



Hi Fellow Writers!

Whoever thought writing was easy? Bet you don't anymore! The beginning might have been brilliant, and you probably had loads of enthusiasm in week one, but I bet a good number of you---if not all of you---have hit the half-way slump.

I've lost count now of the number of letters I've received from aspiring writers saying that they can start a book, but just can't finish it. Sometimes I think that's what separates the writers that succeed from those that don't; sometimes it's as simple as the fact that they worked through the slumps and got their book finished.

Whatever stage you're at, I wanted to pass a bit of advice that my dad gave me (he's a writer too): "Just get it writ."

Why was that the best advice? Because you can always go back and change things once you have something to work on. You need to first just get the story down without judging yourself or trying to write "the most brilliant book ever."

Did any of you stumble over your first line? I know I have spent hours on some books writing and rewriting that first line trying to write something original/brilliant/mind-grabbing. Now I know to just get started because I can always go back and change that first line later.

Every time I start a new book, about half-way or maybe two-thirds of the way through, the voices at the back of my head pipe up. I call one of them Cassandra the Prophet of Doom. She's a killer, and has done her level best to stop me from writing. She says things like, "You're writing rubbish. What the heck made you think you could write? You can't, you know. Everyone can write better than you. You'll be found out. You have nothing to say."

I know better now, and tell her, "Zip it Cass, I'm busy writing a book," and just to get on and get my story writ.

I believe that we have two separate parts of our brain and we have to let them each have their space. The first part is the creative part. It has an idea; it is spontaneous, flowing, and full of energy. The other part is the critical, rational part of the brain that will say,

"Oh, but will that idea work? Is it good enough? How can it be improved?" So my main bit of advice is: get your story down. Let it flow, let the creative side of you have room to express itself without judgment, and at the end, when you have your last page written, then you can go back and edit.

I read an article by Philip Pullman once. He said he always hit that slump around page 70. That's when the voice at the back of his head pipes up with the doubts. So even he, with all his success and brilliant books, goes through the same process. So if you have hit a point when you feel like you can't carry on, or your book isn't any good, remember you are not alone---you are in good company, and it is all part of the process.

JUST GET IT WRIT!

You can always go back and change things later.

Cathy Hopkins