

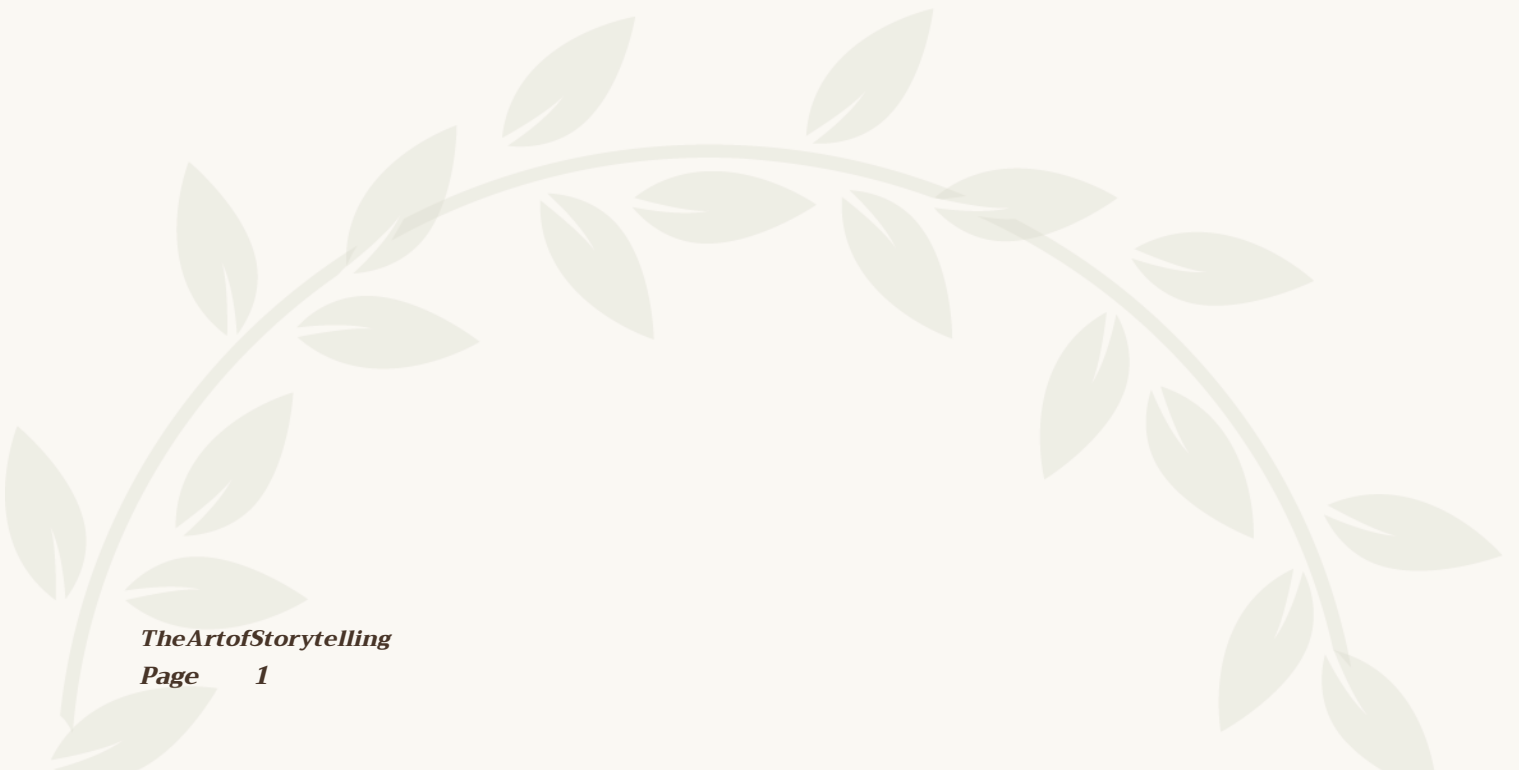


ART OF STORY TELLING



Lazarus Carpenter

Sample heading (can be removed)



Lazarus Carpenter



wordsmatterpublishing.com
lazaruscarpenterauthor.com

‘ONCE UPON A TIME’

On a cave wall, gnarled fingers etched images with a fragment of flint across rock. A deer pursued by hunters brandishing spears springs out of the granite. In another image, the deer fallen pierced with spears surrounded by hunters. Yet further along the cave wall, hunters are seen carrying the fallen creature hung between them on a pole. Next we see the hunters sitting around a fire, the deer roasting on an ancient spit. The art of storytelling begins.

