

# Novelist's Boot Camp

Get it written—Get it done



# About your presenter

## **T.A. (Todd) Stone:**

30 years of writing for publication

Multi-Published, multi-award winning author

**Close to Home, No Place Like Home,**

**The Best Defense, Kriegspiel**

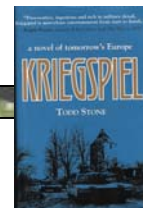
**Novelist's Boot Camp** (April '06)

Head Writer, **Crime Scene** ([www.crimescene.com](http://www.crimescene.com))

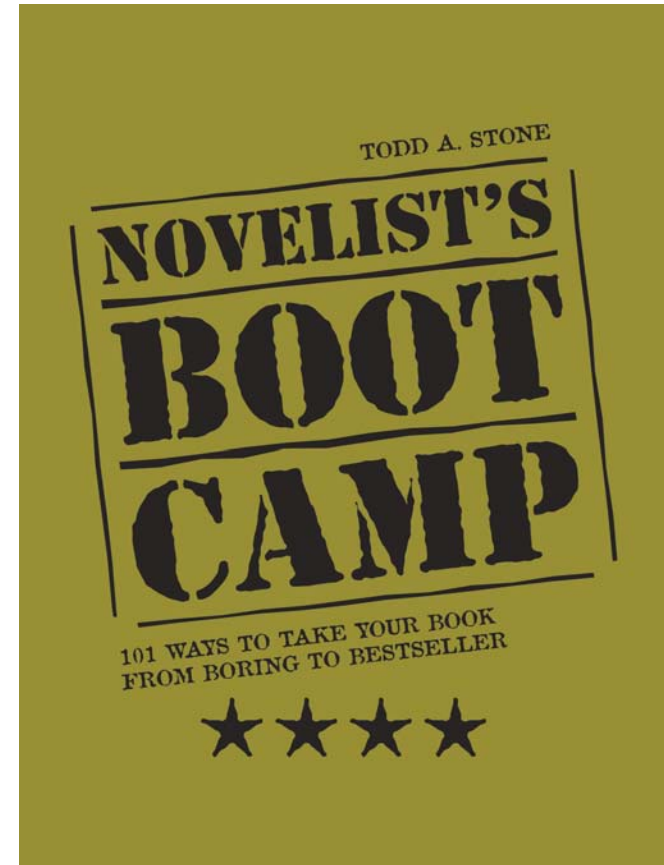
Full-time communications manager

Numerous web and magazine (*Writers Digest*) articles

Presents at writers conferences nationwide



**Highlight** selected elements from the Novelist's Boot Camp Battle Plan for Writing Your Novel (writing process)



***Novelist's Boot Camp***  
**by Todd A. Stone**  
Take Command of Your Novel!

It's time to plan and execute a writing strategy that's in sync with your ultimate mission objective: getting published.

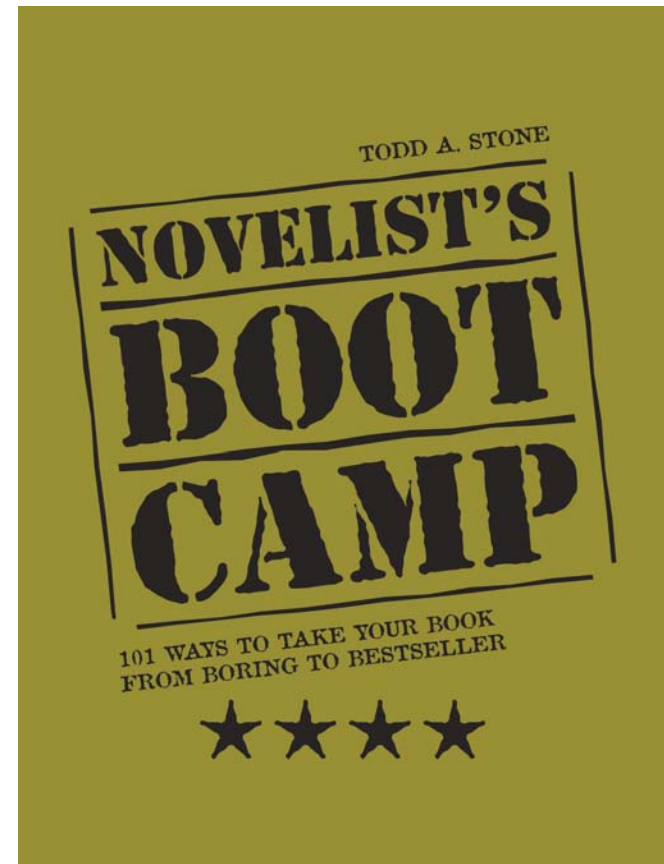
In *Novelist's Boot Camp*, author Todd A. Stone, a former assistant professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, draws on his experience as novelist, writing instructor, and military officer to help get you and your writing into tip-top shape.

