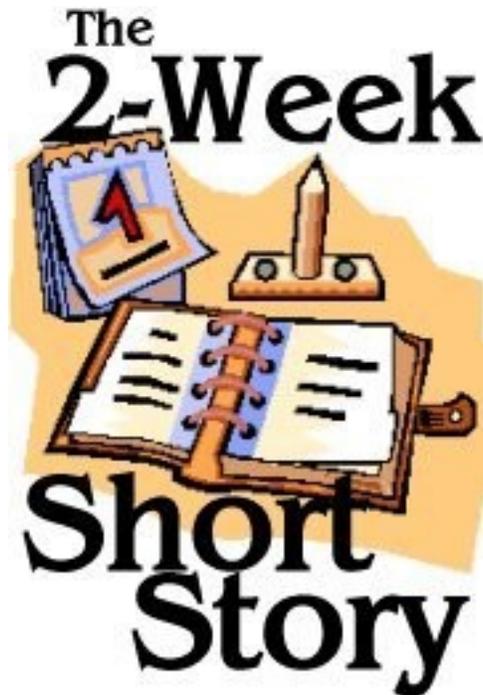


# The Scriptorium Webzine for Writers

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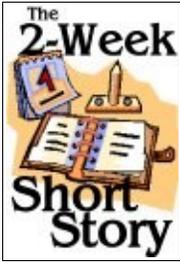
## Email Course

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## Lesson One - Light A Fire

Welcome to the 2-Week Short Story course! Together over the next two weeks, we're going to write a short story together. Well, you're going to write it, and I'm going to do my best to guide you through the process.

Two weeks might not sound like a very long time in which to write your story. You might have partially-finished works that have been sitting and stagnating for much longer than that, or stories you've been slaving over for months without ever getting to the end. We all have other demands on our time, and all too often "writing time" falls to the bottom of the list. So you're probably asking, "how am I going to do this?"

We're going to use some strategies to write this story that will hopefully make the process easier, faster, and if we're lucky, more fun for you, the writer. We're also going to talk about avoiding things that might make you get stuck or slow your progress.

To get the most out of this course, I'm going to suggest that you **not** browse these lessons at work, or while you're multi-tasking other things, or in two-minute chunks scattered through the day. I'm assuming that if you've signed up to write a short story in two weeks, you already know you're going to have to put some time on it. For the first few lessons at least, set aside a time to work on the course, read the lesson first and then follow any instructions.

The biggest thing to remember is *don't take your writing too seriously*, especially in the first draft. It's better to write an awful first draft than to never finish the story at all. Everything can be changed and improved later, but you need that raw material to work with. So let's find out how we're going to get it.

### Tools

For this lesson, all you need are some note-making tools. I strongly suggest pen/pencil and paper or index cards, but if you're more comfortable making notes on the computer, go with what works for you. You should also print out the worksheet at the end of this lesson so that you can fill it in when the time comes.

### Story Ideas 101

I was going to make the assumption that if you're taking this course, you already have an idea for a short story you want to write, but I don't think I should do that. I think we'll start with the topic of ideas. That way, if you need an idea, this will help you find one, and if you have an idea, you'll find some help to evaluate it.

The question of where to get ideas is probably the one writers are asked most often--and it's the one least easily answered. It's probably fair to say that everything that happens around you or to you is a potential story idea, but how do those ideas turn into *stories*?

Writing stories is very much like any other creative process. Creativity is messy. We start out with a bunch of raw materials, and somehow we find a way to combine them into a coherent, whole, end product. Start with pigment, water, paper, brushes, mess them around for a while and you end up with a painting. Start with flour, eggs, sugar, a few other things, mix them up and you'll get a cake, or maybe a pie. Stories are like that. To start, you have a few things to work with:

- bits of unrelated fact
- people you know or have observed
- your own experiences and emotions
- other media (being careful to develop one's own original story)
- conversations and overheard or misheard utterances
- news and events in other people's lives
- dreams and visions
- pictures, art, other visuals
- your sense of what makes a "good" story
- your imagination

Right now it's pretty messy. What you need to do to get started is dip into that mix, and extract some bits:

- some people to be your characters
- some events that will affect the people
- a vision of what kind of story you want to tell

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### Want more?

Eight full lessons are waiting to help you tackle transforming those initial ideas into scenes, then go on to finding your own method for writing your story, getting through the middle, bringing it all together in a perfect ending, and tying up the loose ends. Through the lessons you'll find worksheets, checklists, help and encouragement. Take your story through its initial promises and deliver on them in the end, writing quickly and steadily.

**This is only the beginning of Lesson One, and we're just getting started.  
To discover the next steps for turning your ideas into solid stories quickly,  
[sign up today for The 2-Week Short Story Email Course!](#)**

I do hope you'll join me,

