

Questions	Name: Brian L. Tucker Gender: Male Age: 31
<p>When you have difficulty expressing an idea when you are writing, what do you do? *(Prompt) What else could you do? Or, follow up with a specific aspect – knowing when you are finished, creating an opening, etc.</p>	<p>Great question! I have a tendency to read books from a similar genre. Just recently, I was having trouble finishing my first novel, <i>Wheelman</i>, because I'd never written for a young adult audience before. So, I re-read <i>Holes</i> by Louis Sachar, and I was able to see how he ended that wonderful story, and it helped me a lot! Have you read it?</p> <p>I knew my book was finished when I was able to read the ending and feel that sense of closure (and that adventure had happened) in Mexico for Cy Vance and his family.</p>
<p>Who do you think is a good writer? What makes him or her a good writer? Who's writing styles influence you?</p>	<p>Louis Sachar is a great young adult writer. I also love Charles Portis – author of <i>True Grit</i>. What makes him a good writer? Hmm. I'd have to say his ability to get the narration and tone of a fourteen year old protagonist, Mattie Ross, just right. Do you like it? I highly recommend that one. It's such a great lesson in determination, and she's as resilient of a character in fiction as you'll find.</p> <p>So, Charles Portis' style has definitely influenced me. I love all of his books. He blends humor and action so well together.</p>
<p>Have you ever tried to write like that person? What did you learn? How did it go?</p>	<p>I've tried to write like Portis before. And I feel like I've failed at it a lot, but that's because Portis' voice is his own. I learned that blending humor and action together with shortened sentences is a difficult task. If writing reads really smoothly, it's probably because the writer did a lot of work to make it so. Portis makes fiction look easy. It's important to find examples like that to help you understand the ins and outs of what makes a story truly great.</p>
<p>If you knew that one of your friends was having problems with his or her writing, what could you tell your friend that would help?</p>	<p>Keep writing! Have you seen Pixar's <i>Finding Nemo</i>? Remember where Dora tells Marlon (who's looking for his son Nemo) to just keep swimming. "Just keep swimming" she sings over and over. That's great advice for writing, too! There's really not a finish line. A writer can always improve and a story can always get better. So, it's up to you to make it great, because no one can write just like you can!</p>
<p>What is one problem you frequently have when writing? What do you do to overcome it?</p>	<p>A problem I frequently have while writing is getting distracted. I'm not the best at writing (even a little bit, maybe just 200 words a day) consistently. I tend to only write on weekends, and it still counts. But, I know if I made a point to write more than 2 days a week, I'd have a story finished much sooner. Plus, I wouldn't forget where I've left my characters. Imagine losing sight of your characters. Scary thought, huh? Imagine writer Stan Lee forgetting where he left Iron Man. Or, writer Suzanne Collins forgetting about Katniss Everdeen. These wouldn't be good things for the reader. Imagine how the story would suffer if the writer left the reader stranded.</p>
<p>How do you think you learned to write? Who influenced you?</p>	<p>My hometown was probably my biggest influence on me as a writer. I grew up in southern Kentucky in a small town called Monticello next to a big lake – Lake Cumberland. In my town next to the Appalachian</p>

	<p>Mountains, there isn't a shopping mall, a movie cinema, or a Chuck-E-Cheese. So, my friends and I, we learned the importance of hanging out and telling stories. My parents and grandparents did the same thing. If you wanted to be entertained, you had to live it. This doesn't mean an adventure can't take you away to the mall or the movies, but if you go outside and really let the day lead you into adventures around your home, you'll be surprised just how much fun you and friends can have. Imagine the stories you'd have after summer break for next school year, if you let your break be filled with adventures and time with friends. The adventures like in books such as <i>Holes</i> and <i>True Grit</i> are partially the result of great ideas, but they also have roots in the authors' lives, too. At some point, I guarantee they lived through a tough summer camp or witnessed a hardship within their family, and they decided to create stories to help them process it. And that's how we get such great characters like Stanley Yelnats from <i>Holes</i> and Mattie Ross in <i>True Grit</i>.</p>
<p>Are you a good writer? Why or why not? How do you know?</p>	<p>I think I'm learning something new with each book I write. Each idea and story are helping me learn how to tell a story a new way. In <i>Wheelman</i>, I learned how to tell a story through the eyes of a teen, Cy Vance, as he comes through foster care, looks for his dad, and travels to Mexico to meet new families. This story helped me learn how to write in a way I'd not previously done before. So, in a way it's helping me to write more and become better with each new story. It's a motivator for me.</p>
<p>What would you like to be able to do better as a writer?</p>	<p>I'd like to be able to write from the female point of view better. I'm a guy, and it's easier for me to write with a teen like Cy Vance in mind. Think about it. Would you feel more comfortable seeing the world through a boy or girl's eyes? Why is that? If you're like me, it's intimidating to write from a perspective I don't know as well. But, it always pushes me to learn more about that person and where they're coming from. I've only written two stories from female perspectives, and I felt happy with the results. Could they've been better? Of course. But I had to take extra precautions as I wrote to make sure I got 'their' voices just right.</p>
<p>What advice do you have for me? Is there anything else you would like me to know?</p>	<p>Writing is a journey. And it's often enriched by the stories you yourself have lived through. So, if you can experience a great summer with friends, it makes for an easier experience to draw from. But, you always have your imagination, too. And it can help you fill in the gaps as you write. Don't ever shortchange your ability to dream up new stories. For example, few people have probably ever fought a dragon in real life, but it didn't stop J.R.R. Tolkien from writing <i>The Hobbit</i>. He dreamed that one up. So, keep believing in what you write always. If you think it needs to be written, write it, and the world will enjoy it. But more importantly, you'll know it mattered to you as well.</p>