

# Books, writing, dreams

Jody Lamb, author  
March 26, 2015







ST. ANSELM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
Dearborn Heights, Michigan  
1992 - 1993  
Monsignor Moloney, Pastor  
Sr. Mary Ann Thue, Principal  
Mrs. Agne  
Fourth Grade





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# Agenda

- Writing and me
- On writing
  - Story
  - Reading
  - Creating scenes for the reader's mind vs. telling a story
  - Revising



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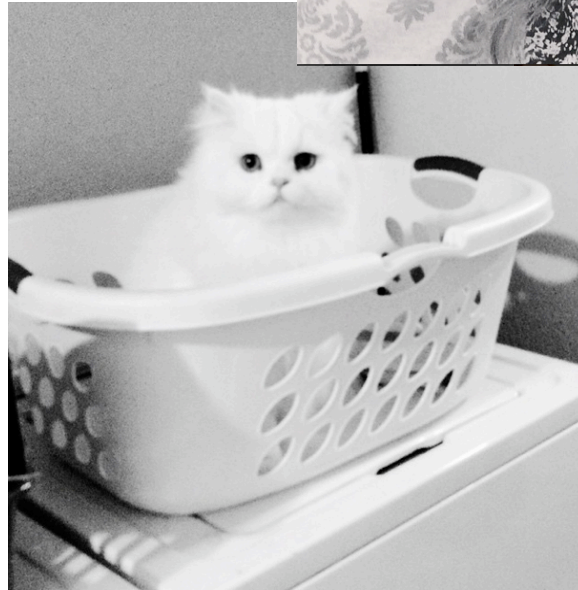
# Jody Lamb is...

- Lifelong story lover
- Author
- Marketing professional



This is my novel





The logo for 'jodylamb' features a small purple flower icon above the word 'jody' in green and 'lamb' in purple.

# My book – a dream come true!

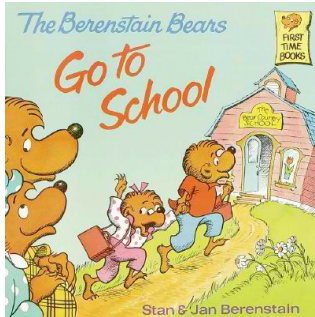
- Middle-grade novel (ages 8-13)
- Released in 2012



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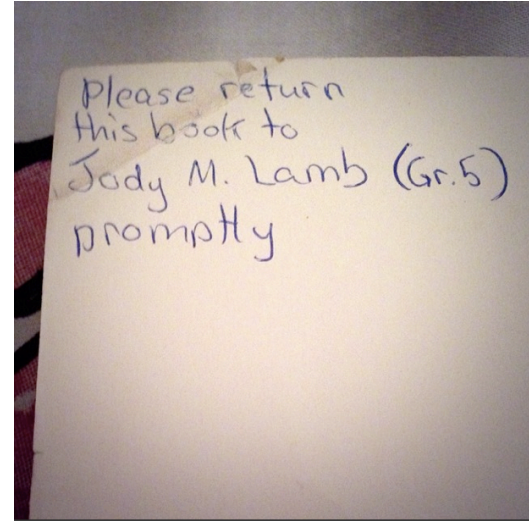
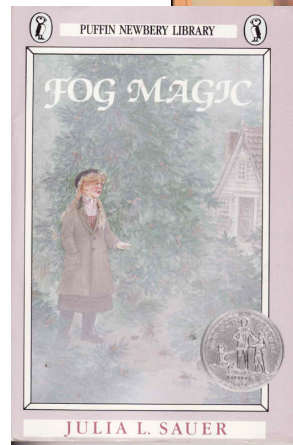
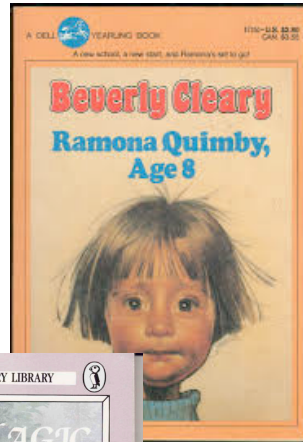


# Early years



- As soon as I could read The Berenstain Bears books myself, I wrote my own stories.
- I learned that the first draft of anything I wrote was usually pretty awful but the second and third drafts were good. The four draft was GREAT!

# Early years



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# Early years



Seventh Grade



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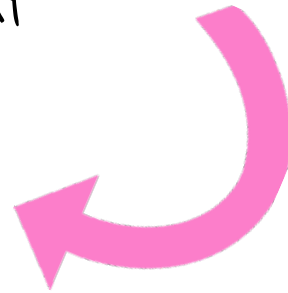


# Early years

This is my cat who believed she was a dog.



