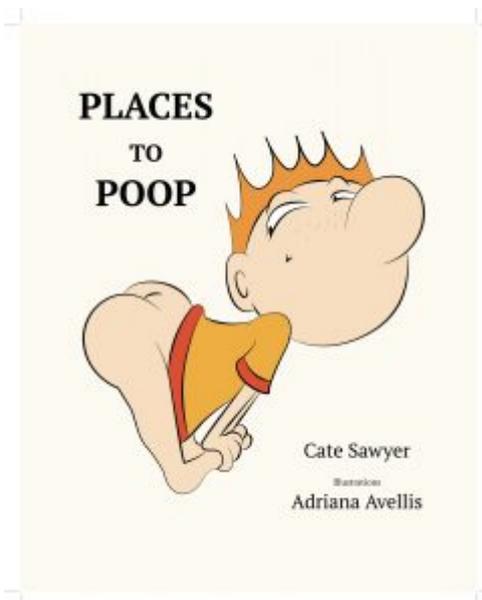


# Breaking into the Industry from an Illustrator's Perspective

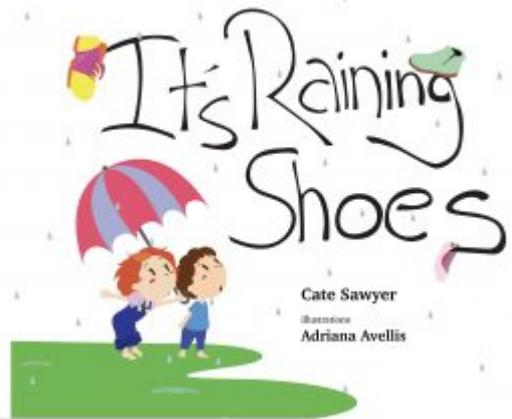
Illustrator Adriana Avellis has partnered with Children's Book Author Cate Sawyer to release *Places to Poop*, *It's Raining Shoes*, *The Umbilical Family*, and *Discombobulated*. As a contemporary, new, vibrant illustrator I thought you'd be interested to hear more about her and how she broke into the exclusive industry.



**You studied at Newcastle University in NSW. Did your connection with the university play any part in you getting your breakthrough to publication?**

My Bachelor Degree in Visual Communication Design helped me build the foundations of my style and personal confidence about being an illustrator. I had many wonderful tutors who encouraged us to not be afraid to get out there, and that was what motivated me to contact Hawkeye Publishing and brought me to right now. I originally contacted Hawkeye asking if I could do an internship with them. They weren't able to accommodate that, but they did connect me with Cate Sawyer and we ended up working together.

You went on to study at the London College of Art. Tell us about that.

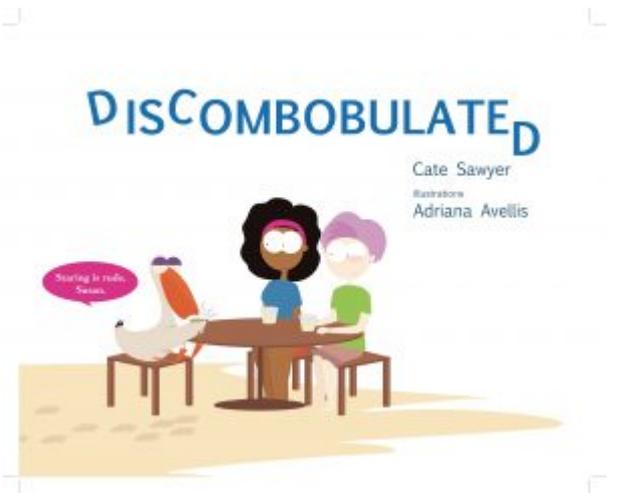


University of Newcastle was really a place for me to begin to find my voice as an artist. I learnt about foundations, the elements necessary to construct a design, and understand the meaning behind the construction.

I found, after I went into the field and began practising and creating, that I was restless to continue to learn. The reason for my studying the Diploma of Illustration through the London Art College, was to work on my skills specifically as an illustrator. I learned more illustration focused techniques, including colour palette, character design, composition, editorial design, sequential design, etc.

The reason I decided to further my studies is so I could not only build my portfolio, but to challenge myself. Studying illustration isn't just the creative aspect – it's understanding deadlines, time management, working to a brief and collaborating with clients. Both of my courses of study have been exceptionally beneficial to my career.

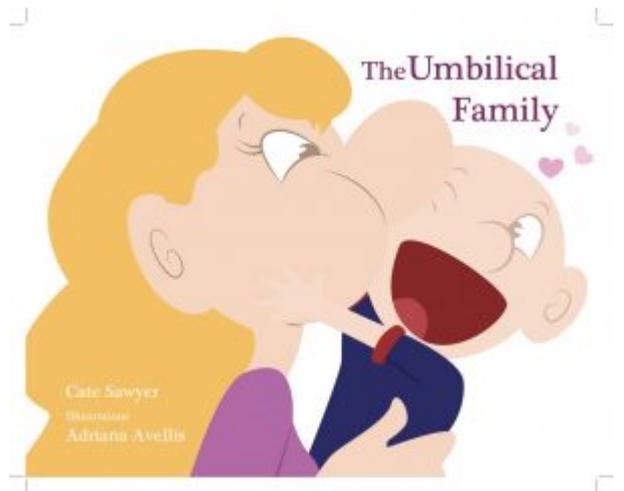
## How hard is it for new graduates to break into illustrating?



I found it quite difficult. The creative world is very competitive and there are so many different branches to choose. Initially, I applied for a lot of design jobs, mostly entry level, however I always managed to miss the mark just slightly with what they required from me.

I also contacted publishing houses, hoping (in my young, enthusiastic mind) that someone would give me a push in the right direction. I sent emails out and said I was an illustrator wanting to work in the publishing world and wanting advice on how I could do that. It was pretty brutal when no one got back to me (wiser and older me now understands the processes). I tried to think of other avenues, and when I finally got a response – even though it wasn't exactly the response I was looking for, I ran with it. It takes thick skin, patience and hard work to be in this industry, and for graduates, they just have to be smart and find out different ways they can break in.

**What do you enjoy most about illustrating?**



It makes me happy. I have been drawing since I was very young, and when I was seven, I decided that I was going to work as a Disney artist. The way the creative team designed these animations that made me feel so much was astounding and filled me with wonder. When I draw, I love the different reactions I get from people, most of the cartoons/illustrations I create are designed to make people laugh. The ability to make someone happy and laugh is beautiful.

**What do you enjoy least?**

Having creative blocks. They are the absolute worst. Some days I am absolutely fine, the ideas flow and everything is perfect, I could draw from when I wake up to when I go to bed. But those blocks can sometimes hit me for days... and days. When I'm blocked, whatever I create just doesn't look right, I have an idea in my head but I just can't execute it.

**Why release 4 books at once?**

It's a good idea to establish a rich trail of work. Breaking into the industry with one book is like going to battle with slingshot while everyone else has machine guns. Releasing all four gives variety to our audience, gives them the opportunity to get to know us.

