



Sneak Peek

[Transcript]

Hello! My name is Heather Demetrios, and this is your You Have A Process sneak peek. This course is designed to help you learn about, explore, and trust in your process and—trust me—you *do* have a process!

Most of the writers that I work with come into our work thinking that they don't have a process; they have read multiple craft books, blogs, listened to podcasts, gone to writing retreats and lectures and courses and even got into MFA programs. Some of them even have *New York Times* bestseller list accolades or literary awards, and they *still* think that they don't have a process. They try to slip on somebody else's process, read a craft book and do what that craft book says or what a famous author they admire says. But the problem with that is that that's the other person's process. It's not your process.

The truth is that there is so much that you're already doing in your life, and in the writer seat, that supports your writing. You already have the tools to court flow, to get in flow and stay in flow, to get unstuck, to generate ideas, to set the groundwork for a successful writing session. But if you don't know what you're doing, and you're just kind of hoping for magic to occur when you sit down, then you're not able to harness with intention, all the things that you *actually are doing* that are working.

This course is really designed to empower you to help you step into your authority as a writer, and to be able to be your own best advocate for your writing when you're in the writer's seat.

To be able to work skillfully with the inner critic when it comes up, to have a set of tools that work for you and that maybe you've even devised yourself that generates ideas and that gets you in the groove of a good writing session.

This work is based on a decade of my time in publishing as a professional author, but also as a writing coach, and as a professor in an MFA program. I have worked with writers one-on-one in groups and all kinds of contexts. But most of all, the laboratory of my work is myself and beginning to discover tools that worked for me, and then thinking about how I might be able to help other writers discover tools that work for them.

Sometimes the things that I do are things I can pass along, and they work for those writers. But oftentimes, you know, we're all very different and so it's really through a series of dialogue, of questions and explorations, of becoming a process detective, and of having some trial-and-error and being attentive and tending to your own time in the writer's seat and also outside of it. That will really help you and has helped the writers I work with discover what their process is and then it's just a matter of amplifying what's working, revising what's not, bringing in tools that support the way that you work whether you are a visual person, or you are into using environmental factors, or music or movement to get into flow. You might be somebody that starts story with setting and you're all about location, location, location. Everybody's different.

This course is very much designed for you to figure out what works for you. And then I offer a lot of strategies for going deeper into whatever your particular process is. I've developed a series of process archetypes which are *not* another box to put you in, but are simply little stars that can guide you if you are leaning toward a certain way as a writer.

I am a very character-based writer. When I am looking for tools to get unstuck, to generate new ideas, to get into flow, I'm going to look at the archetypes that support somebody who works from a very character-based space, but I'm also somebody who very much begins story with setting, and so I'm also going to look at that archetype when I need a tool to help me. Those tools might be anything from meditations to sidewriting, which is exploratory work that might not end up in the book but will help you go deeper into your story and characters.

Those tools might be more out-of-the-box stuff like collaging or interviewing yourself. There're so many things. In this course, we try to look at a lot of different ways of discovering what works for us, including looking at personality types, and recognizing how those different tests like Myers-Briggs or Enneagram, or even astrology or tarot could support your writing practice. What are the things that you are drawn to that help you get connected? And then how can you use those things to help you in the writer's seat?

This also includes anything from how you overcome challenges in other areas of your life. What qualities of yourself do you bring into a situation and how might that be transferred to the writer's seat? This really gets into the nitty-gritty of what you're doing moment-to-moment, not just before, during and after a writing session; we also look at your whole life.

There's a series of worksheets, audio lectures, videos, all sorts of things to support the work that you're doing with process. **One thing that I also really love about You Have A Process is that it's a live portal that you have access to for life.** As I discover new process archetypes or I create new worksheets or glean something from the work that I do one-on-one with writers or in a course I'm teaching...if I discover something that's going to be really helpful to unlocking process, then I'm going to put that in the portal. This means that you are always getting fresh, new material that can support your writing practice.

Michelangelo said, *I am still learning* and that's the case for me. That's the case for you. The best writers are always learning. But when I created this course, I wanted it to be a course that is empowered, that is not focused on Western, patriarchal, academic, white traditions of how we learn. I'm taking a very circular, very feminine, very mindful approach to how I look at process and not assuming that there's one way to do it. That's no right way. I am trusting myself and I'm trusting you to be able to do this work to explore how you show up for your writing and how your writing shows up for you, and all the quirky, wonderful, cool ways that you get into story and deepen story and get out of places where you're stuck and generate new ideas.

