

**Title of Session:** Creating an Author Bio

**Creator:** Janet Beasley

**Curriculum:** Novice = Short Bio

**Definition:** An author bio can often times make or break the author's reputation, sales, and acceptance within the literary community. A well developed creative bio leads to more fans which in turn leads to more sales and acceptance in the literary community as a whole. Bio lengths vary according to need. Short bios hover around 100 – 150 words while a long descriptive bio has the liberty of taking up an entire page using a standard 12 font.

**Goals:** To master the basics of creating a short author bio that shines, and critique other enthusiasts in your group to help them discover their greatest potential and qualities as a writer.

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**Tools:**

- 3 x 5 cards
- Pens or pencils
- White tube socks (one per enthusiast)
- Sharpies (an array of colors if you wish)
- Digital camera
- A separate area set up with a chair and background using silk trees, black or white sheet, etc. Be creative and do your best to make it look good as this will be used for your enthusiasts' sample headshots later in this session.
  - HINT: Do not use a reflective surface such as a window or mirror as your background.

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**Ice breaker**

- Hand out tube socks, and have enthusiasts color facial features on the socks.
- Enthusiasts will then use them as sock puppets that represent an author other than themselves.
- Enthusiasts can then take turns "making" their imaginary friend tell a short bit about their writing career as a sock puppet.

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**Lesson:**

- Put each writing enthusiasts' name on a 3 x 5 card and put the cards in a "hat."
- Go around the group and have each enthusiast draw a card, and ask them to keep the name listed on their card a secret.

**Activity 1:**

Once all the cards are handed out have each enthusiast list on the card:

- 3 **positive points** about the person listed on the card.
- 3 **fun facts** you would like to learn about the enthusiast on the card you have: i.e. Do you like the beach or the mountains? Where did you grow up? What is your favorite food? Do you have a pet? What are your dreams? Would you rather write than read, or read than write? etc.
- 3 **writing questions**: i.e. Why did you become a writer? Why did you pick the genre you did? Do you write everyday? What inspires you? Who's your favorite author and why? etc.

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- Collect the cards, shuffle them, and return them to the corresponding enthusiast.
  - Using the information on their personal cards, have enthusiasts create and write their own bio.

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- Have enthusiasts then read their bios aloud and critique.

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### **Activity 2:**

- Snap a couple of head shots of each enthusiast in your "set" area. Do not share them publicly, but put them on your computer and share among the group only for class purposes. Talk about what looks best, talk about what they would keep and/or change: i.e. color of shirt, hats, glasses reflecting, make-up, pose, etc. Have the enthusiasts write down on their 3 x 5 cards the things that would make for their best author head shot when the time comes. Delete enthusiasts' pictures from your computer in front of them for privacy reasons.

### **Discussion:**

- What are your favorite things to discover when getting acquainted with a new author?
- What is the one thing above all you want your fans to know about you?
- Where are some places you would use your author bio?  
i.e. back book cover, blogs, websites, and other promotional opportunities.

## **Creating an Author Bio**

### **Janet Beasley**

#### **Handout - NOVICE**

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#### **What is an author bio?**

An author bio is a valuable tool that an author creates to entice fans to read their stories.

#### **What is in a short author bio?**

- Positive things about you (i.e. outgoing, great smile, or additional talents)
- Fun facts about you outside of writing (favorite food, favorite vacation place, where did you grow up).
- A brief description of your writing: i.e. genre, detail of your title ratings (G, PG 13, R, etc.), what inspires you, and your target audience.

#### **What is a target audience?**

An author's target audience is the biggest mainstream group of people they see reading their books. Every author faces the challenge of deciding who their title will most likely attract, but is a necessary evil if you want to succeed. While some genres, such as romance or westerns are easier to narrow down, there are broader target audiences that are more difficult to zero in on. For example, fantasy (think Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter) is a tough one as kids AND adults make up a thriving target audience within this genre. There are times when authors are forced to choose a target market genre, and they may not find exactly what they're looking for and have to include their titles in categories that don't necessarily fit their expectations. On the flipside, authors can be pleasantly surprised by the response they get on their titles, and will find that their original target market is not at all what they thought.

- From the author Janet Beasley: *"I personally found that with my Hidden Earth Series had been released for a few months, my biggest target market had become middle grade boys. I don't know about you, but I would NEVER have chosen that audience from the onset...it's a tough one to crack into, and I have been honored to be able to change my marketing to fit that group of readers."*

#### **How many author bios should an author have?**

An author should have a short and a long descriptive bio that is ever changing. Long descriptive bios and vitas are covered in the Advance Journey to Publication Curriculum.