**What made you decide to work with Cate Sawyer?**

When I received her response to my email asking to meet because she was looking for an illustrator to create some children's books with her, I was ecstatic. I'm pretty sure I still have it somewhere.

The moment I met Cate I knew we would get along. She was friendly and enthusiastic about my artwork (which was the greatest thing ever for me, being new to the industry). Working with someone so established with such a wealth of knowledge and experience has been incredible. Cate encourages me and works with me as equals.

**How long has it taken in between meeting the author, and the books going on sale? What was involved in the process?**

Three years. Three years with planning, getting side tracked, re-planning, writing, designing, scrapping ideas, creating new ones and finally reaching our goal.

**What are your personal favourite children's picture books?**

I've always been in love with the *Winnie the Pooh* books – E.H Shepard's illustrations are so beautiful and the stories are something today I feel nostalgic about.

Another is the Dr. Seuss books. I cannot even count how many times I read the *Fox in Socks* as a kid. That book is at my parent's house in absolute tatters because myself and my brother and sister read it so much.

My favourite children's book of all time, however, has to be *Little Moebie* by Martin Waddell, Illustrated by Jill Barton. The illustrations were so soft and playful, and worked in so well with the story.

**Which illustrators have most informed your own artistic development, and why?**

There are a lot of influences around and I can't say it's just specific to illustrators. An Illustrator I do admire and

follow is Tim Von Rueden, an independent artist. Tim's artwork has such detail and a mixture of semi-realistic and stylised work, he is an incredible artist. Mostly, I look at the work of Disney animators. I could look at my portfolio and see a lot of influence there. I learnt to draw drawing Disney characters.

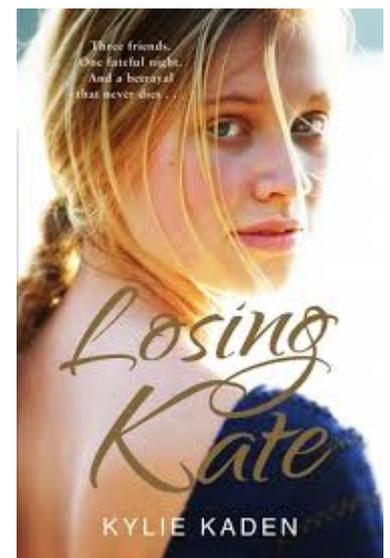
**What's next for [Adriana Avellis](#)?**

I still have a day job – my artwork is not yet providing a full time income, however, I am working on a lovely new book with Cate Sawyer, some exciting personal art projects on the go, and the usual client work. I am now receiving more author approaches; which is exciting.

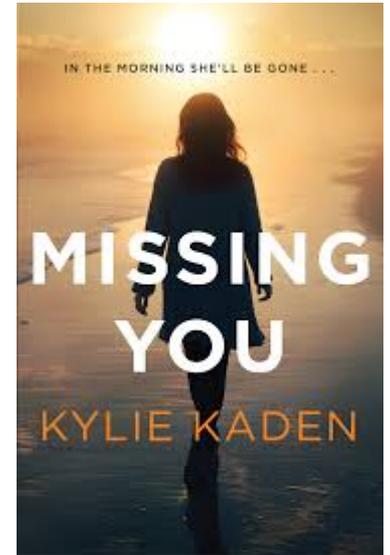
Interview by [Carolyn Martinez](#), Author, Editor & Guest Speaker.

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## Finding Your Authorly Voice



One of my favourite authors is Kylie Kaden because she writes a damn good character driven novel – my favourite kind. Her characters resonate with me; I love the exquisite way their layers unravel during the juicy situations she places them in. Kylie has two bestsellers, and her third novel is due for release in August 2019. I ran into her at a recent writers' event (have I mentioned lately how important it is for all writers to get out from behind



their desks and network?), so I took the opportunity to pose a question to her that I'm often asked by writers usually grappling with their first novel – how does a writer find their voice; is it a formulaic process? When I'm asked this question, people will rattle off the name of their favourite author and mention that by the time they've read six or seven of their novels they all start to sound similar.

Kylie's three novels in, not six or seven, but I do like her response:

'Having *winged* my first book (and most of my second), I feel a tad unqualified to talk about finding a writer's voice. It sounds hard. Like a windswept, uphill adventure involving a hip-flask and walking stick. But I travelled no such voyage.

For me, writing is an unconscious, gut instinct most of the time. In fact, my throat still tightens a squidge every time I say 'I'm a writer', fearful that alarms will sound, people will point and shout 'she has no business calling herself that'. Suffice to say finding my voice was a short and flukey journey.

'My first attempt at writing (mostly for sanity-preservation reasons whilst on mat leave) was found on the slush pile at Random House about a year after I started. I was gobsmacked. *Losing Kate* then launched in April. But it wasn't until they accepted my second (*Missing You*, released April 2015) that I

realised I just might be doing something right, and perhaps it was my ignorance of all rules that made me distinct. My third, *The Day The Lies Began*, is out August 2019 – and only now am I feeling legit.

‘Many ingredients go into writing. Your style is the result of the decisions you make at the word level. Tone and word-appropriateness are dictated by audience and purpose – the odd ‘f’ bomb may be considered acceptable by many in a work of contemporary fiction, but entirely taboo in a professional or technical piece. But the all-important ‘voice’ is the relationship you have with your reader. What comes through about *you*. What makes the work distinct. Like the core of the onion after all the layers are pulled away. So how can that be anything but raw, essentially you?

‘So, I’ve come to believe ‘voice’ should take the least effort. Hone your craft, consider structure and pace, and edit till your eyes twitch. But voice? It’s within you. It’s organic. It’s the one thing most susceptible to being ‘lost in translation’. Kind of like soul. The way I see it novels are a marathon not a sprint and to remain consistent (for a hundred thousand words or so) I can’t be thinking too hard about the personality behind each word. I need to churn them out, work that cursor across those pesky blank lines without falling out of character.

‘One of the great things about my editor is her willingness to leave personality on the page. Genre conventions are one thing, but no one wants to read a contrived, formulaic, well-rehearsed act, or a watered-down version of the writers-favourite-author. Don’t try to please everyone – readers yearn for honesty. Authenticity. A different spin on the well-trodden plot; the quirky turn of phrase, the off-beat observation, the slightly-insane interpretation of a common situation. I feel these little nuances make fiction shine.

‘In short, I believe the advice your mother dished out on your

first nervous day of school, 'just be yourself,' is just as apt when it comes to writing. If it's not working, you may just be trying too hard.'

Kylie's words resonate. I agree – there's a fine line between trying too hard and not trying enough. For sure, perfect your craft – you must learn the craft of writing – but don't neutralise your voice in the honing of your craft.

Kylie is presenting at Arana Hills Library from 6pm – 7:30pm on Tuesday 23rd October on 'Creative Writing Basics'. [Bookings required](#).

If you haven't already read *Losing Kate* and *Missing You*, I highly recommend you do so. Not only are they riveting reads, they're great case studies in character writing.

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## Publicity ... The Necessary Evil

It's the bane of nearly every author with whom I speak. We just want to write, but alas we must publicise, and most horridly of all – often in front of a crowd.



