



Parent Testimonial

By Mary Roper (2005)

One day I'd like to write a book...

Can you see me sitting here in a dream-like state looking into the sky?

A few years ago a friend said, JUST DO IT! I said, No way! I am too much of a perfectionist. I tear my work apart. That friend pointed me to a website that promoted National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo).

National Novel Writing Month said, Take 30 days and crank out a 50,000 word novel! Think Quantity not Quality! Get your ideas, your story on paper. I thought it was an insane idea. But it worked for me. It freed me to practice letting go of my perfectionist streak and just write.

That was November 2003, I was 33. I completed a Pre-Teen Fairy Story of just over 50,000 words that year. My eldest daughter, then 14, saw that I was gearing up to do this crazy thing again in 2004 and she asked if she could do it too. I fully supported her. She aimed for 50,000 as that was the Goal given by the site. She wrote 25,000 words that month! We both knew that 50,000 words was pushing it for her and agreed that at 25,000 words she had done an amazing thing.

Other teachers grabbed the idea as well. It is about writing fluency; the ability to fluidly translate the ideas in one's head to words on the page. No marking off for penmanship or spelling or even *gasp* Grammar! Of course when dealing with younger folks with other things on their plates the 50,000 word count issue had to be revisited.

In the Young Writers Program, the student and teacher, in our case mom and dad, sit down and discuss a reasonable goal with each child. Each child is different so each goal will be different. Then they make out a goal contract saying that the teacher will help and advise the child as they endeavor to accomplish their goals.

It took me until I was thirty-three to be able to let go and transfer the words and ideas in my head onto paper into semi-coherent sentences. I LOVE the idea that the National Novel Writing Month group has jumped on board with the teachers and have started a YOUNG WRITERS PROGRAM! It is helping me ensure that my children will not struggle with such things until they are thirty-three like I did.

In closing I would like to share a bit about my eldest child's experience last year. Writing and typing furiously for 30 days. Living on ramen, sandwiches, and tea because you don't

want to waste a second of precious crazy writing time. Cramped fingers and working late into the night even on your bed with a flashlight.

Was it worth it?

As a Mom...Seeing your 14 year old daughter's face light up when you hand her a copy of the novella she wrote all by herself... That's PRICELESS!