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THE WRITER'S EVERYTHING



The **Economization**
of Intellectual Property

From The Editor

QJ MARTIN

Well, it's finally over. The 20th year of NaNoWriMo is done and passed, and while I did not technically achieve victory, I am still quite happy with my results.

NaNoWriMo had the intended effect on me, as I'm sure it has on thousands of other writers across the globe. It's proved to all of us that we have what it takes to be able to write an entire novel in a very short period of time. Whether that period of time is, in fact, a month, or if it is two, as it will be for my current work-in-progress, makes no difference.

We can all be writers.

The Writer's Everything is released as a free weekly PDF download. If you'd like it sent directly to your inbox each Friday, then you can go to <https://qjmartin.org/newsletter/> and sign up there to receive it. Be sure to check your junk folder in case the newsletter is accidentally filtered out of your inbox.

If you would like to support *The Writer's Everything*, as well as my other literary endeavors, be sure that I will never turn down donations. You can pledge your patronage at <https://patreon.com/qjmartin/>

Until next time,

QJ

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Developing Your Character

Basic Information > Age

QJ MARTIN

Does he enjoy getting older, or does he dread it?

Some characters welcome the passage of time with open arms, as it comes with newfound freedom and abilities. Others dread old age. In *The Bucket List*, Edward Cole writes a list of activities that he wants to participate in before he dies, and soon engages in a race against the clock to check them all off before his lung cancer takes him. In *Interview with a Vampire*, Claudia hates the fact that she's stuck in the eternal form of a young girl, wishing instead that she could mature and become a grown woman.

Basic Information > Location

Where does he live?

The location where your character lives can have a large role to play in the plot of your story. In *Spider-Man*, Peter Parker lives in New York City, which puts him in close proximity to Oscorp Laboratories, where he is bitten by a radioactive spider and receives his superpowers. His presence among skyscrapers also facilitates his capacity to travel by swinging from building to building, an ability that would be useless in a rural farming community. In *The Village*, the village that the main characters live in is an essential aspect of the plot, and the truths behind its existence are major reveals both to the main character and to the audience.

Does he own, rent, squat, or live with someone else?

The question of whether a character owns, rents, or stays on another individual's property, with or without permission, can reveal a great deal about both his social status and aspects of his personality. In *Batman Begins*, Bruce Wayne lives in a mansion, which demonstrates both his

extreme wealth and privileged position among the Gotham City elite. In *Spider-Man 2*, Peter Parker lives in a cheap, run-down apartment which he can barely manage to afford as it is.



Does his location affect the way he sees himself? If so, why?

The location where a character lives can have a deep effect on the character's opinion of himself, for better or worse. In *Arrow*, Malcolm Merlyn is a wealthy businessman living in a rich neighborhood

in Starling City, which makes him feel superior to those who live in the city's slums, called the Glades. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the citizens of Gondor feel great pride over the fact that they lived directly in front of Mordor, and were personally responsible for keeping Sauron's forces at bay.

The Economization of Intellectual Property

QJ MARTIN

Nearly every person who calls themselves a writer has one dream objective that's always hovering right in the back of their minds: they want to be able to make a living off of their writing. It's the ever-elusive act of quitting our day job which we are all actively striving for.

The thing is, though, that the majority of us are far from putting in our two-week notice. Factor in the responsibilities of daily life, the cost of food and board, the act of caring for family members, and much more, and we're left with the painfully unfortunate situation of having very little time to actually be able to dedicate to our dream job.

If you are part of that majority, the majority that doesn't include Stephen King and J.K. Rowling, then you know just how important it is to make every effort count with your writing. But is there a way to go beyond that? Is there a way to economize our creativity, to allow our hand-crafted words and hard-fought grammatical victories to pull double duty, triple duty, or more?

The Key

The key to economizing your creativity, to get more out of your writing than its simple face value, is to remember that when you write something, it is yours. Those words, in that order, are your **intellectual property**, and until or unless you sign a contract to part with your writing, you can use those words in any way that you want.