This week I had the pleasure of meeting Dr Tiana Templeman, lecturer from the Queensland University of Technology, award-winning freelance journalist, author and media industry academic who delivers courses for writers' centres, corporates and libraries. She has delivered 'Working with the Media' courses for Tourism & Events Queensland and teaches Feature Writing at the Queensland University of Technology. We secured her for a session with Brisbane Book Authors and it was full of specific, relevant information. I liked the detail she provided; she doesn't speak in overarching concepts, she gives solid, concrete tasks writers can take on immediately. In fact, I'd even go so far as saying that after hearing her speak I became excited about my upcoming publicity efforts ... perhaps publicity is not so evil after all.

So I hit her up with a few questions with you in mind.

**What should authors keep in mind when approaching media to promote their books?**

It's important to think about the publication they're approaching and what the readers at that publication are interested in. This is what drives editorial decisions so authors need to present their work in a way that will appeal to the readership.

**What should be included in a media release, and how long should it be?**

One page is perfect. Ideally, it should contain a paragraph up front drawing on any central themes in the book which will resonate with readers, followed by a brief synopsis and something interesting about the author. Contact details and a link to an online image library should also be included. It can be annoying when large attachments clog up an inbox, however, on the flipside a journalist may need access to the images immediately if they're filling a last-minute space in a newspaper. A link to an online image library solves both of

these issues.

### **Does a media release stand alone, or is it the body of the email that has to grab a journalist's attention?**

A media release will stand alone but the biggest challenge is often getting the journalist to read it when they're busy. For this reason, it's a good idea to include a couple of paragraphs in the email introducing the central themes in the book, the story and the writer. It's fine to show a bit of personality in the email as long as it remains professional.

### **How do we know to whom to pitch our particular story?**

Research, research, research. Keep an eye on the arts pages of newspapers and magazines, look for online sites that promote authors, and see which outlets are running reviews or even snippets with a small blurb and cover photo. The local library is a great place to find a wide range of newspapers and magazines which can be reviewed for possible coverage opportunities at no charge.

### **What is the lead-time for approaching magazines, newspapers and radio with a story idea?**

It varies depending on the publication but a good rule of thumb is 6 months for glossy magazines, one month for weekend newspapers, one or two weeks for dailies and the same for radio.

### **What are the common mistakes authors make when approaching media?**

Definitely sending out mass press releases to journalists without checking if the journalist writes about books and authors. Whether a journalist is a staff writer working at a newspaper or a freelancer, they generally have areas they specialise in. For example, I love books but write about food and travel. Even if I get an amazing press release from an

author, it isn't something I would write about as I don't have editorial contacts in this area.

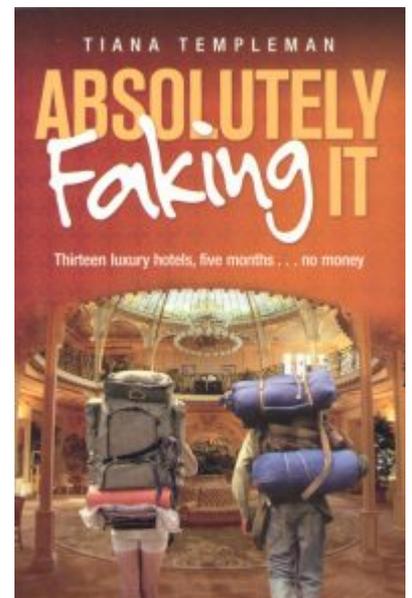
### **How should an author prepare for an interview to be an engaging interviewee?**

The most important thing to remember is the interviewer probably hasn't read your book, especially if it hasn't come out yet. Think about what questions they might ask – your introduction email and media release will help drive these – and have some anecdotes ready to go. Keep them short and sharp and don't limit yourself to the book itself. A quick, funny or poignant story about the writing process or a story behind the story can be interesting and make your interview come across as less of a sales pitch. Also, don't forget your aim is to get people to buy your book, so don't give away all those juicy plot twists!

### **What's next for you – what are you currently working on?**

I'm heading overseas on assignment for the NZ Herald and also redesigning my website. One promises to be much more fun than the other!

Tiana's book *Absolutely Faking It* has nothing to do with publicity – in author terms, she's a travel writer. Although, I have to say, I think *Absolutely Faking It* would be a great title for a book on publicity for introverts! If you're interested in securing Tiana as a speaker or copywriter you can find her [here](#). If you're like Tiana and travel means hiking boots and hostels – you might like reading [Absolutely Faking It](#).

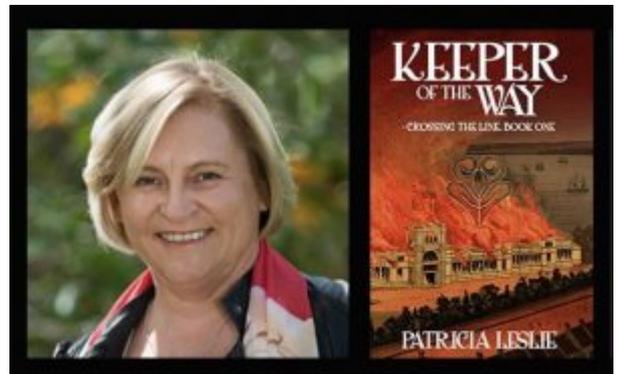


If you're someone we need to feature on our writers blog, contact [Carolyn Martinez](#) and convince us why.

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## Sydney as a Choice Setting in the Words of Patricia Leslie

Patricia Leslie is an Australian author with a passion for combining history, fantasy, and action into stories that nudge at the boundaries of reality. Her latest novel is *Keeper of the Way*, published by Odyssey Books and distributed by Novella Books. Our Q&A delves into her authorly life and process.



**What have you learned about being an author, on the way to releasing your third book, *Keeper of the Way*?**

Resilience, persistence, faith, and patience.

Resilience through finding strength after apparent failure: I learned not to take rejections personally, but to feel I'd made headway if I received something other than a form "not for us" note. After all, there are plenty of now famous authors out there who had to pay their dues and collect their fair share of rejection slips. Don't get me wrong. I wanted to give up a few times along the way; shoved my manuscripts in the metaphorical bottom-drawer in frustration, and found other things to do. But the ideas still came. Stories created themselves in my head and before long I'd be back at it,

either dusting off the finished manuscript or bashing out something new. That is how I also learned persistence.

Faith: I took to heart something John Steinbeck once wrote to a friend about how he still felt that one day someone would realise that he was an imposter: "... the haunting thought comes that perhaps I have been kidding myself all these years, myself and other people – that I have nothing to say or no art in saying nothing." I figured that if the great John Steinbeck felt that way, had that lack of confidence in himself, then who am I to deny those similar feelings in myself.

Patience: The other thing I've learned is that this is a long game. I've gone from strength to strength in my writing, in my research, in my ability to sift through the ideas to find the hidden gems, and in coming to terms with fear. I've done it at my own pace and within the boundaries of what I can handle in terms of stress and pressure. Writing and all it entails isn't done in a bubble. Competing demands must be taken into account.

