

Title of Session: Continuity in Novel Writing

Creator: Janet Beasley

Curriculum: ADVANCED

Definition: Continuity, in this setting, refers to the art of keeping your elements within your novel constant. The longer your novel the more difficult it can become keeping the continuity spot on. Missed continuity can happen in a single word or an entire phrase. It can be found in time of day, weather, terrain, props, character clothing, character actions, or character appearance to name a few.

Goals: By the end of the session enthusiasts will be able to recognize and/or correct continuity issues within their novels.

Tools:

2 each: *You may use the choices below, or come up with your own. The more items you have, the more fun and in depth the Ice Breaker will be.*

Pencils

Pens

Paper clips

Rubber bands

Markers

Erasers

Rubber insects

Marbles

Rocks

Stuffed animals (small)

Coins

Salt and pepper shakers

Spoons

Eye shadow

Combs

1 each:

Table cloth or sheet

Wipe off board or flip chart and appropriate markers

Ice Breaker:

- On one table align one each of the items you have from the list above
- Have enthusiasts study the alignment for a few moments, then cover them with the table cloth or sheet.
- On another table put the matching second items in a pile
- Have enthusiasts arrange the items in the order they saw on table 1

- Remove sheet and see how close they were able to come to the original alignment
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Activity:

- Have enthusiasts read the story from their handouts. It is the same story as below, however for the overseer the continuity issues have been underlined.
- Have enthusiasts read the scenario and pick out the continuity issues.

Night Owl – Flash Fiction - author Janet Beasley

Hank rode into town on his motorcycle. When he got there he parked in front of the diner. Being the sun was just beginning to rise over the horizon, he had the parking lot to himself as always. He looked at the weathered sign and thought, *Man, am I ever glad to be here. Riding through the night gets harder every time. I suppose since all I do anymore is ride in the night that's why the top brass code-named me Night Owl.* He removed his helmet, laid it on the seat behind him and took in a deep breath, relishing in the faint aroma of the coffee brewing, wafting from the cracks between the logs of the rustic diner.

Leading the feds to the next suspect on their list in the drug ring, in which Hank was once involved, had become his career. Not of choice, but out of necessity to keep himself out of jail. Last night was no different. He'd gotten the information he needed from the guy, but it took going through a scuffle and getting beat up pretty bad. Regardless, he had successfully led the authorities to the next criminal whom Hank saw in cuffs as he rode off.

Even with his massive size, Hank was getting uneasy as each criminal arrested was moving the authorities closer to the king pin – someone Hank respected. When the time came Hank knew the king pin would recognize him and that would probably cost him his life. He was starting to think prison may have been an easier route. He grabbed his bag, **got out of the car**, then grimaced as he walked to the door.

He leaned and peered through the front window before pulling on the door handle, his long, dangling earrings clinking on the glass. He smiled when he saw Bob heating up the stainless grill through the large cut-out opening between the kitchen and the dining area. Hank let himself in, moseyed to the third booth and took a seat. When he sat down on the creaking bench he shook his head, wondering when...or if... Bob was ever going to renovate. Before he grabbed a menu Hank made sure his **helmet was steadied on the bench beside him**.

Hank didn't know why he had grabbed the menu, chuckling to himself he supposed it was out of habit from being on the road so much. He put the menu back in the misshapen silver rack on the table, and waited for Bob to come out and take his order as usual.

Bob burst through the swinging door from the kitchen and ended up at Hank's table where he wiped the grease from his hands on his apron. Bob sat down across from Hank and said, "I need to get these benches fixed." Hank stared Bob down with a look that should have let Bob know he had a knack for the obvious. Bob took one hard look at Hank's shiny earlobes and asked a silly question that had been bothering him, "How come you only wear diamond stud earrings?"

"That's for me to know, only."

Bob grinned. "Fair enough." He wiped his hands on his shirt once again before he said to Hank, "How long you gonna keep this up?"

"As long as it takes."

Bob hung his head. "Well, I sure hate seeing you come in here every night looking like this." He looked Hank in the eye. "I mean as if this isn't bad enough, what's gonna happen when you lead them to Rudy? You know all rules will be off the table and one or the other of you's going down...don't you?"

Hank sighed. "Yeah, and I hope it's me and not him." He slammed himself against the booth's straight up back. "I can't fathom having to shoot my old man."

Continuity Issues from Story: See if enthusiasts picked out all 5 of them

got out of the car. - he was riding a motorcycle

helmet was steadied on the bench beside him. – Hank took his helmet off earlier and laid it on the seat of the motorcycle

stud earring – Hank is wearing long, dangling earrings

shirt – he wiped his hands on his apron before

night – Hank comes to the restaurant every morning for breakfast

Discussion:

- What is your biggest pet peeve when it comes to continuity in a fictional story?
- In the genre you are writing, name some of the things that will need to hold continuity to make your story believable.

- Do you think your readers would notice that your character is traveling 2000 miles, and they just started their journey. However, you have them ending up at their destination an hour later?

Session: Continuity

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Handout: ADVANCED

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Why is continuity so important in a fictional setting?

Continuity helps with the believability factor of a fictional story.

What is an example of poor continuity?

Example: Mary swung her sword at the beast, but the beast was too fast. Mary raised her knife again, in hopes of intimidating the scaly monster.

- Explanation: Is Mary using a sword or a knife?

Example: Victor, the most valiant of the five remaining warriors, took a hit, costing him his life. When the enemy retreated, the five warriors raced to safety.

- Explanation: If Victor is one of the five, there can only be four left to race to safety.

Something fun to do next time you're watching a movie or TV program: Take note of the continuity such as hair styles, clothing, drive by scenes, store fronts, landscapes, props, and place settings to name a few. In rare cases "Hollywood" misses one, but for the most part they are spot on.

Continuity Exercise: Read through the following and pick out the continuity issues.

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