theory of craft.

A NEWSLETTER ON MASTERING SKILL

MENTORSHIP AND GROWTH IN EDITORIAL CAREERS

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About Theory of Craft

The *Theory of Craft* is a personal and knowledge development resource newsletter developed by Society for Book and Magazine Editors of Nigeria. The scope of the topics range from enhancing skills, cultivating talent, improving productivity, freelance business management and knowledge resources. The target audience is the editorial professional to assist them in mastering their skills. The newsletter is managed by members of the society who serve as guest editors. The ToC is a continuous professional development project.

About the Guest Editor

Olaleye Omoteniola Akinwalere is an editor with ten years of experience. She's a graduate of English and Literature from the University of Benin and has worked as a professional editor in the education, trade and technology publishing space. She is also a writer who has worked with international organisations. Omoteniola has worked with leading publishers in the last seven years. She currently works as a senior editor at a multinational digital publishing company and as an editorial manager at a leading publishing company.

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

When I embarked on putting together this newsletter, I did a lot of research on what would appeal to many writers today. During my research, I realised that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has helped me in more ways than I can imagine, and I decided that it would be selfish not to share the advantages of AI with other writers and editors alike.

In this edition, we will focus on the use of AI in fiction writing. We will discuss the different ways in which AI can help writers to improve their writing skills. Many people use AI for different functions in our society today, but it is not news that some writers have also generated novels with the use of AI. However, recently, Amazon banned books that were written using AI from their website. It begs the question: Where do writers draw the line between using AI to write an entire novel and using it to storyboard to visualise the storyline of their stories? All of these will be explored in this edition. Finally, the "How To" section will provide actionable tips and techniques for using AI for story creation. This includes tips on the correct use of prompts, do's and don'ts on using AI to generate stories, and when to draw the line, will be explored. In conclusion, I hope that this edition of Theory of Craft will enlighten the members on the correct use of generative AI. I also hope that after reading this edition, more members will learn how to use the correct prompts to get what they need from AI while using it to generate stories.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter as much as I enjoyed curating the stories featured here and editing it!

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ESSAY: POTENTIAL OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS AS A RESOURCE IN FICTION WRITING **BY NURAIN ỌLÁDÈJÌ**

As a writer, I rely heavily on my intuition when I write. A lot of what fiction writing does is to inspire us to tell an emotional truth through an imagined reality. Language is the building block with which a fiction writer builds this reality, so that the story resonates with readers on a level of reality. I imagine that for writers of some of the greatest books, they didn't just use language, they felt it. This is why, when AI first emerged as a writing tool, I was immediately dismissive of it. Perhaps what I perceived at the time, and for years later, was that AI was being presented as a writer, not as a tool for writers.

I am still not convinced that AI can be programmed to write fiction that can compete with human fiction writers who feel language. I have, however, come to see the potential of AI to take some weight off writers and thus allow then to focus more mental energy on working on the rhythm of their language.

AI can serve as a good companion and assistant in research for a story. It can suggest entire plot lines or in some cases when a writer gets stuck in the middle of a story. These suggestions can excite the writer's imagination to find a way out and proceed with the story. AI can also suggest dialogue between characters and internal monologue. In areas where small details can make a huge difference, AI can be the companion that one bounces ideas and crosschecks accuracy in milliseconds. In instances where a writer has successfully settled into a rhythm that could be disrupted by factchecking something

or engaging in minor research, AI can serve as an excellent assistant. With the right prompt, AI can easily provide the writer with a working resolution to enable them to maintain their focus and rhythm while writing, and revisit the query to tidy up later.

I once listened to a well-known writer of speculative fiction who said he gets a lot of story ideas by using AI to generate images. He would generate several images using several prompts and, the results would give him ideas for a fresh story or for something that can enhance a story he was yet to complete. Since fiction writing depends on intuition, AI can be used as a tool to feed that intuition to consider creative directions that would otherwise not have come to mind.

I believe that as writers if our perception of AI focuses more on its application as a companion tool to ease our work, and not as competition, we can reap its full benefits.

A CONVERSATION WITH
OLUSOLA ALLI

Can you tell us about Lightreader and its mission to support writers on mobile platforms?

Lightreader is a mobile reading application tailored to use as little data as possible. It was created in response to users' demands. Before it, there was another reading app by the same company for Africans, but they discovered that Africans did not have access to cheap internet. They realised people were not using the reading app because of the cost of data. So, when they designed Lightreader, it was designed to use as little data as possible. The app was created for young people to have access to publishing, because it would be difficult for them to get published traditionally by a publishing house.

What are the main advantages of using AI for writing episodic stories over traditional methods?

The first advantage is speed. When it comes to AI, you tend to write faster because you don't need to sit and brainstorm on what to write next. AI does all the brainstorming for you. AI removes the concept of writer's block. You can never run out of ideas when writing with the help of AI. When you hit to a brick wall, all you need to do is to feed AI with certain prompts, and it generates a fresh set of ideas for you.

How has AI been beneficial to writers creating episodic stories, specifically for mobile apps?

When it comes to writing episodic stories, the plot must be solid, and you need to be able to make it branch out in as many ways as possible to still make sense. Episodic stories often involve multiple interconnected chapters or episodes, each contributing to the overarching narrative. This means the storyline must be robust enough to sustain reader interest over time while allowing for various subplots and character arcs to develop organically.