My best friend, Frisky.



# The worst advice ever #1



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# Early Years

- “Your dream won’t come true. There are too many other people with the same dream.” – grownup to me
- “You’ll never make it. The odds are against you.” – grownup to me





# Grownup Jody



- I took the bad advice!
- Stopped writing.
- Gave up my dream.
- Landed in grownup land and became too busy for my dreams!



The logo for Jody Lamb, featuring the name 'jodylamb' in a stylized, lowercase font. The 'j' and 'l' are green, and the 'a', 'm', and 'b' are purple. A small purple flower icon is positioned above the 'j'.

# Grownup Jody



I thought about little-kid me and my dreams while waiting at airports when traveling for business.



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# Unburied the dream

- When I was 26, I felt very sad.
- I read my childhood diaries and journals.
- I remembered how much I loved creative writing.
- I decided to write stories again.



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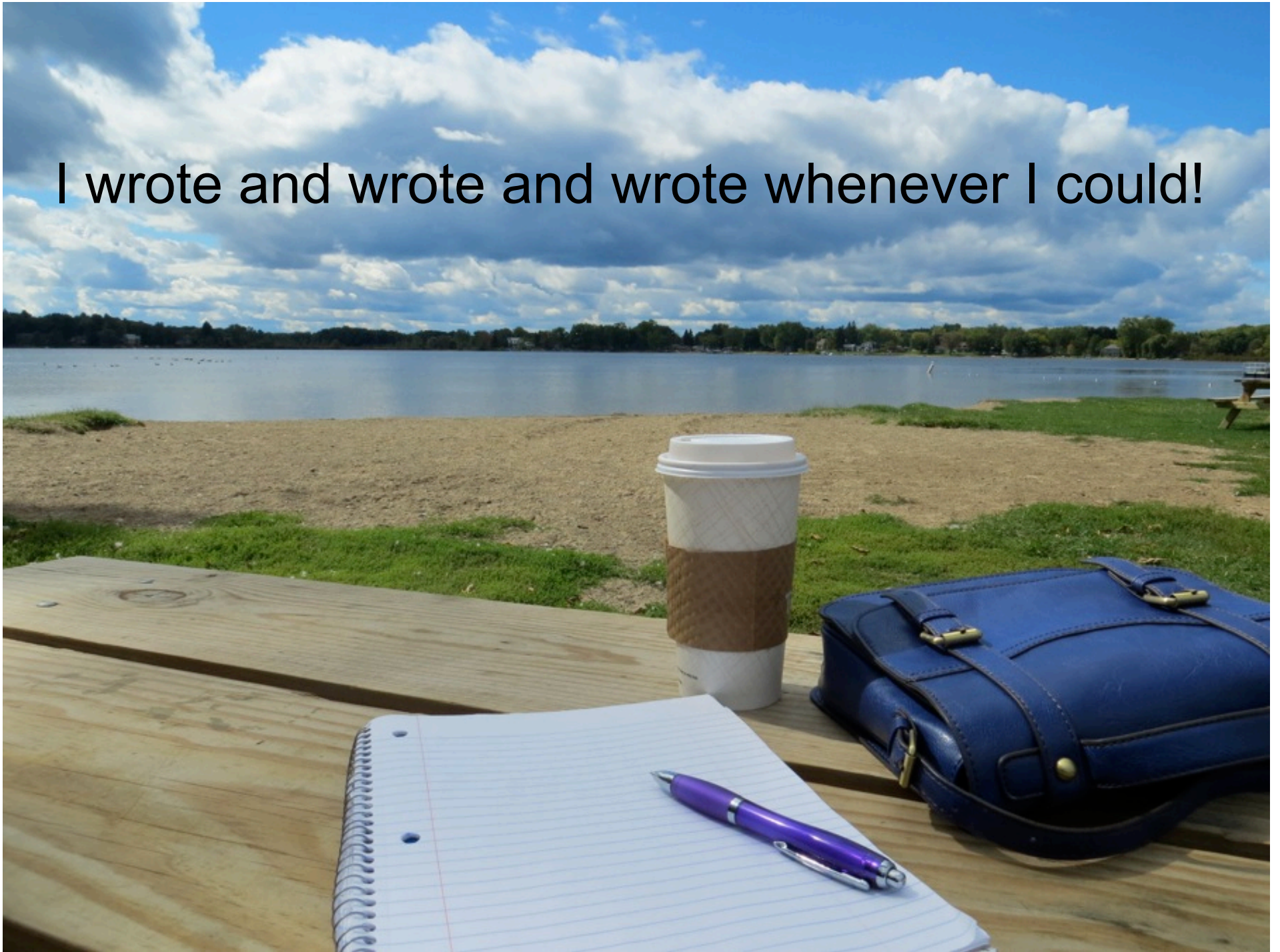
# Unburied the dream

- I was busy with my job so I had to create time to write I didn't know I had.
- I cut out most TV shows and movies but I read 4 times the number of books I read every month.



