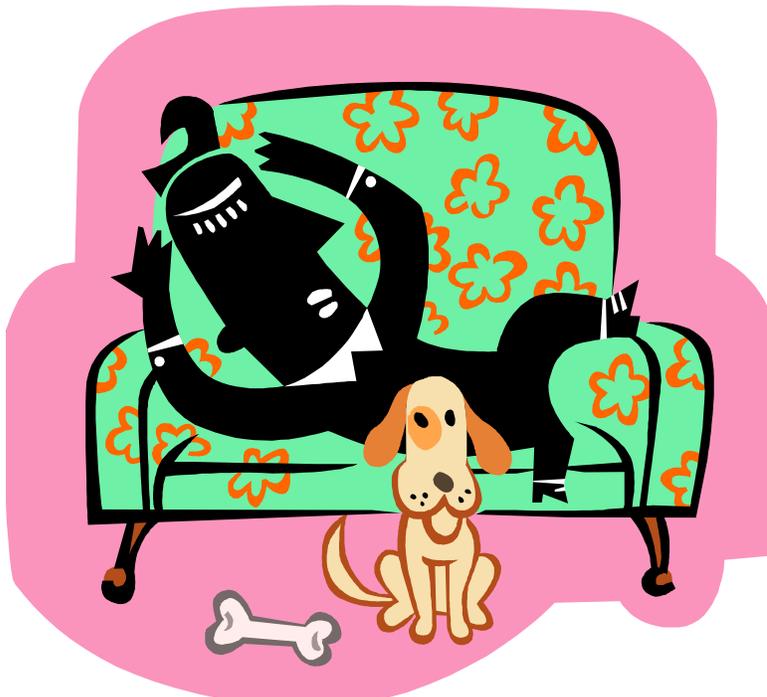


## Passionately Active vs. Couch-Potato Passive

*By Barbara Carpenter*

“Was” is possibly one of the most over-used words in the English language. When I pick up a book by a writer I admire, sit down to become involved in a terrific story, and then find myself immersed in a sea of “was-es,” I get a little crazy. I admit that I have sometimes picked up a pen and circled that offensive, little three-letter word, thus committing the unpardonable act of defacing a book.

For twelve years or so, I belonged to a writer’s roundtable, monitored by various instructors. One of them, a pseudo-literate who wore jackets with patches on the elbows and spoke with a carefully cultivated professorial tone, did little more than pat every would-be writer on the back. The only things missing were a pipe and a silver-handled cane.



The alternate moderator could not have been more opposite. Once a dancer, she carried her small frame with grace and dignity that perfectly complemented

*Continued on page two*



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## Active vs. Passive

*Continued from page one*

her silvery hair. After she became our only instructor, she presented a usable, valuable “how-to-become-a-better writer” discourse every Tuesday evening. I believe that one of the most important focused on active vs. passive verbs.

Inactive, passive verbs can become a writer’s crutch. It takes thought and effort to activate verbs, those words that were described as “action words” by at least two of my elementary school grammar teachers. Diagraming sentences became a nightmare to me, but I can still see value in the practice. I often use the principles when in doubt about word placement.

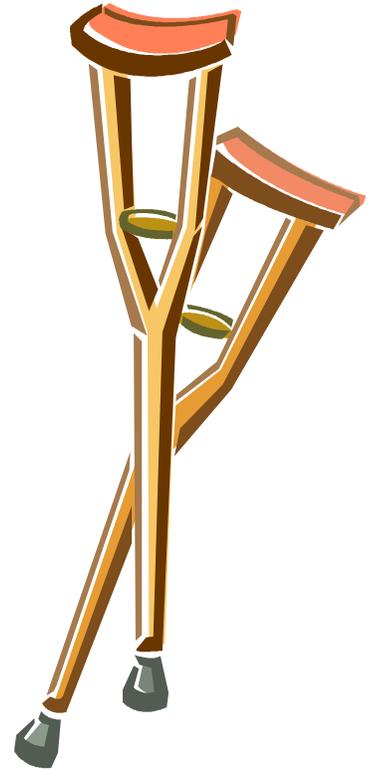
A sentence can be structured to avoid most passive verbs. At times the passive form is perfectly acceptable, but active is always better. As an exercise in a writing class, I asked the students to count the times they had used “was” on one page of their assignment. The result astounded them. One writer used it a whopping twenty-seven times. Example follows:

“There was a dresser against one wall, and a closet door was on the left side of it.” I suggested the following: “A mahogany dresser, shiny with the patina of years, stood against one wall and a single closet door opened to the left of it.” Not only do action verbs follow the subject, the phrase now paints a word picture.