This is not another *here's how to do something* kind of course. This is very much designed to be a way that you step into your own personal power as a writer: you are in the driver's seat. You have your own North Star, you have your own process and all I'm doing is helping you unlock that a little bit through a series of explorations.

For this sneak peek I'm giving you a look at the You Have A Process mind-map: this is the core of the work that we do. This is a living document that you could be adding to throughout your life, especially as you enter into new seasons of your life, or you start exploring new kinds of work or genres. Your process will expand.

So you've got this mind-map. You can bring it up and take a look at it as I speak. If you need to pause this little audio, take a pause and then we will come back.

In the course itself, this whole thing that you're looking at right now is actually filled out—on the left-hand column each of the areas of the process are described. And in the mind-map you will also get an example of my process. You'll see a filled-out mind-map, and in the course I'll be walking you through each of these steps. **So, for this sneak peek, I wanted to share with you the thing that I think is the most immediately helpful aspect of this work that we're going to be doing, which is Orient.**

Over the years I've not only observed my own process, but have committed to a serious mindfulness practice—I'm a certified meditation teacher—as well as learned so much from the one-on-one work that I do with writers uncovering their processes—helping them with their inner critic, devising tools. I also have an MFA in Writing, so I've got tools from that practice. I bring all of these to bear on this You Have A Process journey.

The way that I have looked at a process is to break it down into parts. Now, if the words that I offer here aren't useful to you, you can change them—again, you're in the driver's seat. The first is Courting Flow.

We look at how we get into flow. Then we have Orient, and so on and so forth, all the way back circular to Courting Flow. Orient is, I think, the single most useful thing you could ever take away from You Have A Process other than just simply knowing that you have a process and trusting it and being curious about it. With Orient, it's really a question of looking at how do *you* enter into story?

So today we've skipped the first step, just for this sneak peek. If you're taking the course, we would have gotten deep into how you court flow. We look at not only what happens from the moment you wake up or even in your sleep—I have writers who are very lucky and wake up with a scene in their mind that they dreamed, but for most of us that's not usually happening. We look at from the moment that you wake up all the way through the moment that you go to bed, and we look at the rest of your life—other things that are supporting or not supporting your writing practice.

But let's say we've done that and now we've moved on to Orient. We'll say you've already done whatever you do before you write to court flow. Now you're sitting down.

What's the first thing that you do?

It's really interesting because when I do this dialogue with writers, they *think* they know what they do. But then the deeper that we go, and the more follow-up questions that I ask them, it becomes clear that they're doing things they had no idea they were doing that were supporting their writing. I'll give you an example:

I was working with a writer who I asked this question—*How do you drop into story?* I often like to use the image of a World War II spy. Of course, I wrote *Code Name Badass* about Virginia Hall. We're imagining being a spy who's dropping into enemy territory—being flown in by the Royal Air Force, dropping into Occupied France. When you're dropped in, the minute your boots hit the ground, what do you do?

So imagine you're at your writer's seat. It might be helpful to not think about when you're in the middle of a story or the middle of a chapter. Let's think about what you do when you first drop into either the beginning of a chapter or even a new story. Now, if you write in the short story form, then you would probably want to think about either the beats of the short story or the very beginning of the short story. It depends on how you organize your process and the structure of your work. So, you drop in: what do you do? Take a minute.

With this mind-map, you're eventually going to be filling this out with the tools and the things that you do that work for you. And why would you do that? Because when you sit at your writer's seat, and you feel like *I've got nothing, I don't feel like writing today. I don't have any ideas...* this is where having your process intimately known by you comes in handy because you look at the mind-map and you say, *Okay, wait, I know what to do. I know how I orient in story.*

I know what I do. For me personally, I orient through two ways. Either I start with setting, or I start with interiority. I'm trying to get grounded in the scene. Now, when I revise, I might realize, *Well some of that was just for me, I got into too much interiority because I was trying to find my way in the scene or way*

too much setting. But that's for revision. We're not going to worry about that right now. **And by the way, in the You Have A Process course there is a whole section on revision.** Figuring out if your revision process has different things in it than your drafting process—which it probably does—and I give you a lot of tools for that as well, which you can take or leave, obviously, because it's *your* process, not mine.

