

## **FAQ for Diana Burrell's Become an Idea Machine class (update 4/8/2011)**

### **How does this class work?**

It's a three-week class, designed so that you can learn how to generate story ideas easily and get them out in the market quickly.

In the first week, I'll share my strategies to help you start building your idea generation muscles – and a huge list of story ideas.

During week two, you'll continue building up your inventory of story ideas, but you'll also start learning how to refine your brain spurts into stories you can sell.

And in week three, I'll show you how to take those refined ideas and target them for the right markets ... because you can have the greatest ideas in the world, but if you're sending them to the wrong magazines you'll never make a sale.

### **How much do your classes cost?**

The Premium-level costs \$149, which includes access to the class online and e-mail support. Effective with the May 2011 classes, I've dropped the \$99 basic level which didn't include e-mail support – I really feel the best results come from having some back-and-forth with the instructor, if only to give both of us some accountability.

You can pay by PayPal or send me a check at:

**The Renegade Writer  
P.O. Box 1622  
Westford, MA 01886**

If you mail me a check, let me know ahead of time because I can go for weeks without checking my P.O. box.

### **How is this class different from the story idea workshop you used to offer?**

The biggest difference is that due to popular demand, I'm offering one-on-one support to students, which I didn't before. I've updated existing material and added new material. If you took my story idea workshop before and want to go another round of it, this time with support, you can pay the difference (\$50), get access to the updated material, and work with me one-on-one. Drop me an e-mail at [dianaburrell@gmail.com](mailto:dianaburrell@gmail.com) if you'd like to do this.

### **I suck at coming up with story ideas. What makes you think you can help me?**

If you are really lack that much confidence in your idea-generating abilities, please sign up. I can give you that kick of confidence you desperately need. In all my years of teaching writing classes, I've never met a student who couldn't come up with a handful of ideas – not just any old ideas, but ones that could sell! – by the end of the course. I help students by asking them questions about their lives, their interests, their dreams for the future – the same kind of questions that I'll ask you in our one-on-one e-mails. Coming

up with ideas is a skill, not a talent – and once you learn the basics, you'll find that generating good story ideas gets easier and begets more good ideas. You may not ever love coming up with ideas, but my course can certainly make the process easier – and less painful – for you.

**Wait ... you're going to see my ideas? Should I be worried that you'll steal them?**

You know, I myself was worried about this. No, not that I'd steal your ideas, but that one of my students would accuse me of stealing, which is why when I first ran this class as a workshop, I offered no input into my students' ideas. But several things happened. First, my students started begging me for feedback on their ideas. They didn't seem too concerned that I'd pillage their piles of stories. Then I talked to my co-author, Linda, who critiques story ideas in her class and has never had a problem with students worried about idea theft. I've also critiqued story ideas and queries from writers who've taken my magazine writing courses IRL. All I can do is assure my students and potential students I have so many ideas of my own and so little time to get them out to editors that I hardly have time to pilfer ideas from other writers. And if you've read *The Renegade Writer*, you know how much we loathe editors who steal story ideas ... surely it's not a practice we'd adopt.

**Will I benefit from your class if I've been freelancing for awhile?**

If you've had a career-long struggle with idea generation, I think my workshop could help you. If your ideas feel a little stale, perhaps some of my techniques will get you thinking in a new and different way. I've designed the course to be helpful for both beginning and working freelancers, so there are some points within the workshop where I talk about stuff an experienced freelancer should know, such as knowing your markets or what TK stands for. This might irritate you, it may not, so consider yourself warned.

