

TRAVEL WRITING: *Deepen Your Travel Experiences and Improve Your Writing with a Muse Board*

January 21, 2023

**Sacramento Branch of
the CWC**

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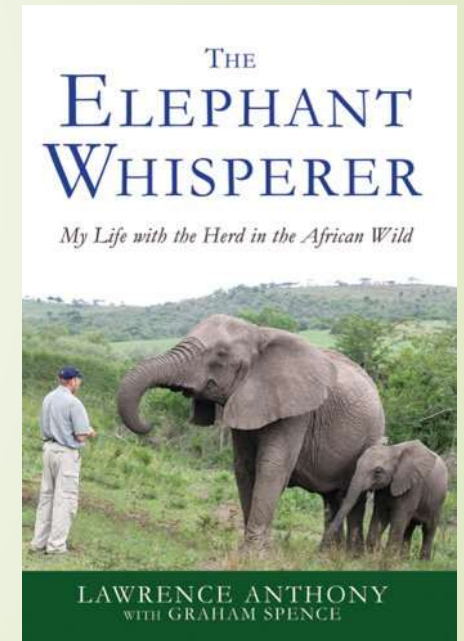
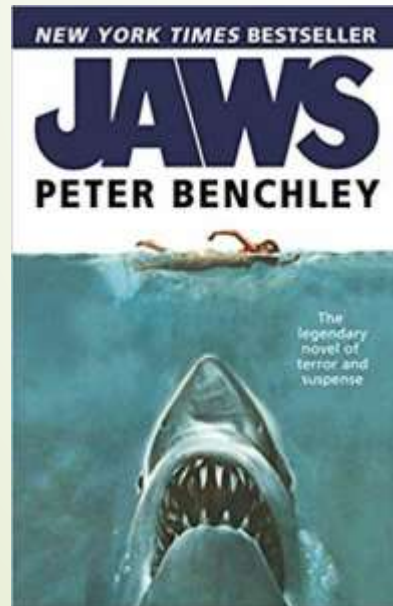
Junior

OUTLINE

- Discuss treating travel settings as character
- Ways to retain sensory details of travel experiences
- Learn what a muse board is and how you can use it to capture details
- How to create a muse board
- 12 benefits of muse boards
- Marketing tool
- Practice exercises in between
- Q&A (Burning questions at any time)

BOOKS WITH SETTING AS CHARACTER

...when the events and characters are entwined with the setting and the key elements of the novel can't take place anywhere else.



FICTION EXAMPLE:

Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier

“Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me. There was a padlock and a chain upon the gate. I called in my dream to the lodge-keeper, and had no answer, and peering closer through the rusted spokes of the gate I saw that the lodge was uninhabited.

No smoke came from the chimney, and the little lattice windows gaped forlorn.”

YOUR HOMETOWN

Menabilly -
the real life inspiration for Manderley



NONFICTION EXAMPLE

The Elephant Whisperer by Lawrence Anthony

“In the distance, the percussive shot of a rifle sounded like a giant stick of firewood crackling. ... It was a sound wired into a game ranger’s psyche. Then came a burst...crack-crack-crack. Flocks of squawking birds scrambled, silhouetted in the crimson sunset.”

TRAVELING AND DIRECT EXPERIENCE ADDS RICHNESS

- **CAPTURE SENSORY DETAILS** while traveling
- Where to find **RESOURCES**, especially for places that you can't visit or no longer exist

CAPTURE SENSORY DETAILS WHILE TRAVELING

- Journal (Document 5 senses and enhance your travel experiences)
- Take photos & videos
- Take more photos & videos

PHOTOS

9



Notice the differences in men and women, how the baby is carried, head coverings

JOURNAL THE INTANGIBLES

Visual

Hearing



Touch

Smell

Taste

SOUNDS

Use Logic: Inca Trail,
Peru



- Audible breathing
- Cursing?
- Clump of boots
- Clack of hiking poles on rocks
- Clatter of small rocks cascading down
- Bird songs/insects (YouTube videos)

RESOURCES

- **MUSE BOARDS*****
- Google images
- Instagram/Pinterest
- Tripadvisor chats
- Local restaurants & souvenir shops
- Museums
- Travel bloggers
- www.roadsandkingdoms.com



Visuals: Images

Champagne



You are caged in



Size



Google Search Terms: Eiffel Tower images, Top of the Eiffel Tower and Inside the Eiffel Tower

RESOURCES: Human Sources of Information

- Friends/Grocery store! **WHO DO YOU KNOW?**
- Tour guides
- Author network (critique group, CWC)
- Social media: Facebook or IG friends

WHEN YOUR PLACE DOESN'T EXIST (or you can't get there)

- Examples: Historical landscapes
(911, prehistoric times, Lahaina)
- Libraries
- Historical societies
- Museums/museum guides/curators

EXERCISE #1 (Pick One or More)

- 1) What visual images do you want to research to improve the sensory details in your current or a future writing project? What resources can you use?
- 2) Jot down ideas of how to write the emotion of a setting through one of your character's eyes.
- 3) How can you make your setting crucial to the plot in a current or future writing project?