#### **What changes can be made in an author bio?**

Authors often times begin to branch out into different genres, interesting personal life changes such as a new pet – moving to a new city – or becoming a grandma are great

attention getters to name a few. Becoming a well known speaker in the literary world is another fine example of what can change in your bio.

**How long should my author bio be?**

For a short bio you should try to keep it around no more than 150 words.

**I hate any pictures taken of me. Do I really have to have a head shot along with my bio?**

Head shots and author bios go hand in hand. If you plan on succeeding as an author you will want to have a head shot to accompany your bio. Always use a true picture of you. A big NO NO is to use your book cover, a flower, a cat, or something else that is not you. You want your fans to come to know you for who you are. Be sure to use the same head shot each time you present your bio, don't keep changing it every time you're asked to send one. This allows you to become "branded" and people will get to know you by your photo first.

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**Short Author Bio for Janet Beasley:**

Janet Beasley, award winning, #1 best selling author of The Hidden Earth Series is successfully carving her niche` in the YA enchanted epic fantasy genre. Even the young at heart are enjoying the escape her writing style presents.

Her debut novel Volume 1 Maycly the Trilogy, in the Hidden Earth Series, raised to the #1, #2 and #3 positions on one chart and landed ahead of the Hunger Games on yet another. Volume 2 Planet Land climbed to #1 in its category.

Janet's publications include a cookbook, historical fiction, non-fiction and award winning poetry. She is outgoing and compassionate, and is encouraging to aspiring authors. She speaks at literary conferences nationwide, is the founder of and a major contributor to the Journey to Publication curriculum, and has come from the theatrical production arena. Janet enjoys spending time with her family, playing with her dog, kayaking, photographing nature, and baking cupcakes.

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**Title of Session:** Creating an Author Bio

**Creator:** Janet Beasley

**Curriculum:** Advance = Long Bio and Vitae

**Definition:** An author bio can often times make or break the author's reputation, sales, and acceptance within the author community. A well developed creative bio leads to more fans which in turn leads to more sales and acceptance in the author community.

**Goals:** Be able to walk away with a completed long description author bio or author vitae.

**Tools:**

- 1 large clear glass pitcher
  - Shaving cream (not gel)
  - Liquid food coloring (multiple colors – red, blue, yellow, green or use fluorescents – it’s up to you, just have fun)
  - Water
- 
- Flip chart
  - Multi-colored Sharpies/Markers

**Ice Breaker:**

Have enthusiasts assign each bottle of food coloring a “thing.” **For example:** RED = a beach vacation, BLUE = skydiving for the first time, YELLOW = drinking hot chocolate with your friends, GREEN = listening to music

- Fill pitcher about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of water
- Spray a nice thick layer of shaving cream onto top of water covering the entire top
- Announce each drop of food coloring using the “things” your enthusiasts decided upon
- Wait for the colors to start “raining” through the shaving cream into the water

As the colors begin to mix, discuss the correlation between: 1) How awesome and colorful the water becomes, how the color patterns are ever changing, and how colors blend together to make new colors and 2) How author bios should be colorful, eye catching, entertaining, and most importantly flexible and willing to change “color” as more colors (“things”) are added or are blended together - i.e. if you go skydiving on a beach vacation you’ve just made purple!

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**Activity 1:****What is an author bio?**

An author bio can often times make or break the author’s reputation, sales, and acceptance within the literary community. A well developed creative bio leads to more fans which in turn leads to more sales and acceptance in the literary community as a whole. Bio lengths vary according to need. Short bios hover around 100 – 150 words while a long descriptive bio has the liberty of taking up an entire page using a standard 12 font.

**How long should my long author bio be?**

You don’t want to write a novel, but you do have the liberty here to take up one full page.

### **Should I have my bio and/or vitae edited?**

Absolutely. It's always a good idea to have at least two fresh set of eyes looking over your presentation. You can get a good head start if you remember to avoid clichés, analogies, and of course adverbs. Watch those exclamation points, alliterations, and keep an eye on those ever pesky commas.

### **What is a vitae?**

More commonly known as a curriculum vitae (CV), a vitae is a detailed, visually stunning, account of the person's experience, skills, and background. It includes photos, pictures, and a creative layout. Styles vary from formal to contemporary, and whimsical to humorous. The sky's the limit on the creativity one can use to put together a vitae.