Stories depicted in this way were experiences of adventures recorded for all to see. A beginning, a middle and an end, a journey through time. As language developed so to an oral tradition of sharing stories between folk. All indigenous cultures without exception began in this way, the most ancient being the Aboriginals of Australia. Passing through thousands of generations, stories told around the camp fires have recorded ancient history. Many years later, as alive and vibrant as the day they were first told. The storyteller illustrating the story through engaging language entertained and captivated their audience.

With the advent of the written word, ink and scrolls of parchment, stories could be recorded to be read at any time, but were only available to the rich and educated, whilst the oral tradition continued for common folk. The oldest known manuscripts are dated around 2100 BC. But some scholars believe that these could be transcriptions of earlier Sumerian texts. Integrated versions have been found dating from around 2000-1700 BC. The most complete “standard” version written on 12 clay tablets sometime between 1500 – 1200 BC.

The ancient Egyptians had wax and wood “notebooks,” but the Romans were the first to create bound books from paper (papyrus). By the 2nd century, this type of codex was the preferred writing tool among early Christians. The Diamond Sutra is now considered the oldest known printed book, its contents are central to Indian Buddhism, and are believed to have been translated from Sanskrit to Chinese in about 400 AD. The development of printing in China in the 8th Century paved the way for this book.

In Europe the first book ever written that we know of is The Epic of Gilgamesh: a mythical retelling of an important political figure from history. Years later, in 1454, a German man called Johannes Gutenberg built his very own printing press. And thus in Europe the ‘book’ was born as the pages printed were bound together.

The plays and sonnets of William Shakespeare appeared in the Royal Court of Elizabeth I in pamphlet form. There are many great storytellers from the past, perhaps the most famous and prolific being Charles Dickens (1812-1870). He wrote more than fifteen novels, short stories, plays and many journal articles based on social commentary of Victorian England.

It is said ‘everyone has a story to tell’. So you have an idea and would like to write your story, where do I start I hear you ask? A story has five basic but important elements. These five components are: the characters, the setting, the plot, the conflict, and the resolution. These essential elements keep the story running smoothly and allow the action to develop in a logical way that the reader can follow. I feel it is crucial the opening line and first paragraph are engaging and memorable so the reader becomes hooked. You may have written an excellent story but if the reader becomes bored by the first couple of pages they may put the book down and not finish it at all. There are many excellent books with engaging beginnings and here I suggest some of my favourites for you to consider.

For example in 'A Christmas Carol' (1843) a novella written by Charles Dickens we read.

"Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. ... Old Marley was as dead as a doornail."

JRR Tolkien in the 'Hobbit' (1937)

'In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.'

Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka (1915)

'As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect'

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen (1813)

'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife'

1984 by George Orwell (1949)

'It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen'

The Restaurant at the End of the Universe by Douglas Adams (1980)

'The story so far: in the beginning, the universe was created. This has made a lot of people very angry and been widely regarded as a bad move'

Moby Dick by Herman Melville (1851)

'Call me Ishmael'

Harry Potter by JK Rowling (1997)

“Mr and Mrs Dursley of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much.”

The Prophecy by Lazarus Carpenter (2018)

‘For ten years past, I have been an apprentice to Llwyd ap Crachan Llwyd and have learned the ways of prophet and seer.’

In all of the examples we are hooked as the narrative engages our interest by introducing a theme and suggesting questions raised, yet to be answered. Have a look at novels by your favourite authors for other examples.

‘THE CHARACTERS’

In the first part of this series, we tracked how storytelling has emerged through millennia and examined briefly the idea of engagement to a story by captivating the reader with opening lines and pages designed to create interest. Now to the gritty issue of the characters in your story. Not only is an excellent plot essential for a good story, the characters must bounce off the pages as ‘real’, visualized as if it was a film a reader is watching. You have probably thought of a plot but how is it acted out, who are the players?

