

# Write Angles by Heather Wright

Some writers say that there is no such thing as writer's block. Others believe that it is a real monster lying in wait to turn your creativity to stone just when you need it the most. I believe that the writer's block monster is really out there but I also believe that he can be beaten.



The trick is to challenge him to a duel the way the TV animé heroes duel their opponents and summon some monster and magic cards of your own. Let's take a few out of the writer's deck and see what they can do.

## **The Time to Move on Card**

Play this card if the story is really dead. Maybe you can't make any progress on this story because the idea simply wasn't strong enough in the first place. Don't feel guilty--just move on.

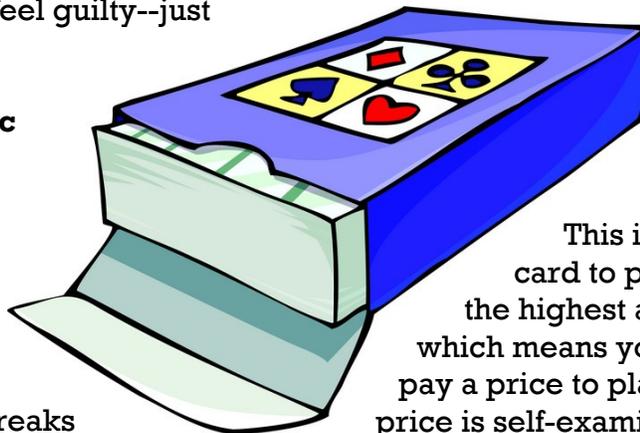
## **The "What If" Magic Card**

Maybe you've been limiting your character's options. Play "what if" for a while and see what happens. What if X breaks his leg right now in your story? What if the teddy bear Y got for her birthday grants her three wishes?

What if Z's gel pens suddenly begin to write flawless French? What if ... now you try.

## **The Manuscript Reborn Card**

If your current project is feeling like it's a failure, put it away. Then, pull out something you filed away in the past. Sometimes reading an old piece of writing can give you a real lift. You remember how good a writer you are or see an angle to develop on a story that you thought was finished. There's nothing like a boost to your self-confidence to break up a bad case of writer's block.



## **The Reality Check Card**

This is the hardest card to play and has the highest attack value, which means you have to pay a price to play it. The price is self-examination. Is the reason you can't write because it's just hard work facing the blank screen/page and you're simply not tough enough to sit there until the work is done? If you believe that you truly have the attack points and attitude that you need, then retire

Beat Writer's Block by Playing Your Cards Right

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this card to the graveyard and play the next one.

## **The Play Until it Works Card**

Did I say 'play'? Sure.

Sometimes the idea of taking a risk is overwhelmed by the fear of failure and you stop trying or are afraid to begin. You may have a lot invested in this new project and you really want to make it work. The pressure to succeed can choke the writing.

This is where play comes in. I mean, you can't fail if you are just playing, right? Grab a book or magazine and, with your eyes closed, put a finger on the page and write down the word you're pointing to. Do it three times or as many times as you need until you find a connection--no matter how weird--and start writing. This technique accounts for a story of mine called "Sherlock Holmes and the Lonely Spider". I admit it's not a great story, but it got me hitting the keyboard again and producing words. After all, if I can turn that combination into a story, I should have no problem with an idea that actually makes sense.

## **The Red Crayon, Black Marker Dragon Card**

This is the card to play when you need to defeat those critical voices inside that keep telling you that you can't write, or that that sentence stinks, or asking why you aren't smart enough to come up with a

better idea than that one. Those voices need to be silenced or the creative right side of your brain doesn't have a chance. The solution? Get out the crayons, markers, gel pens, whatever, and draw.

Recently, I bought *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Drawing*, which should give you a clear idea of my talent level. The book is full of drawing exercises for freeing your creativity and silencing the 'critical voice' that lurks inside your head, waiting to talk you out of even trying.

Coincidentally, I was playing with one of these exercises preceding some precious writing time and, when I began to write, my fingers flew across the keyboard. I've tried this again and again with the same result. I realized that I had found a way to the inner quiet that I need to write. When I draw, I'm incapable of thinking about anything except where my pencil is going next. Everything else disappears and the critic is silent.

If you're worried that your attempts to draw a picture would make your critical voices unite in a volume rivaling your favourite band at full blast, then try something simpler--grab a coloring book and color a picture. Just choosing colors and concentrating on staying in the lines can be a very quieting experience. As in drawing, the world slips away for enough time to quiet the voices and let your creativity emerge.

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## **The You're Not Alone Card**

Play this card and remember that you're not the first nor will you be the last writer to be stopped by writer's block. Remember, too, that the good ones-- like you--got through it and kept on writing. To succeed they played the next card.

## **The Perseverance Card**

Face the monster down with your determination and talent and he'll back away. Never make him more important than the writing. You have a story to tell and you need to keep the seat of your pants applied to the chair and write it. And if you don't? Well, it's hard to succeed when you're walking away from your goal.

Lawrence Kasdan wrote that, "[being] a writer is like having homework for the rest of your life."

If you're tough enough or crazy enough to commit yourself to that kind of life then you can defeat whatever monster is trying to take it away from you.

Stack your deck with perseverance, colour, playfulness, a dose of reality and some well-deserved praise and make the writer's block monster disappear. Remember you have a lifetime of homework to do and the time to start is now.