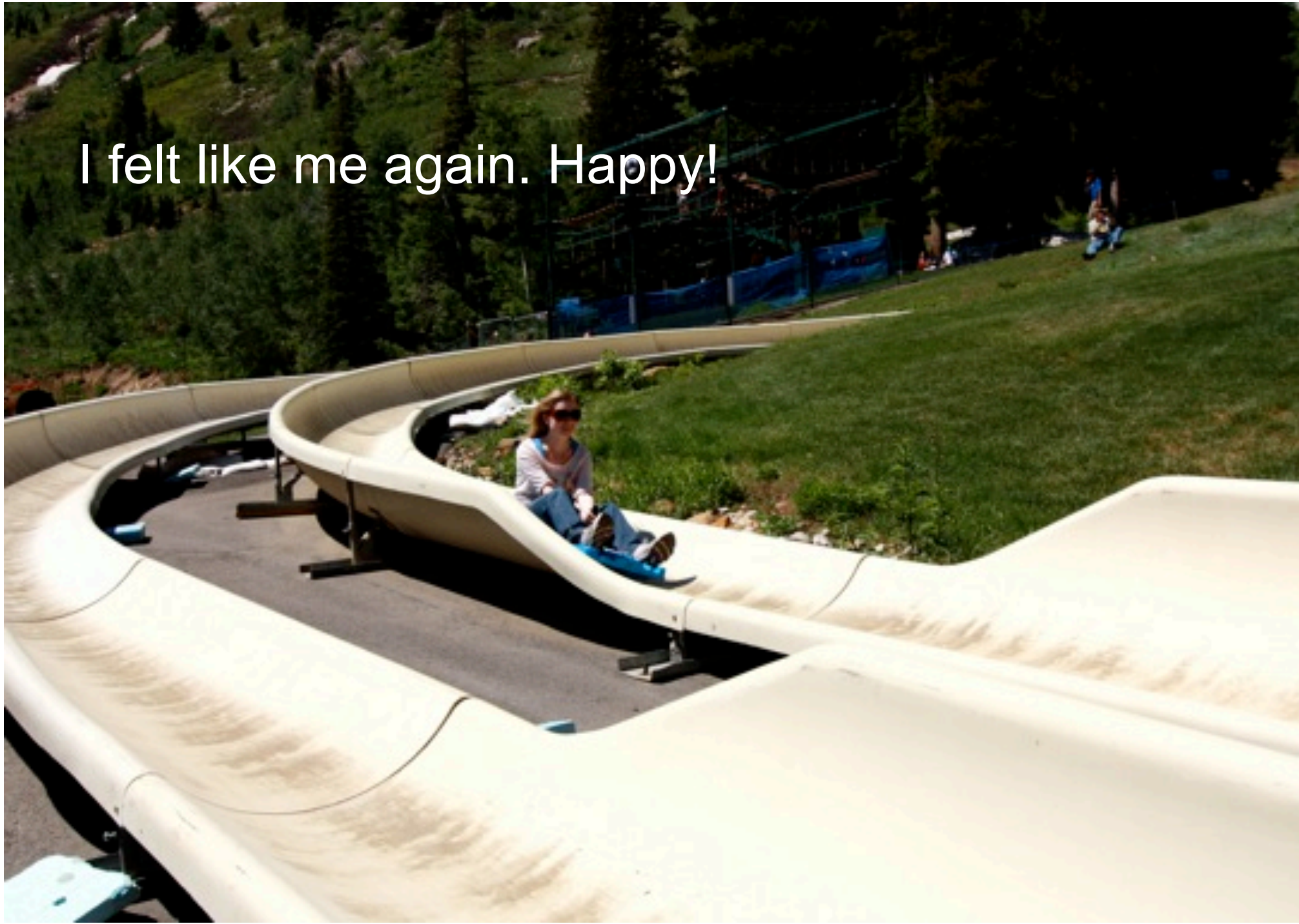
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I wrote and wrote and wrote whenever I could!





I felt like me again. Happy!



