

Welcome to the tenth and final installment of "Becoming a Better Writer." An investigation into the art of creativity - in ten easy lessons!

There are further courses planned and under construction but I may take a break for a while. I'm a little behind on some things and I want to clear the decks so I have more time to write.

And of course, there's also that great 21st century novel about the human condition I wanted to get on to!

Hang in here for about a month and I'll be tackling 2 new 5-part courses:

1. "Inspiration - Which Rock is That Under?" and
2. "Writing for Money, the Only Logical Choice!"

As always, you can contact me for advice, guidance or just my opinion - anytime at:  
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## Lesson Ten

### The Surprise Ending

Actually, this lesson is not just about endings, it's about how to make your readers love your fiction by messing with their expectations.

You pick up a book by an unknown author. From the cover you have some vague idea it's a thriller of some sort. You start reading.

Two sisters, Pat and Jo, are on their way back to their mother's house. They're arguing, unhappy they shared the same boyfriend but have now both lost him.

(You're thinking, maybe this story's about love, loss and forgiveness.)

When they arrive at the house, the mother's not there.

(Maybe it's murder mystery.)

They call the police but they won't act on a missing person for 24 hours at least. The phone's suddenly cut off and they hear scuffling outside. It's dark now, and the sisters are terrified.

(Gasp! Maybe it's a psycho!)

The window upstairs smashes. Timidly, they go to investigate. In the main bedroom, the wind is howling through the broken window. In a mirror, they catch a glimpse of a shadow darting down the corridor. Jo

follows but discovers nothing.

(Oh no, what if it's a ghost story.)

Pat decides to leave but Jo won't let her. The door slams in Pat's face as she tries to leave. They fight but Jo restrains her sister. Books fly around the room and furniture overturns.

(This is some kind of weird telekinetic thing going on right?)

The sisters talk. Maybe there's nothing sinister going on. It's just like when they were kids and their mother thought they had a poltergeist that one time.

(Phew!)

Then, the door is broken down by a hooded figure with an axe.

(Oh no - it IS a psycho!)

They're chased around the house until the figure is pushed off the balcony. When they get down to the rain soaked mud outside, it's their mother.

(A twist? Okay, it's a strange story but there were clues, weren't there?)

"Where the cloak?" Jo looks up and there's someone else there. The psycho's still alive! They run back into the house, bolt the doors. Oddly, everything's quiet.

The phone rings. Wasn't it cut off? They answer it. To their relief, it's the ex-boyfriend. But then he says, 'Won't you let me in? I'm just outside.'

They look out of the window and sure enough, there he is, grinning, hooded, with the axe in his hand...

END

Okay, this example is a little crass and melodramatic but the same 'shock and twist' style of storytelling can be used in any genre... and frequently is nowadays.

The trick is to make intervening steps between actions as credible as possible. Don't give out too many clues and use internal monologue to focus on what's happening in the present rather than helping the reader to second-guess the plot.

There are two ways of doing this.

1. Make it up as you go along.

The trouble with doing it this way is that you'll end up with all kinds of inconsistencies. Okay, some authors do it. They deliberately put their characters in situations they can't possibly resolve and then, through skill or luck create events to get them out of them.

However, with this approach, you'll likely spend much of your time repairing mistakes in your text - after you've finished your first draft.

A much better way is:

## 2. Planning.

Right from the start, do a rough template in note form of where the plot goes, where the twists are and how you will end the story, especially if you're going to have one final twist that throws the whole story into another, more profound light.

You must know the twist before you start!

It's the only effective way of diverting attention away from it all the way through the story.

It's a great technique - and it's not only popular with readers, it's a surefire hit with agents, publishers and, of course, movie producers!

The double twist is even better - a real favorite.

Use it and you'll be successful before you know it.

Best of luck.

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This is the last of ten short lessons on "Becoming a Better Writer." Other lessons follow shortly.

You may unsubscribe from this valiant act of selflessness on my part at any time - but of course, I'd much prefer if you didn't!

Also, you may like to forward this email to other writers and colleagues who might find it interesting, fun and educational. No problem but - no editing please!

Best regards and keep writing.

Don't forget, you can contact me for any reason at [rob@easywaytowrite.com](mailto:rob@easywaytowrite.com)

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