

# THE RELUCTANT WRITER

## IMPROVING ON TRADITION



Instinctively, we think of outlines as minimalist. And, as many of you know, I'm a fan of keeping them under one page, so you can scan the flow of ideas. However, the usual method of using clipped, one- or two-word cues for each section can defeat the purpose of an outline in the first place.

In addition to *ordering* your ideas, outlines can theoretically help you to *develop* them...to make sure there are smooth *transitions* between them...to help you place examples and arguments *within* them...to *remember* them.....and to help you *articulate* them when it's time to write. But for any of these functions to work, you need to use complete sentences. Here's an example of a traditionally "clipped" outline:

### CRANBERRY SAUCE:

- Traditional
- Unpopular
- Canned vs. fresh

Now here's the same outline with complete sentences:

### PSYCHOLOGY OF CRANBERRY SAUCE:

- Most people include it at Thanksgiving because it's a family or cultural tradition.
- However, very little is actually eaten.
- One reason might be a childhood association with the cylindrical, gelatinous, canned version.
- However, fresh cranberries are easy to make, and provide color on a plate full of neutrals.
- So, the problem and the solution are both based on visual aesthetics more than flavor.

In order to produce these sentences, I had to push my thoughts on cranberry sauce a little further. Now that I have complete sentences, my diatribe practically writes itself.

## CONSULTING

*I'm currently accepting new clients & projects for the Winter semester!*

### ASSESSMENTS:

A written assessment—based on interviews and writing samples—helps you and your child to understand more precisely why writing challenges arise, and to prioritize effective strategies.

### KIDS, age 8-18:

For young people struggling with writing work, I offer the following options:

### BOOK PROJECTS

Clients use a topic of personal interest to work through writing challenges. Ideal for people impacted by anxiety or rigidity.

### ESSAY-WRITING SUPPORT

For those with specific academic goals, I focus on one stage of the writing process at a time, meeting weekly or biweekly throughout the semester.

### ADULTS:

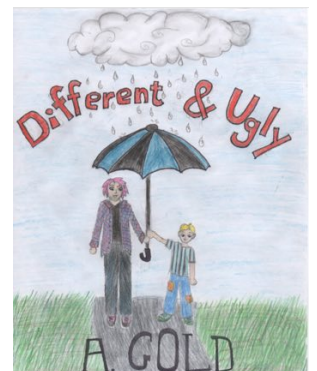
Individual adult clients can schedule weekly sessions, or arrange a sequence of meetings and draft reviews based on a specific project or deadline.

*Sessions take place at my Temescal office:  
510 49<sup>th</sup> St. (@Telegraph), #209  
Oakland, CA 94609*

## NEW RELEASE from BARNACLE BOOKS!

Our latest publication is *Different & Ugly*, a novel by author A. Gold. The narrative alternates between the minds of two protagonists:

Le-Anne, an angry and alienated 15-year-old lesbian, and Tyler, a good-natured 9-year-old boy with autism. Their stories intertwine as they face the challenges of growing up and moving forward. (Recommended for age 14+ due to mature content.) Excerpts and ordering info will be available soon on my website!



## HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR THE NEURODIVERSE & THE WRITING-AVERSE

*I spend a lot of time researching and testing books, games, and other products that I think might help me or my clients with things like creative thinking, articulating ideas, planning, and organization. At holiday time, I like to recommend gift ideas, but please know that I am not affiliated with any of these products or vendors.*

### A GAME OF CREATIVE CONNECTIONS



**DISRUPTUS** (\$25, Games of Berkeley & artsy bookstores)

This game has very few rules, and lots of ways to play. The basic idea is to come up with new ways of using familiar objects...for example, how could you combine a toaster and a backpack into a new product? How would you improve upon a hammock? How could you use a shoe other than as a foot covering? A lot of writers have a hard time making connections between points, and this game is a low-stakes way to discover and practice your innate skills.

### SENSORY ETCH-A-SKETCH



**KID O MAGNATAB** (\$25-\$35, Ruby's Garden & cool toy stores)

This thing is just fun to play with, so I recommend it for all ages. You "draw" with the metal beads inside by drawing them up with a magnetic stylus; to erase, you pop them back down with a satisfying click. As with an etch-a-sketch, your creativity is severely constrained by the linear format, which many people find comforting; it subjects invention to the laws of engineering. It's also great for sensory feedback; fans of popping bubble wrap will love this.

### THE COGNITIVE ASSISTANT



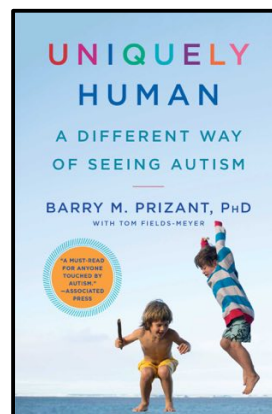
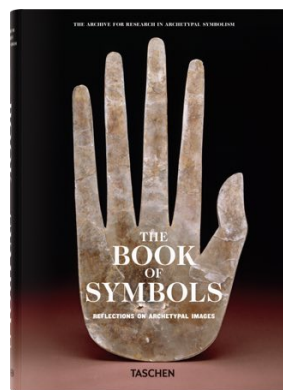
**POST-IT DISPENSER WD-330 COL** (\$10, Staples & Walgreens)

I don't necessarily recommend Post-Its as an aid to memory, since they tend to proliferate, become invisible, and then get lost. However, they're great for other cognitive tasks, like labelling (stacks of related documents, ideas in a brainstorm) and experimenting (working out a small definition, diagram, or list in the midst of writing). This dispenser is unobtrusive and heavy, so a fresh page is always easy to extract. A 6-pack of accordion-folded refills usually lasts me through the year.

## RECOMMENDED READING

**TASCHEN BOOK OF SYMBOLS** (\$40, Builder's Booksources)

The seemingly arbitrary associations between objects and their cultural meanings are explained concretely in this thick reference book, which is organized with tabs and 5 ribbon bookmarks. Interesting to most humans, and great for improving abstract thinking. Some adult content.



**UNIQUELY HUMAN** by Barry Prizant (\$16, order from your local bookstore)

This is one of the only books I've seen that discusses autism interventions through the lens of true empathy for the person being supported. I recommend it as a gift to teachers, administrators, health care providers and family members who need help "getting it."