

# Red Pen Training

## Proof of Pudding Workshop



**WELCOME!**

# rainbowmaker



- Jenny Lawson
  - Teacher / examiner
  - IT specialist / consultant
  - Maths and IT texts books
  - Editor
- Anne Rainbow
  - Writer of fiction: poetry, short stories, plays, novels
  - Devon/Cornwall ML 2010-13
  - ScrivenerVirgin blog
  - Red Pen Mentor

# Family Circle by Patsy Collins



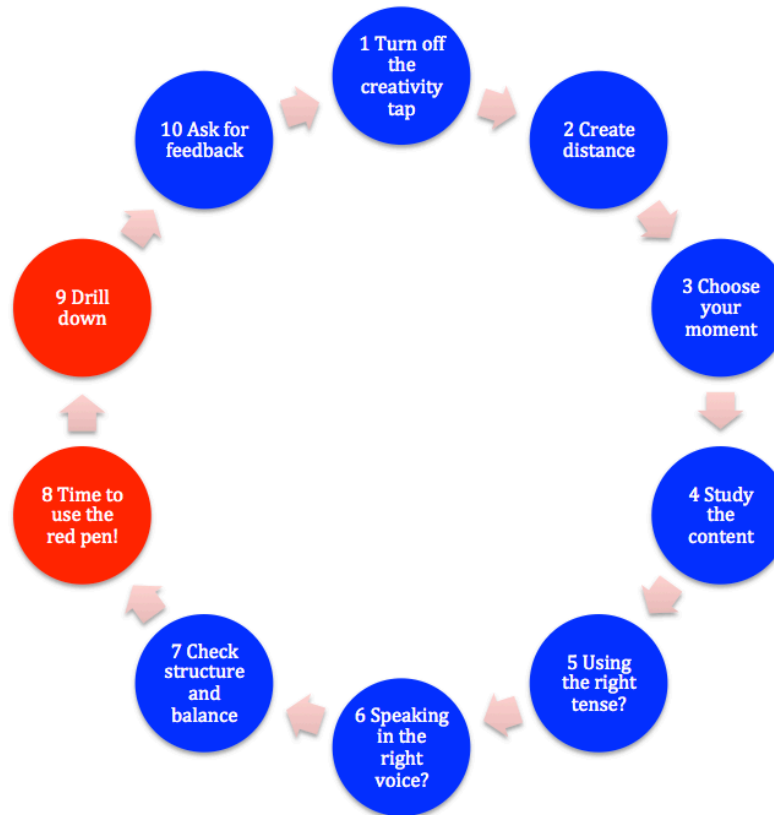
# The plan for today!

- What is editing?
- Reminder of Red Pen process
- Activities 1, 2, 3, ...
- Recap on main editing techniques
- Q&A

# What is editing?

- Editing is not the same as writing
- Editing is a systematic process
- Editing requires examination of the text
- Finding flaws – and fixing them

# Red Pen process



# Mental checklist

- FIRST IMPRESSIONS
- PLOT
- CHARACTERS
- Use of SENSES
- The TAKEAWAY MESSAGE

# Activity 1

- Read Draft 1
  - What is good about it?
  - What is not so good about it?
- List all tasks to be addressed
- Select three SMART tasks



# Generic tasks

- THE BIG PICTURE  
Pruning, balance, tense, person, tone
- THE DETAIL  
Grammar, punctuation, vocabulary
- WRITING STYLE  
Exposition, dialogue, show versus tell

# RP4: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- I like the overall concept. I love the secret ingredient. And I like the warmth that comes across throughout the story.
- It's a lovely idea
- I enjoyed the way it is written In as close to the present tense as possible. When not possible the present perfect is used. I liked the way it read like a recipe and that many paragraphs focused on one of the ingredients.

# RP4: PLOT

- I didn't think there was much of a plot, although it's nice to see people coming together at the end.
- Needs more plot.

# RP4: CHARACTERS

- There's also a new beginning, with a different bowl for cooking this year's pudding. I felt the characters, apart from the storyteller herself, were very vague.
- I am intrigued to know more about them

# RP4: Use of SENSES

- Taste of cinnamon. Sugar, spices!
- Love to the nuts...as Uncles.
- There's quite a lot to tickle the senses: touch, taste, smell.