What that means is that the blog post you wrote last week, the one you thought was pure genius, can become a series of tweets. The movie you watched last night wasn't a waste of time, because now you have a movie review on your blog, a video review on YouTube, and your glowing recommendation on Facebook. The dream journal that you record your nightly adventures in every morning can become the inspiration for a short story, a novel, or a memoir.

There are over 7 billion people in this world. The chances are strong that there is someone, somewhere, who, upon discovering you, would become your biggest fan, would read everything that you write and impatiently demand for more.

Not everyone, however, is going to find you on Twitter. Not everyone is going to read your blog. Not everyone is going to watch your YouTube videos, listen to your podcast, or watch your live-stream. But each of those avenues of distribution affords you the opportunity to reach a greater and greater audience.

You never know how much interest you'll garner through your varied distributions of your intellectual property. Perhaps someone will find you on YouTube, love your video essays, and seek you out on Kindle or Audible. Perhaps someone will keep up with your tweets for weeks, finally notice that pinned tweet on your profile, and become a rabid fan of your amazing podcast.

Of course, not every tweet is worthy of a YouTube video. Not every blog post is worthy of a live-stream event. So the question we're left with is, how can we identify the projects that have the greatest potential to be economized, projects that we know will still be valid and meaningful long after we write them.

Planning Ahead

If you want to economize your intellectual property, you must start by identifying topics that you can write about that will translate well to different mediums. For example, I have a (rather inactive) YouTube account in which I critique and fix movies and TV shows based on, above all else, their story-telling merits.

Writing Definitions

Intellectual Property

Creations of the mind, such as inventions, artistic and literary works, designs, and the like. They are items to which their creators have the rights, and which they are able to patent, copyright, or trademark.

Genre

The style in which a story is written, or the category in which the story fits. Genres are used for indexing books in libraries and book stores, and for readers to quickly discover books of interest.

Drama

A genre of writing that contains conflict of characters, and is conveyed through dialogue between the characters, in either prose or verse form.

Story Beat

The individual points of action that occur throughout a story. The story beats are usually all interlinked or related to each other, and together, they form the story.

Derivative Work

A work that includes major elements from previously created, original works, transformed, modified, or adapted into a second, separate work.

Ensemble Cast

A cast including numerous characters, usually all of whom, or at least the majority of whom, function as main characters in the story, as opposed to a story with a single protagonist.

Writing Concepts

Genre Conventions

Genre conventions are the story elements that are common, if not unique, to the *genre* in which an author chooses to write their story.

While a dozen writers may have the same idea for a novel, it's up to each individual to choose how they want to tell it. A large part of that involves the genre which the author chooses for their book.

The same story, such as that of a computer system successfully achieving self-awareness, could be told as a highly intellectual psychological thriller (*Ex Machina*), a high-octane action film (*The Terminator*), an action-oriented murder mystery (*I, Robot*), or a heart-warming but potent character *drama* (*A.I. Artificial Intelligence*).

Every genre is defined by different and unique characteristics and events. These genre conventions have developed over decades, if not centuries. As readers and watchers consume hundreds of stories in their favorite genres, they come to recognize, and even expect, certain things from those stories.

A romantic comedy will almost always have the couple get into a major argument just minutes before realizing the truth about each other and running back into their open arms.

A 'whodunit' will almost always have an ensemble cast packed full of colorful individuals, each one with a long and storied past filled to the brim with connections to the murder victim.

Genre conventions are not set in stone. No author is obligated to write a *story beat* simply because it's common in the genre in which they are writing. Middle ground must be found between fulfilling reader expectations, and creating a novel that is *derivative*.

There are plenty of people who seek out reviews and discussions about their favorite movies. So, of course, these videos would make great material for a blog. If there's a lesson that I extracted from the movie that aids in the development of story-tellers, then those lessons would make perfect articles for a magazine intended to help story-tellers, such as, say, this one.

Economizing Hobbies

Hobbies are just as ripe for economization as anything if you're clever about it. Say you love to go shopping. In that case, make a live-stream where you're unpacking all of the items that you bought, make a YouTube video where you review each of them, and then send out a couple tweets recommending the greatest items in your haul.

