A close-up photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her eyes and nose. The image has a warm, orange-toned overlay. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

Get published.

Build a career.

Contribute to creating a better world.

Become a
**PROFESSIONAL
AUTHOR
COURSE**

PART ONE:

WRITE STORIES THAT WORK

Lesson One:

What is Fiction?

Grant P. Hudson

**BECOME A
PROFESSIONAL
AUTHOR
COURSE
PART ONE:
WRITE STORIES THAT WORK**

Introduction and
Lesson One:
What is Fiction?

Grant P Hudson

CLARENDON HOUSE
PUBLICATIONS

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How This Course Works and What to Expect by the End:

The Become a Professional Author Course is made up of three basic parts:

1. Write Stories That Work

In eight Lesson Modules, you will learn the basic structures of all successful fiction and be encouraged through practical exercises to produce stories of your own which grab, glue, guide and control readers' attention.

2. Sell Stories Effectively

In four Lesson Modules, you will discover how marketing really works and work through several practical exercises so that you will have customers who like, buy and recommend your work to others.

2. How Clarendon House Can Help You

In two Lesson Modules, you will be shown how Clarendon House lays out routes of opportunity for you to get published and acquire a readership of your own.

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO ALL THE EXERCISES TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY TO ACHIEVE THE MAXIMUM BENEFITS FROM THE COURSE.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN PART ONE...

Three important things to make clear before you even read the introduction...

1. You can write however you wish.

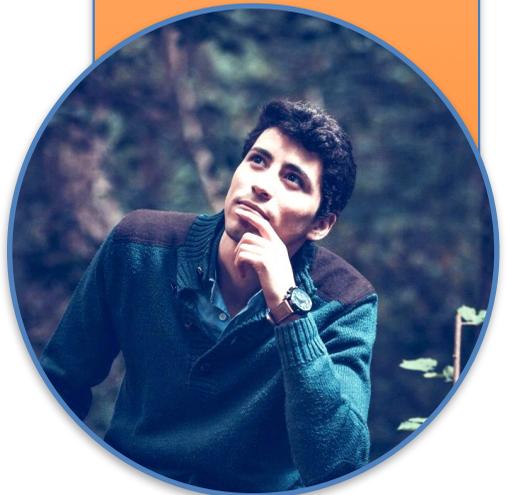
Though this book gives you sequences and approaches to writing based on extensive study of what makes all fiction work, **no one is forcing you to write in a particular way or follow a particular pattern.** Please read this book as an educational exercise, and feel free to accept or reject its principles as you see fit and as you decide what is or isn't applicable to your situation.

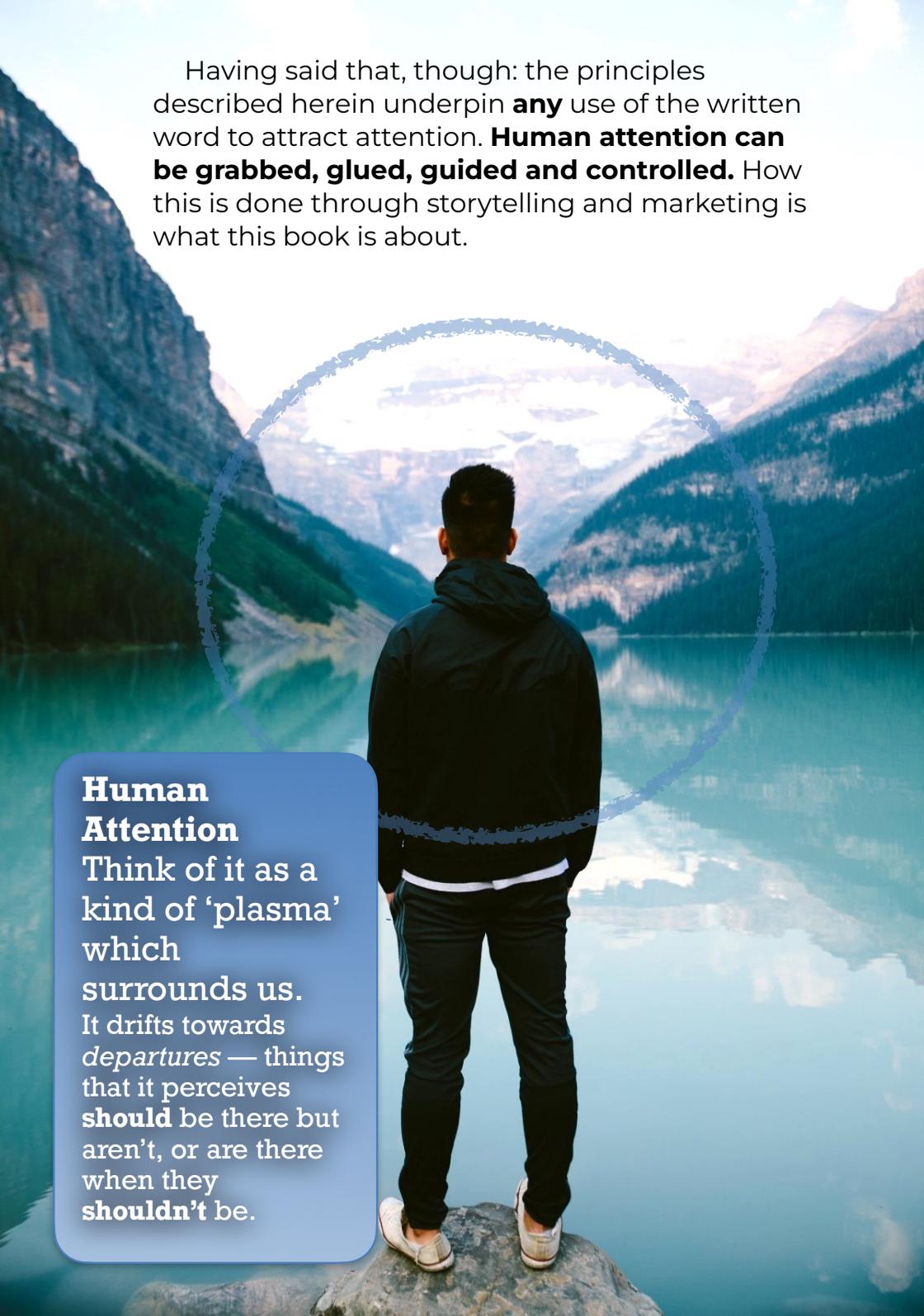
Course Exercise # 1:

Start a Course Log or Journal.

Jot down some of your most deeply held ideas about how writing should be done. Take your time; explore your own writing patterns.

Use your log to note down things from this course.





Having said that, though: the principles described herein underpin **any** use of the written word to attract attention. **Human attention can be grabbed, glued, guided and controlled.** How this is done through storytelling and marketing is what this book is about.

Human Attention

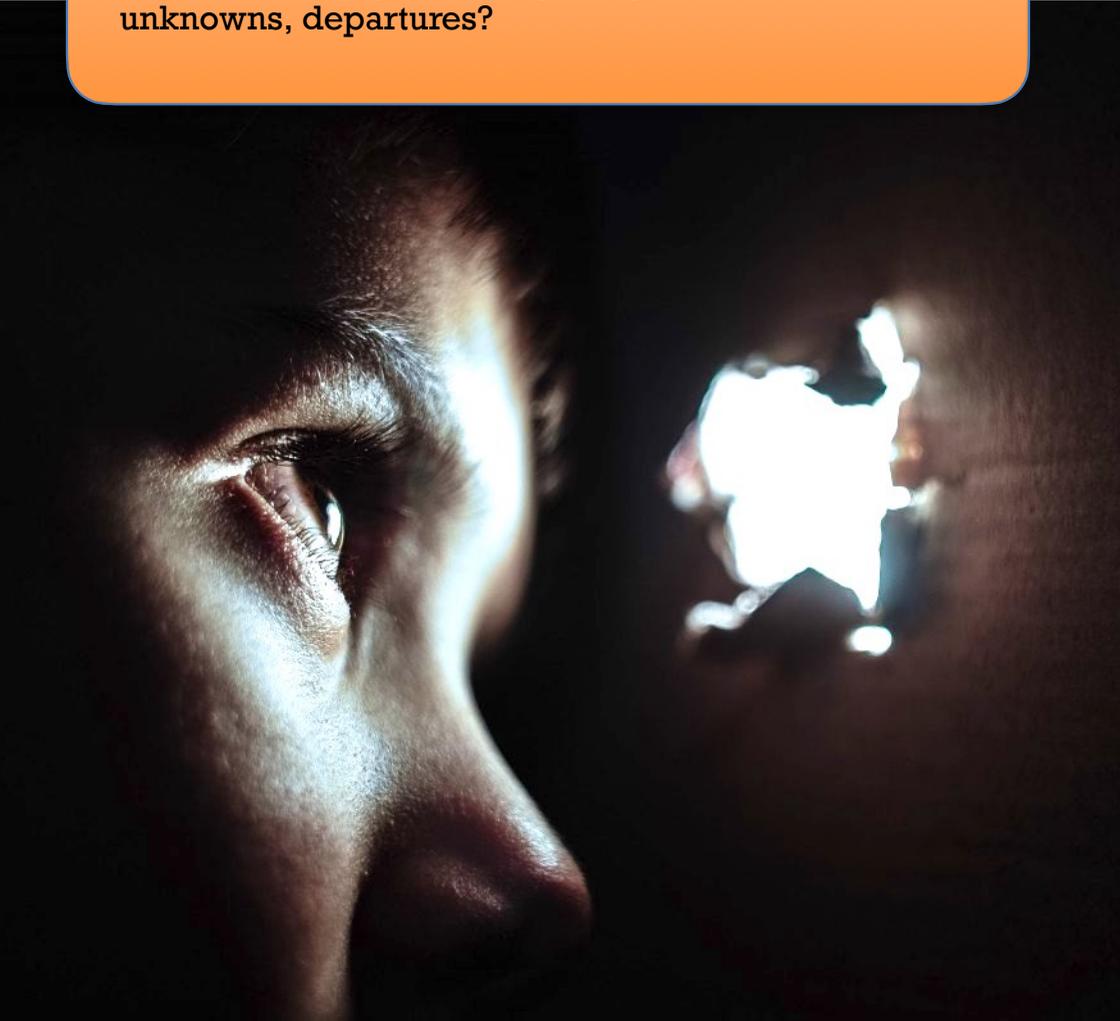
Think of it as a kind of ‘plasma’ which surrounds us.