MUSE BOARDS

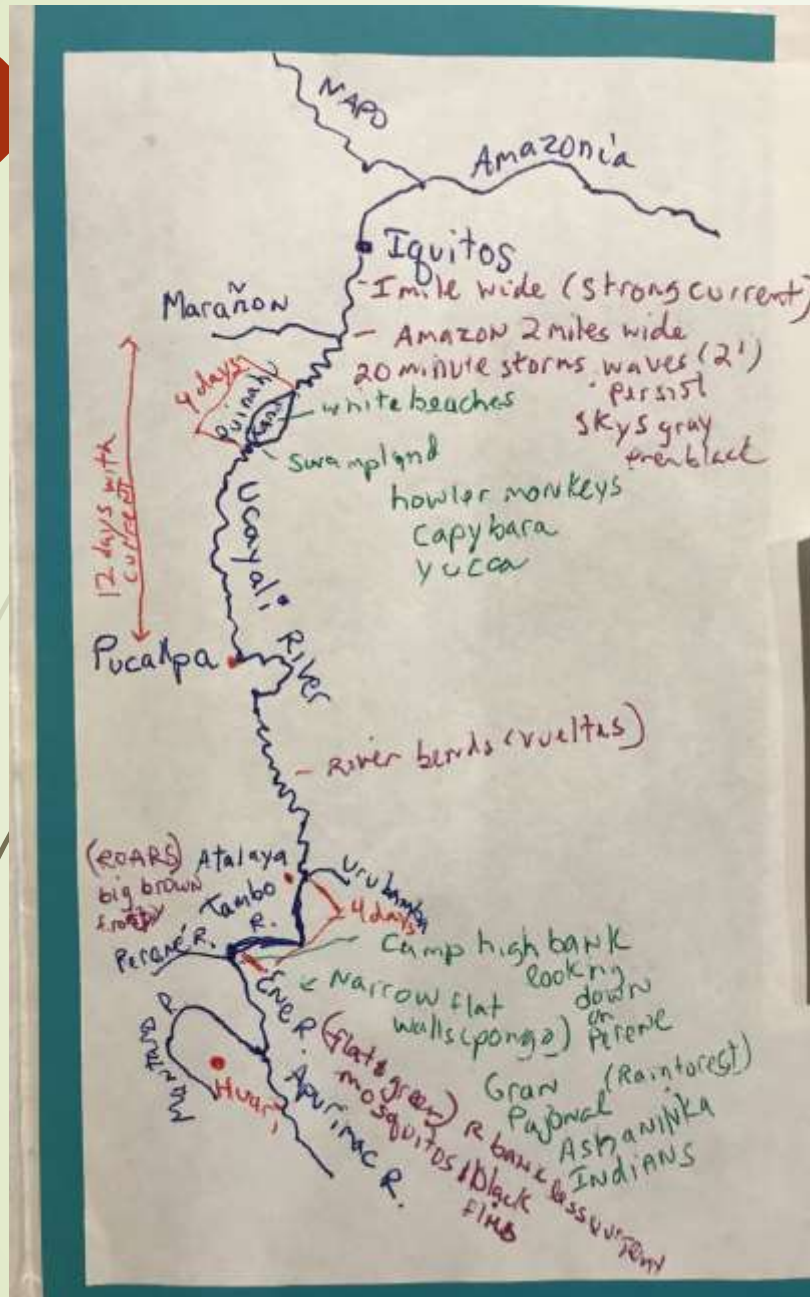
WHAT IS A MUSE BOARD?

- A **muse board** is a visual aid designed to create mood, inform plot, and inspire descriptive prose.
- Similar to TV/film storyboards to define scenes, but a less formal and structured.
- Advertising industry (mood boards), interior and web designers, wedding organizers use it.

TYPES OF MUSE BOARDS: Electronic and Physical

- Electronic muse boards through Pinterest and Instagram (photos), even a Facebook page.
 - Advantage of electronic is portability, but limitations on single screen snapshot or collage.
- Physical muse board options - **trifolds**, corkboard, whiteboards

Use a mix?



IN THE BEGINNING... there was a conference

- Timing
- Changing river colors
confluences & shoreline
- Historical details (550 AD)
 - clothing
 - facial features
 - culture
 - topography
- Needed to plot backwards

