of saying, "I'm a writer. It's how I make my living."

Excellent monthly newsletter. Peter's advice is sound, and you'll find lots of good information here.

**Amazon.com** – <http://www.amazon.com> – Whether you want to break into the magazine market, or you're looking for a place to market your books, this is where you should start. This top ranked bookstore offers a lucrative affiliate program you can sell your books through.

## Jumpstart Your Writing Career

You can also search through the selection of over 80,000 magazines to help you find places to market your writing. This site is excellent for helping you find places to market your writing, and it's probably one that no one thinks to use. You really should.

Cool Stuff 4 Writers – <http://www.coolstuff4writers.com> – Need a break from writing, or need some great tools to help you run your writing business? Then this is the site for you. You'll find an excellent collection of forms to help you keep track of all your writing projects, as well as ebooks, books, and lots of other stuff to keep you motivated when you write. Definitely worth a look.

No matter what kind of help you need with your writing, you'll find something here. The bonus is that a lot of this stuff is free.

Jinger Jarrett is the Ecommerce director for My1stbusiness.com, an expert panel member for NetProfitSecrets.com, and a copywriter for CopywritePlus.com. Get her best special offers and a copy of her ecourse at <http://www.marketingforwriters.com>



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