It drifts towards *departures* — things that it perceives **should** be there but aren’t, or are there when they **shouldn’t** be.

Course Exercise # 2:

In your course log, list some of the things your attention is on right now in Life.

Is it drawn to gaps, missing things, losses, mysteries, unknowns, departures?





2. Prepare to change the way you view stories.

This course will change the way you view stories completely. Please don't read it if you feel you want to continue to enjoy fiction 'from the outside' and remain innocent as to the devices used to make it work on you as a reader or audience member.

3. 'Readers' are not all the same.

One of the biggest myths in the world of writing fiction is that you just need to acquire 'readers'.

But which readers? Who are they? Who exactly are the readers who will enjoy **your** fiction?

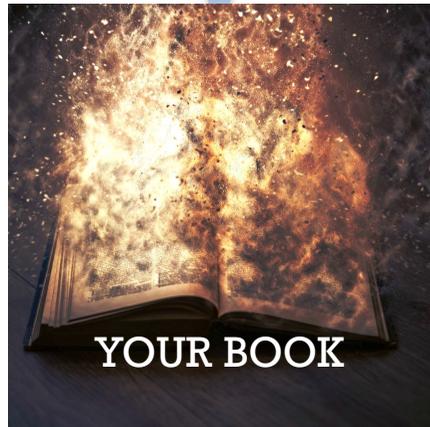
If you want your fiction to be read, one of the primary things you will have to decide or discover is who **your** readers are. You are not chasing 'readers' as some kind of general group; you are looking for **particular readers** who will love what **you** write.

There's a big difference, as you will see.

The more you understand this, the better everything in this book will work for you.



ALL THE READERS IN
THE WORLD



YOUR BOOK



YOUR PUBLIC

INTRODUCTION

The first part of this book teaches you **how to write stories that grab, glue, guide and control readers' attention**. Once you know how to do that, you're ready for the second part, which teaches you how to **grab, glue, guide and control prospects' attention**.

Here are some basic principles:

1. The world doesn't owe you readers. You have to work to acquire them.

Particular readers want particular feelings. Often they don't exactly know what they want until they feel it. Your writing has built-in feelings already — your job is to attract those readers who want exactly the feelings **your** work offers.



2. Fiction affects readers emotionally.

Any successful piece of fiction has managed to affect readers in specific emotional ways. A successful professional author by definition has managed to build a career around readers by affecting their emotions.

Course Exercise # 3:

In your log, list the main feelings which you think your fiction creates in readers.

Again, take your time; come back to the list over a few days if needed.



3. As a writer, you use emotion to deliver a message.

You guide a particular group of readers through a series of imagined events called a 'story', and produce the feelings those particular readers yearn for. Those emotions are a **carrier wave** for your **message**.

Each year I help dozens of writers stop wasting time and energy writing material which will never attract or affect readers, and instead guide them into creating stories which work.

Stories that work grab, glue, guide and control readers' attention.

These writers find that this process not only helps readers enjoy the resulting stories, but also makes the process of writing them far more enjoyable and productive.



**Emotions are a
carrier wave
for your
message**



The second part of this book contains information which will change the way you present yourself as an author and market your books. Similarly, thousands of writers waste time and money on inefficient marketing approaches which will never produce sales or fans. Instead, they could build professional careers as authors with books that actually sell.

Marketing that works grabs, glues, guides and controls prospects' attention.

The core of successful writing and marketing has to do with **clarifying your message**, which in turn clarifies your fiction and your market.

These steps will work for you, regardless of your genre, your style, your preferred form (novel, short story, play, screenplay etc) or anything else, if you do them fully and correctly.

*The core of successful writing and marketing has to do with **clarifying your message**, which in turn clarifies your fiction and your market.*

Fiction writing has used these same principles ever since human beings learned how to write. Stories that work for readers attract, grip and guide those readers; stories that do something else are quickly forgotten or become admired only by a small group of devotees.