MORE ON THE TRIFOLDS

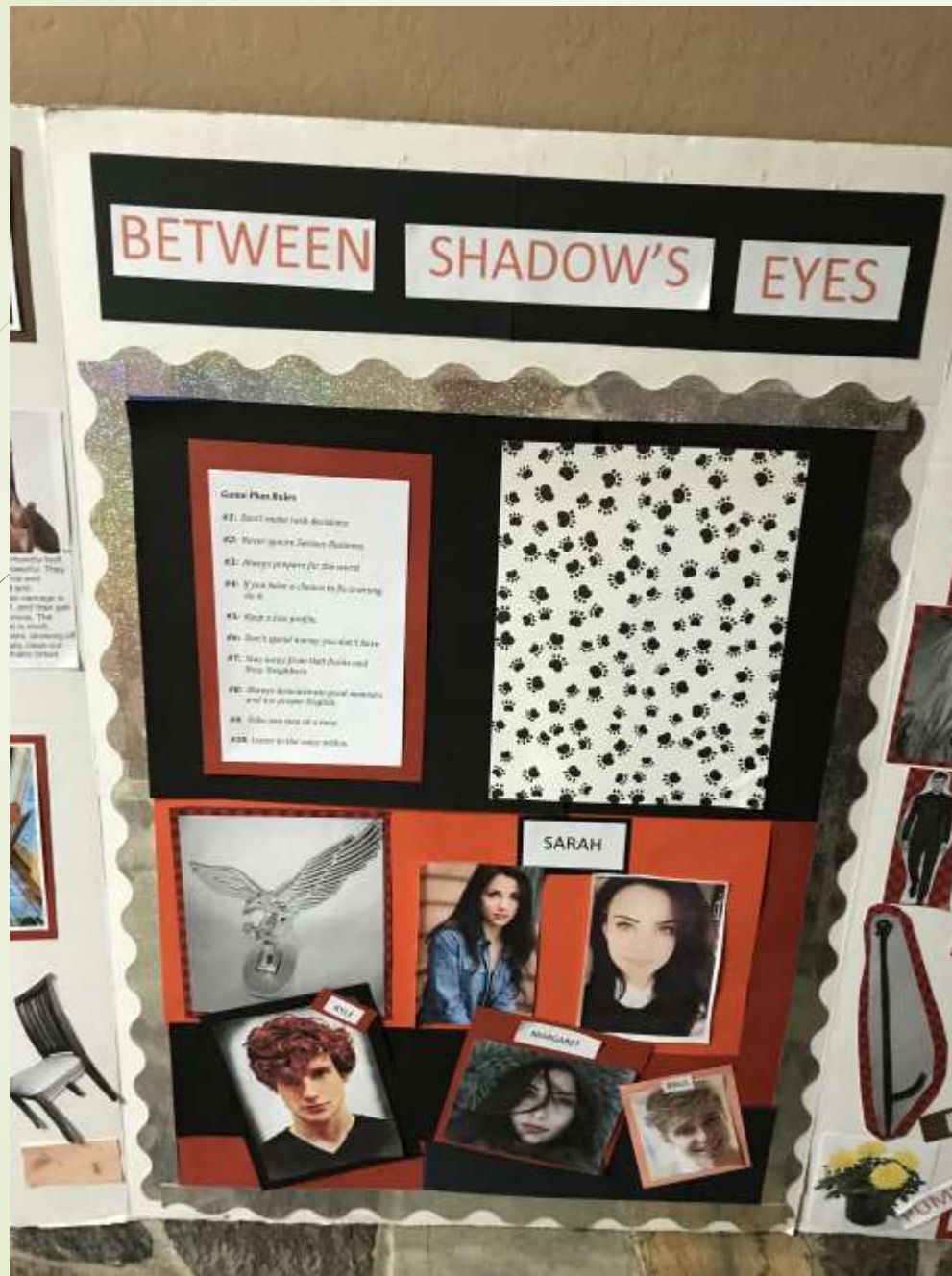


- **Advantages**
 - Trifold mimics – three act proportions
 - Just look up
 - Draws attention at book events
- **Disadvantages**
 - Bulky (not for airplanes)
 - Photos can bend
 - Items fall off
 - Space limited



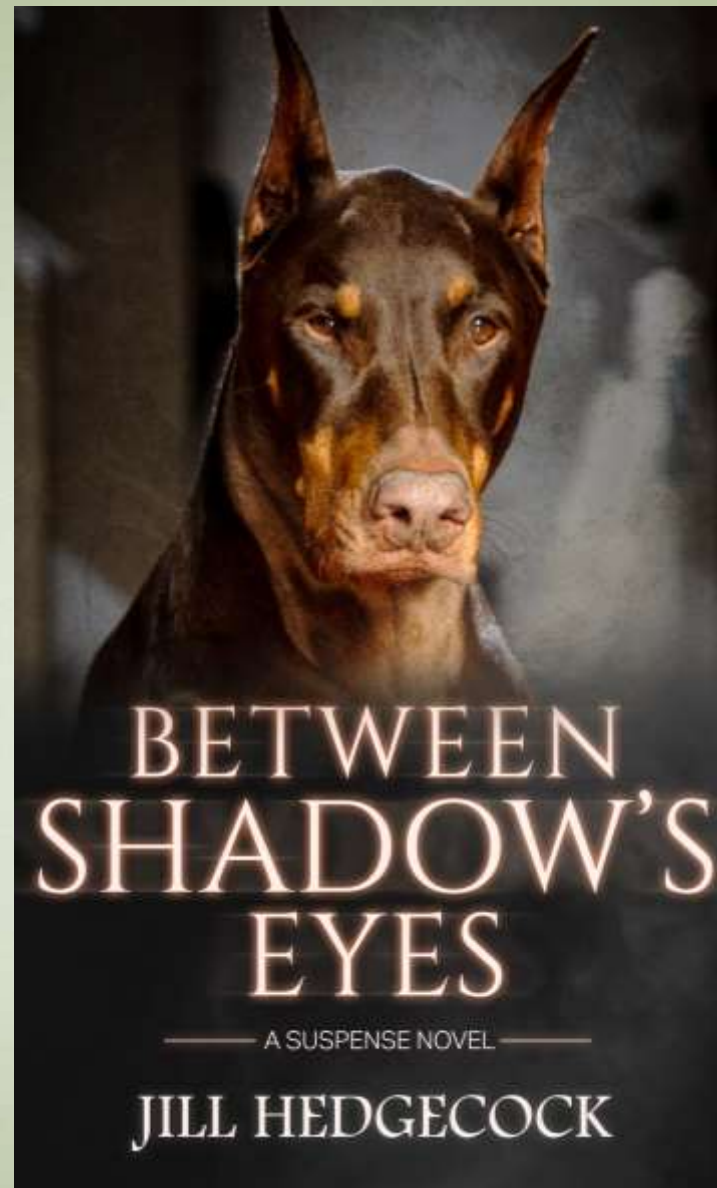
TOOLS

Trifold
Cutting Tools
Colored
Paper
Securing Tools
Content



CONTENT

Book title, text excerpts, elevator pitch, photos, etc...



**Don't
Forget to
Leave
Room for
Your Book
Cover**



Images and Shapes



SUDAN

Sudan was born in Shambe, Southern Sudan, in 1973. At two years old, he was taken to the Dvůr Králové Zoo in the Czech Republic. While he was there, he sired two calves, Nabiré and Najin. In his late years he had a mild and relaxed temperament. His calm nature and happy spirit allowed his keepers to be close to him and for visitors to connect with him, proving a tremendous ambassador for his species.

He had special bonds with all his caretakers and loved a scratch behind his ears from anyone who came to see him. He continued to patrol and mark his territory with pride until his very last days, and we miss the sight of his stately frame enormously.

BORN: 1973
DIED: 2018

Use texture
to mimic
the mood
you want
to create

(GRIEF OVER THE
LAST MALE RHINO)

COLOR MATTERS

Plus, the
backing
allows the
images to
be easily
moved
around



WHAT DO COLORS MEAN?