# RP4: The TAKEAWAY MESSAGE

- I felt the build up was so wistful and then the resolution a little too complete
- I felt the author seemed quite distant and isolated but I'm sure that wasn't the intended message
- The idea that you don't have to be together all the time to be a family is true - and very strong.

# Activity 1: The good points

- Specifically about Christmas so good for magazine market – easily identifiable theme!
- Recognisable family issue – who inherits the pudding bowl
- Happy ending = feel good factor

# Activity 1: Not-so-good points

- Takes ages before it really starts
- A lot of examples of family – too many?
- Would have liked a little more dialogue maybe the daughters being introduced earlier
- try to use the word pudding less
- Bit repetitive?
- Try getting rid of some of the more formal language such as “prior to”
- Verging on saccharine
- didnt excite me too much; bit rambling



# Activity 1: The tasks

1. Introduce more dialogue earlier in the story.
2. Reduce the length by at least 10% - possibly more.  
PRUNE!
3. Ending! Change it (for me at least)
4. ? Find ways of engaging reader more
5. Repetition
6. Punctuation needs some attention!
7. Not sure about some of the direct comparisons between ingredients/pudding and family life: the one that was most specific (about her brother Daniel) was the most successful, I thought.

# Next?

- Set three tasks
- Writer edits the story
- Revised draft available for consideration

# Task 1: Pruning

- Aim for 10% reduction
- 1 word in ten

# Task 2: Characters

- Mother
- Grandmother (L5) and great grandmother
- Two daughters: Sally and Caroline (L7/8)
- Brother Allen (L15) and nephews (L18)
- Uncles (L61), little girls (L64), bride (L64)
- Daniel (L70)
- Husband's sister and three children (94)

# Task 3: Balance

- **Lines 2/3:** I fetch the ceramic mixing bowl from the garage.
- **Lines 23-27:** As I run water into the bowl to clean it prior to making this year's batch ... I dry the cream china surface and place the bowl on the table next to the assembled ingredients.
- 35 / 258 / 73 / 264/ 18 / 589 / 66 / 148 / 338

# Task 4: POV

- Rule: Only one POV at a time
- Rule: Use the reader's eyes / ears / senses
- Written first person from Mother's POV

# Task 5: Timing

- Mixing action in with exposition
- Matching the time it takes to do things with the time it takes to think thoughts
- No kangaroo hops!



# Activity 3: Draft 3 vs draft 4

**3: As I begin to assemble the ingredients ...** the phone rings.

“It’s just me for now,” Sally says. “Don’t worry, Carol’s coming, but there’s been a minor crisis over transport to the kids football practice. She’s going to drop them off, arrange a lift home and get here as soon as she can.”

**4: As I begin ...** the phone rings.

As I make my way to the hall, I wonder if it’s Sally to reassure me they’re on their way, or Carol to inform me about whatever crisis has delayed them.

“There’s a slight change of plan,” Sally says. “Don’t worry, we’re coming, but Carol’s got a minor crisis over the kids’ football practice. I’m leaving now and Carol will follow as soon as she can.” I chuckle; amused at my girls acting so completely in character. They’ll never change. As I return to the kitchen, I think about things that have changed. I now buy the nuts shelled ready for use.



# Draft 4

- COMFORT BREAK TIME!
- Read through, make notes
- Can use mental checklist again if you wish
- Time: 10-15mins

# Activity 1: The tasks revisited

# Task 6: Entrances / exits

- L6: taught my own daughters, Sally and Caroline, to make puddings
- L11/14: One of my daughters will have to take on the task. As they're twins, it's not obvious which. I guess Sally will volunteer; she's always ready to accept responsibly. She'd take good care of this treasured piece of china. Caroline would care more about what it represents,

# Task 7: Props

- Telephone
- Bowl
- Ingredients

# Task 8: Writing style

- L13/14: She'd take good **care** of this treasured piece of china. Carol would **care** more about what it represents
- L15 & L22: 'months in advance'
- L32 & L34: crisis
- L100-107:  
"Well, sort of. Let's talk about that once Carol gets here."  
Oh dear, it doesn't **sound** as though they've taken me seriously. ...  
"Don't worry, Mum. We've got a plan."  
I don't like the **sound** of that.