This concept can be better said as “Show! Don’t tell!” Don’t tell me what a room holds. Show me! Active verbs can make a story and characters vibrant, while passive verbs simply lie there, waiting for a good writer to pick them up and toss them into the recycle bin.

Once we are conscious of excessive passive verbs as we read, those little inactive demons seem to activate and jump out at us like verbal hand grenades. Instead of becoming one with the story teller, I find myself editing as I read, which annoys me. After I have bought a book, dedicated an amount of time to read it and then become distracted by poor sentence structure and was-es,

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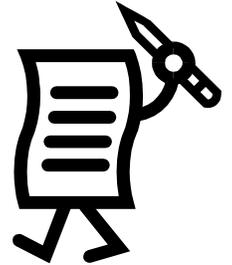


## Active vs. Passive

*Continued from page two*

I am actively non-passive, pardon the near pun. I don't lose respect for a competent story-teller, but I question the ability and expertise of the proofreader/editor who let it happen.

Every writer should read his/her own work repeatedly. Then read it again. Every time I do so, I find something that needs to be reworded, corrected or deleted. Even as aware as I am of the passive/active trap, an occasional "was" creeps into a sentence where it does not belong. When I find one, I take great pleasure in banishing it from the page. May it rest in peace!



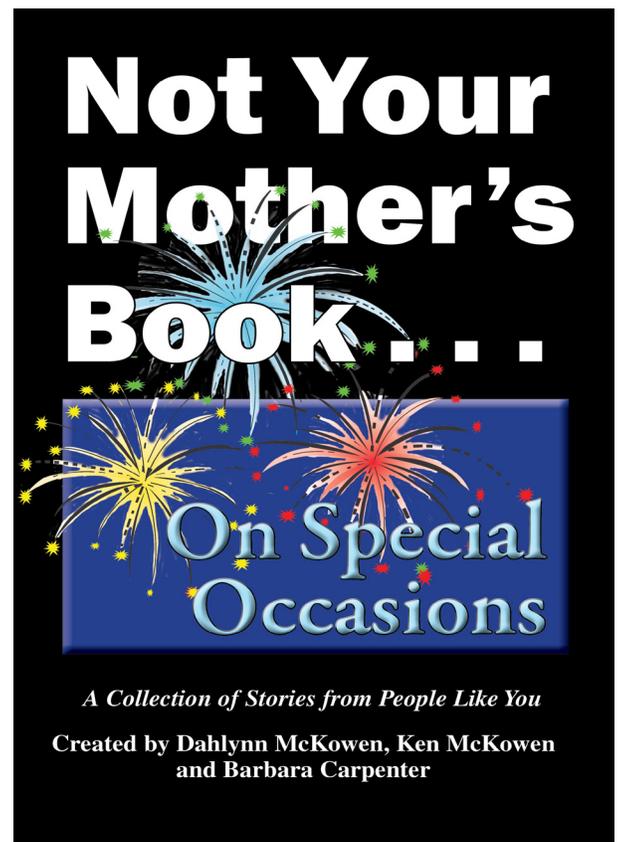
## About Barbara Carpenter

Award-winning author and poet Barbara Carpenter has three novels and two memoirs in print. Hailing from the great state of Illinois, Barbara is an established editor and freelancer; her work has appeared in



national magazines, anthologies and on-line publications.