There are many ways to write a story but how will you write yours? How much planning and forethought will be needed? In my own case I have both written intuitively with very little planning and completed tales with so much planning it became a research project. It all depends on you and what you want to achieve. With my first book in the 'Crach Ffynnant' series, *The Prophecy*, it was mostly written intuitively with very little planning however, as the series developed, so too did the research to continue the story. The adventures of Crach Ffynnant are based loosely on historical fact as he truly was a dwarf, prophet and seer to Owain Glyndwr, the last true Prince of Wales. However, a writer's dream emerges for me because here was a character who although 'lived', very little is known about him before he came to serve the Prince.

What a gift this was as I could imagine how his life may have been in the Middle Ages and thus, create it. There are no artist's impressions of him either, a fantasy was born. So the best way to proceed in example is to tell my story as it happened. I had finished my first self-published book, *Ballad of Penygraig* and wanted to write something else. For some years I had been loosely involved in various festivals related to Owain Glyndwr, written a couple of songs about him ('Owain Glyndwr' and 'Jack of Kent') and written a children's pantomime, 'A Fiery Knights Tale'. In the pantomime I narrated the story as Crach Ffynnant and wrote the music. So my mind was edging towards writing about Crach Ffynnant and how it all started for him, how his life led him towards Glyndwr. I had no idea how to start, nor indeed where in terms of the story would lead and one day three years ago, I sat down and just wrote and wrote as the thoughts came to me and the tale began.

Crach is a delightful character with a good sense of humour and heaps of good qualities. But he lived in a time where often his experiences were anything other than fun, in fact just the opposite. He does not meet Glyndwr for quite some time in *The Prophecy* and we get to know Crach well through his adventures on the way towards his destiny, to serve Glyndwr. By the end of the first chapter Crach is established as a character and visualising him is easy, but I have not given it all away by any means and throughout the story his personality develops. We also discover why Crach must go to London and who will help him get there, but there is no character overload and descriptions are relevant to the point in the story. By the end of the first chapter the reader is familiar with Crach and his old Master.

My characters evolved more by good luck than good management but evolve they surely did and are alive and well in all three volumes of the series. Here is the rub though because as the story grew so too did the research of characters such as Glyndwr, Henry IV and others to exact as much accuracy as possible. However, at no time did I plan to write a historical book, I wanted to bring back dragons too and align with the symbolism of Glyndwr so fantasy had to develop, there was no choice and I loved every word coming out of my deranged mind.

I have always had a tendency to go where 'angels fear to tread' and the lack of planning in volume one testifies to this, but it worked. So make lists of what your characters look like, their personality traits, clothing, movements and actions. Who are the protagonists and how much will you say about them and where in the tale it is relevant to add detail. Think about relationships between characters and how detail can be added and where it is appropriate. It is very helpful to look at how your favourite authors describe characters to give you some ideas. But there are so many easy ways to make shortcuts nowadays and heaps of internet sites offering advice, guidance and check lists to enable ease of writing.

I think an important word here is 'balance'. By all means use whatever methods are out there to help you but take your time and do not kill the spontaneity of your storytelling by getting bogged down in the methodology of writing.

I write because I like to tell a good story and I am a great believer in spontaneity and intuition in my storytelling. Another aspect of character formation is, it is really quite difficult not to include parts of your own personality in your characters. There is certainly a little bit of me in all my characters, even the villains. As a little exercise, invent a character, their good points and bad and then write your own, then compare and contrast. Who we are and what we have seen, the people who have influenced us in our lives and our good and bad points will in some way appear in our characters and stories when writing fiction, it is hard not to, after all we are the 'sum of our parts'.

'END IN SIGHT'

Dependent upon story length do you have a Novella or a Novel on your desk? Anything over forty thousand words may be considered a novel. If you have in mind a series and wish to introduce major characters some writers begin with a novella by means of launching a series. Others like myself use a novel to launch a character, Crach Ffignant – The Prophecy being a prime example. Nevertheless, your story may be nearing the end if it's writing or things may get in the way and for many, a common problem is 'writers block'. Ideas and themes seem like a desert, dry and not very productive on a practical level and emotionally draining, tiresome and frustrating for the creative mind on another. So what do you do, cut an ear off? Somewhat extreme perhaps, Van Gogh must have regretted his actions as will you if you are hard on yourself.

'Writers block' is simply your mind saying 'have a day off'. We should never force the creative process of storytelling and perhaps should consider using exercises to encourage intuitive writing in order to be alive within our story. If we are 'alive' in the story the reader will be drawn in to your words like the images of a good film.