Similarly, marketing has used these same principles ever since human beings needed to trade goods. Marketing, done correctly, attracts, grips and guides prospects towards what they are really looking for and will produce sales — and, almost better than

sales, fans who will recommend your product to others. Marketing that doesn't do these things fails rapidly (and can be wastefully expensive).

By the time you reach the end of this book, if you apply yourself fully to the wisdom it contains — laid out as a series of **lessons** — you should be able to write stories which attract, grip and guide readers while delivering your communication effectively and you will have customers who like, buy and recommend your work to others.



A top-down view of a wooden desk with a white laptop, a smartphone, and a cup of coffee. The laptop is on the left, the smartphone is on the right, and the coffee cup is in the bottom right corner. The text is centered over the laptop screen.

Part One:
WRITE STORIES
THAT WORK

LESSON ONE: WHAT IS FICTION?

Many writers waste enormous amounts of time writing stories which don't work for readers and which readers will never buy.

That's an awful statement, isn't it? It triggers some of the deepest doubts that many writers try to hide from themselves.

'What if my writing isn't actually any good?'

'What if I am really wasting my time?'

'What if no one ever reads my stuff?'

Lack of sales can seem to confirm these deepest fears.

There are two possible reasons for low or zero sales in these circumstances:

1. Your work actually **isn't** any good because it fails to **grab, glue, guide and control readers**

OR



2. The marketing of your work isn't any good because it fails to **grab, glue, guide and control prospects**.

The first part of this book addresses the grim potential reality of the first point: maybe your writing actually **isn't** working.

In Part One, you'll discover what makes writing work, and why some authors succeed while others have in-built failure before they even get published. You'll learn how to replicate eternally successful principles in your own work, again and again, so that no matter what you're writing, you know how to construct something which attracts, grips and guides readers — not just any readers, but the **right readers for your work**.

One of the surprising side-effects of this is that your own work will become much more appealing, energised and attractive to you, the writer, before anyone else even sees it.

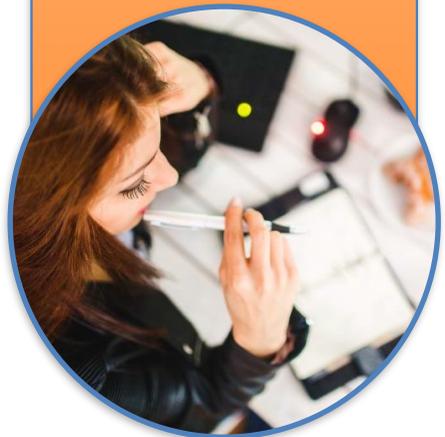
You will feel like writing more, and you will make changes to your lifestyle to enable you to do so.

Course Exercise # 4:

Is your work flawed? Or is your marketing flawed?

(Hint: if your fiction isn't selling, the answer to one or both of these questions is 'Yes'.)

Note down your thoughts in your Course Log.



What Is Fiction For?

It's soul-crushing to spend hours, weeks, months, maybe years, on a piece of writing only to have it produce no results in terms of sales or reader feedback. Writers are very often introverted folks to begin with, but writing which doesn't get accepted anywhere can drive them deeper into

their dark caves of self-doubt.

The problem is straightforward.

Most writers who want to make a living from what they write — or just want to gain acceptance for their work — are capable of stringing words and sentences together and generating scenes, chapters, stories, books, even series of books.