### **For the uninitiated, what is urban fantasy?**

I think of myself as a writer of speculative fiction, but that is usually too generalised a description. I'm fascinated by the nuggets of information hidden away in history books and archives, most often about women. The sort of thing that isn't well known. I also work from the viewpoint that history, if you go back far enough, reaches a point where it slips into mythology. I've read widely enough to make connections between the history/myths of different cultures. For instance, most cultures were once more women-focussed than currently. The femaleness of their beliefs have been pushed underground or subverted. This is common enough knowledge, but the lengths and machinations that have been taken to hide history are quite often astounding. If you're not much of a reader you might never realise that women, historically, did anything more than keep house and have babies. And this is just one

area of neglect. The same can be said for indigenous histories (any country, any time period), and religious beliefs.

The term urban fantasy, I feel, refers to fantasy fiction set in a realistic urban setting without any elves and dragons (high fantasy). Magic realism would have strong links to urban fantasy as well.

In [\*Keeper of the Way\*](#), I blend a real mystery (the destruction of Sydney's Garden Palace) with magic and mythology. Magic has a strong hold on our imagination and there are more people than might like to admit who instinctually assign magical reasoning to unexplainable events.

### **Why set all your books in Sydney?**

Sydney's history is really interesting and easy for me to research. It's where I live and I know it reasonably well. There's also a mystery around the Sydney Basin's past that is only coming to the surface now as we learn more about the First Peoples and acknowledge their presence and impact on the area before and during European occupation. I hint a little at this in *Keeper of the Way*. We're also maturing enough (most of us) to realise that what we've learned and been told, what's been mentioned in newspapers and books in the past, only scratches the surface of real life.

Readers I've talked to have been pleasantly surprised that the settings are Australian. Australian readers can relate to the locations and social history of the times in a way they can't with stories set on the other side of the world.

### **What did you learn about writing process/technique from your first novel?**

1. That revision never stops.
2. There's nearly always a better way to say or describe something.
3. No matter how many times you read the words, sneaky

typos and clunky phrasing can be found by fresh eyes (usually someone else's fresh eyes).

### **What did you learn from your second?**

1. That I'm not too bad at this writing caper. Not perfect mind you, but not too bad. There's always room for improvement.
2. That faith and confidence come from within and cannot be relied upon from external sources.

### **Are you a full-time author?**

Unfortunately not. I'm a full time creative – I'm always thinking about stories, ideas, words, ways to promote myself, but I haven't reached the stage where I can quit the day-job and concentrate solely on writing. It slows everything down but that's okay. This is a long game and my plan takes that into account.

### **What are your favourite and least favourite marketing activities associated with being an author? Why?**

I love and hate social media. It's addictive and, once you become hooked on the quick rewards, not getting instant gratification is depressing. I enjoy it, but it's distracting and can take up a lot of time. It can be highly educational, puts you in touch with areas, aspects of life you might not experience otherwise and is fake, shallow, and unreal at the same time. It makes you feel great one minute and inadequate the next. Such a contradiction!

### **Do you attend writing festivals?**

I've appeared at the Sutherland Shire Writers Festival and Sydney Book Expo. I'm totally up for other festivals.

### **Describe your relationship with your editor.**

My editor and publisher are one and the same person. We have a

good working relationship. She's considerate of her authors' sensitivities (and insecurities). Her editing suggestions are usually spot on but she's also open to negotiation if there's a good reason.

**What are your favourite author networking events?**

I haven't really been to any to tell you the truth. Those I've come across tend to be during the day when I'm at work. If anyone knows of some in Sydney after business hours, drop me a line.

**How are you published, and what have been the major benefits and drawbacks of this?**

Odyssey Books is a Small press. It's great because I have a direct line to the publisher who is supportive of all her authors and encourages them to interact and seek advice from each other. We call ourselves, The Oddies. It's a great group of people. The drawbacks of being with a small press are the restricted resources for marketing and general reach. However, we're all on this journey together. Odyssey has a great future.

**We're all excited about this next question; what's next for Patricia Leslie?**

Finish the Crossing the Line series (two more books) and then get moving on a story I've had on the back burner for years (set in Ancient Gaul). I'd also like to write more short stories. I have a bunch of ideas that didn't make it into Keeper of the Way.

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# Kylie Chan – On Writing, Publishing and Marketing

From Taoist immortals to distant galaxies, Author Kylie Chan writes Fantasy based on Chinese mythology. She's had 10 novels published by Harper-Collins, and 3 novellas self-published. In a hybrid mix, her manga/text combined novel 'Small Shen' (manga by Queenie Chan) was published in Australia by Harper-Collins and self-published in the US and UK with Ingram Spark. That's a lot of experience all wrapped up in one author so of course I was quick to pick her brain for your benefit.

## **Who are your readers and why do they connect with your books?**

I have readers from thirteen to ninety. I'm approached by children at conventions who I feel are far too young to be reading my stuff, but many of them are extremely mature for their age! One of the best things that happened was at a signing, and the bookstore manager, her mother, and her grandmother all came to get the books signed. Her grandmother was in her nineties and was a huge fan of the 'White Tiger'.

## **What's your professional background?**

For most of my life I've been a specialist in information technology. I started out in the early eighties working on mainframes in the Bureau of Statistics in Canberra. PC's hadn't even been invented then, and when they appeared I raced to learn about this more portable and accessible technology. I've worked as a trainer, and in Hong Kong I was a consultant and expert in business intelligence systems. When I returned to Australia I had to start from the bottom again (for the third time) and just couldn't face it. I decided to write a best-seller instead. I'm a full-time author now.

## **In terms of process, are you a plotter or do you wing it?**

I do both: I have a big story arc idea in my head, and then release my characters into the world and gently steer them in

the direction I want them to go. Sometimes they refuse.

**What are the hardest lessons you've learned as a writer?**

That the income isn't nearly as much as I thought it would be. I would be making far more as an IT consultant. But writing gives me freedom and happiness that I wouldn't give up for anything!

**Do you enjoy the promotional side of being an author?**

I love it! I love getting out and meeting the fans, and talking to everybody. Catching up with my peers at events is the best thing ever. Going to conventions is super fun, I adore the cosplay and because I have a nerdy background I can relate to my fellow nerds!

**What marketing channels are worthwhile for authors, and what's over-rated?**

'Building your author platform' is seriously over-rated. It's more important to produce quality stories. Having a terrific marketing effort and online presence will only work ONCE if your books aren't fun to read or poorly edited; your readers will go to your work, see that it's of poor quality, and never return. They'll tell their friends, too. The biggest reason people buy books is because someone they trust has told them the book is good. No amount of the author telling them to buy their stuff will work (more than once).

**What's been the most extraordinary 'meeting a fan' experience you've had?**

This happened at an Oz ComicCon last year.

Young woman: 'You have thirty seconds to convince me why I should buy your books, with ten seconds to think about it. Starting... now.'

Me: 'No.'

Her: (shocked)

Me: 'They stand on their own merit. If you don't want them, that's fine.'

(She just went away.)

Another one:

Young man: 'I don't read books, I've never read a book, and I won't read yours. If I did read, why should I read these ones?'

