



StoryADay Writing Guides



# CREATIVE CHALLENGE workbook



## **You're Doing *WHAT* In A Month?!**

So, you're thinking about signing up for one of those writing challenges where you write a boatload of fiction in a month: StoryADay May, NaNoWriMo, PoemADay etc.

You're doing it because you want to make writing a priority and this seems like a great idea: just the thing to push you ahead.

You know you'll be happier—and easier to live with—if you do make writing a priority, and this kind of big commitment excites you.

### **So why are you stalling?**

Because it's scary, that's why!

To succeed with your writing you're going to have to make changes, take action, wrestle with writer's block and imposter syndrome (are you even good enough to have imposter syndrome?!).

Plus, you'll have to tell the people in your life that yes, it's worth putting in this much effort for something that makes you happy, even if no one has paid you to do it...yet.

Taking action is always hard, whether it's making a sales call or leaping off the dock into the cool, blue water.

Taking action becomes much, much easier if you have:



- A clear picture of how this could rock your world (for the better)
- A mentor or role models who show you that this really can be done
- A toolkit and map to keep you on track after you've taken that first big step.

**Take 30 minutes, all at once, in a quiet place. Go through this workbook. It's going to help you figure out:**

### **Why you should take on this ambitious challenge**

...and what might happen if you do?

You'll admit your biggest dreams and have fun with them. And you'll discover that even 'failing' can be A Good Thing.

### **Ways to feed your muse**

...what inspires you? What do you hate? Capture these important ideas in this workbook. Reviewing them will propel you into your writing every day as soon as you sit down.

### **Practical tools to help you work.**

How will you write? Where will you write? What will you do when you run into roadblocks?

Thinking all these things through now will free you to 'just write' when the challenge begins.

### **Ready? Then let's begin!**

## Part 1: What if?

### Daydreams of Success

Daydreaming is a powerful way to figure out what you want and how much you want it. If you don't have a destination in mind you're just wandering aimlessly, and that's hard to sustain.

Having a clear sense of the path, the destination and the potential pitfalls will make you a thousand times more likely to succeed (statistics not scientifically validated...)

Come back and read these notes on a day when it's hard to write, to remind yourself why you are putting yourself through this torture. This is your armor, *and* your holy grail.

**Flip the and let's get started!**



## What would happen if you ‘succeed’; if you meet your goal?

How would you feel? What could you do? What could you finally *stop* doing?

A large grid of dotted lines for writing, consisting of 20 rows and 30 columns of dots.



## What if you ‘fail’; if you don’t meet the goal?

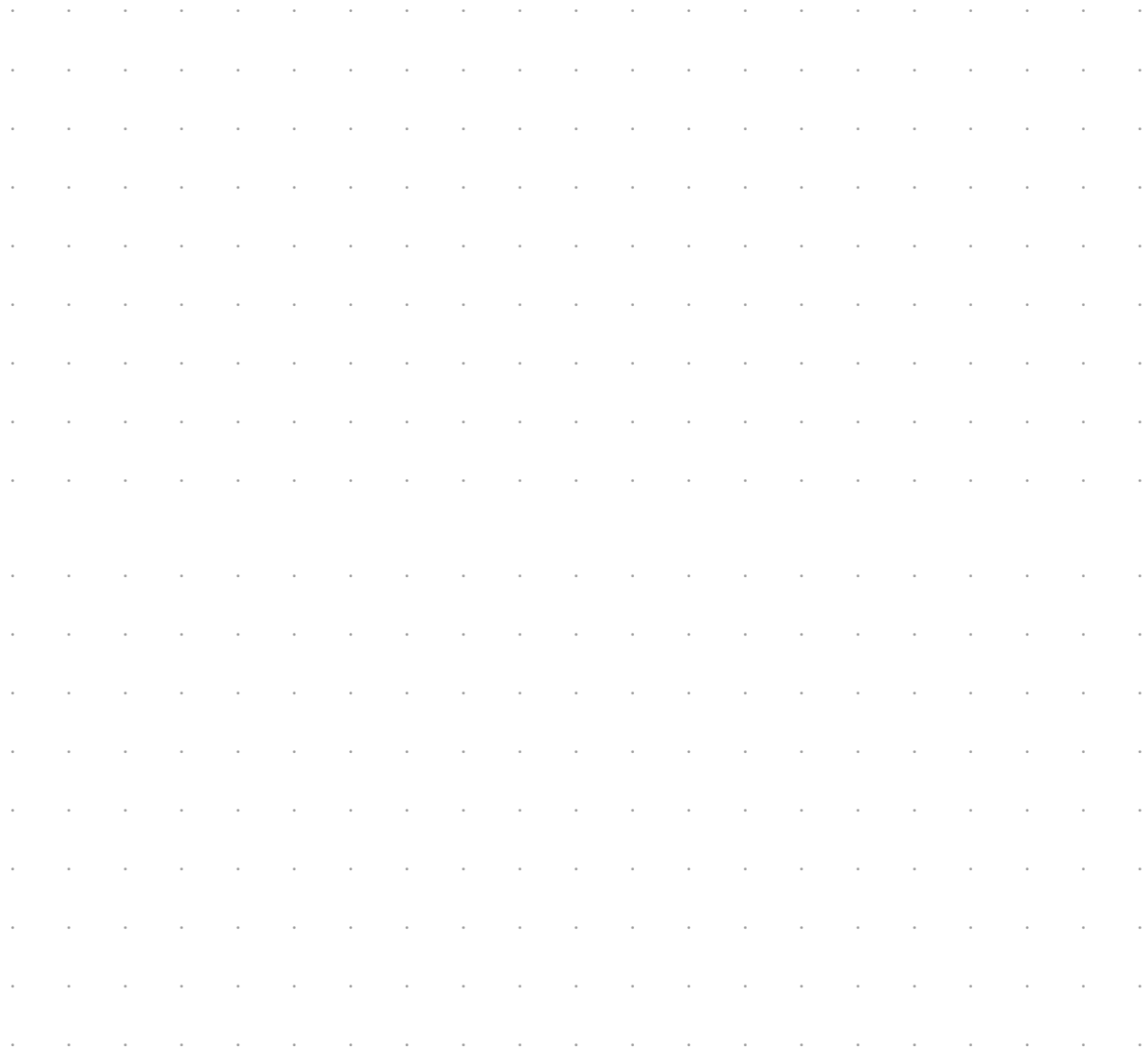
How will you feel? What actual consequences will it have for your life? Be honest about what will happen if you fail to finish.