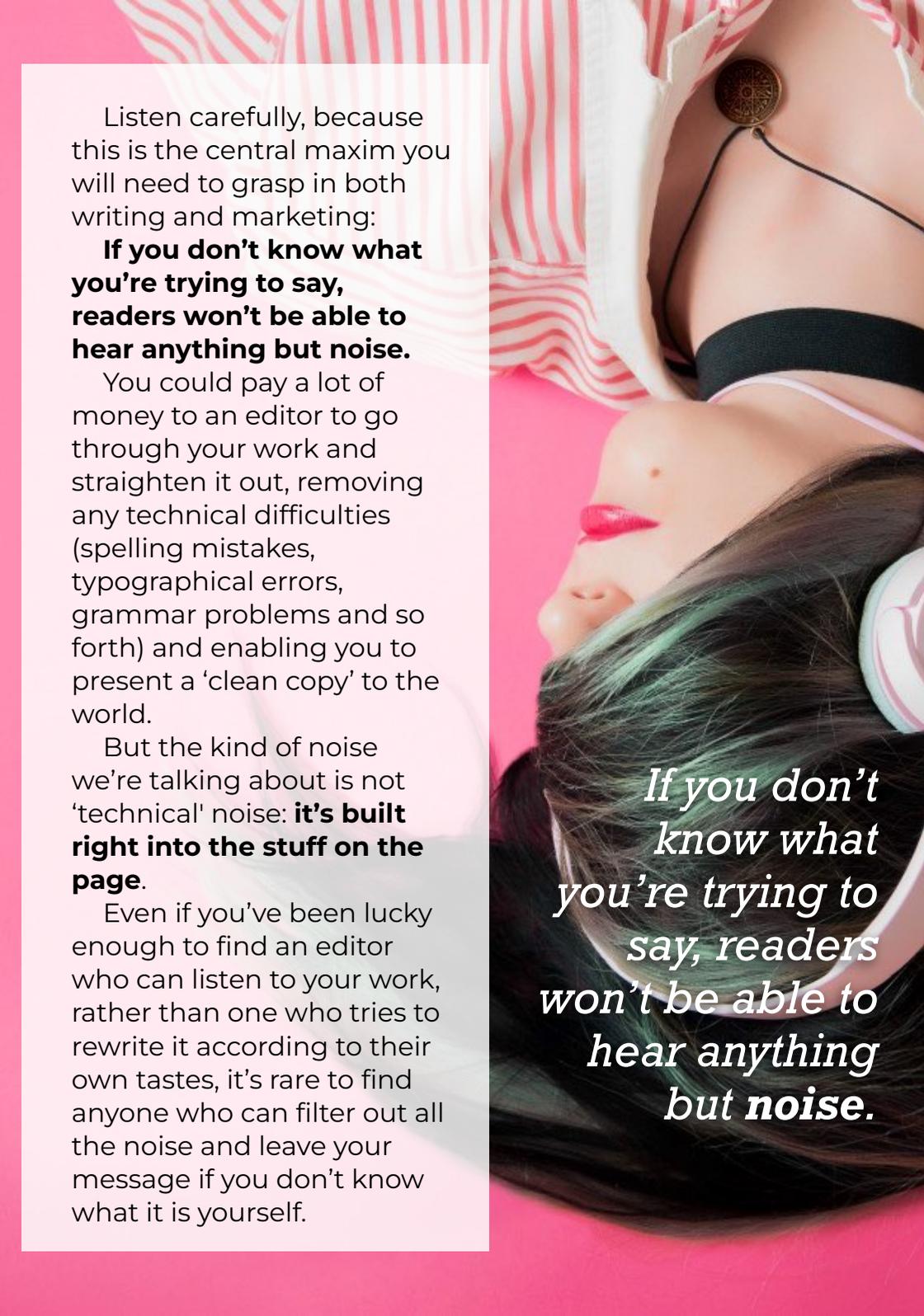
A large pile of tangled, multi-colored threads (red, green, blue, purple, yellow, black) against a brown background. The threads are of various colors and are completely mixed together, creating a chaotic and dense mass. The background is a solid, warm brown color.

What they **don't** usually know is **what they are trying to say with all those words.**

Inanimate pages and screens are happy to swallow volume after volume of words, and with the advent of free self-publishing, there are platforms out there which will joyfully consume an infinite amount of stuff and publish it, without any sales or feedback of any kind.

The cruel fact is that all those raw words don't achieve much. Most of the vast volume of material out there is just **noise.**

Noise is defined as random fluctuations that obscure or do not contain meaningful data or other information.



Listen carefully, because this is the central maxim you will need to grasp in both writing and marketing:

If you don't know what you're trying to say, readers won't be able to hear anything but noise.

You could pay a lot of money to an editor to go through your work and straighten it out, removing any technical difficulties (spelling mistakes, typographical errors, grammar problems and so forth) and enabling you to present a 'clean copy' to the world.

But the kind of noise we're talking about is not 'technical' noise: **it's built right into the stuff on the page.**

Even if you've been lucky enough to find an editor who can listen to your work, rather than one who tries to rewrite it according to their own tastes, it's rare to find anyone who can filter out all the noise and leave your message if you don't know what it is yourself.

If you don't know what you're trying to say, readers won't be able to hear anything but noise.

Books that fail creatively and commercially are composed mainly of noise.