Oh! I have another one! This happened at Angus and Robertson in Post Office Square a few years ago, when I was just starting out. I was doing a signing with Marianne de Pierres.

Older woman: 'Oh you're signing your books? What are they about?'

Marianne: 'Mine are space opera science fiction.'

Me: 'Mine are fantasy based on Chinese mythology.'

Woman: 'So they're fiction?'

Us: 'Yes.'

Woman: 'Oh, I'm far too intelligent to read fiction.' (Sticks her nose in the air and walks past us into the store.)

(Marianne and I still laugh at that one)

### **What's next for [Kylie Chan](#)?**

I'm busy working on the next 'Dragon Empire' book. I have a few workshops coming up that I'm presenting at the Queensland Writers Centre: one of them will be 'self-publishing 101' where I go through the basics. I'm appearing at Byron Writers Festival in August to talk about self-publishing with Ingram Spark. I'm giving a workshop at the Rainforest Writers Retreat. Oh, and I have an idea for a new story based in the 'Dark Heavens' universe!

**[Carolyn Martinez is an author, editor and speaker.](#)**

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# In Conversation With Compulsive Reader's Founder – Maggie Ball

[Compulsive Reader](#) has more than 10,000 subscribers, and over 1 million book loving visitors each year. It consistently ranks in the Top 20 Google and Yahoo searches for book reviews. The driving force behind Compulsive Reader is Maggie Ball – Poet, Book Critic, Podcast Interviewer and Producer, Mother of 3, Wife, and Research Support Lead (the day job). She and her poetry have been described as ‘... polished and brave. Intellect melds with emotion to soar,’ *Jan Dean, Author of [Paint Peels Graffiti Sings](#)*, and ‘... an intelligent poet whose writing is charged with imagery and language drawn from the sciences,’ *Linda Ireland*. These are just two amongst many, many exceptional accolades.

Maggie interviewed me on her podcast when [Finding Love Again](#) was launched. I found her a generous, intelligent, interesting, engaging host. I was particularly enthused that she read my book before the interview (I’ve found this to be the exception rather than the rule), and I’m very pleased to learn more about this extraordinary woman to share with you.

**Your podcast is littered with great names. Which have been your top 3 most memorable interviewees?**

I’ll never forget interviewing [Tom Keneally](#) (just after [Bettany's Book](#) in 2003). He was a joy – so interested in absolutely everything, loquacious and easy to talk to, utterly nice – we went way overtime and I wanted to keep going. That was a transcript though – I wasn’t actually recording the shows at that point. It was pretty early on in my interviewing ‘career’, and I daresay his encouragement was part of why I continued to do it. Another transcribed

interview that I loved doing was the great, Late [Dorothy Porter](#) (interviewed just after [Other Worlds](#) in 2007: ). She also was incredibly nice, intelligent and insightful – I felt that if I could only talk to her long enough I might absorb some of her greatness. For the recorded ones – I hate choosing because I pretty much love everyone, but a few that have remained with me and come to mind immediately include [Emily Ballou](#), who came on shortly after [The Darwin Poems](#) were published for the second time, and something about her resonated with me – not just because I loved the book, which I did, but because she had a quality – even a bit ditzy – which was very down-to-earth and appealing. I also am partial to the face-to-face interviews as there are nuances you can't get on the phone – the eye contact, the subtleties of body language etc. [Ben Okri](#), who I interviewed at the Sydney Writers Festival in 2016, was rather wonderful in this respect – plus I got a hug (can't get that over the phone): I know that's four. Also [you](#) (Carolyn Martinez), which makes five :- ).

**Many writers are introverts, but we all must market our books. Can you offer any tips on how writers can ensure they're a good interviewee?**

Lol – that's a whole course! But in brief, it helps to do your homework – know your interviewer and their style (listen to their shows for a bit so you can come in with that knowledge). Always bring your book and be prepared to talk about it – so have a log-line or 'elevator speech' overview ready. Once you're in the conversation, treat the interviewer as if they are a good friend – so respond to their questions with warmth (even if you don't like the question), and respond candidly, openly and feel free to meander a bit. The listeners want to get to know you. The worst interviewee is either hostile or non-communicative. I've never had the former, but I have, once or twice, had an interviewee who basically responded with one word answers. I couldn't use the

interview.

**How do authors go about having their book reviewed by Compulsive Reader? I imagine you get far more requests than you can manage.**

I'm afraid I do get far more review pitches than I can handle – I only have a small, busy volunteer team and our reviews tend to be pretty thorough as you say – I won't publish a review that just skims the surface, so they take time which limits how many we can do. We publish guidelines on the site (under submissions) and basically the process is to send a few paragraphs of synopsis. A few puffs or existing review blurbs doesn't hurt either. The query should be professional – no typos, really clear writing (sometimes I don't even know what a person is asking for), with the right blend of familiar and professional. They shouldn't beg! (it happens a lot).

Nor should they tell me how much work went into the writing of the book, how long it took, that it was self-published (we don't mind at all, but set up a company and treat your book like a publisher would!), or that you are new at this and hoping to get some feedback (there are places that do that). Don't send the book until I ask for it! Do include a nice looking .pdf press sheet with any relevant backstory, a book cover, and the synopsis/blurbs. Most publishers will create this promo sheet for a new book. Don't ask questions that can be easily found by visiting the site. Always visit the site first and know who you're querying.

**With your passion being poetry why are you interviewing and reviewing other writers besides poets?**

I choose who I want to interview or review based on my reading tastes rather than my own writing. I do actually also write fiction and nonfiction as well as poetry and I read very widely in a pretty extensive range of genres. Also poetry is a harder sell, so I do get more feels from promoting it than say, from promoting a blockbuster novel that doesn't need

help. Compulsive Reader is very much a passion project – it's not a business for me at all – I'm able to please myself creatively without worrying about things like sales, page hits, etc. It is definitely cross-promotional and complementary (and I know I'm a better writer from reading deeply and talking to other writers), and the perks are pretty good, but mostly, it's something I do because I truly love doing it.

**Which of your books of poetry is your favourite?**



I'm so humbled and moved by reviews I've received – they keep me writing. I think, poetry is such a hard sell, why do it – and then I think of those reviews and think – well, someone (intelligent and wonderful) has been moved. That's enough.

I'm not entirely sure I have a favourite. In terms of sole-authored, full-length collections, there are actually only two books – [Repulsion Thrust](#) and [Unmaking Atoms](#). There are quite a few chapbooks including about 8 collaborations but those are my two big books. Both cover a lot of ground, and explore different ground (though perhaps there are some similarities – the science inspiration, the ecological focus, the mingling of dark and light), so it's hard to choose one, but If I have to I'll say *Unmaking Atoms* just because it's more recent and as an author you're always trying to go a little further with each book.

**Would you care to share with us the proudest moment you've experienced so far in your career?**

Maybe, because it was recent, winning the Hunter Writers Centre's Member's Award in the Newcastle Poetry Prize. I know it's not a massive award, but the Newcastle Poetry Prize means a lot to me – I've been entering it for a long time, and I've been a member of the Hunter Writers Centre for a long time too – about 25 years!