I wrote a short story about a 12-year old girl.



I kept adding to the story and the plot.  
In half a year, I had a whole book.



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Finishing the first draft was just  
beginning!

I became a sponge and an  
editor to improve my story.



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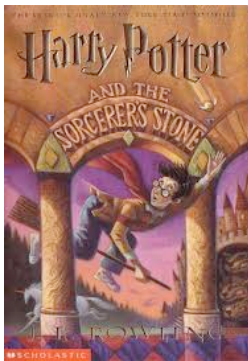
# After a year of revising...



I flew to Los Angeles for a kids' book writers' conference.



I met with people from New York City publishers.



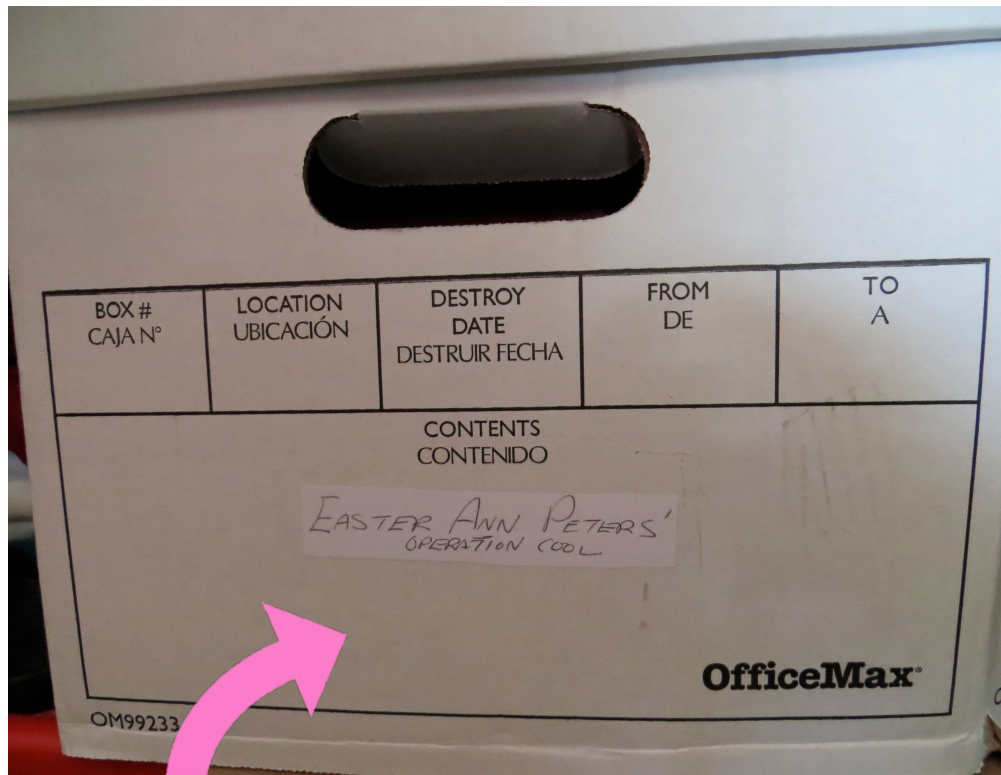
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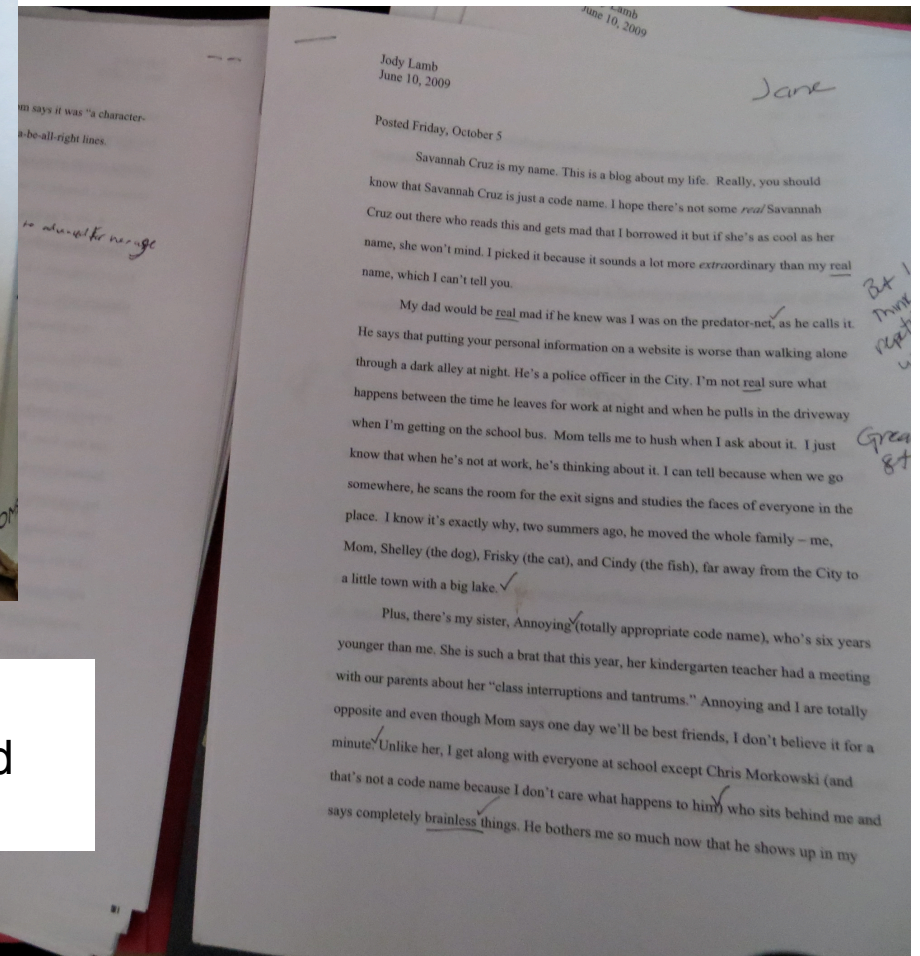