28

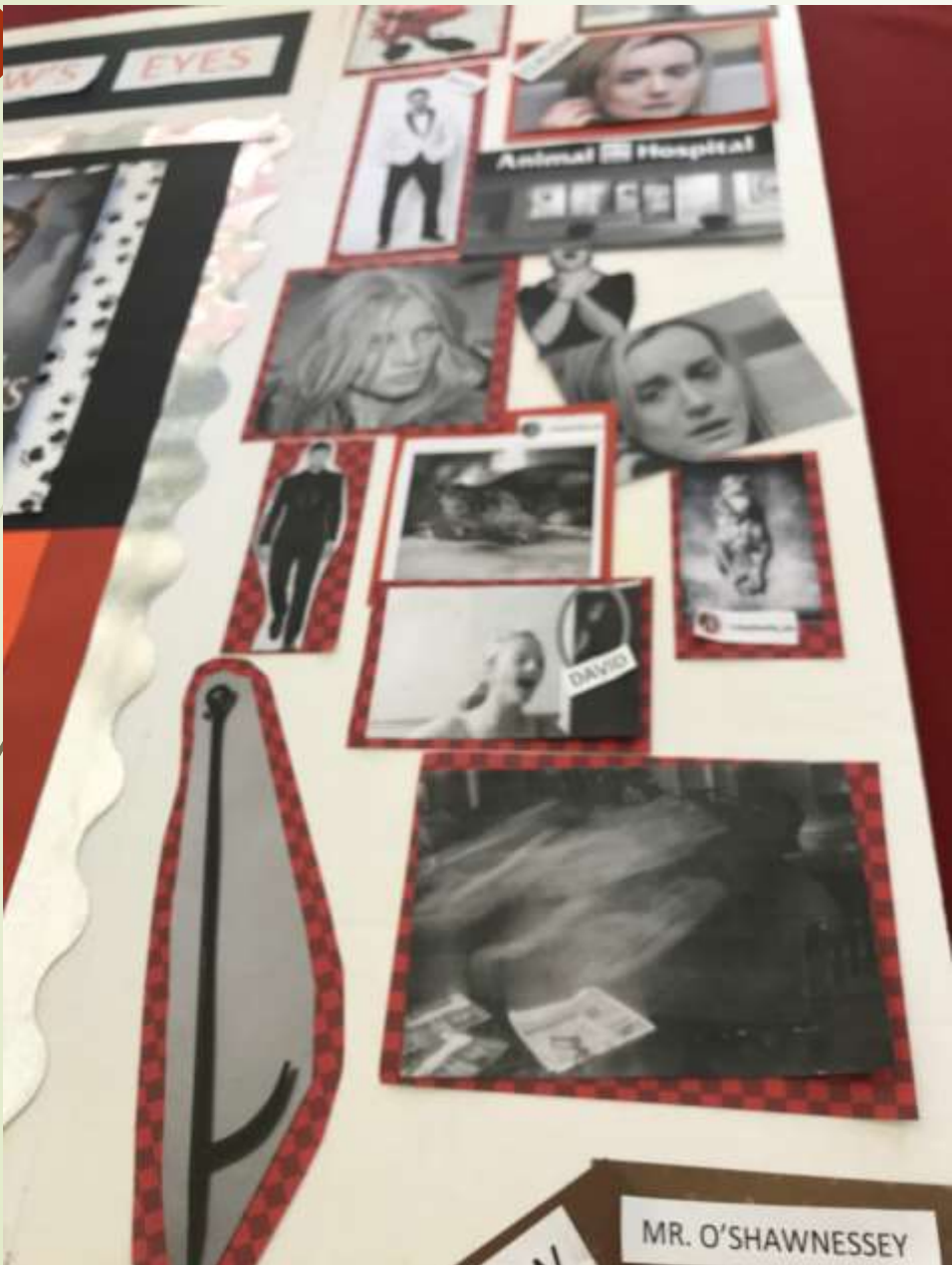
- **Blue** conveys consciousness, faith, and truth.
- **Purple** is linked to the mystery.
- **Red** refers to courage, passion, or danger.
- **Pink** commonly stands for gentleness and sweetness (good for romance genre)
- **Yellow** and **orange** radiate energy, boldness, optimism, confidence, ambition, and creativity
- **Green** is associated with the earth, renewal, and balance.



BACKGROUND EMPHASIS

Focus on lion?

Camouflage -
touched by
mother's foresight
to hide?