As I said, I know that when I start writing - this is from years of paying attention to my own process - that I always start with setting or character interiority. Now, other writers, they might start writing on dialogue. I have writers who start in the middle of an action scene. They just need to get people moving. I have writers who like to put a quote that sort of inspires that scene at the top of the page, or a question that the chapter is going to answer. This is something the reader would never see, but this is for them. Right? So, take a minute and think—you just go ahead and pause the audio and really think back to the last time or the last few times that you started a new chapter. What did you begin with? And, if you don't know, that's totally okay.

We're not used to being so mindful about our process because, of the industrial writing machine. It's all about, you know, let's talk about plot, let's talk about character, and process is often kind of thrown to the side. It's focused on *are you pantsier or are you plotter, do outline or do you not?* You know, process is so much richer than that. So, it isn't about pantsing and plotting—just kind of get that out of your head because those are just more labels that aren't going to be useful to you. Pause if you need to think about you orient.

Okay, so now we're back. If you couldn't come up with anything, my recommendation is to go back and look at the previous few chapters that you've written. Look at how you start. Do you start with a zinger of a statement? Do you start with something that your character's feeling or thinking in that moment? Do you begin with your character having a problem? I remember that with one of my books, *Exquisite Captive*, which is the first in a trilogy, it came out of a writing prompt where the teacher said, *Write the beginning of a story in which a character has a problem and they have to solve it*—which is great advice for writing: stakes, obstacles, desire, all those things. And so the first thing that popped into my mind was a genie who was stuck in her bottle...and it just went on from there. For some writers it's really useful, especially if you tend to struggle with...I don't like using the word plot... I like what George Saunders calls it: *meaningful action*. If you struggle with meaningful action, then maybe for you, in order to get things going, you need to start immediately with some kind of problem that the character has to solve.

There are any number of ways that you can begin, but all that matters is to know how *you* begin. It's not wrong if it's what you do. And this is where trusting yourself and seeing your process as stepping into your personal power as an act of empowerment as an act of ownership of your writing, of giving yourself permission to trust yourself is key. Okay?

So look at that. Look at how you start. Though I start with setting or interiority, it has to go somewhere from there, right? So, what do I do? If I'm orienting in story and I'm trying to start and I start with interiority and it feels too *blah*, I say, *Okay, well, I know setting also helps me get in*. I begin to go to setting and I say, *Okay, let me describe the scene*. Now, the key to this section of Orient is closely

linked to the next section, which is Flow, because Orient is almost asking a question, and Flow is the answer.

If I orient with setting or interiority, I need to be paying attention to what gets me into flow. For me personally, I'm very rarely flowing from the minute I start writing, I have to write myself into flow and I know that, so when I don't have flow immediately, I don't panic, because first I do the courting flow aspect which we are not doing in this sneak peek. But that's all the ways that I sort of get myself into a good writing space, regardless of how I feel that day. I know some people really love the idea of a muse and if that's part of your process, great, but I attend to what Picasso said that "inspiration exists, but it has to find you working." So showing up, doing the things that I know are gonna most support the conditions for flow when I'm writing.

Okay, so now I'm at orienting, and I know how I orient and so how do I know when it's starting to zing? How does the scene really get going? And that is the next part.

You become a process detective, to begin to notice when you start flowing. Now, for you, Orient and Flow might be almost the same step because you might be immediately flowing so long as you orient in a way that works for you—that's great. For others, you might be more like me, where you orient as a way to simply get your bearings on the page. But then there's something else that you bring in and *now* the scene is flowing. Maybe you orient with setting, but you don't flow until there's dialogue and you've got people talking to each other.