# Nearly two years of editing



I have 3 boxes of handwritten edits & advice from others and editors about my book



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Fri, Apr 1, 2011 at 6:04 PM

Suzie Townsend & FinePrint Literary Management <suzie@fineprintllc.com>

To: Jody Lamb <jodymarielamb@gmail.com>

Thank you for querying me. Unfortunately I don't feel I'm quite the right agent for your project. I'm regretfully going to pass.

Best of luck with this project and all your endeavors. Due to the volume of queries and submissions I receive, I'm unable to provide a personal evaluation of your query and/or further explanation of my decision.

Good luck with your submissions.

Best,



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Guess how many times  
publishers and book agents said  
no to making it a book?



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30

*Thirty*



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# Famous rejections

- J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter & the Sorcerer's Stone* (12 times)
- Madeline L'Engle's *Wrinkle in Time*
- Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*
- Dr. Seuss' *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*
- Judy Blume (two years worth)



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# The worst advice #2

- “You’re not good enough to get published.”
- “You’re crazy!”
- “You’re wasting your time with writing that book!”

This time I didn’t listen to the bad advice.



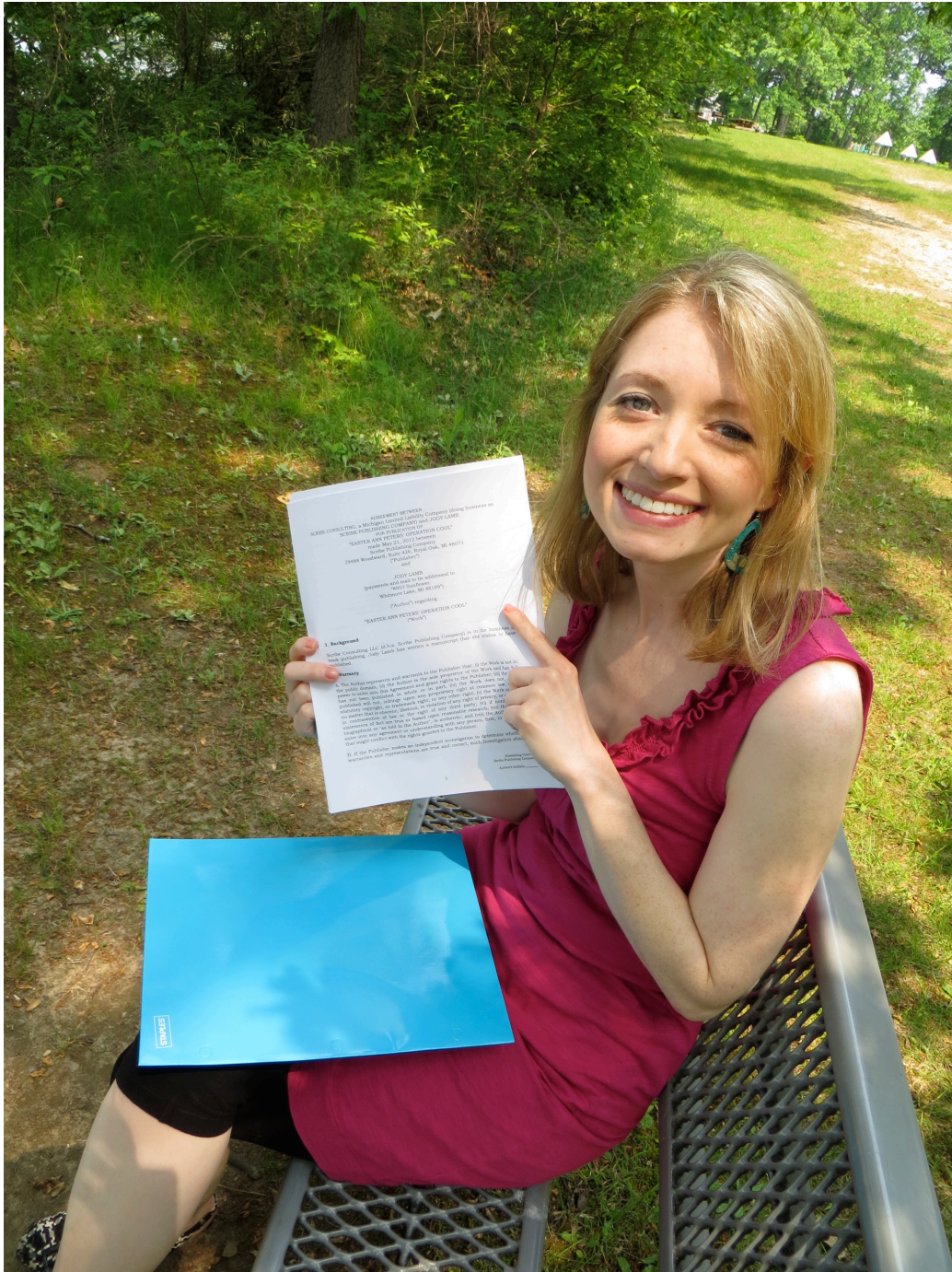
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Finally...



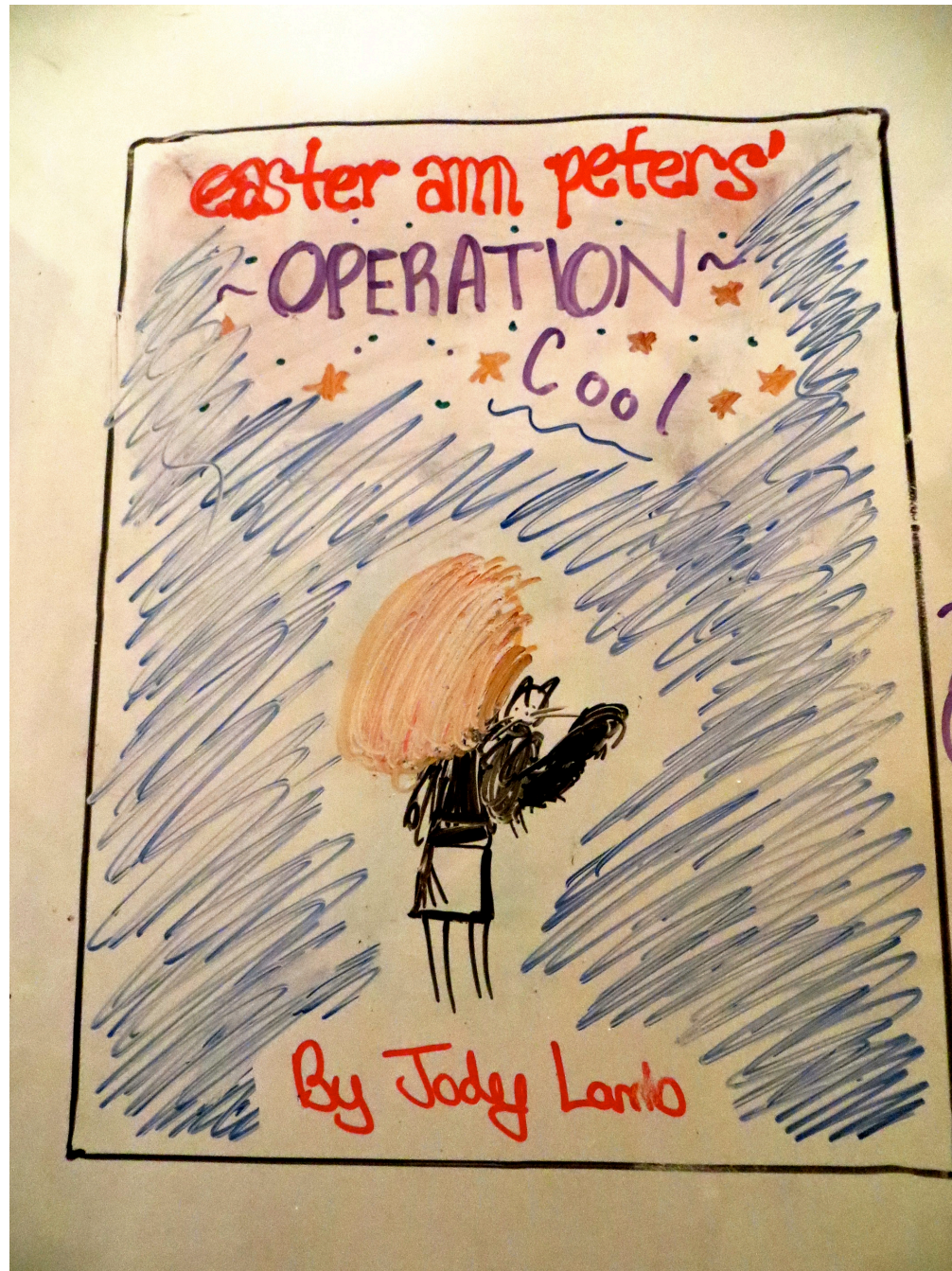
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# What great writers have in common