This boot-camp-in-a-book includes 101 carefully crafted drills designed to show you how to:

- Identify and develop story ideas with laser-like perception
- Create realistic "alpha" characters who can take charge of any scene
- Know what motivates your protagonist's enemy so that you can amp up the conflict
- Outline your story to avoid sneak attacks from flawed plot twists
- Dodge the land mines of bad writing like Deadly Modifier Build Up (DMBU)
- Triage your scenes to ensure a thorough and precise revision process

Plus, there's a twelve-week boot camp battle plan that you can use to stay the course and finish your novel.

*Novelist's Boot Camp* provides you with all the ammunition you need to approach your work with dedication, confidence, and skill. Now, report for duty and start writing that bestseller!



# Our mini-boot camp

## Session 1:

**Overview of NBC**

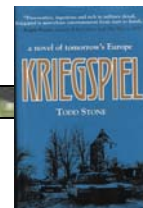
**Preparation, Invention, and Development**—*"must-do's" to set yourself up for success*

## Session 2:

**Real-world Revision**

## Session 3

**Hands-on workshop**



# Our agenda--Session 1

## Overview of NBC

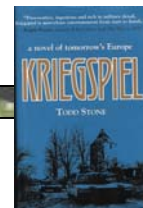
## Preparation, Invention, and Development—

*"must-do's" to set yourself up for success*

**The BIC** – your key to an on-target novel

**The Master Scene Summary** – know what to write when

- How to beat writer's block
- 5 "Secrets" to a better 1<sup>st</sup> draft



# Novelist's Boot Camp Battle Plan Phases

1. Mental Preparation and Mission Planning
2. Invention
3. Development
4. Drafting
5. Revision and Rewriting
6. Editing and Proofreading
7. Staying Battle Ready



# Why a “Phased plan?”

Drives toward completion of the work

Helps improve the “quality” of the work

Makes the writing process more rewarding

*\*not for everyone*



# The BIC—your Book on an Index Card

When a causal event happens, an (adjective)  
character does [or must do] something in the  
face of opposition,

and so (the character does something), and  
then (the character or opposition does  
something), and so.., and then..it works out.

+

genre

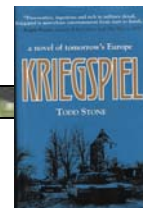
This is what your book is about:



# For example

When a member of her bomb squad is killed defusing explosives, a cynical, physically and emotionally scarred female police bomb tech must solve the crime to stop a serial bomber from striking again.

So what happens?



So...

So against official resistance, she deciphers the clues from bomb fragments, traces the components, and finally confronts the bomber in a personal life-or-death struggle.

What book is this?

RANGER



# Another

When an series of brutal murders threaten the safety and wholesome facade of an affluent Chicago suburb, an emotionally traumatized former profiler must solve the crimes to stop the killer from striking again. So he ties together cases hot and cold, risking his fragile sanity to first profile, then personally confront, a hulking madman bent on revenge.

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# One More

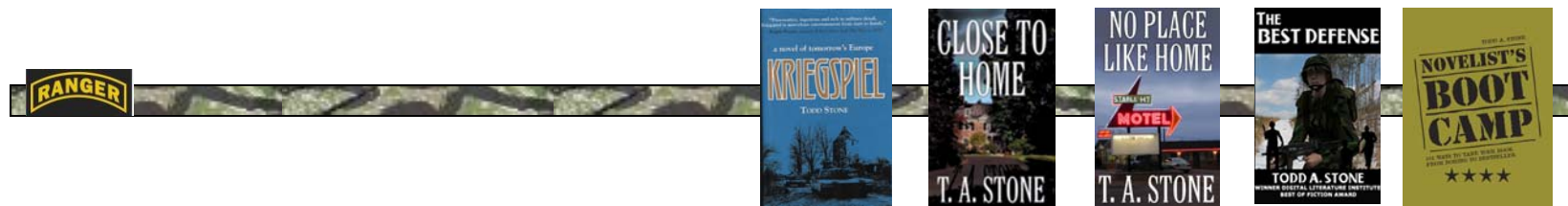
When bio-tech enhanced terrorist legion besieges a remote nuclear weapons depot, a stubborn but lonely Army officer must rally her outnumbered, rag-tag, mostly female force in a desperate defense of the weapons of mass destruction. So...

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Putting your book on a business card (making a pitch) gives you clear guideposts for writing.

Adding genre tells you how to “frame” the story



# The master story summary

I hate outlining

The master story summary organizes your story

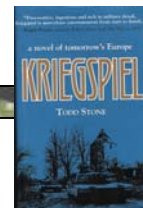
Comes from your business card description

Scenes = place, time, characters, action—no dialog

Written in present tense

All telling!

