

The Back Story on Marketing Fiction

From WRITER'S DIGEST

By Rob Eager, author of *Sell Your Book like Wildfire*

A survey of 21,000 book shoppers by the Codex Group revealed that the #1 way to attract people to a fiction author's website is to offer exclusive unpublished writings, such as short stories, novellas, lost chapters, alternate openers or endings, etc. This desire for content is especially popular with women. So, if you want to draw more people to your books, this promotional idea is one of the most effective - yet least used by novelists.

A good example of using short stories to market fiction is Stephenie Meyer, the mega-bestselling author of the *Twilight* series. Stephenie wrote a novella based on one of her popular books called *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner*. She offered this novella as a limited-time free gift to her fans before it was officially published. The buzz over this short story was huge and kept readers engaged with her work even though she was in-between releasing new books.

To create content that attracts more readers, look through everything you've written that could be turned into an interesting standalone short story. For instance:

1. You could write a prequel or a brief back story about your main character that explains the history or events leading up to one of your novels.
2. If you're writing a series of novels, create short stories that cover the material in-between two consecutive books. Fill in any gaps, or take a different look at a character who might deserve more attention.
3. If you have an interesting secondary character who doesn't get fully developed in a novel, you could write a "Where are they now?" type of short story that gives more details or an update.

Once you've written a short story, offer it on your website, social media networks, and newsletter. You could also make it available as a free bonus or premium item in conjunction with one of your novels that entices readers to purchase. If you're a novelist who wants to increase book sales, use your natural strength as a story-teller to create powerful marketing tools.