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# Caveman kid



# Modern kid



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# Do you like...

- Books
- Music
- Movies
- TV shows



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They all share stories!



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# The secrets to great writing

1. Read.
2. Write the story you want to read.
3. Show a story.
4. Revise. Revise again. Revise again.



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# How to be a good writer: Read

- For fun, read. Read. Then read some more. *Every day.*
- Read books you know you'll love.
- Read books you don't think you'll like.
- Read different genres.
- Read books that are boy-ish. Read books that are girl-ish.



The logo for 'jody lamb' features a small purple flower icon to the left of the name. The name 'jody' is written in a green, lowercase, sans-serif font, and 'lamb' is written in a purple, lowercase, sans-serif font.



# How to be a good writer: Read

- If you want to create anything (especially books, music, art, film), you have to read books because you need to know what's happening with the *art* of story.



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# How to be a good writer: Write a strong story

## A great story!

- Write a story that you want to read
- Write what you know OR write what you wish you knew better
- Be inspired by the characters all around you and the what-ifs you're already thinking about



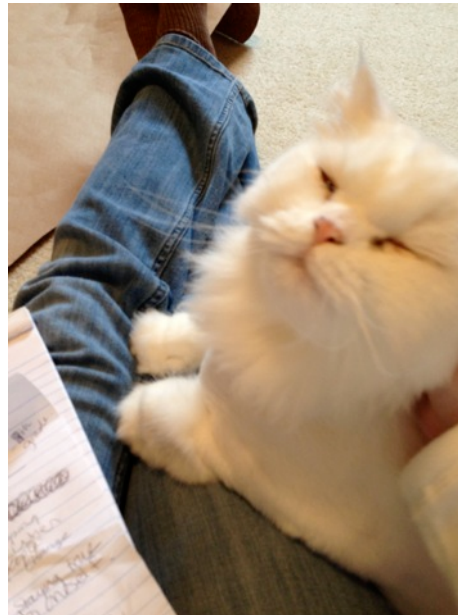
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When I created a cat  
character in my book, guess  
who I thought of?



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# The cats I've loved



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# Yoplait, Easter's cat

“Yoplait, my cat, charges down the stairs and leaps from the bottom step to my feet before the front door is even shut.

‘Hey, girl.’

She rubs her head against my leg and fur flies like how the wind scatters dandelion seeds in summer. Her fur is always flying like that because it's long, thick, and covered in splotches of peach and white. What makes her stand out most is her super long, puffy tail that'd better fit a Golden Retriever.”



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# Yoplait, Easter's cat

“The problem with cats who think they’re dogs is that they’re faster than you’d guess, even the kind with a swinging belly...

Yoplait’s flat-ish face is pressed against the wire fence.

“Grrrrr,” she bellows. Her puffed-up peachy body, with a tail double the size of Drama Chihuahua, is clearly in attack mode.

‘Yoooooooooplait!’”



# How to be a good writer: Be a good storyteller

- Show the story, don't tell the story.
- Details! Action!
- Make it easy on the reader
- Paint the scene vividly
- What does it smell like? Dog poo? Lilacs?
- What does the air feel like? Sticky hot? Sting-y cold?