A large grid of dotted lines for writing, consisting of 20 rows and 20 columns of dots.



## What could you gain from not finishing?

Would you really be 'a failure'? Or would you have a partial draft? Will you have a clearer sense of your style? Will you have a better working method? Will you have a clearer sense of what you need to do next time to create projects you want to stick with? Is it worth risking 'failure' to gain these things?

A large rectangular area filled with a grid of small, light gray dots, intended for handwritten notes or answers to the question above.

## Part 2: Get Inspired

Sitting down to write every day for a month (or more) is going to take huge reserves of creative energy. You're going to need to draw on a well of inspiration and it's more than OK to look outside yourself for that inspiration.

In the midst of a creative challenge you will be pressed for time. You need to take a quick hit, get to your word count and get on with your life.

This section is your creative well. Come back to it often and refresh yourself.

This is where your role models live, where your mentors are, and where you remind yourself what you love. It will fuel you for the journey and, best of all, there's an inexhaustible supply.

**Turn the page and dive in!**



## What triggers your inspiration to write?

Which books, movies, music, art, TV shows, activities make you jump up and run to your desk, burning to write? A favorite novel or short story? A book you hate and can't believe someone published? A piece of art or music that goes perfectly with your theme or hero? Note them here, so you can quickly read a few pages/watch a few scenes/listen to a few bars, if you're having trouble getting started with your writing.

## What do you love in your favorite tales?

Witty dialogue? Heroic characters? Descriptive prose? Realism? Escapism? Fast pacing? Slow, descriptive prose? When your writing slows down it's probably because you've strayed from the things you love. Capture all the things you admire, here. Come back and check it out when you feel your energy flagging. Are you still writing what you love?

A large grid of dotted lines for writing, consisting of 20 rows and 30 columns of dots.



## What do you hate, in a creative work?

What enrages you when you see it? These are the topics, techniques and character traits you must avoid. In fact, you are going to show the world these things have no place in fiction. You are writing the antidote to the things you hate. And if you catch yourself falling into using them, that's a huge signpost that you are on the wrong track and you need to find your way back to the true path of your story. Refer back to this often.



# your reader?

will help you stay on track as you write.



## How will you feel when you hear from readers?

If you do your job right, and readers feel the emotions you intended, how would it feel if they told you about it? Don't worry too much about the unknown reader yet, but do allow yourself to imagine what it would be like if the one person who always understands you, read this book. What if you wrote it *for* them? Imagine that they get it, every nuance. How does that make you feel?

A large grid of dotted lines for writing, consisting of 20 rows and 20 columns of dots.

DON'T YOU WANT TO DIVE INTO WRITING, RIGHT NOW?!



## Part 3: Get Prepared

It's great to be motivated and it's important to be inspired, but if you don't have the tools you need to write every day, then the rest is just wishful thinking.

Use this section to figure out how, when, and where you will write, and what you will do when the going gets tough (hint: the answer is not 'give up'!)

As you go through these next few questions, notice how smart and creative you are. When asked, you know exactly what you can do to get what you want. It's just hard to remember these things when we're tired or depleted.

So write them all down now and keep this workbook handy, for the inevitable moments when you feel like quitting.

(Did I mention 'give up' should not be your go-to response during a challenge? It's an option – see Part 1 – but more than likely something from this section will save you and help you push through to a meaningful result.)

