

SUSAN R. DIXON
writing guide

THREE QUESTIONS

That set your story in motion

A WORKBOOK



Greetings.

No matter where you are as a writer—expert, intermediate, bunny slope—you will have *those days*.

Maybe you never got started because you didn't know how. Maybe you bogged down or ran short of ideas. Or you thought things were going fine but you sat down to write and found yourself playing computer games (that's thinking time, right?) or scrolling through social media. #nojudgment

We've all been there: “you've lost your touch, what you just wrote is garbage, you probably never should have tried, and who do you think you are anyway?”

BUT, you wrote yourself into this pickle, so you can write yourself out. The questions in this guide are like a roadmap. They will get you started or get you unstuck or help you get your *mojo* back. And that feeling, when your writing is moving, changes everything.

I use an ancient symbol to represent this liberation—the Triskelion, a three-armed spiral found in many cultures and especially in Ireland etched on stone. No one knows exactly what it means and perhaps it does not mean anything, exactly. Its three arms are like a pinwheel, activating energy. It represents the movement of water, of air, of growth, of creativity .

The Triskelion questions are familiar from investigative reporting, but when you use them as described here, *together*, they become a powerful tool. When you have a clear grasp of all three questions, write your answers (preferably by hand because of the connection to your brain), and keep all three in the back of your mind as you work, you set the Triskelion spinning. You send energy all through your writing. And through yourself.

Answer these questions honestly. Keep answering them. I promise you, they will give you surprising results.



Why?

To get started in writing—or to get out of a rut you may have fallen into—you need to be in touch with the values, ideas, and passions that get you up in the morning. What drives *you*, the writer, the author, the teller of the tale.

When your Triskelion is spinning, your writing radiates your passion. You show up in your writing as yourself, not anyone else—not the author of a book you admire, not your witty best friend, not the rules-obeying high achiever your high school English teacher wished you had been—but as yourself. When you do that, your story rings true.

When you are in touch with *why* you write, you allow your story to have meaning. In *The Wizard of Oz*, a girl gets carried away by a tornado and has many adventures before finding her way back. But what was L. Frank Baum's *why*? In his hands, *The Wizard of Oz* became a timeless meditation on friendship, longing, and learning the value of home. Without this *why*, the story might have been interesting, even exciting, what with the tornado, and the wicked witch, and all the flying monkeys, but it would not have had the same power to connect.

What is your story's plot line?

What is the *why* of this story?

How?

The *how* is your craft. It is your thought process, the strategizing about structure, tone, and pacing. It is about shaping your story.

Is it about grammar and syntax and how to write compelling characters, the things that are in the “how to” books? Sure. Those things count. Also those books are helpful, if you get a good one. They can also be a distraction, so it’s best to use them wisely. At this point, though, you need to know something more basic: your structure. So here are a few questions to help you think about how you are going to get your character from Point A to Point B.

Where will your main character be when your story opens, physically and emotionally?

Where will your character be when your story ends, physically and emotionally?

What significant obstacles will your main character face?

What companions will your character have? What mentors? What enemies?

How will you map your main character’s journey through your story?

Who?

You have a story but it's going to burn a hole in your pocket if you don't have someone to tell it to. That might be the people gathered around the campfire for your ghost story, or around the dinner table for family memories, or at the bar for your escapades. A story hardly even exists without someone to hear it.

This is the final, and critical, arm of the Triskelion. The energy that motivates your story is your *why*. The energy that shapes your story is your *how*. Finally, the energy that sends your story out into the world is your *who*. Keep the three arms of the Triskelion spinning and your story comes to life.

What demographic will this story appeal to?

What are the key elements of your story that will draw readers in?

Who is the ideal audience for your story?

WANT MORE SUPPORT?

*You have a story, perhaps a memory.
You may have been prompted by an object,
or an object helps you discover it.
Or the memory has been lurking there for a long time,
waiting.
However you got the story, you want to write it.*



From Idea to Written is a twelve-week, guided self-study that will do just that—bring your story to life.

You will receive 12 ordered assignments to complete, the last of which will be to write your story from beginning to end. There will be a private Facebook group where you can ask questions and five bi-weekly coaching calls.

For more information see www.susanrdixon.com