**What's next for Maggie Ball?**

I've got another full-length poetry book ready to go which I'm going to be sending out very soon, and then I'm thinking it's time to go back to the world of fiction for a bit. I have finally decided to move on from my abandoned third novel, and start over.

*[Carolyn Martinez](#) is an author, editor and speaker.*

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## **A Seismic Shift in Thinking – Shriek an absurd novel – In Conversation With Davide A. Cottone**

Davide A. Cottone introduced me to the Absurd genre. Frankly, before I read his book [Shriek: an absurd novel](#) I didn't even know what the Absurd genre was. The cover enticed, the exemplary writing held me.

Davide wrote the book to join the discussion/debate on how the world could change for a better future. 'When the dominoes

fall, it will be the lateral thinkers not the reactionaries who will triumph,' he says. In the past, writers have written fables and parables to make social commentary. Davide has used the Absurd genre, and in so doing the parallels with current world events surrounding the rise of Donald Trump, Kim Jong Un, Bitcoin, the demise of conservative religious values, people's social response to broken government promises, and new technologies are so compelling, it's ludicrous.

"The world can be a mad place and sometimes we need to proffer absurd solutions to confront or at least contain situations that are spiralling out of control," Davide says.

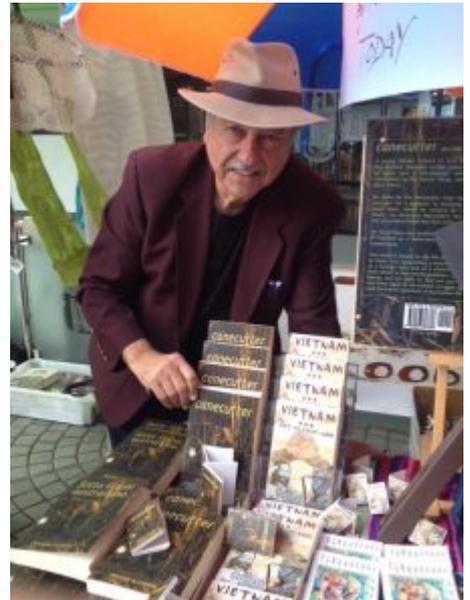
He argues that technology, and the social implications of the populist mindset, has necessitated a seismic shift in thinking and the corresponding changes to the structure and organisation of society are inevitable. He says we need to 'take the wisdom of the ages and reapply to the problems of today's world.'

*Shriek: an absurd novel* is a fictional work about Aleph, an 'idiot savant' confronting a maelstrom of social, political, economic, technological and religious upheaval. The content and the genre mean that this book is for the lateral thinkers. Conspiracy Theorists, philosophers, academics, and those with an interest in social commentary are likely to enjoy the book.

I'm keen to hear from people who've read *Shriek*. One could put hundreds of interpretations to this book. It's one I can envisage as a catalyst for debate in universities, especially in sociology or political courses.

**THE MAN BEHIND THE TAPESTRY THAT IS SHRIEK:**

**What is it about writing that draws you to the craft?**



It's an opportunity to do some genetic engineering by mingling my thoughts (DNA) with those of my audience. Especially when I write in the absurd genre, the end product can very well be something one never intended. That's very exciting. Try reading *Shriek: an absurd novel* and you'll know what I mean.

**You've had published or performed 5 novels, several musicals and plays, and two volumes of poetry. Tell us two of your most outstanding experiences/memories.**

The musicals and plays which I have written have been performed in Australia and overseas and they comprise my most outstanding experiences and memories by far. With a live audience, the interaction and feedback is immediate. You know if you have achieved your goal of getting your message across without having to wait for faceless reviewers to determine your success or otherwise.

My latest novel, *Shriek: an absurd novel* where I wrestle with the statement by Salvador Dali is my most challenging. He claims, *Madmen think they are sane, I know I am mad*. As a result, I don't know where I stand. Hence the novel. It could be a trap to tie you to the same dilemma!

**Is your greatest love plays, poems or novels?**

Poetry is my first great love; it's really heart-to-heart stuff. Plays and especially musicals are my other great love. It's the in-the-raw, face-to-face interaction with a live audience that consumes you whether you are writing it or seeing it performed. My third and greatest love is fiction based on fact. It allows me to create super humans out of mere mortals. Can I have three great loves please?

**Your writing career has spanned over fifty years. Summarise for us what you've learned during that time?**

I have learned that it often doesn't matter how well you write, it's the chatter that matters. You have to have a pathway for getting your work out there. You have to get people talking about your work and wanting to own it.

**What do you see as the characteristics that a writer needs to be successful?**

The writer needs to be true to the genre as well as add something different, something new.

**How do you choose what you're going to write about?**

I listen to the buzz. What people are talking about at any particular time gives me the opportunity to put my views forward. I try to give them a picture of how I think it is, rather than pander to them with what they want to hear. Not always a good strategy and that's why you have to wait a generation sometimes before the audience is far enough removed to grasp the point which is so often in their face, yet they don't want to acknowledge it.

**Give us your take on traditional versus Indie publishing in 2017.**

Traditional publishing is dead. Indie publishing is the new reality. It is augmented reality personified.

**What is your background and how did you become a writer?**

I am a farmer's son. He planted seeds in the soil and hoped they would grow. I plant words and ideas into people's minds and hope they will grow.

**One of your novels – [Vietnam: Viet-Bloody-Nam](#) – has been adapted into a play. What was that experience like?**

Brilliant and it was so easy. It is a good book with a strong and everlasting message that was easy for the playwright to get across and easy for the audience to grasp.

**Which has been your most successful commercial product and why do you think it was popular?**

My historical fiction novel [Canecutter](#) has been my most successful commercially. The feedback from the novel made me realise how the power of the phenomenological experience transcends all barriers to understanding, compassion and empathy. There is a social agenda in that book that cuts across all human experiences. The teacher, the lawyer, the doctor, the street-lounger and the bum are all able to walk the walk through the North Queensland sugarcane fields and identify it as their own albeit on another stage.

*Carolyn Martinez is an [author](#), [editor](#) and [author's coach](#).*

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**3 Million Books SOLD ... and  
Counting – In Conversation  
with Romantic Storyteller Amy**

# Andrews

***Warning: Swearing and blasphemy ahead, along with bloody good advice for aspiring writers.***

Amy Andrews is an award-winning, USA Today best-selling Brissie and proud Aussie author who has written sixty-five plus contemporary romances. She's been translated into over a dozen languages. In her words, her books bring all the feels from 'sass and quirk and laughter to emotional grit to panty-melting heat'. Yes, her books feature lots of sex and kissing.

'You probably shouldn't try one if you think that stuff belongs behind a closed door,' she says. She loves good books and great booze although she'll take mediocre booze if there's nothing else.



To dip your toe into her style, here's a quote from 'Numbered', the book Amy co-authored with her sister Ros Baxter. 'Numbered' this month (August 2017) won the Romance Writers of Australia, RUBY (Romantic Book of the Year) award in the Romantic Elements Category. The RUBY is the most prestigious award for romance writing in the country. 'I bet if cancer of the penis was more prevalent there'd be a cure for this fucker. I bet if dicks were being amputated or dropping off left, right and centre there'd have been a cure decades ago. There'd be a whole fucking government dick department dedicated to it.'