Flow is the next part of the You Have A Process exploration, which we'll get into when you take the course—which I'm so hoping that you will because I absolutely love doing this work. I've become a bit of a process collector. It is so thrilling to see all the ways in which the writers that I work with get into story, and they have the most unique, interesting ways, depending on their day jobs and a million other unique factors. If they're an interior designer or scientist, for example, it might really inform how they approach the page in a way that I've never heard of before. And it's so cool! And then we say, *Great, you're doing that already. How do we amplify that? How do we make that work even better for you so that you can trust it, so that when you're in the writer's seat, you don't panic? You don't feel like oh no, I have to go take a course or read a craft book. You say okay, I know what my process is.*

And if it's not working for you anymore, if you've changed genres or you're in a new stage of your life, then you just do this process we're engaging in right now again—you become a story and process detective, and you figure out what's working for you.

What I challenge you to do over the next few days is to really pay attention to how you orient and really look at the minutiae. This is granular level. You might think, *Oh, yeah, I orient with setting.* But then you might notice, *You know what? It's not setting in general. It's actually one singular image. I need to have one singular image that drives the scene, that acts as a focal point or an axis that the whole scene turns around.* That's one of my writers. She thought that how she oriented was setting alone, but then we realized no, it's a very specific image in the setting. And she knows based on being a story and process detective that when she hits on that image—and it might not be right away—but when she eventually hits on it, she's connected somatically, she's connected to her body, she can feel *yep, that's*

the image. And then she trusts herself and she knows that she can move forward with the rest of the scene. And because we've gone through this whole You Have A Process exploration, she knows what to do next after she catches that image. And when we did the Courting Flow work—which again, we didn't do today—that's when she and I looked at what were all the ways that she collects images or discovers these images or sets herself up to be open to the image that's going to arise from her subconscious. Because she knows she orients with imagery, that's an invitation to court flow with images—tarot, Pinterest, collaging, and other visual mediums.

So if you have that sort of process, then you would have the process archetype of being a visual writer. In the You Have A Process course there will be all these different activities and sidewriting suggestions for how to do more visual work that can support the way you enter into story so that you can get that image faster and you can trust when you have it.

If you notice, I also mentioned the body. Another thing we do when you have a process is really looking somatically, connecting to our bodies. So we get out of our head, we're not so twisted around by the inner critic or self-doubt, fear, comparison, all those things because we're in the body. And so you'll begin to trust. When you're in flow, you feel what flow feels like. You can trust your process. You think, *Oh, I'm flowing now. What's the next step in my process?* Or, *Oh, I put this down, but it feels like a no, it doesn't feel like a yes, I have a niggling feeling that this isn't working. So I look at my process map and I say okay, what do I need to do to court more flow? What do I need to do to better orient in this scene?*

And so it really just becomes scientific in the sense that, you know, when we think about scientists, they don't consider a failed experiment a waste of time because that's really important information about what worked and what didn't work. And there are things they can take off the table, and then new things they add to the table for their experiments. And that's what we do with our writing, right? We know, *Okay, that didn't work, but I have a process. You ask yourself, How do I bring something else in and see if that works based on how I work best?* And that's what this is all about.

So, in conclusion!

I hope you have a lot of fun being a process detective, getting into the minutiae of how you orient, really paying attention, asking yourself, *Okay, what do I do after that? And then what do I do and then what do I do?* And this is the dialogue I do with my writers. I say, *Why do you do that? Why does that work? Okay, wait before you get into, say, setting, what do you do, what happens?* And it's a really, really powerful way of looking at your writing from an entirely new, fresh perspective.

The power imbalance is no longer there. You are empowered as a writer; you aren't afraid to step into that because you know what works for you. You articulate that. And then and this is the kicker it brings that *je ne sais quoi* of authority onto the page.

The confidence that you feel in the writer's seat is transmitted onto the page: stronger word choice, clear action: you can tell that this writer is the captain of the ship and they know where they're going. You trust yourself, you trust the story, and that's how it works. It's a symbiotic relationship.

Okay, so what are the next steps if you want to take the course?

- Go to heatherdemertios.com and click on my offerings tab, and [You Have A Process is there!](#)

Like I said, this a live portal. There are so many delicious ways to explore process. There's also a process vault where you can read about other writers' processes, share your own process, and we can all get new ideas and learn from each other.

If you have any questions [reach out to me on my contact page on heatherdemertios.com](#) and I'll be happy to answer them. But in the meantime, just enjoy—enjoy exploring how you orient. I can't wait to hear about your incredible process and to support you in your writing practice and your journey.

Be well!

:: click below to start uncovering your process ::