Say you like to collect certain objects, such as coins, stamps, shot glasses, or spoons. As you collect those items, make a tiny little note about the situation under which you bought or found each of them. The next thing you know, you have a blog series and an upcoming Kindle book discussing your journey to develop the greatest coin or ugly sweater collection in the world.

Lean Into Your Interests

As you contemplate ways that you can economize your creativity, keep in mind that the

best subjects to write about are going to be ones that interest you. If you're an expert craftsman, but you hate writing how-to guides for power tools, it's not going to magically become more enjoyable if you also decide to create a podcast explaining how to use power tools.

The things you write should always be those that pique your own interest, but that is even more the case, even more essential, if you're going to be revisiting those works again and again in different forms.

When you're writing, your goal is to try to elicit certain emotional responses from your readers. If you're not excited about what you're discussing, if it isn't a topic that makes you giddy, and if every article or tweet is a chore, then you're not going to be able to draw your readers in and allow them to have the sort of emotional response that keeps them coming back for more. That is equally true even when it is, in fact, a topic that they themselves have interest in.

While hundreds of thousands of individuals, if not more, claim the title of writer, much time and energy is required to really make a go of this profession. Thankfully, with a little planning, and a dash of creativity, your words can take you twice as far, if not further, towards your goal of being a successful writer.

Cinematic Storytelling — Differentiating An Ensemble Cast

QJ MARTIN

There are very few writing choices as risky as creating a novel with an **ensemble cast**. So much could go wrong, especially for the beginning writer. Yet, if done right, the rewards are more than equal to the challenge.

The question is, though, what is the secret to creating a satisfying ensemble cast?

Unique Characters

The key, in my opinion, is to give each character at least one major, unique characteristic.

For example, think of *The Lord of the Rings*. The story is set in a fantasy world that none of the readers can directly relate to. As such, it would be very easy for the characters to blend in with each other.

Four tall characters that live a long time? Ok. But do these characters all come off as the same?

Aragorn

Aragorn is a talented swordsman.

Gandalf

Gandalf is a wise and powerful wizard.

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Legolas

Legolas is an exceptional archer.

Arwen

Arwen is willing to give up immortality for Aragorn.

Of course we know that each of these characters holds a unique position in our memory. But they were also much easier to relate to. What about characters that aren't so easy to relate to, such as the four little hobbits?

Frodo

Frodo is self-sacrificing and brave.

Samwise

Samwise is loyal to a fault.

Merry

Merry is a trouble-maker with deep-seated sense of duty and honor.

Pippin

Pippin is clumsy and brash, choosing to act before he thinks things through.

These four characters could have easily blended together and become indistinguishable from each other, but that's not the case. While I might argue that Merry and Pippin were not necessarily distinguishable in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, even they developed characteristics

that stood out firmly from each other. Compare that with *The Hobbit*. There are thirteen dwarves in this story, and in the book, they are nearly indistinguishable. While the movie adaptations did make efforts to give them unique qualities, it didn't help that they all had names that rhymed with each other, or simply blended together in a list.

What if the entire cast is made of preteen youths? Well, think of Stephen King's *It*. Read off the following list of words and tell me if every character doesn't immediately pop into your head as clear as day:

- Writer
- Architect
- Voice-Actor
- Hypochondriac
- Historian
- Accountant
- Designer

That's not to even mention their physical characteristics, such as stutterer, overweight, female, Jewish, etc., or their interests, like bird-watching, smoking, etc. The point is, each character has multiple unique aspects that help them to stand out among what could have potentially been an identical cast of young children.

Try It Out

If you're writing a novel with multiple main characters, then grab a piece of paper, or your favorite note-taking app, and put each of their names as a heading. Now try to give each of them one or two unique characteristics.

That doesn't mean that they can't all have something in common. For example, they could all love D&D, but one of them could be obsessed with writing the adventures, and another could love to do voices, and another could always run into things without thinking, with the whole group suffering the consequences.

With a little bit of effort, you can develop a wide variety of colorful, interesting, and, above all, memorable characters for your novel.