

# Writing Life

MORE POWERFUL THAN A LIGHT SABER  
MORE MAGICAL THAN MERLIN  
THESE WRITER'S WORDS CAN  
CONQUER WRITER'S BLOCK WITH A SINGLE FLASH  
AND  
FILL PAGES WITH IDEAS IN A WAND WAVE!

What are these incredible words which motivate writers?  
The simple, "what if" generates ideas and ignites the imagination.  
Head a piece of paper with the words, what if...

- I discovered a boa constrictor lying on top of my washing machine?
- I learned I had a twin?
- While stopped at a light, a truck driver whistles and drops a note through my sunroof?
- I find letters stuffed beneath the basement floor?
- Turn the key in the lock and find my house filled with dogs?

Take your notepad or laptop to the mall or a local coffee shop, watch the people around you think of multiple possibilities for people's actions and backgrounds. What if...

- That little girl licking that ice cream cone is the missing child pictured on the milk carton at home?
- I witness a bank robbery across the street as I sip a latte?
- The three people standing in line before me have the same eye color---and it's orange?
- I sit working in a coffee shop and all the customers around me chant, "Up-terang" after every sip of coffee?
- A zucchini and a string bean waltz in holding hands?

If the last two happen, it's time to stop drinking so much coffee. A 'what if' list should include the good, the bad and the absurd. Unleash your creativity and see what ideas spring forth.

A 'what if' list can (get you past that writers' block. If you are stuck in the middle of a story, think of all the what ifs that would happen to your character.

- My main character turns down the wrong street?
- My main character loses his/her best friend?
- My main character is sent to a different location?
- My main character is arrested?

The 'what if' can also unravel that story thread. If we reexamine our 'what if' idea of the note passed by the truck driver and let the 'what ifs' continue to create a story. What if the truck driver passes a piece of paper through my character, Emily's moon roof. What if..

- It has a phone number and she calls it.
- The note states he knows a secret about Emily's husband.
- The driver thinks Emily is a co-conspirator in a kidnapping.

- The driver is shy and took a chance with a new way to meet someone.
- The truck driver is sipping a latte, his eyes are orange, his truck carries boxes of zucchini and green beans. The note he passes has printed, “Up-terang.”

Sometimes the ‘what if’ list leads to a strong story thread, sometimes it leads to a refreshing direction for a stalled story, sometimes all it leads to is laughter. Sometimes laughter is all a writer needs to get back to writing. What ‘what if’ ideas spark your imagination? What if every time you wrote ‘what if’ a magical story sprung from your pen and that story earned a spot on New York Times best sellers list?