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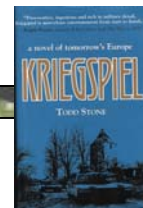


## **Betrands' Bedroom— morning**

(Murderer name) ambushes Susan Bertrand as she comes out of the shower. He lies in wait for Pastor Thomas Winston, Susan's lover, kills him too, and poses the bodies.

## **Kraag's ADMS office— afternoon**

Kraag receives a call from Mayor Dorland about the murder, blows off an executive meeting with corp. bigwigs to respond.



**Betrands' Bedroom— morning**  
**Kraag's ADMS office— afternoon**  
**Outside Kraag's house—evening**  
**Parking lot of Kraag's employer—morning**  
**Hallway to Kraag's office—morning**  
**First body dump site—morning**  
**Next place where hero/heroine has a  
conflict and AM/PM/Night**  
**Next place where hero/heroine has a  
conflict and AM/PM/Night**



Can be expanded into one page, 4 pages, or 20 pages—eventually 300!

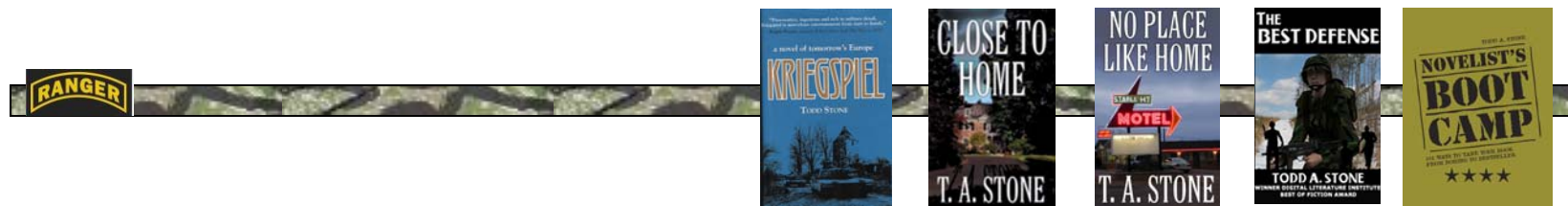
Keeps time/events straight

Keeps you focused on what happens, on moving the story along

Helps keep the main characters in the foreground

Lets you move events around

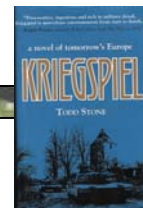
Gives you basis for a synopsis



# Bonus

- Beat writers block every time
- 5 Unwritten rules for a higher quality draft

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# Beat writers block every time

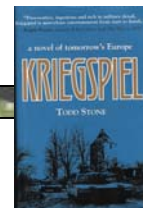
What it is and isn't:

Writer's block is a **symptom**, not a disease

Writer's block is **not** when over stressed, ill,  
have overwhelming reality

Writer's block is **not** when you don't "feel"  
like writing

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# When does it hit you?

Most often occurs during drafting

Usually when trying to write what happens **and** write how it happens

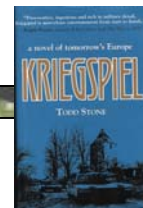
Or can come inner critic, as a way to keep from doing invention/development work, way to just not work

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# Ounces of prevention

1. Set **readily attainable** goals
2. BIC
3. Master story summary
4. Full character knowledge
5. Get in the “here and now” most productive mindset



# Pounds of cure

1. Go back to the BIC, Master Scene Summary, and character biographies
2. Force it!

Forget “creativity exercises”

Write the wrong thing (for the character)

Pick a technique and go

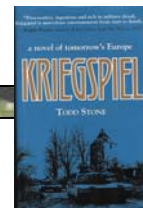
Write what you can

Warm up with lukewarm



## 5 "Secrets" to a higher Quality Draft

1. Thorough preparation, invention, and development.
2. Smaller chunks!
3. Everybody is in the here and now
4. Use all the senses to show
5. Be deliberately creative (override the editor)



# By way of review

## Overview of NBC

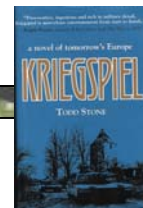
### Preparation, Invention, and Development—

*"must-do's" to set yourself up for success*

**The BIC** – your key to an on-target novel

**The Master Scene Summary** – know what to write when

- How to beat writer's block
  - Symptom, not disease
  - Revisit invention, development; Force it
- 5 "Secrets" to a better 1<sup>st</sup> draft
  - Prepare well, plan small bites, be there, use all senses, disciplined creativity



# Novelist's Boot Camp Battle Plan Phases

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2. Invention
3. Development
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# Our agenda--Session 2

## Real-world Revision:

How to **triage** your work

The **7 Revision Passes**

- The 4 paths to *published!*

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# Our agenda-- Session 3

Hands-on “boot camp”

BIC

Master Scene Summary

Get control of your calendar

Other