### **What kind of pictures should I use on my vitae?**

- First and foremost your author head shot
- Book covers
- Your logo (if applicable)
- General photos that fit your personality: (trees, sky scrapers, bicyclists, mountains, the beach, cupcakes, etc.)
- Pictures of you doing the things you listed under "Fun Facts" or Lifestyle
  - *TIP: Be sure to stray away from using too many pics of the kids, grandkids, spouses, siblings, and/or pets. No more than one of each should do. Too many pics of the family and pets begin to turn people off. Remember your fans don't have the "personal" connection with your family and pets that you do, but they may find a connection with you by knowing you have a cool family and/or pets. Pics of you having fun, writing, receiving an award – these are much more widely accepted by fans.*

Below is an example of Janet Beasley's author vitae:

#1  
Best Selling  
Award Winning



# Author Janet Beasley

*Writing professionally since  
1994*



**Creative Genius**  
**Fantastical**  
**Imagination**  
**Dreamer**  
**Achiever**



Author of:  
YA Enchanted Fantasy  
Historical Fiction  
Non-fiction  
Curriculum  
Stage Plays  
Articles  
Poetry

Loves...



Facilitator  
Speaker



*Other Vitae Examples: See front of curriculum – look for Dar Bagby, Janet Beasley, Jean E. Lane, Connie M. Thompson, and Elise VanCise*

### **What are some things that might require a long descriptive author bio?**

- On your “About” page of your website or blog
- An invitation to do write a guest post on a blog
- If your local paper wants to give you some press
- Select venues and organizations require a long description if they are considering you for a speaking engagement at their establishment, convention, or conference
- They make great detailed hand-outs at book signings to connect with fans

### **Should a bio/vitae be written in first person? (Using “I” instead of “he” or “she”)**

- It’s up to you – there really is no right or wrong answer, it’s a matter of personal preference, and how you want to present yourself.
- If you write your bio/vitae in first person it will most likely deliver a presentation with a “gloating” feel to it, however some people prefer to read the first person bios as they perceive it more as a feel of portraying self confidence and possibly a hint of self stability, or even giving a stronger feeling of achievement
- If you write your bio/vitae in third person it will present an objective view point for your fans. They may be the fans that like to read “what others have said” about you, possibly giving you more credibility in their eyes.
- If you’re using third person does this mean you need to have someone write your bio for you? NO. You can write your own bio using third person and most won’t even know that it was you.
  - *Example of third person written by Janet Beasley: Author Janet Beasley has been awarded 5 stars on her latest novel. When we asked her to describe the feeling it gave her she said, “Receiving such an award has given me the next ounce of gumption I need to dive head first into my next novel in the series.” Janet went on to say that the novel that received 5 stars was her debut epic novel and it took her eight years to write. She gives credit to the education she received as a student of an online writing school out of New York.*
  - **TIP:** If you know your target market this may help you decide which will work best for you.

### **What font and font size should I use?**

- For your written bio use a standard font such as a Times New Roman size 12
  - *Cool Fact: Times New Roman is the most widely accepted font around the globe*
- For your vitae – get creative! But be careful **not** to use fonts and sizes that make things difficult to read. There are some awesome fonts out there, though when used in smaller sizes, on websites, blogs, or presentations they are not the easiest ones to read.

### **What should come first in my bio?**

Just like the “hook” line in the first chapter of your book you want an opening line that not only grabs their attention, but holds it. You want to include your biggest accomplishment(s), a hint of experience, and possibly a skill in one power-packed sentence.

*Example: #1 best selling, award winning author Joe Brown's unmatched style of fantasy writing paid off when he was accepted into the Author Hall of Fame 10 years ago.*

### **What other things need to be included in the bio/vitae**

- Throw in a few more major accomplishments: awards, reviews, press, media
- A dash of interesting literary accomplishments: writing school, if you're going to attempt another genre out of your comfort zone, appearances you've made
- Why are *you*, your genre's expert?
- And be sure your bio and/or vitae is dripping with your personality. Throw in something that will catch them off guard – it could be humorous, or offer some fun facts about yourself. Don't be afraid to tell them if you're an animal lover, a race car driver, a doctor, you love to hike, you love to scrapbook, you hate coconut, etc. – this is where you'll connect with your fans on a more personal level

***HINT: If you're not a thriller writer, don't make remarks that lead them to think this. If you're an outgoing personality let that shine.***

- Just like in your novellas and novels – overcoming trials always brings a connection with many fans: Maybe you have been in a bad accident or suffered from a terminal disease and your survival rate was nil, but you overcame the odds. Or maybe you've been through a real hardship – loss of a family member or a home to fire or a bad storm, but you fought your way back and won.
- Solid closing statement – from a witty zinger that is not offensive to a serious statement that expresses your passion for the craft, and everything in between, a solid closing statement has the potential of bringing you more fans. This statement should be something that captures one last bit of your personality to help clench connections.
- Contact info – as an author it's a bit different giving out this info. We don't need to be hounded by fans texting or calling us all hours of the day and night. So don't give out your phone number. Your email address is iffy – if you're not going to have time to answer your fans then don't give it out. A mailing address for fan mail is great, but this should not be your home or office – use a PO Box for the best and safest way to correspond by mail.
  - ***TIP: The best thing to do for contact info is to give your fans your URL (website address). Your website should be your main hub where you send everyone first. From your website they should be able to easily follow links by clicking on buttons you've provided to your social media sites and/or your blog.***