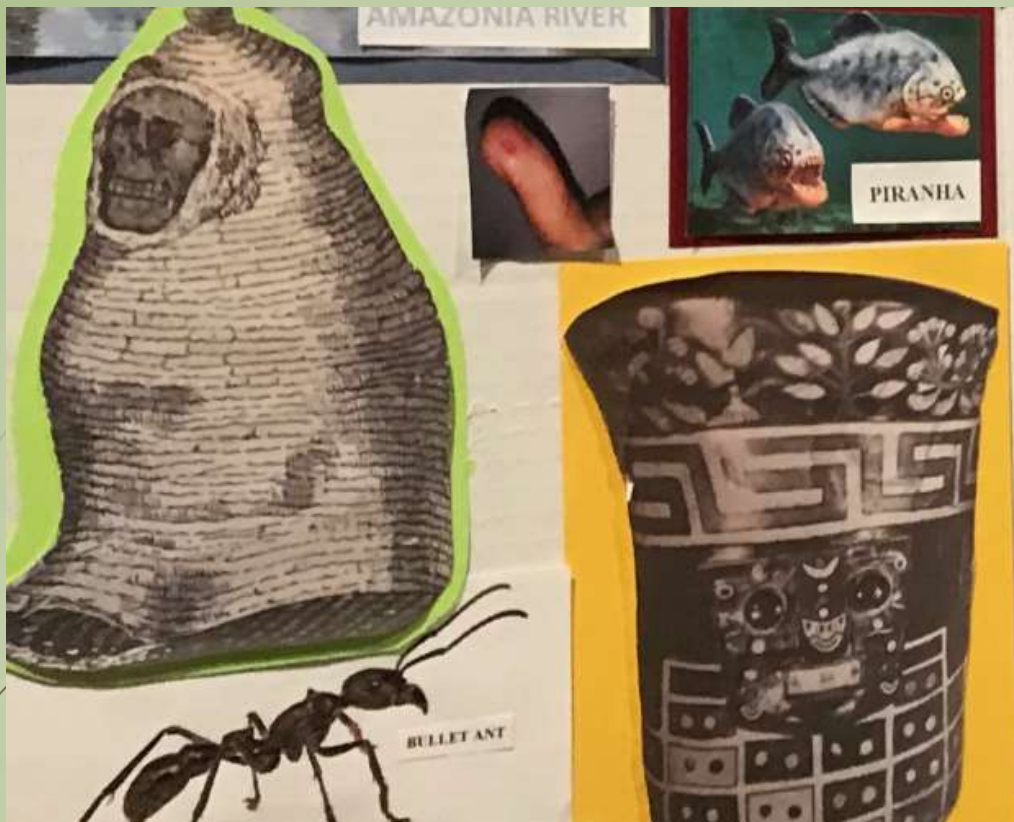


GENRES CAN DICTATE MUSE BOARD DESIGN

Thriller: Use red to communicate danger or tension. Emphasis can be enhanced with black & white photos

Mystery: Pictorial trail of clues that you'll use – this will help with the critical element of foreshadowing

Memoir: Family tree, hairstyles, vintage clothing

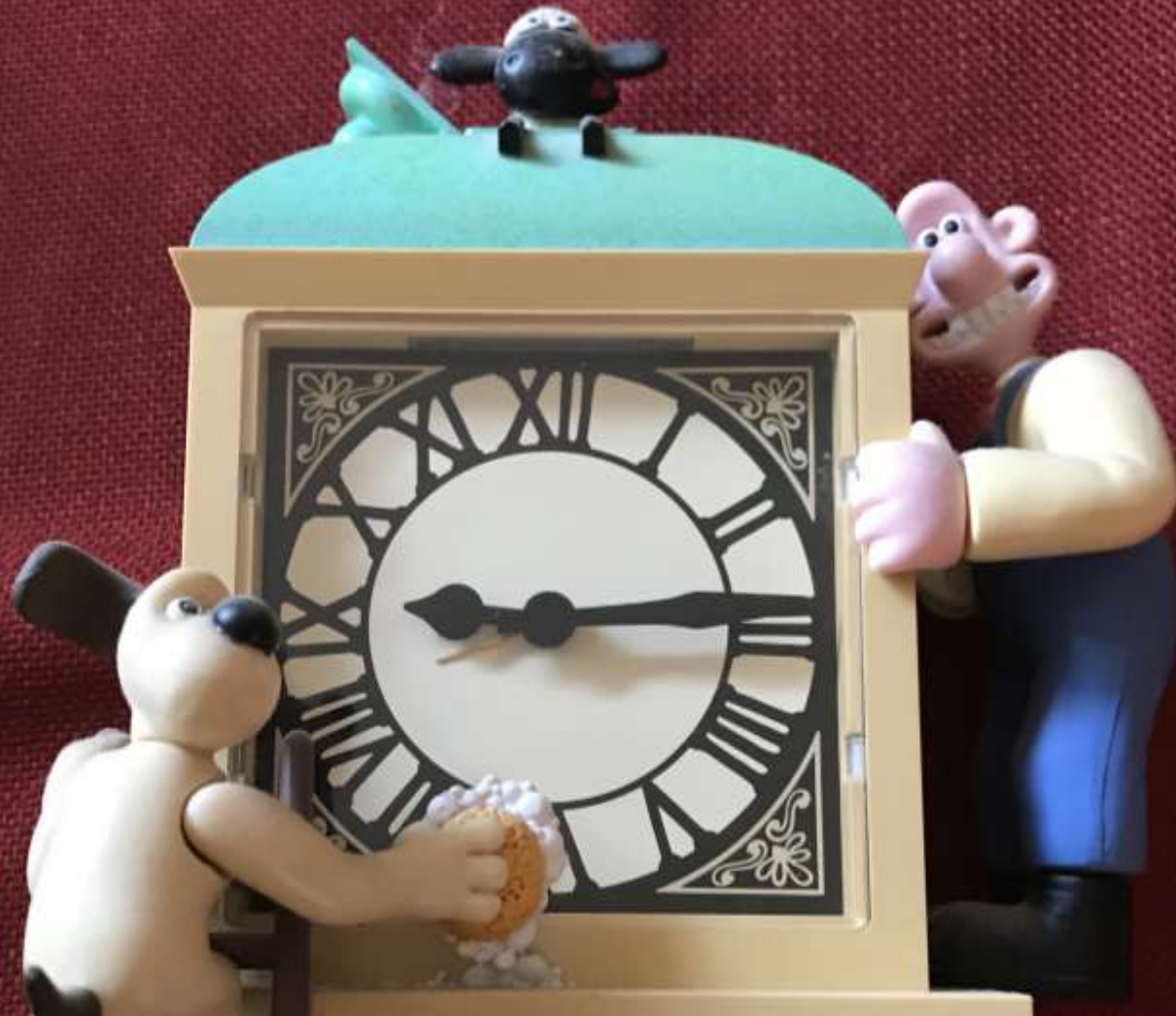


Historical Fiction must be true to the time period.
Weapons? Pottery? Burial customs? Game hunting and fishing.

EXERCISE #2

Think about a current (or past) writing project

- Write down **five** images that you would put on your muse board
- Choose **background colors** for each image
- Decide which of the **three panels** you would place the pictures (*I prefer to put character images on the center panel, but you can place them in the order they appear on the book*)



BENEFIT 1:

Yes, it
really is a
TIMESAVER

Prevent time-consuming
rewrites

34

SARAH



MARGARET



PAUL



KYLE



TIMESAVER: What was that character's eye/hair color?

Especially for characters that only appear occasionally

Great for when struggling for metaphors

35

Game Plan Rules

- #1: Don't make rash decisions.
- #2: Never ignore Serious Business.
- #3: Always prepare for the worst
- #4: If you have a chance to fix a wrong, do it.
- #5: Keep a low profile.
- #6: Don't spend money you don't have.
- #7: Stay away from Odd Ducks and Nosy Neighbors.
- #8: Always demonstrate good manners and use proper English.
- #9: Take one step at a time.
- #10: Listen to the voice within.