For me I become my characters as I write about them and subsequently get to know them well in terms of personality and behaviour. I suppose we can liken it to acting, jumping from one character to the next, making it up as you go. That is 'intuitive writing'. The best stories are often written this way around theme-work and storyline. When I invented Septimus Tupp my mind was full of a fat, idle and pretty useless gluttonous monk who would do anything to avoid work. Sadly for him it came as a great surprise in the story when he ended up face down floating in a trout pool. If you have to kill off a character, make it a memorable demise. In fiction, the universe is your oyster and as Jon Luc would say, 'Make it so!'

My genre is historical fiction set in the 1400's and so a certain amount of research is often needed. Nothing better in storytelling than embellishing fact with fiction. The simple point of course is, it matters not what you write, if you have a story inside you, develop it and give birth to your ideas, make them come alive. To be honest I suppose I may write in this genre because I find it more comfortable than 'real life in the here and now'. But what storyteller does not?

So your story is written and you sit back and heave a sigh of relief.

Well just take a deep breath. Put your feet up and leave the manuscript alone for a few days, you deserve the rest, the easy bit is behind you. Now comes the heart wrenching and tear jerking, frustrations and sleepless nights. You have to read it. Reading through and noting possible changes as the pages are turned, especially grammar, fleshing out character descriptions, correcting errors, formatting and editing your manuscript. In my limited experience, this process takes as long as writing a story and is the reason why many authors fail to get in to print. Fortunately, if you are simply a storyteller and have difficulty in editing and formatting, Words Matter Publishing offers support and services, so if you have a budget contract the services you need. If like me you have little disposable income then you have to do the work to reduce the amount your publisher must do to bring you to market. If you do not have the skills now, believe me you will develop them.

Let's just take 'five' and remember the reality of being a storyteller wishing to become a published author. You must strive to have in simplest form

A great original story told in a creative way

Characters that bring the storyline alive and are memorable

Chapters of reasonable length with thought provoking 'first paragraphs'

Novella or Novel is determined by the length of your story

Good grammar, formatted and edited to the best of your ability

So, you feel happy to have achieved where you are right now and so you should, to have reached this point takes skill, determination and endurance. Now we must face the reality, we are not alone, it is suggested there are a million new authors every year and that my friends is competition and an enormous market place in which to be. Will you make a million dollars from your story, will it be made into a movie? Well I wish you every success but I am happy with telling a good tale. I hope you have found this series, The Art of Storytelling to be a helpful introduction. There are thousands of writing courses out there, do it yourself manuals and publishers but if you have a story to tell. Pick up your pen or tap those keys.

May your quill never run dry!

‘WRITING A SERIES’

So you finished a story but there are many more adventures for your characters to experience, thus perhaps deciding to write volume two or even more. I am going to kick-off with how I created my series.

For me, when I completed ‘Crach Ffynnant – The Prophecy’, I knew there was much more to tell and the creation of a series was very clear in my mind from the outset. In fact, I have now written three volumes in my series with one more currently under the quill. This was a time in Wales when the revolt of 1400 resulted in war with Henry V of England. This is well documented and thus a mix of fact and fiction fuelled my addled mind.

'The Prophecy' is for the most part 'fiction' however, one of my main characters, Owain Glyndwr, did study law at Lincolns Inn in 1375. So no surprise I should create a chance meeting between Crach and Owain at the Inn, setting the scene for their future relationship which would last for decades. I was fortunate in many ways as very little is known about Crach Ffynnant, other than he was a dwarf, prophet, seer and rode with Owain Glyndwr, the last real true Prince of Wales. Glyndwr's life is well documented through historians whereas Crach's is not. What a gift for a storyteller; a real person with an almost blank canvas to paint.

Inventing a life for Crach and subsequent adventures to get him to the point of meeting Glyndwr, was a mammoth task in real terms. It seemed sensible to create some kind of apprenticeship for him to serve, ending as a prophet and seer which ultimately he became. Secret scrolls, and a prophecy became the reason to get Crach from the mountains of Wales to London.

There was an ancient prophecy in Welsh history related to the rise of Glyndwr and on the night of his birth, a great storm raged and apparently the stable floors were covered in blood with a spirit sword hanging in the air above baby Owain's head. His destiny was certain, but you have to read my books to find out. I felt strongly the need to bring back the ancient welsh dragon, so one of Crach's teachers as an apprentice was a crotchety old dragon, Tan-y-Mynedd. I took themes from Crach Ffynnant - The Prophecy, developing them in volume two.

