

## Random 10: Ways to Use the Weather in Your Writing

By Deb Courtney

Writing comes from inside us, from the secret places, from our joys and our experiences and from our imaginations. It can also be impacted by external events and phenomena. Weather is one of those mundane things which we give little thought to, but which can impact us greatly—from our moods, to directing the events of our lives in small ways. Here's a look at how that bit of mundane might be put to work for you, as a writer.

### Actual Weather, impacting us as writers:

**Cold**—on a brisk, cold day, place your hand on a windowpane. Take a walk in the chill. Feel the invigoration, or the pain, of two degree air as it hits your lungs. Know that for most of us, the cold is an ephemeral experience, a fleeting part of our time, but it can get in the way of things, much like writers block or a day job can. But it passes.

**Gray**—oh how a dreary day gets some of us down. The barometric pressure drops, the grey mimics twilight, and calls for a fire, a cup of something warm, and a comfy blanket. Or a nap! But what an opportunity for quiet reflection. On your goals, on your stories, on your progress. As a writer, the ability to revel in this quiet time may lead to discovery, or new ideas, or breakthroughs on old ones. So, revel.

**Brilliant**—When there are no clouds, and the temperature is as close to perfect as it ever gets, take a notebook and get outside. On your patio, on a hike, at a pool. Interact. Through interactions with people and nature, you build experiences upon which your characters can draw, and through which your settings can manifest.

**Caliente**—summer's heat can wring the life out of us, melt composure, wilt our good intentions. But the heat of summer can also remind us of the emotive interactions between our characters, or how they might feel on a tropical beach far away. Grab your notebook—no matter how damp—and capture the sensory experience and delights that only summer's heat can bring us.

**Windy**—whether a hot summer's breeze or the chill thrust of winter, wind can remind us of the changeable nature of things, and also how to remain flexible in the face of strong forces. Watch the trees bend, or the dust blow, and think through how your story and your characters remain strong but flexible and unbroken in the face of adversity, or how they might splinter under the force of something too strong to resist.

### Weather in your story:

**Setting**—though a cliché, 'It was a dark and stormy night' does have the benefit of creating a setting of sorts. What is your setting's weather and how does it relate to your story, plot and characters? Could this story only happen in a dusty and dry desert, or might it as easily take place in the Arctic? Why?

**Mood Enhancer**—use of weather in a story can enhance or complement the mood you create in scenes. Also a cliché is rain at a funeral, but what about light snow during a romantic walk? A change in weather during a climactic moment? To avoid cliché it is advisable not to dwell overly on weather conditions as a mood enhancer, but do not ignore them altogether.

**Plot Driver**—Some stories really can only happen in certain climates with certain weather. A flood in small town Massachusetts might not play, but would easily in a drought-ridden Midwest town where a freak storm drops unexpected amounts of water on

soil baked to bricks. That same storm would be a drop in the bucket of water absorbed by a tropical rainforest, and considered run-of-the-mill in Central Florida.

Character—much as noted above, the weather has an impact on people. It may also have an impact on your characters. How do they respond to the weather of your story? How does it enhance or negate their moods, or the events of your plot?

Juxtaposition—a powerful tool is to play against the expected. A bright sunny gorgeous day may feel offensive at a funeral, or during a strongly emotional scene in your book, while a dreary rainy day might be an opportunity for your characters to be playfully full of joy and laughter.

As writers we are told to use what we know, and we all know the weather and what it does to us. So use it. And, as the old saying goes, if you don't like the weather, wait five minutes—it's sure to change.

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