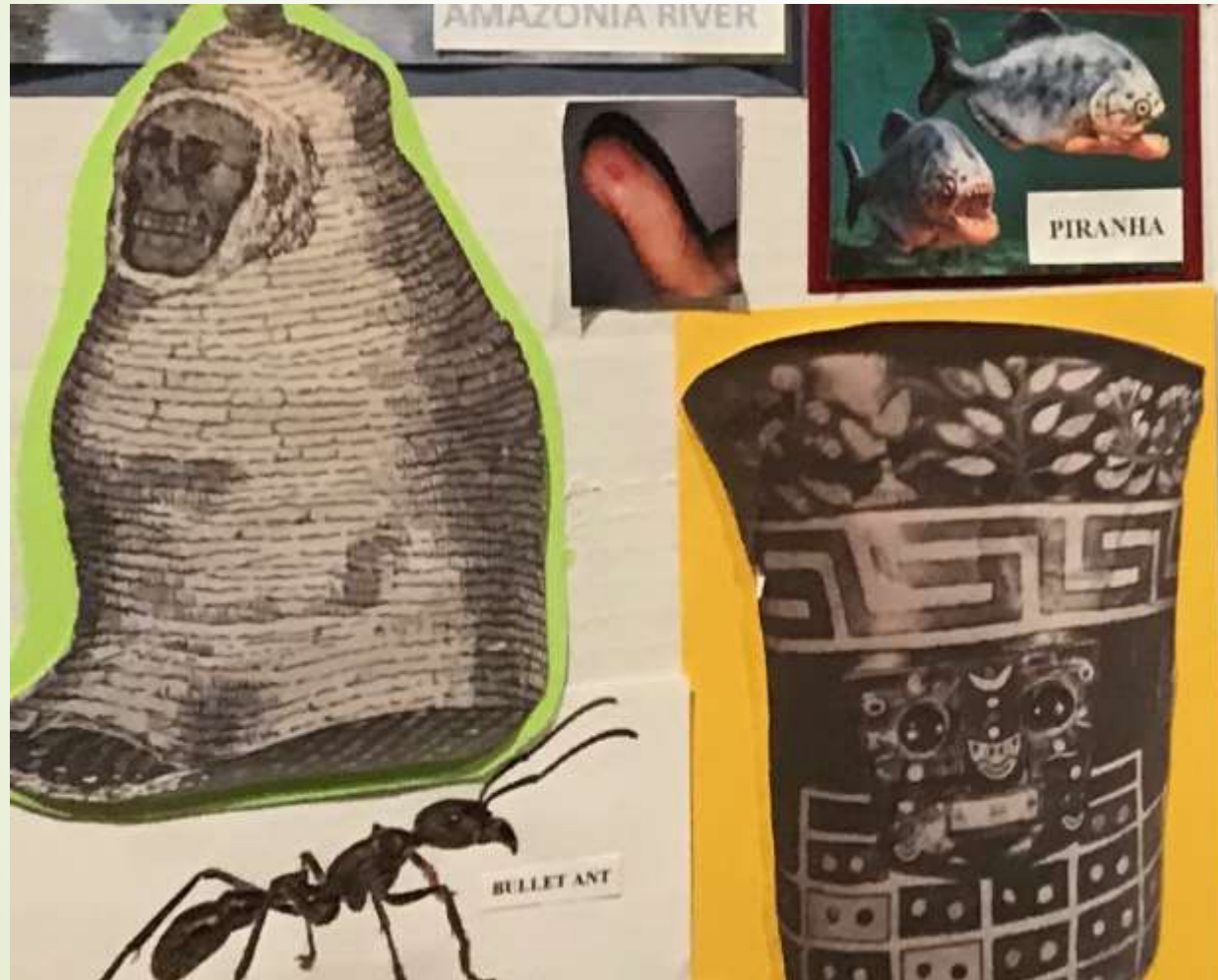
TIMESAVER

Lists and
Important Text



BENEFIT 2:
Helps you
think like your
character

BENEFIT 3: Craft Detailed Descriptive Text





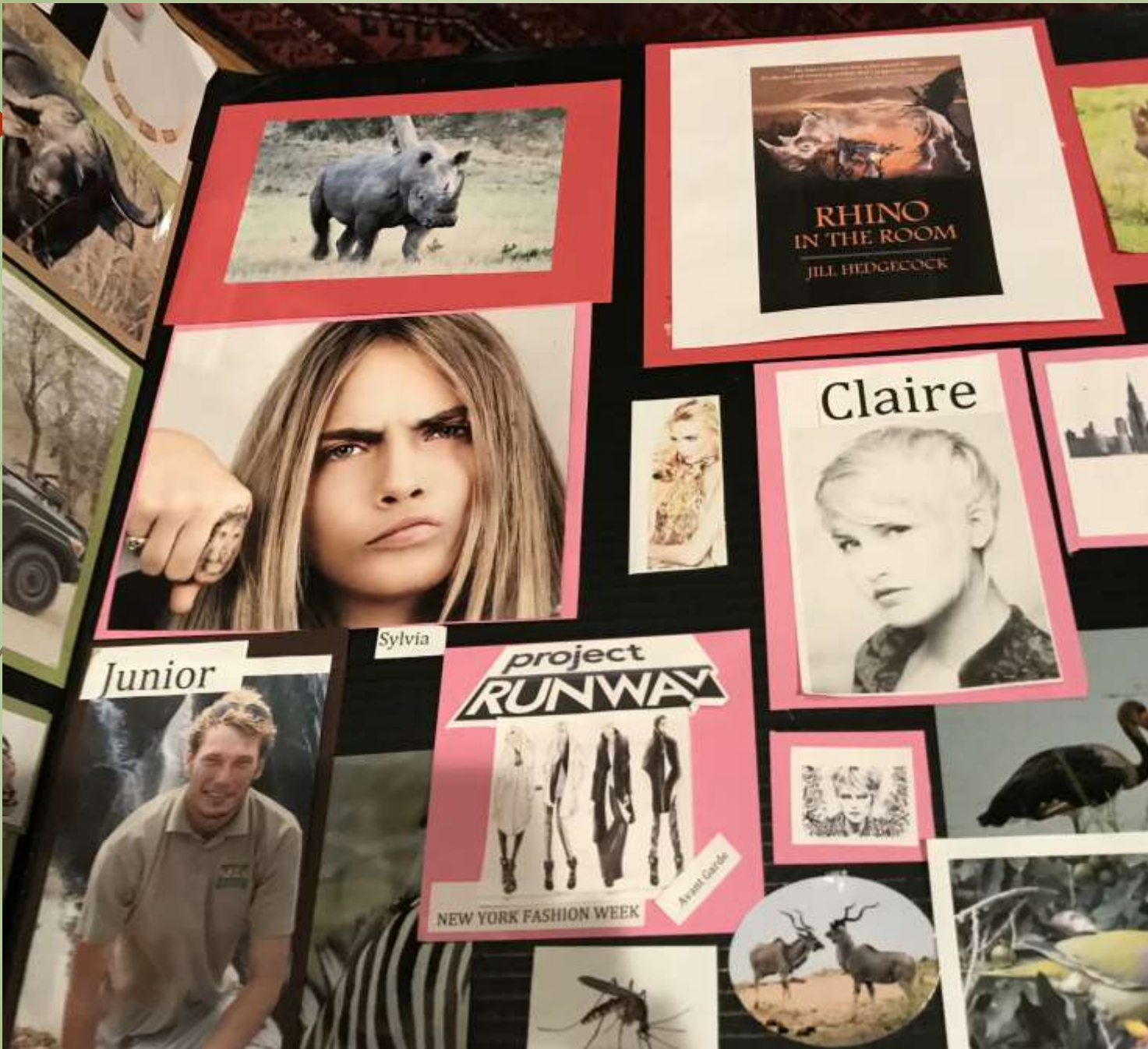
BENEFIT 4: Find your beginning or end

- ▶ Can't find the right ending?
- ▶ Did you start in the right place?
- ▶ Move images around.
- ▶ Chances are the answer is on the board, but maybe in the wrong spot.



BENEFIT 5:

Correct weaknesses
in your writing style:
character-driven vs.
plot-driven



BENEFIT 6: Find Emotion

► **Angry teen** to remind me about how she feels about her father after she discovers his extra-marital affair.

41



BENEFIT 7 Improve Your Setting Descriptions

- ▶ Does your plot occur in one place? Is there an **unusual** element (cars/animals) to your setting?
- ▶ Grab **images** of a park or a greyhound racetrack or a kid playing in a fountain.
- ▶ Can folding these settings into your story add depth?



BENEFIT 8: Find New Perspectives