'Crach Ffynnant – Rise of the Dragon' inherited Owain's eventual Coronation as Prince of Wales on the one hand, with Tan-y-Mynedd discovering sacred dragon's eggs, on the other, thus the title, Rise of the Dragon. Research was great fun for me as I adore history and Wales is flooded with over a thousand years of 'stuff to make your hair curl'. So matching fact, fiction and fables filled my pen. I certainly admit to a tremendous amount of poetic license in my storytelling, but I think all writers would. Do you?

The rebellion and subsequent war leading to Glyndwr's rise to the Welsh throne filled my pages. By the end of the book the war is well under way, the characters have developed real personalities and almost leap from the pages, the dragon eggs have hatched and their future is safe.

I have always enjoyed acting, so when I write about a character, I do become them in my mind, conversations can become most schizophrenic but that's writing. In volume three, 'Crach Ffynnant – Ravens and Dragons' again themes develop even more, embracing the reader (I hope) as if they are watching a movie through my words. Well that is the intention. This time the writing and preparation included a road trip around ancient battle sites, castles, and places I knew Glyndwr had been.

I strongly recommend if you are writing similar stuff; if something really existed, go see it for yourself if you can, spending quiet time intuiting whatever and scribbling like a whirling dervish. For me this road trip was probably the most productive time I have experienced as a storyteller. Every evening thousands of words as the story became real in my mind. The first draft was completed in twelve weeks, never have I written so much, so quickly. I believe, the road trip was the catalyst.

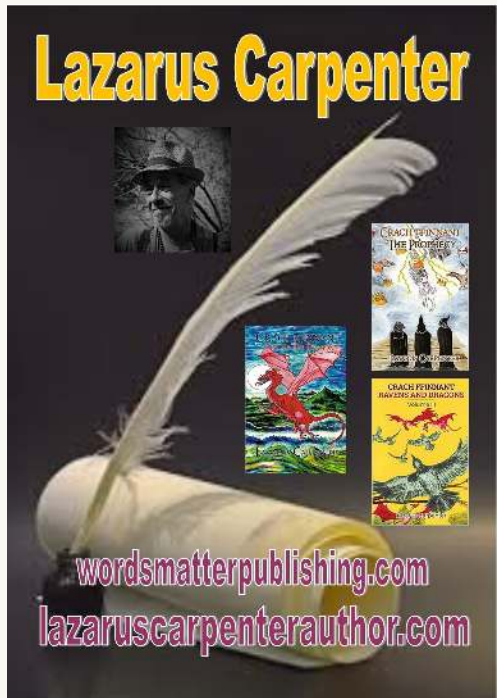
My fictional dragon eggs now hatched and growing enable a new story line to run alongside the war. Again you must read the book to find out what happened but if you like medieval mystery with dragons, mystery and adventure, 'I'm yer man' as they say!

My final volume in the series, 'Crach Ffinnant – Justice Prevails' is fast paced culminating in an ending readers would not expect. It is a hell of a story and it has been such a privilege to write it supported by WMP in all its glory. So let me try and pull together some key points to remember when writing a series.

1. A series by definition suggests a 'big story', what is it.
2. How many volumes?
3. What is the key theme for each volume?
4. Which characters are central to the story and how will they develop
5. How will themes develop
6. Do you have a central character
7. Is there a central plot and how does it develop
8. If it is possible to do real research, do it!
9. Become your story (without ending up as psychotic an advantage)
10. Will you write the whole series before publishing or phase publish?

Writing a series is great fun, well it has been for me as I almost near the end of one of the best creative journeys of my life. Check out your favourite series authors and consider what it is you like about their writing. What will readers like about your writing?

Keep your quill full!



On a cave wall, gnarled fingers etched images with a fragment of flint across rock. A deer pursued by hunters brandishing spears springs out of the granite. In another image, the deer fallen pierced with spears surrounded by hunters. Yet further along the cave wall, hunters are seen carrying the fallen creature hung between them on a pole. Next we see the hunters sitting around a fire, the deer roasting on an ancient spit. The art of storytelling begins.

