

Jessica's Writerly Items Ahoy!

Read these Books:

- *What It Is* by Lynda Barry
- *How To Become a Famous Writer Before You're Dead* by Ariel Gore
- *On Writing* by Stephen King
- *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott
- *From Where You Dream* by Robert Olen Butler
- *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles* by Steven Pressfield
- *The Braindead Megaphone* by George Saunders
- *The 38 Most Common Fiction Writing Mistakes (And How To Avoid Them)* by Jack M. Bickham
- *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft* by Janet Burroway
- *The Art of Fiction* by John Gardner
- **Short-fiction collections (I like novels too, but reading mind-blowing short stories teaches me more about how to write; all titles before maple leaf are Canadian):** *Pleased to Meet You* by Caroline Adderson, *Mad Hope* by Heather Birrell, *The Other Side of Youth* by Kelli Deeth, *Kuessipan* by Naomi Fontaine (translated by David Homel), *All the Anxious Girls on Earth* by Zsuzsi Gartner, *Ladykiller* by Charlotte Gill, *The Broken Record Technique* by Lee Henderson, *19 Knives* by Mark Jarman, *Pretty* by Greg Kearney, *How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?* by Doretta Lau, *Light Lifting* by Alexander MacLeod, *Buying Cigarettes for the Dog* by Stuart Ross, *This Cake Is for the Party* by Sarah Selecky, *Islands of Decolonial Love* by Leanne Simpson, *Bang Crunch* by Neil Smith, *The Best Place on Earth* by Ayelet Tsabari, *Bats or Swallows* by Teri Vlassopoulos 🍁 *Where I'm Calling From: New and Selected Stories* by Raymond Carver, *Whatever Happened to Interracial Love?* by Kathleen Collins, *Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self* by Danielle Evans, *Men Without Women* by Ernest Hemingway, *Break Any Woman Down* by Dana Johnson, *The Girl on the Fridge* by Etgar Keret, *Birds of America* and *Like Life* by Lorrie Moore, *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline* and *Pastoralia* by George Saunders, *The Surrender and Other Stories* by Mabel Segun, *Honored Guest* by Joy Williams

Visit these Websites:

- www.doretta.com/how-to-submit-to-literary-magazines/ (download her super-helpful free PDF)
- <https://bookriot.com/2016/11/15/bookish-ways-to-fight-the-good-fight/> (inspiring *Book Riot* article by Sarah Nicolas)
- <http://yoss2011.com> (a manifesto demanding more respect for short stories, dangit!)

Do these Things:

- Invest in a pen and a notebook that you love, and use them, a lot.
- Go to other writers' readings, and politely pay attention. If there's an open mic, bring something to read, but make sure to keep it *short* (2 or 3 minutes max), or the audience will probably not like you. And if you enjoyed something somebody read, let them know. That will make them happy.
- Attend small-press, comic & zine fairs (better yet—make a zine and bring it to exchange, or book a table to sell and exchange it), attend writing workshops and talks, and start your own writers' group.
- Get your own website (keep it simple if you're not design-inclined).
- Before submitting to literary magazines, read what they publish, then send your stories to the places most likely to publish them. Read & follow submission guidelines. Include a short cover letter with story title & word count (+ brief bio if requested), addressed to the correct (& correctly spelled) editor. Number your story pages. Include your name & contact info on every page (except with blind-judged contests & grant applications). Double-space & use one-inch margins. Use black ink in easy-to-read, 12-point font on plain, white paper. Do a spell & grammar check of your cover letter & story, and/or ask an eagle-eyed person to look them over. Include a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) for mailed submissions. Keep track of your submissions, e.g. in a Word or Excel table (when & where sent + response).
- Always be gracious about rejection—especially personalized rejection notes, which are like gold! Make sure to follow up and submit more work to those publications that want to see more of your writing. Include a brief thank you to the editor who wrote the note, and mention the title of the story you submitted previously.
- (From Stephen King's *On Writing*: "You can't make them like your story, but you can at least make it easy for them to try to like it.")