- ▶ Images can provide visual descriptors. Take pictures that provide a fresh angle.
- ▶ Use weather to capture mood.



BENEFIT 9:

Contrast physical size
against common
objects

Take a **Ton** of pictures





BENEFIT 10:

Helps with
Overall
Plotting

BENEFIT 11: Foreshadow

45

By studying your second and third muse board panels. You might find opportunities to foreshadow early in the book.





BENEFIT 12:

Identifying theme or symbolism or character's **wants**

Do you see repetition in the photos? This may help you identify a key **theme** that hadn't occurred to you



A WORD ON COPYRIGHT

Use your own photos

Get permission

Cite sources

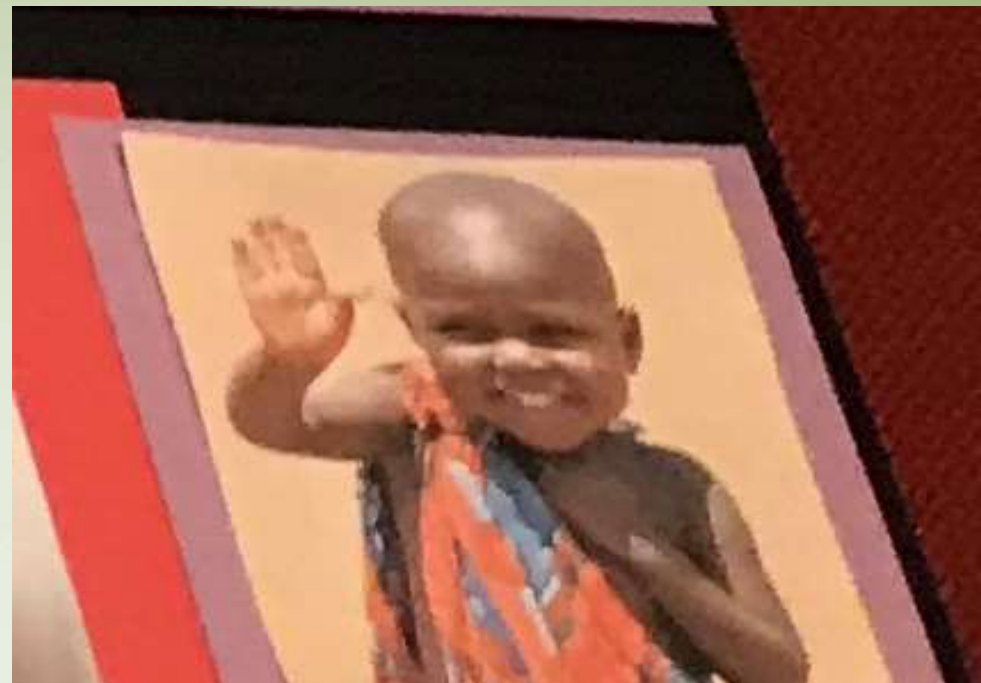
Use “noncopyrighted” images –
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<https://www.pexels.com/royalty-free-images>



PLAYTIME

- **Don't be afraid** to put stuff on that doesn't end up in your book. These can be pulled off or kept to help tell others about your writing process.
- **Dog paw print** – marketing, not story





Keep the changes!

