

How to Become an Author - His Own Character Was Being Shaped By Fiction

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This is an excerpt from my novel, *Shootout at the North Line*; A Novel of Alaska. Jacky is a young man who endeavors to go up to Alaska to find adventure and something worth writing about.

He read everything he could lay his hands on. The local public library became his home away from home. It was the perfect place to spend hot summer days, enjoying the air conditioning and traveling the world. His literary tastes ran to realistic drama and adventures. He identified with the heroes of biographies and novels. The likes of Lincoln, Daniel Boone and JFK became his mentors. Vince Lombardi became his coach. Gerry Kramer and Jackie Robinson were like teammates. He developed his moral compass by reading the lives of the saints. Deep in his bones he felt a longing to be a hero, a saint, or even a martyr. It was a rich internal world that he fed constantly.

As he got older, historical novels enriched and expanded his view of the world. He learned about China from Pearl S. Buck. He sailed up and down that exotic country's rivers aboard a gunboat in *The Sand Pebbles*. He voyaged to Hawaii with Michener. He hunted Michigan's Upper Peninsula and darkest Africa with Hemingway. He joined the Marines and went to war courtesy of Leon Uris. Like a sponge he absorbed the scenes and characters of the people in his favorite novels. He swaggered through the hallways of the hospital alongside Randall Murphy and found a new role model in Kersey. His occasional battles with his mom reminded him of standing up to the Big Nurse. Without realizing it, his own character was being shaped by the world of fiction.

Sure he had thought of becoming a writer himself. Although he was always reading he never tried to write much of anything until he found himself in a creative writing class in high school. The laborious process of getting the spelling and grammar right seemed like a pain in the ass to Jacky. He did enjoy the praise he sometimes got from teachers and fellow students. At seventeen years old he decided he didn't really have anything interesting or exciting to write about. From that moment he told himself he would endeavor to lead a life that would be worth writing about.