The branching paths should seamlessly integrate into the main plot, providing diverse yet coherent storylines that keep readers engaged and eager for the next episode. Careful planning and flexibility are essential to ensure that each episode adds value to the overall story while maintaining consistency and continuity. With the use of AI prompts, a writer can get limitless ideas for ways to improve their stories. Writing episodic stories requires a lot of words. The word count for episodic stories can be between 100,000 and 400,000 words. Without the use of AI, this might not have been possible.

No matter how much you get paid, always make sure you learn and practice what you learn in your own way.

Are there any limitations or challenges that writers face when relying on AI for story generation?

The challenge is overly relying on AI to do the bulk of the work. For me, I think the beauty of any work depends on the ability of the writer to create something unique from their imagination. There are books a writer would finish and go back to years later, and marvel at what they have created. One thing writers' pride themselves on is their creativity, so when writers start to rely heavily on AI, it takes away that sense of accomplishment and originality.

How does Lightreader support writers in blending their creative input with AI-generated content to produce cohesive, compelling stories?

At Lightreader, we tell readers to first believe in themselves and use AI as their last option. They are advised to explore everything first and then when they are stuck, to give themselves a few days to reset. If after these few days, they are still unable to continue writing, we advise them to try using AI.

Finally, how do you see the role of AI in writing evolving in the future, especially for writers in mobile and digital storytelling platforms?

I see AI becoming sort of an industrial machine writer. AI is going to keep getting better at generating stories. Will AI take the place of writers? I do believe it will because to a large extent, it will be able to generate stories at a very fast rate, and with the way AI learns, it will be able to produce something nearly as good as what humans produce. Is there a way to put the brakes on AI, to say we only need it to finetune what we have written? Yes, we can. We can do this by reducing the amount of information in the prompts that we feed the AI with.

HOW TO: USE AI EFFECTIVELY WHILE WRITING FICTION

In recent years, generative AI has become a significant tool in the storytelling toolkit, offering unique assistance to writers in developing and refining their work. This technology can help in brainstorming ideas, developing complex narratives and even exploring character backstories. However, like any powerful tool, it is essential to know how to use AI effectively to enhance creativity without letting it overshadow the writer's voice. In this guide, we will explore practical tips on using AI in fiction, the dos and don'ts of prompt design and guidelines for setting boundaries in AI-assisted storytelling.

1. Setting the Stage with Strong Prompts: A strong prompt is the foundation for effective AI-assisted storytelling. When using AI to create stories, the prompt you provide will heavily influence the narrative direction, tone and level of detail in the output.

Example: Instead of a vague prompt like, "Write a story about a detective," try specifying the setting, tone and character attributes to guide the AI toward a richer narrative. A more detailed prompt could be, "Write a story about a seasoned detective in 1950s Ibadan, struggling with inner demons as he investigates a string of high-profile armed robbers. Set a noir tone and explore his moral conflicts."

2. Structuring Effective Prompts: To help you get started with AI prompting, here are examples of well-structured prompts that guide the AI toward specific storytelling goals:

» **Prompt 1:** Exploring Characters Backstory: Describe the childhood of a reclusive schoolteacher who lives alone in a remote village, focusing on events that led to their isolation and fear of betrayal."

» **Prompt 2:** Plot Twist Setup: "Write a scene where a detective discovers a hidden clue that changes their perspective on the entire case. The twist should be subtle yet impactful."

3. Drawing the Line: Balancing AI Assistance with Originality: Using AI to generate parts of a story can be incredibly helpful, but it is crucial to strike a balance between AI-driven content and personal creativity. Think of AI as a collaborator rather than a substitute for original thought. Here are some ways to maintain creative control:

» **Limit AI to Idea Generation:** AI is an excellent tool for brainstorming, especially when facing writer's block. However, it is best used to kickstart ideas rather than dictate entire narratives. For example, you might ask the AI to suggest different settings or backstory elements for a character but reserve the final storyline for your creative touch.

» **Use AI to Develop Existing Concepts:** Instead of using AI to create new characters or plots entirely, try feeding it elements from a story you have already started. For instance, if you are struggling with dialogue for a particular character, provide details about the character's personality and situation, then let the AI suggest lines that fit within your framework.

» **Reserve Emotional Depth for Yourself:** AI may provide helpful structures, but it often lacks the nuance needed to capture human emotions fully. Emotional arcs, which are integral to reader engagement, are best crafted by you as the writer to ensure authenticity.

By following these techniques, writers can learn to harness AI as a powerful creative ally without letting it replace the human touch. Thoughtful prompts, mindful boundaries, and a commitment to maintaining one's voice will empower you to use AI responsibly and effectively.

The Society for Book and Magazine Editors is a non-profit organisation that represents editorial professionals with headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria. It was founded in 2017 and registered in 2018 by Anwuli Ojogwu and Enajite Efemuaye. SBMEN offers training, resources and events to editors to enhance their professional development.
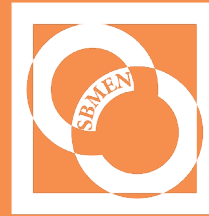
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