

## Overused Words that Mark the Writer as a Beginner to Publishers and Agents

### **Don't Be Caught in a Cliché Whatever You Write!**

**By Jude Urbanski**

Words of wisdom, but how often have you transgressed? Quite a few, if you're like me. A cliché is an over-used word or expression. Clichés are so popular that a National Cliché Day prevails. Writer Laura Hayden says clichés make great books titles, but lousy writing. A Google search gives the topic respect.

Well, what's so bad about using tried and true words or phrases? Our mothers would probably approve. Our mothers, though, are not writing in our 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which good writing etiquette, says no to these sometimes lovely and loved clichés.

If you want a refreshing voice, an agent, a publisher and sales, don't be caught in a cliché. Sorry, but true. Clichés do not say anything new to our readers. Granted, sometimes only a cliché fits, but, even then, try for words [that] only you, the newbie or the established author, can or would say. Your own voice is what should be heard in your writing.

You may have to sit a long time at your computer to find words only your voice would pen. I know I have. Generally, though, our words and our voices are better than the clichés. Clichés are weak writing. Meaning they're often the easy fix, rather than hammering out our unique twist and style.

Weak writing is repetition of clichés, euphemisms or pet words. It's using predictable sequences. I just read and judged a wonderful book for a contest, but if I had to read the word 'puckered' one more time, I would rethink my high score. Otherwise, the book was faultless. Just an example of how authors have 'pet words.' Search your manuscript for overused words or phrases. Just as we're taught to search for the 'ly' words. Draw from deep within how to say something your special way.

There is a hard fix, enabling us to avoid clichés as well as to improve our writing. That fix involves knowing facts. Facts you're learning in this course, at conferences and reading on your craft. One hard fix is to monitor use of the words 'that' and 'had.' The first can generally be eliminated and the second can become a more active verb. I've noticed the word 'the' can also often be eliminated. These techniques create tighter and cleaner writing. We already know to avoid flowery or purple prose and monitor weak or predictable plots. Of course, "show don't tell," layer your characters and always, always ratchet up the stakes.

We don't write, we rewrite. But we don't want to be caught in a cliché whatever we write.

You may find the following links on clichés interesting. [ClicheSite.com](http://ClicheSite.com) and [elistonwordpro.bizland.com](http://elistonwordpro.bizland.com).

Jude Urbanski

*Joy Restored*, Desert Breeze Publishing, Nov 2011 [Quoted article by permission.]