Yep, this author is your best friend – the person who tells you as it is, political correctness be damned. If all your friends are straighty one eighties because that's your preference, Amy is not for you. But My God, she's definitely for me. [Amy Andrews](#) is full of energy and charisma – great

company for an afternoon interview over a bottle of good wine (I'm super professional); the stories! ...She describes writing a book as 'hard' but having written a book, 'awesome'. Amy has contemporary romance novels in these categories: Sexy, Small Town, Medical, Sport, Urban Family, and Mystery. Her books are in translation all over the world from Russia to South Africa and Iceland, and have even gone into Japanese manga and been turned into graphic novels. Super talented, and happy to share hard-earned knowledge.

**More than 65 books... Share with us two of your most precious experiences.**

That first phone call from London at nine o'clock at night to tell me they were buying my first book – after trying to get published with Harlequin for 12 years! – was very special. It was State of Origin night and everyone I rang to tell was out somewhere or not answering their phones!

Another precious experience was being in the Times Square Marriot in New York for the Romance Writers of America conference a few years back and discovering my book cover was on one of the elevator doors. *My cover!!!* It was ridiculously thrilling!

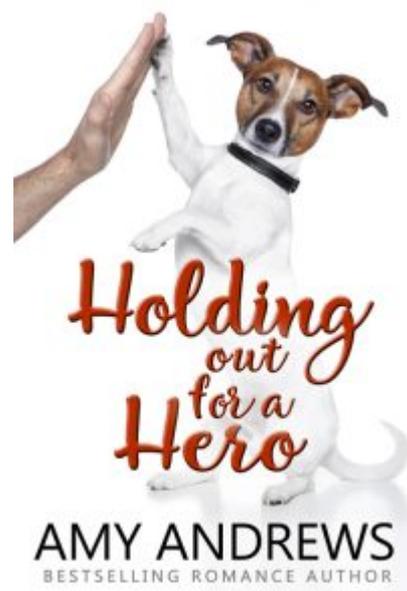
**When did you decide to leave your job as a Registered Nurse and become a full-time writer, and how big a decision was that?**

I retired three years ago – so I'd been published ten years at that stage – and it was a *very* big decision for me. I loved being a nurse – loved it from the moment I first put on my uniform at the age of 17. And I loved the people I worked with. But changes at work were making me rethink my direction and I started to wonder if maybe the universe was telling me I should just write instead of trying to juggle two professions. Financially, though, I knew I'd be cutting my income in half so it was a leap of faith. Luckily it's worked out okay, with

my writing income increasing year on year. I haven't made up the short fall yet but I'm getting closer!

**That's a lot of books! How do you find new story lines at this stage in your career?**

I don't. They reckon there's only about 9 original plots in the world and all stories are a fresh twist on them. I mean, a boy wizard was hardly a new idea, right? But, it's how each writer tells that age-old story that sets each book apart. So I guess I try to do that, bearing in mind there's something very comforting to a reader – a *genre* reader anyway – about the familiarity of stories. Writing something to be new and innovative is, for me, the wrong way to approach my job. I don't write to be clever with words or to set the world on fire. I write to entertain. I am Netflix!

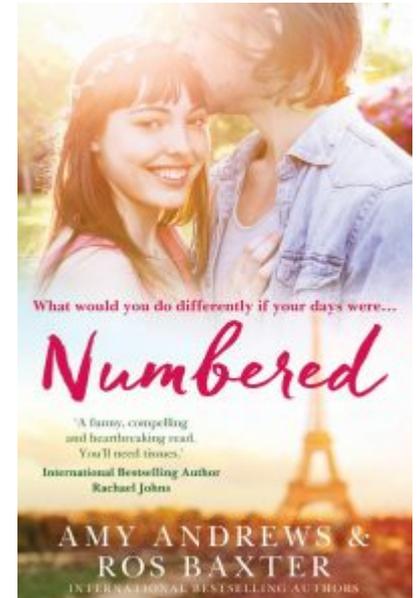


**What have you learned about writing, agents and publishers along the way?**

I've learned that all you can really control is the writing side – so much is actually out of your hands unless you self publish but even then, there's no guarantee your book is going to find an audience. I've learned that it takes talent, persistence, agility and a sprinkle of luck (sometimes a shit load of it) to make it as a full-time writer. I've learned that a good agent and a good publisher /editor is gold but they're all not created equal and they are first and foremost a business.

**You wrote the novel *Numbered* with your sister. Can you tell us about that process? At any point did you want to strangle one another?**

At no point did we want to strangle each other. We'd already written 2 books together so we were confident in our process and we have such similar writing styles and personalities, it was actually incredibly easy. And fun! I think the secret to co-writing is to plan/plot as much as possible in advance. Our process was to each own a POV character and tell the story in alternating POV chapters. Then we sent the chapters via email when we were done and the story came together.



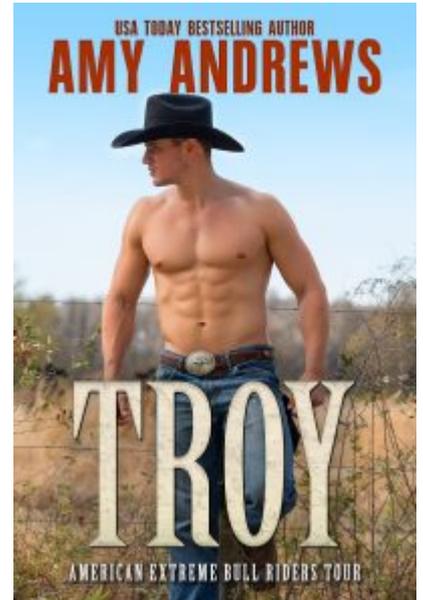
I used to love getting Ros's chapter and reading her take on what we'd decided was going to happen. It was always fresh and wonderful and inspired me to go on and write the next chapter. I really think it pushed us to be better writers because I wanted my contribution to be just as good.

**Describe your life as a writer for us. I know you occasionally get whisked to Europe for decadent lunches with publishers. Is that common?**

Lol – I do visit my publisher when I'm overseas and they do take me to lunch which is hands down soooo freaking cool! But no one's shouting me business class airfares to swan around the world just yet J I might have to be more like JK or EL before something like that happens! Sadly the everyday reality is me staying in my PJ's for way too long and bleeding all over the keyboard. Writing a book is hard! *Having* written a book is awesome.

**I've heard you say that networking is a cornerstone of a successful writing career. Any additional advice for fellow authors who may be earlier in their careers? For instance, how important are competitions and awards, writers conferences, etc?**

Comps are great for learning craft as long as you only enter the ones that give you feedback. Awards are lovely but not something you can count on. Conferences are gold. G.O.L.D. Find your tribe – the body that’s there to support your particular genre – join them and go to their workshops and conferences and get into their online communities. Not only will you find kinship but you’ll improve your craft and get to know industry people as well. This is where your networking really comes into force. You can face-to-face pitch manuscripts at a lot of writer conferences these days to an editor or an agent. That’s worth the admission price alone! If I had one piece of advice I’d recommend you invest in attending a writing conference (appropriate to what you’re writing) every year. If you’re looking at ROI, it’s the best bang for buck IMHO. But make sure you work it work it, when you’re there – get your money’s worth! Learn craft but also go to industry workshops, introduce yourself to people etc. The connections you make at conferences may not be immediately evident but they can be career starting/building.