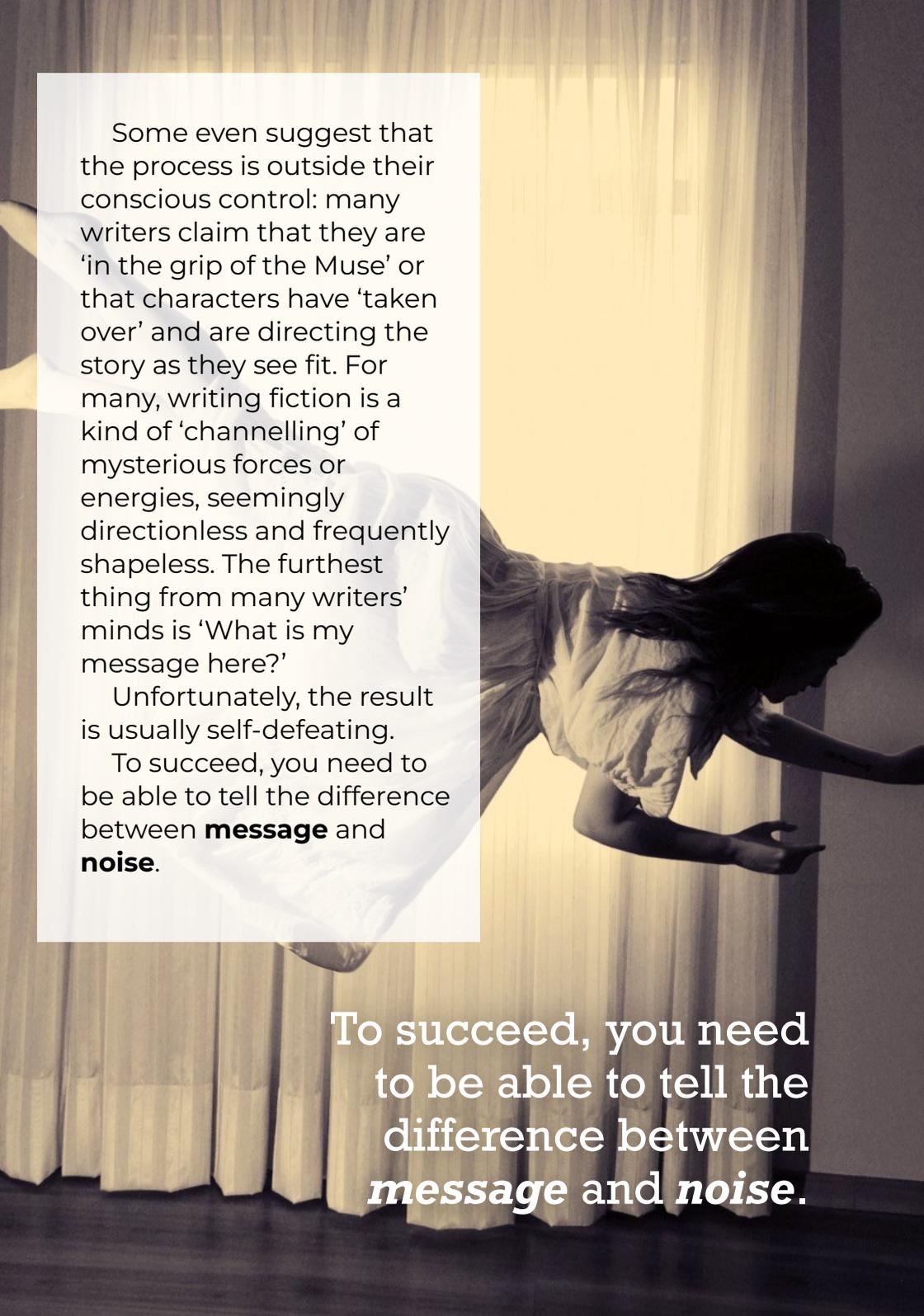
This means that even readers who would delight in reading your work walk right past your book because the things they would love are hidden under masses of clutter.

Books that succeed, on the other hand, have had most of their noise removed so that their message shines through.

Clarifying what you're trying to say isn't necessarily easy. Writers tend to get lost within their own worlds, for very precise reasons which we'll examine later. Most of what a writer commits to the page, especially in early drafts, emerges straight from their minds and hearts and is usually far from logical or rationally coherent. All many writers know is that they 'like' what they are doing, and so pour stuff out into the world.



***Writers
tend to get
lost within
their own
worlds...***

A woman in a white, flowing dress is leaning over a window with light-colored curtains. She is looking out the window, and her body is angled towards the right. The lighting is soft and warm, coming from the window. The background is dark, suggesting an interior room.

Some even suggest that the process is outside their conscious control: many writers claim that they are 'in the grip of the Muse' or that characters have 'taken over' and are directing the story as they see fit. For many, writing fiction is a kind of 'channelling' of mysterious forces or energies, seemingly directionless and frequently shapeless. The furthest thing from many writers' minds is 'What is my message here?'

Unfortunately, the result is usually self-defeating.

To succeed, you need to be able to tell the difference between **message** and **noise**.

To succeed, you need to be able to tell the difference between ***message*** and ***noise***.

The problem is that you probably don't know what your message is consciously enough to state it.

Asking others doesn't always help. Even those whom you might trust to give you good feedback might not necessarily be the right readers for your book (your grandmother, for example, might be a highly trusted judge of most things, but perhaps isn't particularly a fan of the gothic horror genre in which you're writing); and reader feedback is often too vague to be any good to you.

'Yeah, I kinda liked it,' is the kind of shapeless feedback you often get. 'I think the middle bit is way too long,' is perhaps a little more helpful, though not much.

Course Exercise # 5:

What kind of feedback have you received about your writing?

In your Course Log, note down the most positive remarks and the most negative. Also note if you haven't received any feedback about your writing.



What you need — and are most unlikely to get — is a reader who knows all about **how stories really work** so that the feedback you get is concise, constructive and straight to the point.