Great backstory on your writing process

- perfection is a goal
- the writing process can be a moving target



MARKETING:

Attention grabbers

Hook/elevator pitch

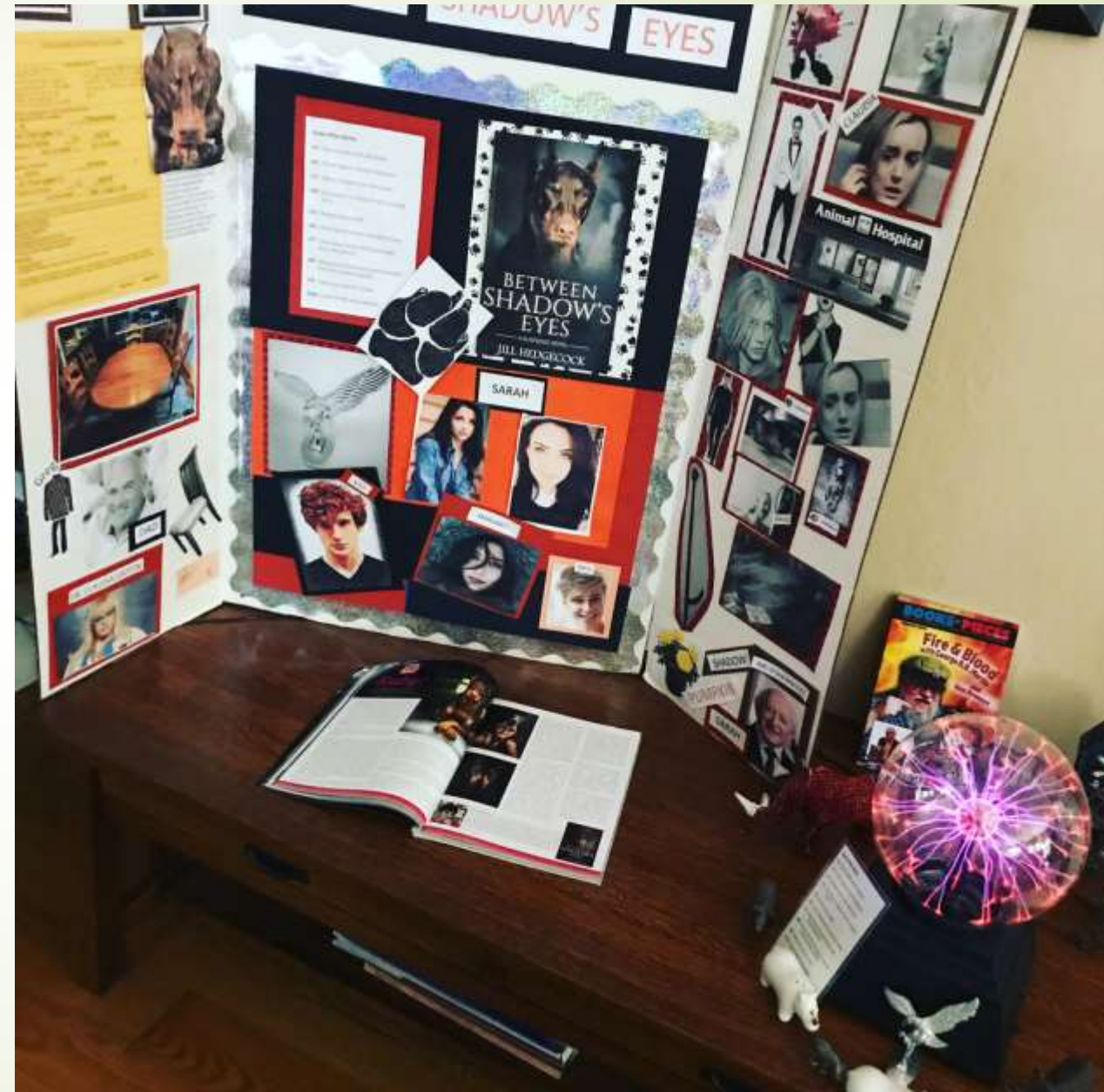
GREAT FOR BOOK EVENTS

51

People are drawn to the **unusual**

Conversation starter

Bookstore display



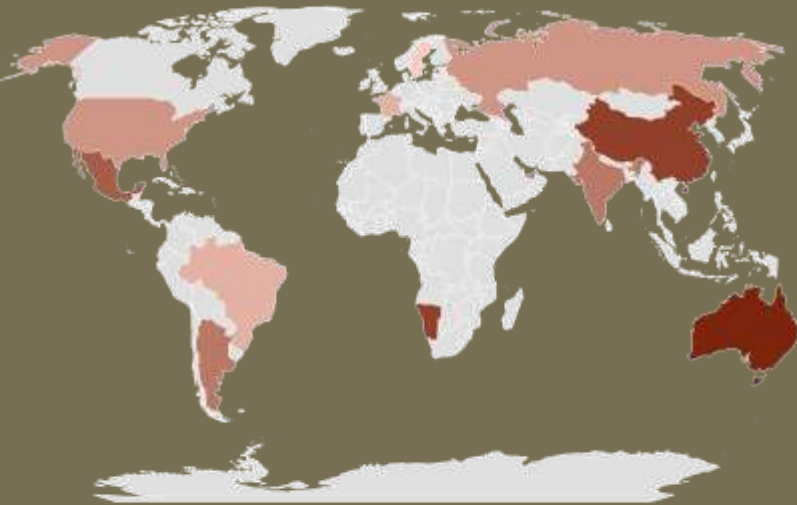
A Whole **New** World to Make You a Better Writer

Chart Title

Series1

12

6



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"I want to write what I know, but all I know is writing workshops."

QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION

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Special Prices
(\$10 multiple books)

\$10 for Rhino in the Room
Between Shadow's Eyes

\$12 for Queen of the Rhino
From Shadow's Perspective