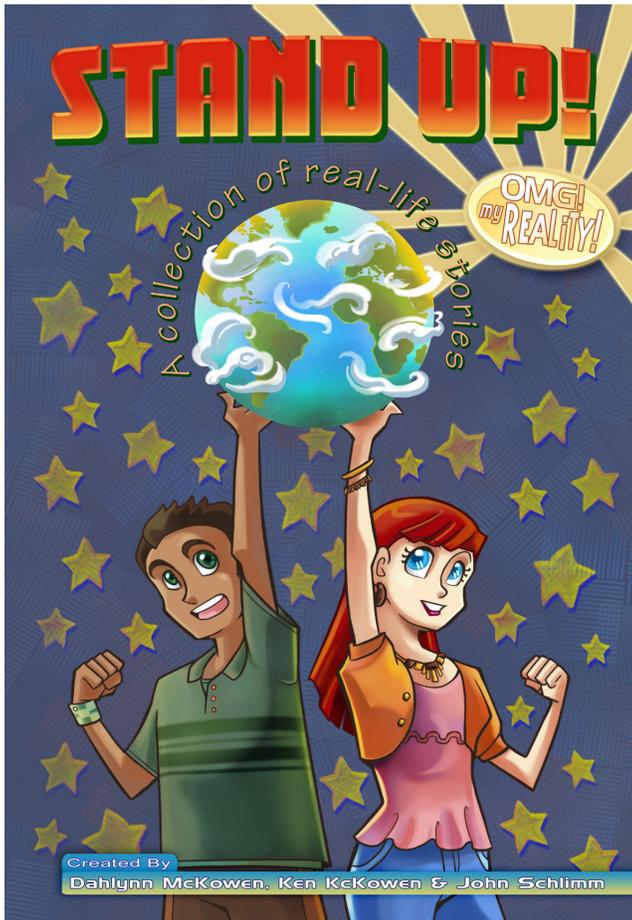
In her spare time, she enjoys painting, quilting and gardening, as well as hosting parties at her home for friends and family.



Barbara is very excited to be the the co-creator of *Not Your Mother's Book . . . On Special Occasions*. She would love to read your stories about all those great occasions—birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, events—the list is endless! So get writing and send your stories to Barbara! Visit [www.PublishingSyndicate.com](http://www.PublishingSyndicate.com) for submission guidelines.

## Stories Needed for New *OMG! My Reality!* Book

### STAND UP!



Young people have the unique power to change the world like no one else. This new anthology celebrates young people as activists and advocates who have let their voices and actions **ROCK** the causes and issues most important to them.

If you are currently 25 years or younger, we want to hear your story, in your own words, about how as a child, teen, or young adult you chose, or are choosing, to **STAND UP!** and impact a cause or issue important to you. Through this powerful new anthology, which will bring together a collection of today's most outstanding young activists, we want to help you continue to let your voice be heard and insure that your actions continue to make this planet a better place for all living beings.

— John Schlimm  
Co-creator, *Stand Up!*

#### Chapter subjects by cause will include:

- Environment
- Human Rights
- Animals
- LGBTQ Issues
- Homelessness
- Domestic & Sexual Abuse
- Fitness/Healthy Lifestyles
- Diseases (cancer, AIDS, etc.)
- Disabilities
- Military
- The Arts (dancing, acting, writing, visual arts)
- Gun Rights/Control
- Bullying
- Politics
- Freedom of Speech
- International Issues



Story guidelines and submission information can be found at [www.PublishingSyndicate.com](http://www.PublishingSyndicate.com); be sure to click on the the *OMG! My Reality* tab.

## *NYMB...On Holidays*

## NYMB Update

We have been receiving many wonderful stories for this title, but, quite honestly, they're too safe. We call them "happy sappy" stories and while one or two may appear in each NYMB book, we are looking for funny, silly, edgy **stories**. The key word here is **STORIES**. Too many essays are being submitted. **We need stories with a beginning, middle and an end.** While it may be a wonderful trip down memory lane for you to share what you had to eat for Thanksgiving and which relatives showed up, to others, it's plain boring. Tell us about something **funny** that happened during a holiday, something different than the norm. And no dedications, please.

The deadline for *On Holidays* will be extended to August 1, 2012. But fair warning to all: if we receive the stories we need right away, the deadline will close early. Don't wait!