Someone who knows what they are talking about can be honest without hurting your feelings, because, perhaps surprisingly, **you will almost certainly agree with their feedback.** That's because they'll be telling you things you subconsciously knew already.

Such people can also be encouraging, because everything they say will point you in the direction of how to fix whatever it is that's not working.



It's like going to a car repair shop and asking someone qualified to take a look at your car and fix whatever they find, as opposed to asking a cake designer to do it. The car person knows cars and will know what to do; the cake person can make vague suggestions but they won't get you very far.

So how do you clarify your message?

Even those writers who sense that this is important can spend hours and hours staring at their computer screens, wondering what the difference is between noise and their message.

How can the hundreds of words of a story add up to a concise message for readers?

Luckily, this can be worked out.



*Writers can spend hours and hours staring at their computer screens, wondering what the difference is between **noise** and their **message***

Themes and Messages

A literary theme is the main idea or underlying meaning a writer explores in a novel, short story, or other literary work.

The same principle applies to genres too: they are **about** something. Each of the many genres usually has a set of themes which that genre normally addresses.

Themes of stories are conveyed through character, setting, dialogue, plot, or a combination of all of these elements. A theme is the **backdrop** for a message.

In many stories, the theme is usually an exploration of some 'big topic' to do with human nature on a grand scale. Many books share the same themes.



PLOT

STORY

THEME

Some common themes in literature are:

- Good vs. evil
- Coming of age
- Love
- Redemption
- Courage and perseverance
- Revenge

There are many others (see the Appendices for more).

But an author's message is **what that particular author is saying about that theme.**

Theme = Big Idea or Meaning

Message = individual slant on that idea

In the classic battle between light and dark, for example, a story about good triumphing over evil may pit two characters or sets of characters against each other, as in J. R. R. Tolkien's **The Lord of the Rings** or J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series; or a story might pitch a main character against a social belief, as in Harper Lee's **To Kill a Mockingbird**.

An author's message is what that particular author is saying about that theme.



The idea of 'Good versus Evil' can be seen in the external actions and dialogue of the characters, and in their internal struggle to do the right thing when faced with difficult moral choices.

But what is that individual author saying **about** that theme?

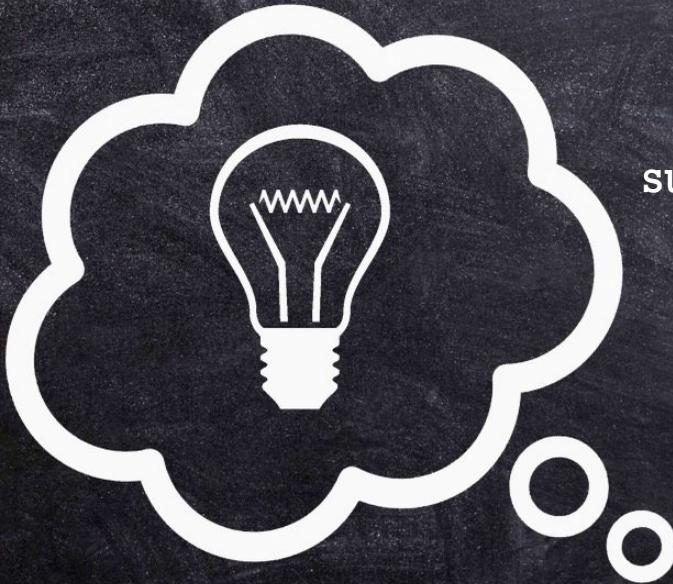
In Tolkien, the Good side wins, but at tremendous cost; in Harper Lee's story, evil could be said to have

won, but a serious moral point has been made.

The message is what that author wants readers to 'get' from the book's theme.

You think you don't have a 'message'? You don't worry about 'themes', you just write?

Unless they're just writing gibberish, **all writers have themes**, consciously or subconsciously.



All writers have themes, consciously or subconsciously.





Whether a writer is composing short stories, writing a novel, or working on a screenplay, a theme is usually spilling out onto the page or screen without conscious direction.

That's part of the problem. That lack of conscious direction is what results in 'noise'.

It may or may not be easy to tell what the theme of the story is at first, much less what the writer is saying about it. But certain questions can be asked to help to isolate what is going on:

i) What are the main characters conflicted about?

Is it a simple 'Good versus Evil' debate? Or are they arguing about Love? Is one side seeking redemption or revenge? Is the main character growing up?

Actions, choices, conversations will all give clues as to the theme of a piece of work, even if the writer had no clue while writing it.