# Task 8: Writing style cont'd

- L2-4: I fetch the ceramic mixing bowl from the garage. **It's** too heavy for everyday use, so for most of the year **it's** put away. **It** only comes out when I mix together the Christmas pudding ingredients. My grandmother used this bowl to make her Christmas puddings before she passed **it** on to my mother.

The ceramic mixing bowl is too heavy for everyday use. For most of the year, **it** lives in the garage, only coming out when I'm ready to make the Christmas pudding mix. My grandmother used this bowl before she passed **it** on to my mother.

# Task 9: Grammar

- L80/81: Carefully, I polish each one until they shine.

# Task 10: Typos

- L36: I chuckle, amused at my girls acting so completely in character.
- L42/43: ... containers, rather than wrapped in layers of muslin and waxed papers for storage. Last year I tried microwaving part of the mixture. It was so much easier than hours of ...
- L64: It's fine, some things really last a long time.
- L96: "In fine cake making form. You?"
- L162/163: "What a lovely idea! After Christmas lunch, as well as a piece of pudding, we'll give everyone a copy of 'The Family Recipe'."
- *I guess Sally will volunteer; she's always ready to accept **responsibly***



# Task 11: Punctuation

- L25: I used to think both it and my family were indestructible; but, of course, that's not true.
- L27/28: As I begin to assemble the ingredients, the familiar routine seems more than a bringing together of foodstuff. It's almost as if I'm drawing my family to me.
- L 72/74: We share the same love though as if we were all together; we share the same batch of mix, divided as we are into smaller pieces.

# Activity 4: Draft 6

# Proof of the pudding!

## THE FAMILY recipe

It was so much more than just a Christmas pudding. It represented everything that I held dear. A short story by Patsy Collins

The ceramic mixing bowl is kept in the garage. It's too heavy for everyday use, so for most of the year it's put away. It only comes out when I make the Christmas pudding. My grandmother used this bowl to make her puddings before she passed it on to my mother. The bowl is mine now. I've taught my own daughters, Sally and Carol, to make puddings according to the family recipe.

As I clean it I'm reminded I can't keep doing this for much longer. My arthritic hands find difficulty in holding the bowl steady. I have to squint to read the measurements on the scales and stirring the mix has become hard work. One of my daughters will have to take on the task. As they're twins, it's not obvious which I guess Sally will volunteer; she's always ready to accept responsibility. She'd take good care of this treasured piece of china. Carol would worry more about what it represents, she might not always manage to make the puddings months in advance, or stick precisely to the recipe, but she'd always produce something and she'd do it with passion. I rather hope they'll find a way to share the bowl, possibly taking turns.

I dry the cream surface and place the bowl on the table. I'm not sure how many puddings I've mixed in this bowl; at least one a year,

but often more. When my brother Allen emigrated, he took a pudding with him for the first Christmas he spent with his new family. Each subsequent year, he received another pudding. I make them early, so holidaying visitors can take them.

The bowl and recipe will be handed on for generations, unless one of us breaks it. I can't imagine that happening. It's been dropped before, but there are no chips or cracks. I used to think both it and my family were indestructible but, of course, that's not true.

As I begin to assemble the ingredients, the familiar routine seems more than a bringing together of foodstuffs. It's almost as if I'm drawing my family to me. I suppose that's true in a way; even when separated the traditional dessert keeps us in each other's thoughts. Just then the phone rings. As I make my way to the hall, I wonder if it's Sally to reassure me they're on their way, or Carol to inform me about whatever crisis has delayed them.

"There's a slight change of plan," Sally says. "Don't worry, we're coming, but Carol's got a minor crisis with the kids. I'm leaving now and Carol will follow as soon as she can."

I chuckle; amused at my girls acting so completely in character. They'll never change.

As I return to the kitchen, I think about things that have changed. I now buy the

short story



# Review with Patsy

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Thank you for attending!