**Scroll down and let's get creative!**

## What are you prepared to sacrifice to find the time to write.

To make time to write every day, something's got to give. What will you put aside to realize your dreams? One hour-long TV show and a half hour on social media? Can you get up 30 minutes early? Stay up a bit later? Can your spouse make dinner a few nights a week? Is now the right time to train your kids to load the dishwasher/do their own laundry/manage their own homework assignments? Are you willing to be more organized in your everyday life (put your keys on that hook by the front door every time you come in and regain the 15 minutes a day you spend searching for them? Do you need to gossip with the gals at lunchtime, or could you be writing?

## What are your best ideas for breaking a block/slump?

After a week or two of intense writing you're going to find it hard to keep the juices flowing. Refer back to the first section ("What If") to remind yourself *why* you're doing this. That will help, but wishful thinking is not the only tool available to you. You need practical ways to shake things up. Will you try writing standing up? On paper instead of on a computer? Will you grab your phone, fire up the voice notes, and tell it your story today? Act it out in front of a video camera? Talk a walk? Ask for help? What will you do?

A large area of dotted lines for writing notes.





## How and where will you write?

How do you write and what do you need to do to make sure you always have your tools ready? Need to commit to charging your mobile devices each night? Do you need to leave your favorite pens everywhere you might be during the day? Will you need a voice recorder and a naming convention for finding your notes again? A notebook in your backpack? Your laptop? Can you write in short 'sprints' if you can't carve out an hour or two? Will outlining/planning help?

Picture yourself working during the challenge and note down all the practical things that will help, or any changes you need to make.

Congratulations! You've gathered some powerful tools to propel yourself to success in your writing life. What's next? Turn the page!

## What's Next?

By this point you should either be inspired and raring to go, or sitting there with a lump in the bottom of your stomach because you know you don't want to put yourself through this.

### **What if I don't want to do it?**

If you have taken the time to go through this workbook and now the idea of a month-long creative writing challenge sounds like absolute torture, then

#### **Don't Do It!**

Just because your friends are all signing up doesn't mean it's right for you. So don't torture yourself. Don't set yourself up for failure.

You can still use all the things you learned in this workbook to power your writing

Maybe you'd rather take a course like the [I, WRITER Course](#), or a smaller challenge like the [StoryADay 3-Day Challenge](#) (spoiler alert, you can do it over any timeline you like!). Perhaps you need to find a community that will keep you writing regularly over the long-term, like the [StoryADay Superstars](#), paired with the weekly writing prompts in the [StoryAWeek newsletter](#).

Maybe you'd rather go it alone, at your own pace.

The beautiful thing about a writing life is that there is no 'right' way to do it.

Be yourself.

## **What if I'm ready to sign up now?**

If you're ready, you're ready, and no one can hold you back.

Refer back to this workbook often as you go through the challenge. It will help you short-circuit the doubts and climb out of the slumps without wasting precious writing time.

The StoryADay community is always here to cheer you on. Make sure you're [signed up for all the news](#)

Keep writing,

Julie Duffy

Founder & Director, StoryADay



## Enjoyed this workbook?

### **I'd love to know!**

After you've finished the workbook and have discovered your secrets to the writing life, I'd love it if you would let me know your favorites.

I'm always excited to hear how other writers are getting inspired.

You can leave a comment for me [here](#).

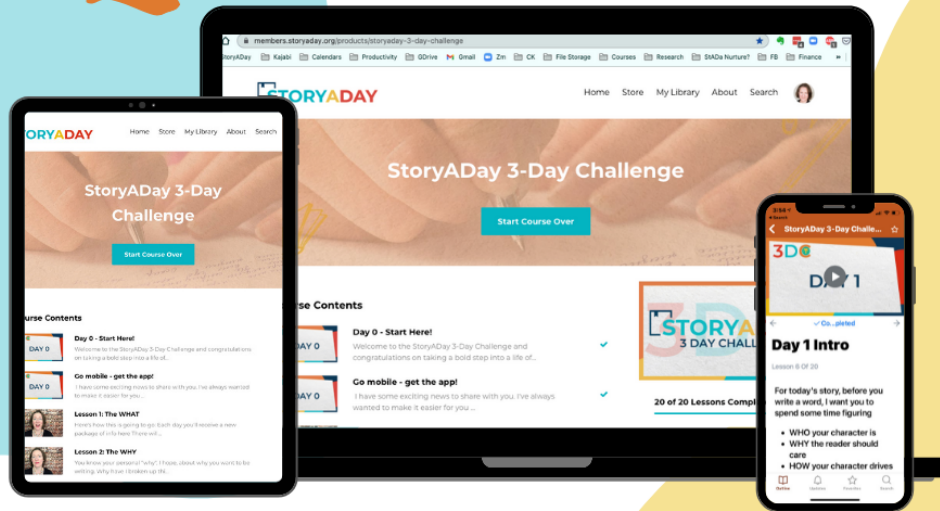
If you know other writers who could use a kick in the proverbial pants, why not share this workbook with them? You can send them to this page, where they can pick up their own copy, and become part of the 'in crowd' (which we are, right?)

And thanks!



# READY FOR MORE?

Take the StoryADay 3-Day Challenge



[storyaday.org/3dc](http://storyaday.org/3dc)

Find out more: [storyaday.org/3dc](http://storyaday.org/3dc)