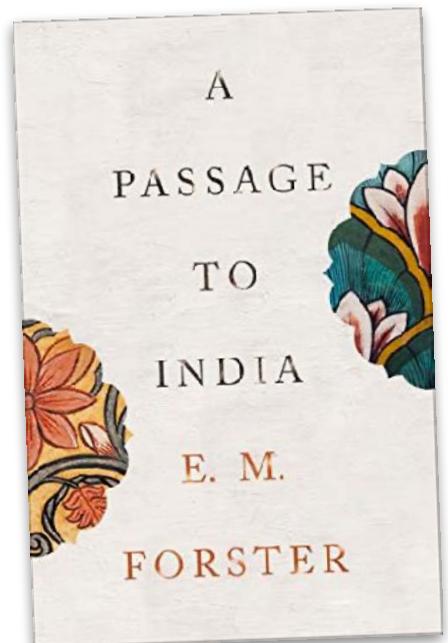
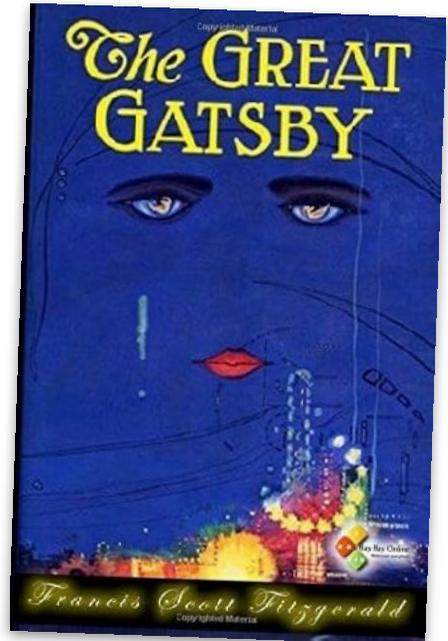
A theme is usually spilling out onto the page or screen without conscious direction.

ii) Are there any recurring motifs?

A motif is a recurring image or detail that highlights the central ideas in a story by recurring throughout the tale. F. Scott Fitzgerald's **The Great Gatsby**, for example, features constant, lavish parties which suggest excessive materialism, and a corrupt pursuit of the American dream. E. M. Forster's **A Passage to India** uses the presence of the 'civilised' British Raj in an otherwise 'primitive' India to hint at the disparities in life which echo its central theme about the meaning of the universe.

Writers sometimes are astonished to discover that the same motifs have appeared and re-appeared throughout their work without their conscious awareness.

Motifs are a clue as to the theme of a work.





iii) What symbols are present in the story?

Symbols are objects, characters, or settings that represent something else. The One Ring in Tolkien's **The Lord of the Rings** is both a magical artefact and a symbol of temptation. Its use throughout the story reveals something about the author's themes. The Caves of Marabar in Forster's **A Passage to India** are symbolic of

universal meaning (or lack of it). When the characters emerge from the caves, their experience tells us something about what Forster is talking about at a fundamental level.

Having established what the themes might be in a particular piece of work, in a general sort of way, a writer can now ask: 'What am I trying to say about this?'

In a book with a theme of Good versus Evil, whose side is the author on?



Are they on any one side, or are they staying neutral and letting the reader choose?

What is the author's often unspoken comment about the theme?

Do you think Harper Lee wants us to take away anything about the prevalent racism in **To Kill a Mockingbird**? Is Shakespeare making a point about Love in **Romeo and Juliet**? Is Pip's 'coming of age' in Dickens' **Great Expectations** supposed to be a good thing?

Once you have stepped back and determined the themes of a piece of writing, it's relatively easy to see what the author is trying to say about those themes.

In this way, you can see what your own message is in a particular piece of work.

And that's extremely important.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a silver pen. In the foreground, several keys are scattered on a white surface. One key has a colorful, abstract design on its head, while others are plain metal. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

**Lesson One:
Discovering and clarifying
your message is the key to
your success as an author
both in terms of writing the
fiction and in terms of
marketing it.**

Lesson One Exercise: YOUR MESSAGE

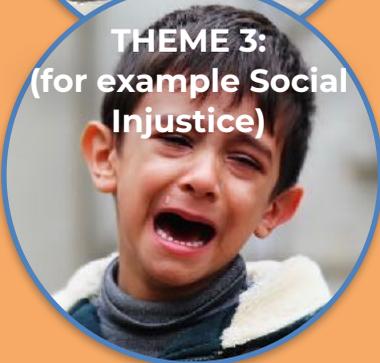
In your Course Log, write down some themes that your fiction tackles:



What are YOU saying ABOUT this theme?



What are YOU saying ABOUT this theme?



What are YOU saying ABOUT this theme?

What are your main characters conflicted about?

Character



Character



Motif



Symbol



Motif



Symbol



What recurring motifs and symbols occur in your fiction?

Write a new 2,000 word story which is

- a) about a specific theme
- b) contains a precise message about that theme
- c) contains motifs and symbols which reflect its message.

Try to cut out anything which does not directly relate to your message.

Save the story for future reference.

**Your next
module:**

**BECOME A
PROFESSIONAL
AUTHOR
COURSE
PART ONE:
WRITE STORIES THAT WORK**

Lesson Two:
Getting Your Message
Straight

Grant P Hudson