**STORIES WE NEED FOR THIS TITLE:** All Jewish holidays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Veteran's Day, St. Patrick's Day and Valentine's Day

**STORIES WE NEED SPECIFICALLY:** funny Thanksgiving Day stories (no essays!) and a few Valentine's Day silly stories.

**STORIES WE DO NOT NEED:** Christmas, Easter and 4th of July

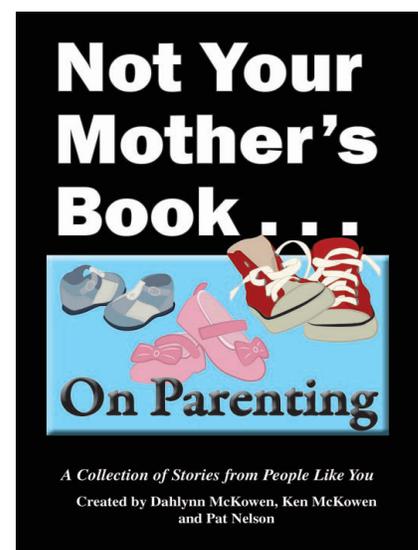
Thanks!

## *NYMB...On Parenting*

### CHECK OUT THE NEW COVER!

Parenting skills don't come in a box or a book or a bag. It's something that comes from within, and in spite of all the trial and tribulations of parenthood, most kids come out okay on the other side. Send us your stories about parenting, the sillier and funnier, the better.

Submit your great stories at the Publishing Syndicate website. Be sure to read the guidelines first so your story has a better chance of making it through the consideration process!



**HURRY! STORIES NEEDED!**

Updated 6/27/12

*Not Your Mother's Book . . .*

**A new anthology for a new century!**

Nearly 40 titles in the NYMB series need stories! Stories written by age 18 and up. More details on the PS website.

**DEADLINES for NYMB**

*On Travel:* August 1, 2012

*On Holidays:* August 1, 2012

*On Being a Stupid Kid:* August 1, 2012

*On Family:* October 1, 2012

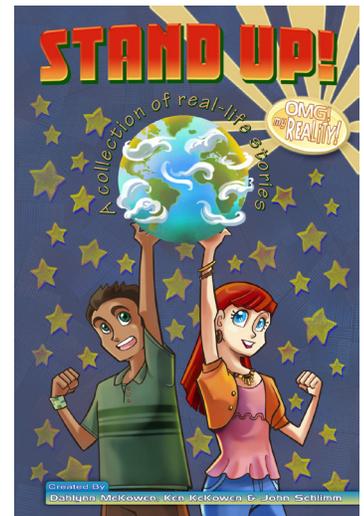
*On Being a Mom:* October 1 2012

*On College:* November 1, 2012

**OMG! My Reality Youth Series**

**Summer writing!**

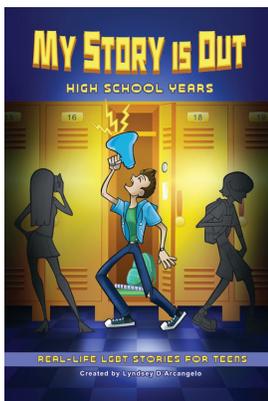
Accepting stories for four *OMG! My Reality!* titles: *Kids*; *Preteens*; *Teens* and the newest in the series: *Stand Up!* (See page 4 to learn more about this book). Stories must be written by youth, age 25 and younger.



**DEADLINE for OMG! books**

*Stand Up!:* November 1, 2012

[www.PublishingSyndicate.com](http://www.PublishingSyndicate.com)



***My Story is Out: High School Years***

Created by Lyndsey D'Arcangelo

***The nation's newest anthology for LGBT teens!***

***DEADLINE TO SUBMIT: October 1, 2012***

Attention LGBT teens and college-aged kids! Lyndsey needs stories for her book, so please pass along this information. Contributors who make the book will be paid royalties! [www.MyStoryIsOut.com](http://www.MyStoryIsOut.com)

**Dream  
of  
Things<sup>SM</sup>**

*Dream of Things* has a great line-up of anthology books. On their website, be sure to click on the "Workshop" tab for a listing of titles. Good luck!

[www.DreamofThings.com](http://www.DreamofThings.com)

***Go for it! Get published!*** 