

This is a series of questions I came up with for my local writing group to chat about at our Thank Goodness It's Over party, which we'll likely be celebrating the day you read this. I thought you might enjoy hearing some of my answers. I confess I didn't include all the questions because some might not make sense to read. If you'd like a [printable list of the questions](#) for yourself or to share with fellow writers, you can [download them here](#).

Who's your favorite character in any project you worked on this November?

Aunt Stevie. I'd intended to give her a minor role as a supporting character, but she came to life and became a vital character. I described her to my writing group as an eccentric aunt with curly red hair who wears bright colors and runs a flower shop. Aunt Stevie was a delight to write. She has a pretty big secret in the book, too.

Which character was the hardest to write for any project you worked on this November?

In my main project, there is a small group of teens who aren't always nice, and I found them difficult to write. I'm not a fan of mean people who are underhanded and manipulative. Which is how several of these teens behave in my story. One of them is so desperate to get something she's willing to throw her *friend* under the bus. I found this group of young adults difficult to write about because it meant digging deep and constantly asking, '*how can I make them meaner?*'

From an emotional perspective, it was difficult to write about one character's profound loss. This character's story is laced with deep emotions. At one point, while writing in the middle of a cafe, I was trying not to cry. My writing pals noticed I'd gone quiet and hadn't joined in the word sprints. I told them I needed them to make me laugh because I could not burst into hysterical tears in the middle of the cafe.

What was your favorite line, phrase, quote that one of your characters said while

writing this November?

"Aunt Stevie, *please* don't make it awkward!"

The statement started as something her nephew, Joey, said when she quizzed a friend he brought home from school. It soon became Joey's catchphrase. A way to show his discomfort and embarrassment when we heard the story from another's viewpoint.

Did you come up with a title for anything you worked on this year? Working titles count!

I titled my book, *Letting Go Of Before*. I remember being passionate when I landed on the title, but afterwards, I doubted my choice. However, as I wrote the story, my characters reached a point where several quoted the phrase.

Favorite scene, chapter, short story, or poem you wrote this November was....

Oh boy, this is hard to narrow down. Sometimes when I'm writing I have scenes that are weak and will need a lot of revision, making a certain scene pop out more to me as a favorite. I didn't feel that way while writing this story.

One scene I adored, and that helped set the pace for the story, occurs when the two teenage main characters connected. When they part company, instead of just saying goodbye, the boy says, "Goodbye Maisy Fisher, who loves the color yellow."

Hardest scene, short story, chapter, or poem you wrote this November was....

My book has two stories that are told simultaneously until they converge. One set of characters is a couple in their forties while the others are seniors in high school. In one scene, the older couple face a challenge when they are asked to organize a private funeral for their

deceased children. The objective is to help them process the loss of repeated miscarriages. This became a deeply emotional scene to write, and I hope the end product will reflect that.

Did you finish your main project or goal for November? No guilt or shame if you didn't.

As of writing this, I am very close to having my rough draft completed, but noticed a few missing scenes. My hopes are high that by the time we tuck November in for the year, this goal will be complete. However, I didn't write three short stories. I only ended up with two because I struggled with the opening of one, writing it a half dozen different ways.

If you didn't, do you plan to continue forward in December? If so, do you want us to continue cheering you on?

As long as my draft is finished, I will let my manuscript breathe for a while before I begin the revision process. I'm looking forward to editing this, but without allowing the story to sit for a while, I will be too close to the rough draft to make the best choices possible.

If you finished, what do you think most contributed to that? (Plantsing, planning, Pantsing, etc.)

I cleared my schedule from just about everything that would interrupt my writing process. I'm a goal planner, and knowing my November would need to be as clear as possible to work on this project, I tackled some things prior to November, and accepted I would do the rest in December.

"How'd you write so many words so fast?" is something I hear often.

Here's the thing, the first week of November I schedule nothing. It allows me to write from 9 to 5 without interruption. I'll also confess I can type something like 60+ wpm when I'm on a

roll. My average is closer to 47. I'm also in a season of life where writing is what I get to indulge in.

Did your story unfold as you'd envisioned, or did your characters run amuck and hold you hostage as you wrote?

There were a few areas where my characters grabbed the keyboard and got so carried away I slammed my computer shut and walked off for a while. Despite the frustration, it all worked out in the end.

Did you know your opening & ending before you began writing? If so, did they end up changing significantly during November?

I had a vague idea of the opening for both sides of my story, but I wasn't certain about the ending. A lot of writers are aware of their ending and just work backwards to get to the rest of their story. I often have one scene in mind, and it's not always the opening or the ending.

If you had a theme in mind when writing your book, did your characters stick with it? If you didn't have a theme in mind when writing, did you discover one while you wrote?

I didn't have a theme in mind when I started writing. I had a story idea. A lot of writers are big on knowing the theme of their story, but I admit I'm not. I write and see what appears. There was a continuous theme that popped up while I was working, but I won't share what that is because I know when we read stories, we each often garner something different from it.

Was there any scene, chapter, poem, or piece that you wrote which caused your inner critic to rise?

Yes. Often, my inner critic rises when I'm writing a scene I feel under qualified to write. I worry I will get the details all wrong and someone more familiar with whatever I'm writing will find the flaws. In this story, I was writing a scene between a character and a therapist when my inner critic rose and thumped me over the head.

Did you have an ah-ha moment?

I had a couple of ah-ha moments! I had a couple of ah-ha moments! During a writing sprint, the first one hit me. My head jerked upright, and I stopped typing to shout out my ah-ha moment. It was in relation to the hook for my story. The other was the moment one character used the title in a moment of personal growth. Which led another character, down the road, to say the same thing but in their own words.

Is there any aspect of your project that you're most excited to dig into for revisions or editing?

During November, my idea became a full-fledged story. I was rereading a scene I'd written to help me settle in for a morning of writing, and I remember thinking, 'I cannot wait to read this book.' I'm excited to see the story take shape and be readable.

Will you let your story breathe for a while or will you continue working with it?

Yes, I haven't decided how long, but I will leave my manuscript for a while before editing.

What's the next step for your story? (new draft, revisions, editing, submitting, etc.)

Breathing, and then I'll jump into revisions and editing, which will take months. While the story is breathing, I will work through other projects that need revision, and one that needs a

draft rewrite for a portion of it.

Are you excited to read your story as a completed polished project?

I am! It's not that I haven't been excited to read other stories I've written, but there's always something exciting about a story coming together and wanting to read the finished project.

At any point during November, did you come up with another story idea? If you did, will you save it to work on until Next November?

I did. While rushing around one evening attempting to get to a meeting on time, I got slapped upside the head with another story idea. Nothing altogether new to me. More of an ah-ha moment for wanting to write this story from a perspective I hadn't considered before. Will I write that one next November? There's no telling. I have a small stack of story ideas, so it will depend on which one I'm most passionate about next year.

If I could do one thing differently next November, it would be...?

I'm not sure, but I'll admit that I enjoyed the process last year of writing two separate drafts for two separate projects, and I may attempt to bite that off again next year. I enjoyed a more relaxed atmosphere because I was only intent on finishing one novel length draft this year, so maybe I'll stick with one story at a time.



Author's Note:

Dear Reader,

I hope you're not too disappointed that I didn't share my November Book Reviews this week.

This post was one I was working on for publication last week, but editing took a backseat because of the holiday and other things that were unfolding in our small corner of the mountains.

Since I [shared my November writing goals](#) with you, I thought this would be a fun way to share how I accomplished them and give you a sneak peek at what I was working on. I hope you all had a lovely Thanksgiving.

The Reluctant Author 