

Outside the Square Fiction Workshop
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By Cheryl Wright
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Five of Five

A Desk Companion of Note for Beginning Writers

Veteran Writer Shares Experience with Others

Reviewed by Carolyn Howard-Johnson, award-winning author of *This is the Place* and *Harkening: A Collection of Stories Remembered* and *Tracings* a chapbook of poetry

Outside the Square Fiction Workshop: An Interactive Workshop for Writers is as much about sharing as it is about advising. Cheryl Wright, veteran writer and editor of Writer2Writer, gives her fellow authors information that she would have liked to have had when she was starting out. Although, this e-book is primarily for beginning writers, the exercises may work well for seasoned writers who are so inundated in the printer's craft that we smell like printers' ink. After all, most of us occasionally suffer from that writer's block malady.

For this purpose, her chapter on called Finding Ideas is excellent. As the author of the *Frugal Book Promoter: How to Do What Your Publisher Won't*, I also like that she touches on marketing, a basic concept many new writers don't begin to understand until it is too late when they all should know how important that is to the eventual outcome of their careers.

Wright uses one of my favorite words, "recycle." In *The Frugal Book Promoter*, I use it to encourage writers to publish the same articles in many different places in order to get clips, build the packages writers need to sell their books to an agents or publishers and, once published, to sell their books. Cheryl encourages her readers to "recycle" the sections in her workbook, each time acquiring new ideas but she is careful to explain exactly how to do that and still plumb the depth of a writer's mind to get the inspirational juices flowing anew with each use.

I disagree with Wright on one point. She uses some captivating dialogue as samples for the first sentence in novels or short stories. Most writing teachers at UCLA's world-renowned Writers' Program warn writers not to open with dialogue; they consider it taking the easy way. I believe that authors who work hard will be able to come up with an opener just as intriguing as Wright's examples using narrative instead and, in fact, Wright provides one. No, I'm not going to give away *that* secret.

As the editor of the writers' site <http://www.writer2writer.com>, Wright brings experience to *Outside the Square Fiction Workshop*, from her site as well as from her experience as

the author of *Saving Emma* and innumerable other pieces. She is also the author of *Think Outside the Square: Writing Publishable (Short) Stories*, a perfect desk companion to *Fiction Workshop*.

(Carolyn Howard-Johnson is an instructor for UCLA's Writers' Program. All of her books including THIS IS THE PLACE, TRACINGS and HARKENING have won awards. Her how-to book, THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T, is the winner of USA Book News' Best Professional Book of 2004. Her FRUGAL EDITOR is the second in the HOWTODOITFRUGALLY series at www.howtodoitfrugally.com.)