Intrigued? – [Freebies and loads of new Amy Andrews titles.](#)

Her latest release is [Troy: American Extreme Bull Riders Tour.](#)

*Carolyn Martinez is an [author](#), [editor and author's coach](#).*

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## Writing in Deep Point of View

Deep Point of View (Deep POV) is a term being discussed by those in the know – agents, publishers, authors – so it’s

worth taking a moment to understand what it is. Blogs and author posts confused me at first. One said – it's to write 'leaner, meaner, cleaner and faster' but then every example given was longer than the original sentence!

I'm going to share with you what I've come to understand about Deep Point of View. I believe that Deep Point of View is a form of show not tell that strips the author's voice out of the writing to portray scenes from the character's viewpoint. When done right, it establishes immediate rapport with your reader.

There are three keys to writing in Deep POV:

1. Remove unnecessary words.
2. Minimise speech tags.
3. The most important – describing what your character sees/does/feels – through their eyes, not the author's.

### **REMOVE UNNECESSARY WORDS**

**Redundant words** get in the way of your prose and slow the reader down. Because they don't contribute any forward movement or essential information, you are better off removing them whenever you can.

**Some commonly used unnecessary words are:** but, then, to the, and, almost, instead, continued, began, back, considered, regarded, wondered, saw, heard, hoped, realised, smelled, watched, touched, felt, knew, decided, just, really, to be, reaching, suddenly, that, you know, up, down, in, out, anyway, even, quite, rather. (Okay to use in dialogue).

### **REMOVE SPEECH TAGS**

#### ***Example***

Jim stopped the car in the middle of the road. 'I want to go bungee jumping,' his eyes sparkled with the fervour of knowing.

'Okay, I'll watch but I'm not doing it with you.'

Jim looked into his wife's eyes and smiled, a knowing smile – he would change her mind.

## **REMOVE THE AUTHOR'S VOICE**

*Examples –*

### ***Deep POV – First Person***

I've always been a bad manager of time. It just seems to speed up when I'm not watching, the seconds tick faster than other peoples'. When I skulk in late, I can see it on my team's faces, I can feel it in their stares. I know how they see me; a complete arse, arrogant enough to expect the world to wait, when really, I'm just optimistic with time. (Source [Kylie Kaden](#) author of *Losing Kate* and *Missing You*).

### ***Deep POV – Third Person***

She ran to class, and barged through the door. The only thing that mattered was seeing him. Seeing his smile and his amazing face. When she did, she knew; he was her world.

***Another example –***

### **This is Not Deep POV:**

Cate felt pain shoot up her leg and wondered how long it would take the venom to reach her heart. Onlookers watching the zookeeper could see she was in trouble. A quick-thinking bystander called an ambulance, while another ran to the park's entry to raise the alarm. (This is the author describing the scene).

### **This is Deep POV:**

Pain shot up her leg. Her hands clamped around her thigh and a groan burst from her mouth. The poison burned an insidious path towards her heart. Her eyes widened, pupils dilated. *She*

*needed an ambulance. Now.*

(This is the character's view. It's what's happening to her body as it happens, and then her thoughts as they go through her mind).

Hope I've inspired you to explore writing in Deep POV because one day your editor might read your manuscript and reply 'love it, but could you re-write your whole book in Deep Point of View please'.

Carolyn Martinez is the author of [Finding Love Again](#), and [Inspiring IVF Stories](#).

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## Writer's Block

I've heard countless people say, 'I'm going to write a book one day' or 'I can only write when I'm inspired.' I'm one of those people who used to speak in a similar vein. My internal dialogue was, 'I'm going to pay off my house and then give up work and then I'll have time to write books.'



I'm now supporting myself as a full-time writer, but my earlier internal dialogue had nothing to do with me being in this position. In fact, had I stayed on that path, there's no way I'd be a writer now. You see, once I became financially

independent, I had kids – time-consuming kids. There is always something in life that'll take you away from your writing if you allow it.

The change for me happened when I read Stephen King's book, 'On Writing'. In it, he says, 'I only write when I'm inspired, and I make sure I'm inspired at 9am every week day.'

If you want to be a writer you have to treat it like a job and give it priority. Otherwise, it'll never happen. I'm not telling you to immediately go out and quit your day job – we all have bills to pay. However, if you're serious about writing a book now, you can set yourself a goal to write 5,000 words a week. That's 1,000 words every week-day, and that's not unrealistic. If you do this, in 17 weeks you'll have written your first draft of an 85,000-word book. Chunk your book down like this into small, achievable goals and before you know it, you'll be there. For most people who haven't had time to write, I say set a goal of 500 words per week, and in two years you'll have a first draft of a book. Some weeks you'll write more. So long as you always write at least 500 words you're moving towards your goal.

Of course, there's more to it. You need to know how to write and if you haven't yet explored your craft and refined your skills, then make sure you do. There are plenty of courses, writing groups, online forums – immerse yourself in them. Every learning activity you involve yourself in will teach you something new. Act like a writer, live the life of a writer, immerse yourself in the world of writing, and you'll be a writer. I go to a published authors group once a month – Brisbane Book Authors – and also go to writing forums, sessions, and festivals whenever I can. One of the best festivals I've ever been to is [Newcastle Writers Festival](#).

Writing a novel length piece of work is like a home loan – immensely overwhelming if you focus on the end game. Break it down into one step at a time, and it's much more manageable.

Find what works for you. In my case, I'm a journalist. For 20 years I kept telling everyone I was going to write a book, but every time I started it turned into a 2,000-word short story. There were some fairly good short stories to come out of it, but it was a recurring pattern for me. 85,000 words is a long time to sit with a character. Eventually, I stopped and considered what I was good at. For me, I was good at 5,000-word feature articles. I wrote them every week for work. So for my first book, '[Inspiring IVF Stories](#)', I interviewed men and women all over Australia and every chapter in the book is, in essence, a 5,000-word feature article. Each chapter is a complete story of someone's IVF experience. I put 12 such feature articles together and turned it into a book.

Once I'd written one 85,000-word book, I knew I could do it. I then started research for my next non-fiction book, '[Finding Love Again](#),' and now I've just finished the first draft of my personal dream goal – to write a fiction novel.

Once I read Stephen King's philosophy and my self-talk changed, it all became quite do-able. Thanks Mr King!

Remember, if 1,000 words, 5 days a week isn't achievable for you right now, don't sweat it. Choose what's do-able for you – every writer no matter how time poor could do at least 500 words a week. Do you think you could do 1,000 words a week consistently? Give it a crack.

*Carolyn Martinez is an author and editor. She likes good music, good wine and good company. Her latest pursuit to keep the creative vibes alive is learning Egyptian drumming.*