# Show vs. tell

*Which makes you “see” better what’s happening in the story?*

A

*“I am embarrassed.”*

B

*“I might melt the ice cream.  
My face burns at a minimum  
of one million degrees!”*



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# How to be a good writer: Revise. Revise again. Revise again.

- A first draft is the easiest part.
- It's only the beginning!



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# After you finish your first draft...

- Say, “Cool!”
- Bask in the sunny awesomeness of you.
- Then ask yourself if it’s the best it can be.
- Even if you love it, spend 10 more minutes reading it aloud. Then *show* in the spots where you’re telling. Then re-read it again.



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# After you finish your first draft...

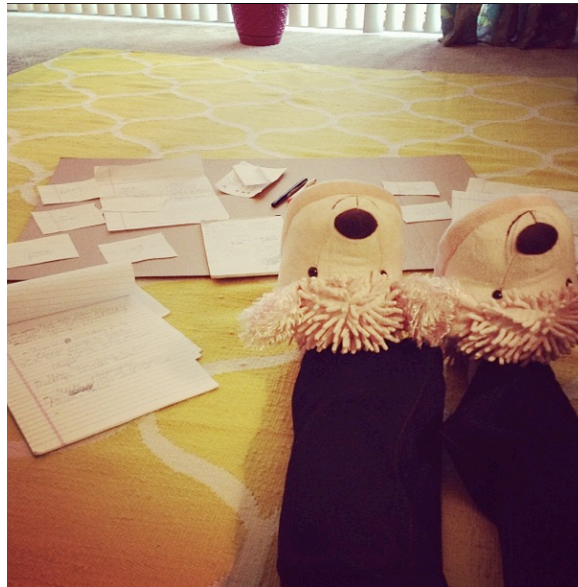
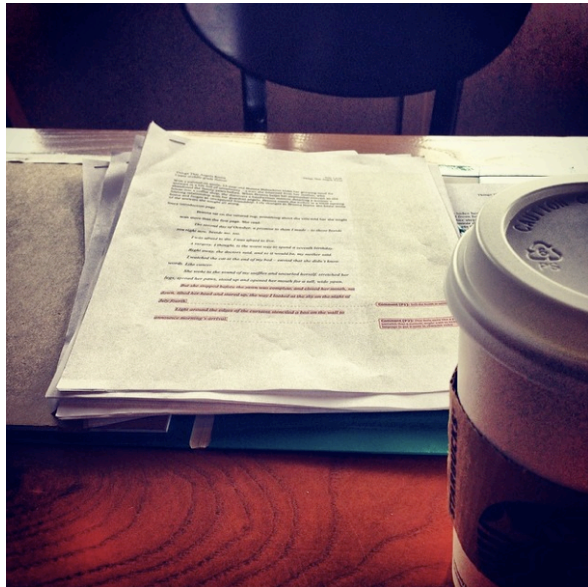
- It's a cool feeling when you finish a first draft of something. "This is the most amazing thing written since Harry Potter!"
- Odds are, you'll read it tomorrow and it won't be as sparkly awesome.
- If you put your name beside a story, it should be the best you can make it.



# After you finish your first draft...

If you're going to do something, do it right. Make it the best you can make it. Otherwise, there's no point.

Take the time to polish it.



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# Where do ideas come from?



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## It All Started on Platform 9 3/4

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*"It was 1990. My then boyfriend and I had decided to move up to Manchester together. After a weekend's flat-hunting, I was travelling back to London on my own on a crowded train, and the idea for Harry Potter simply fell into my head.*

*I had been writing almost continuously since the age of six but I had never been so excited about an idea before. To my immense frustration, I didn't have a pen that worked, and I was too shy to ask anybody if I could borrow one...*

*I did not have a functioning pen with me, but I do think that this was probably a good thing. I simply sat and thought, for four (delayed train) hours, while all the details bubbled up in my brain, and this scrawny, black-haired, bespectacled boy who didn't know he was a wizard became more and more real to me.*

*Perhaps, if I had slowed down the ideas to capture them on paper, I might have stifled some of them (although sometimes I do wonder, idly, how much of what I imagined on that journey I had forgotten by the time I actually got my hands on a pen). I began to write 'Philosopher's Stone' that very evening, although those first few pages bear no resemblance to anything in the finished book."*

- J.K. Rowling



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A coffee shop and residents of a retirement community inspired my current work in progress



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# Writing inspiration

- Life
- Writing prompts



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# What are your dreams?



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# What's the key to making your dreams happen?



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Believing in yourself  
Hope is powerful!



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# Questions?



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