

FIND YOUR WRITING MUSE

BY AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR, LINDA HUGHES



INTRODUCTION

Are you a writer, or want to be a writer, but don't know what to write? Are you stuck in that horrible writer's block? In my writing workshops people ask me all the time how I overcome that, especially since I have nine books out right now and I've published consistently for a long time.



Well, actually, I don't ever have writer's block because I do the five things I'm suggesting to you here. So, hopefully, these tips will help you, too.

TIP #1: VISIT DEAD PEOPLE



I'm not kidding. Old cemeteries are my favorite. Your muse is hiding right there amongst those tombstones. That's where I get great names. One I found recently was Vee. I used it with another name I found, VanderZaan, and put those names together to create a character. These are names I never would have come up with myself. You might also see the headstone of a woman who has a husband buried on each side of her and one at her feet – and that really happened – and you know there's a story there. Use your imagination to write it.

Additional Resources:

Find a Grave - Millions of Cemetery Records and Online Memorials

<http://bit.ly/1IePDuP>

20 Cemeteries You Need To Visit Before You Die

<http://bit.ly/1U8ubn9>

TIP #1: VISIT DEAD PEOPLE



Museums and library archives are also fantastic. For example, I once visited the library archives in Galway, Ireland. I was looking for verification that Jews had lived there in the 1600s because there'd always been a rumor in my family that our Irish ancestors in that area were part Jewish. That didn't seem likely at all so I wanted to find out. Low and behold I came upon documentation of a shipwreck of Jewish businessmen in that area in that time. Some of them loved the place and never left. So, that story, of course, found its way into my last novel *Becoming Jessie Belle*. You never know what you'll run into in those places. Don't over look them.

Additional Resources:

US National Archives and Records Administration

<http://1.usa.gov/1UfhLV1>

The Oxford Guide to Library Research

<http://amzn.to/1NJNmi5>

TIP #2: READ BOOKS



I know you already do this, but read, read, read. Read everything. Read not only the things you love – and figure out what you love about them and how you can do something similar – but also read the things you hate. Push yourself out of your comfort zone. Maybe you don't like Paranormal books, but if you read a good one you'll discover a new type of character. You might even throw a witch into that nice, quiet suburb in your next novel.

Additional Resources:

The Ten Best Top 100 Best Book Lists

<http://bit.ly/1EZTAmV>

The 100 Greatest Non-Fiction Books

<http://bit.ly/1Lyv8Oc>

TIP #3: TAKE A ROAD TRIP



Get in your car and drive. Let out the gypsy in your soul. Don't have a plan. Go free stylin'. If you've got kids, take 'em along. Have an adventure. Pay attention to county and town and street names. Look at the geography, the landscape. Think about how you would describe it in writing.

You can do this during your daily driving routine, too. *New York Times* best-selling author Joshilyn Jackson tells about driving every day from Atlanta, Georgia, to Athens, Georgia, when she was in college. Every day for years she passed a sign on the highway that pointed to "Between, Georgia." She always wondered about that town and ended up writing a highly acclaimed novel about it. All made up in her head just from that sign.

Additional Resources:

Hit The Road: 7 Iconic Road Tips

<http://bit.ly/1JAh33j>

Budget Travel Vacation Ideas: 5 Affordable American Drives

<http://bit.ly/1NXdxj9>

TIP #4: OBSERVE PEOPLE



Go to restaurants, hotel lobbies, or the grocery store. Any place is good for imagining what people do, how they live, and what their relationships are. I used to teach classes at the University of Georgia and we actually held class in a mall. I'd have my students spread out around the food court and observe people, look at how they acted, listen to what they said. They often came back just shocked at what they heard. The things people talk about in public! It gave us great ideas. We'd look at the way people dressed and what they were doing—it's fantastic! This is also a good way for learning authentic dialogue. This kind of exercise will help you hone in on that.

Resources:

How To Write Better By Exercising Your Observation Skills

<http://bit.ly/1Iju1Sn>

How Observing People Can Bring Your Muse Out of Hiding

<http://bit.ly/1Mlqm8z>

TIP #5: MEDITATE



The fifth and final tip to finding your writing muse might sound a little nuts – that is unless you think this whole thing is nuts. You’re going to meditate, pray, reflect. Allow your sixth sense to come alive. Pay attention to your thoughts, wandering though they might be. Try to make your mind go blank. Push out all of your troubles and woes and see what else floats in to take its place. Talk to some of those spirits you met in step one. What stories do they tell? My award-winning novel *Becoming Jessie Belle* is built around visions I had – visits if you will – from women I believe to be my ancestors. Does it matter if it’s real or if I’m just nuts? No, what matters are the stories that came out of it.

Resources:

Meditation In Action: How To Tap Into Your Creativity

<http://huff.to/1KQctWC>

The Voice of the Muse Companion: Guided Meditations for Writers

<http://apple.co/1U8zu68>

CONCLUSION

Here's a mnemonic, a way to remember these five tips to finding your writing muse:

Dead
Books
Drive
People
Nuts

Visit dead people. Read books. Take a road trip. Observe people everywhere. Meditate. You want your books to be alive, vibrant not dead. So go out and use these steps to find your writing muse and get going! The key is to be aware of what's going on around you no matter where you are or what you are doing. Good stories are everywhere. Find them and then go write. If you want to see how these steps have worked for me you can find my books on [Amazon](#), of course, and my [website](#). Join me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#), [Instagram](#), or [Tumblr](#) for more writing tips. I would love to see you there.

Thanks so much for downloading this guide to finding your muse. Now remember, break out of that block and write!