**Using keywords in your bio is huge plus. Add them in strategically as one way to help your bio/author name climb the SEO charts. Some keywords to consider:**

- School(s) – College(s)
- Celebrities' and well known people's names who have endorsed you

- If your book is based on a specific region i.e. Rome, Paris, New York, the Grand Canyon, The Great Barrier Reef, Cliffs of Moher, etc. be sure to add this to your bio
- If your book contains specific things i.e. dog, cat, popcorn, police, military, recipes, etc. be sure to include these terms in your bio to help enhance your SEO placement.

### **How do I close the bio?**

Leaving your fans on a personal note settles well. It adds “umph” to the connection fans may be building with you. They may admire your accomplishments, but if they have something in common with you the “bond” can become even stronger, making for more dedicated fans.

*Example:* When Janet is not writing she enjoys hiking, kayaking, photographing nature, and baking cupcakes.

### **Activity:**

Create columns on the flip chart, outlining each column with a different color

***Title each column individually with the following bold topics (you needn't write out the examples, they are provided to help you coax the enthusiasts in the right direction to fill the columns when the time comes):***

- **Author Experience** (helping aspiring writers, appearances, have been published)
- **Author Skills** (what writing elements do you excel at, are you a writer who can write a novel in 30 days – or does it take you years, do you research your topic, )
- **Author Background** (what lead you to writing, how did you become an author, schooling, etc.)
- **Life Experiences** (fun, funny, scary, monumental, hardships, loss, illness, accident, achievement, trials, triumphs)
- **Life as an Author** (time spent writing at one sitting – days – hours – minutes - random, do you write something everyday, favorite drink while writing, your writing area – does it have a theme)
- **Books/Titles** (singles, series, genres, debut novel/novella, etc.)
- **Awards** (5 star reviews, contest winner, etc.)
- **Well Known or Celebrity Input** (research, foreword, endorsements, etc.)
- **Appearances** (book signings, speaking engagements, exhibiting at a convention, etc.)
- **Inspiration/Creativity** (where does it come from, what things inspire you)
- **Hobbies**
- **Favorite Things** (other than writing – traveling, spending time with family, your pets, your car, photography, drawing, painting, lattes, steak, seafood, desserts, etc.)

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- Once the columns have been labeled, start with the first column and ask the enthusiasts for input/ideas to fill that column. Do this for each column. Write the enthusiasts' input in the same color in which you outlined the column.
- Once columns are filled, ask the enthusiasts to silently study the columns for a couple of minutes to find the things that best describe them and their work(s), and/or think up even more ideas.
- After a couple of minutes ask if any of them were able to mix some of the listings and get "new" colors?
- Ask if any of listings sparked ideas or memories that are individual to them

### **Activity 2:**

#### **Time to write a long description = or draft up an author vitae**

Have enthusiasts "show off" their long bios or vitas. Have the other enthusiasts give an honest critique. Have them point out things that may not necessarily be interesting to them as a reader, and also have them give the author ideas of things not mentioned that they would like to know/make it more interesting i.e. Why did that author choose to write in the genre he/she did.

#### **Discussion:**

- What do you believe are the most important features/facts to include in an author bio?
- Written Bio vs. Author Vitae: Features and benefits of both - Which is your favorite and why? How many of you will be creating both and why?
- Which part of your favorite author's bio/vitae "made the connection" for you?

**Session:** Creating an Author Bio / Vitae  
**Creator:** Janet Beasley

## **Handout – ADVANCE**

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*Vitae Examples: See front of curriculum – look for Dar Bagby, Janet Beasley, Jean E. Lane, Connie M. Thompson, and Elise VanCise*

### **What some things that might require a long descriptive author bio?**

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- Contact info – as an author it's a bit different giving out this info. We don't need to be hounded by fans texting or calling us all hours of the day and night. So don't give out your phone number. Your email address is iffy – if you're not going to have time to answer your fans then don't give it out. A mailing address for fan mail is great, but this should not be your home or office – use a PO Box for the best and safest way to correspond by mail.
  - ***TIP: The best thing to do for contact info is to give your fans your URL (website address). Your website should be your main hub where you send everyone first. From your website they should be able to easily follow links by clicking on buttons you've provided to your social media sites and/or your blog.***

### **What kind of pictures should I use on my vitae?**

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