**What's your teaching style?**

I think my students see me as a very positive, enthusiastic teacher. I'm encouraging ... but I'm not someone who'll tell you your crap idea is gold just because I want to be nice and not hurt your feelings. The way I see it, you're paying me money to be honest with you – and better to hear from me than from an editor that your idea needs some work. If I don't think a story on why women should drink eight glasses of water per day is especially compelling, I'm going to say so – but I'll give you suggestions how to shape that broad idea into something that might sell (something you won't get from an editor). For example, you could turn that idea on its head: Is there any evidence that drinking eight glasses of water a day might be bad for you? On the other hand, my enthusiasm will be genuine for an idea on how to build your own outdoor hearth for less than \$20 or an investigative piece on how children in your school district are being served processed food that's been in deep freeze for 20 years.

**How do I access the workshop? Do I need special software?**

The workshop is web-based; all you need is an Internet connection and a computer (Mac or PC) with browser software like Safari, IE, Firefox, or Chrome. When you click on the URL I give you on Monday mornings, you'll type in your login and password in the pop-up box that appears, then that week's lesson will show up in your browser.

**Do I have to be in a certain place at a certain time?**

Nope. I send the workshop's URL/password out every Monday morning. You can read lesson and do the work at your convenience, although starting with the first week, you'll be asked to do some work each day. The class is progressive and you'll get the most out of each week if you do the daily work.

**Can I access the class after the session is over?**

I change passwords every few months for security reasons. If you need to access the class and your login/password doesn't work, drop me a line at [dianaburrell@gmail.com](mailto:dianaburrell@gmail.com) and I'll set you up with new ones. Please do not share the passwords, user names, or forward the workshop files to anyone. This won't make me or my attorney happy.

**Where do I send my questions and homework?**

My email address for this class is [storyideasclass@gmail.com](mailto:storyideasclass@gmail.com).

**What kind of e-mail support do you give?**

We'll be communicating via e-mail during the week. You can ask me questions, and I'll be checking in with you.

**When will you answer my questions/give me feedback on my ideas?**

With this new format I'm using, I'll check e-mail daily and get back to you with answers to urgent questions. For assignments, I'll be setting aside a large chunk of time on Wednesdays and Fridays to provide feedback to you, so if you turn something into me on a Saturday, I won't be looking at it until the following Wednesday. I make no apologies for keeping my weekends free from work. ☺

**I'm going on vacation for a week during the workshop. Is that okay?**

I advise you to sign up for this workshop when you have a full three weeks to commit to it. It's not designed in a way that makes it easy to take a break. Each day builds on the previous day, sort of like weightlifting. It's not going to do you a lot of good if you have to walk away in the middle of it. Don't worry – I'll be offering this course a lot, so if you can't take it now, it'll always be there later.

**I'll be away/busy/washing my hair when the workshop starts and would like to start a few days late. Can I do that?**

If you're confident that you can catch up on the workshop to your satisfaction, starting a day or two late is usually fine. As I mentioned above, I'll be offering this workshop frequently, so you can always sign up for a session that works better for your schedule rather than start late. I'd almost prefer you do this than start late, but it's your decision.

**Will there be any interaction with the other students in the workshop?**

No. Any interaction will be between you and me.

**If I come up with a great idea in the first class, will you help me write a query letter?**

First, I'll be thrilled that you came up with an idea you're ready to pitch to editors. If

you're a Premium-level student, I'll help you shape it and refine it, and even give you suggestions where to send it once you've written it up in query letter form. My class focuses on helping writers generate the raw material to use for queries. So as for the actual writing of the query, that's beyond the scope of this class. If you want help writing a killer query, then get yourself over to Linda's class, where she'll walk you through the whole process of query letter writing.

**What kind of money-back guarantee do you offer?**

If, after I send the first lesson, you don't think this workshop is for you, I'll return your money. Unfortunately, I cannot refund your money after the second week's lesson has been sent. The other Renegade Writer classes have a two-week money back guarantee because they last for six to eight weeks. My workshop is much shorter, thus the shorter refund time.

**I have a question that's not answered here. What should I do?**

Please e-mail me your question at [dianaburrell@gmail.com](mailto:dianaburrell@gmail.com). Please include "Story Idea Class" in your subject line.