The following is a blog I added to every day of in November, the month that I wrote my novel. I included descriptions of my research and writing process as well as the symbolism I incorporated into my novel as well as other unique aspects of my work.

November 1 (1,326 words)

When I first started writing this novel, I already knew I wanted it to be stream-of-consciousness style, told from the perspective of just one person. As I started writing, the little tidbit “write what you know” lurked in the back of my mind, so I decided to make the main character someone that I could relate to—a young college student with high ambitions, a Jewish heritage, and a love for the Steelers (I have her living in the outskirts of Pittsburgh, or “Picksburgh” as they say in Pittsburgh-ese). As I got the groove of the heroine’s perspective and formed her point of view, about 1,000 words in I decided this novel would be written in one huge paragraph. The purpose of this is not only to capture the essence of the writing without a outright structure in paragraphs or chapters, but also to take a snapshot of what’s really going on in the mind of a college student as her thoughts are being processed.

November 2 (2,035 words)

When I did NaNoWriMo for the first time, I did a stream-of-consciousness narration but in my own mind. It is proving to be much more challenging to do this in the mind of another character, even though it is a character I made up. I think this is because I have to keep track of the history I am making up for her and the things she likes and the dreams she has; in my own mind, I just have to remember and it comes. Another thing that I am doing differently this time around is excluding names; in my own, I included my name (I had originally set out not to do this, but it proved to be too difficult, especially as a first- time NaNoWriMo participant). This time, I am excluding names for two purposes. The first reason is I want to provide a sort of mystery about the character’s life; we already know everything that is going on in her head, which is super intimate and personal, so I feel it would be too intrusive to include a name—it would take away some of the mystique about her character as well as make the writing more personal than it needs to be (yes, I realize she is fictional, but this is the way I need to think in order to make her seem real to me as a writer). Also, providing names would perhaps give the reader different biases as to who the characters are and what they are like, and I want the reader to make judgments based only on my heroine’s descriptions and actions. In fact, the only name I am actually including in the novel is my main character’s dog, Lewis, who is named after Lewis Carroll. Lewis is a symbolic character because he was one of the only “people” that truly loved her, and he ran away, so she feels more alone than ever in his absence.

November 3 (5,002 words)

The plot is shaping up to be incredibly simple—the heroine’s life as she views it, and how she is dealing, internally and externally, with the problems she faces every day, whether they be huge (such as an unplanned pregnancy) or small (like not having time to relax and take a bubble bath). A simple plot is a necessity for an endeavor such as this, because I have to sort through the heroine’s thoughts to come up with patterns and symbolism that can be weaved throughout my work. This is where research on structure and figurative language comes into play. I need to make my heroine’s scattered thoughts come alive, so that they can be seemingly unorganized in an actually structured way.

November 4 (8,976 words)

One thing that I have started to do in this novel is make it multi- modal. This happened unexpectedly, when I decided to add a hyperlink to an internet cartoon (<http://calmblueoceans.com/18/> ) the character was describing. I figured, why not add some spice to my writing and do something I had never attempted before in a work as long as this one? I learned about a multi-modal style of writing in my English 112 class at UC; before I took this class I had no idea that a multi- modal essay could be an academic work even with hyperlinks and pictures. This really sparked my creative flame and I decided to incorporate this into my novel.

November 5 (10,064 words)

One way I am incorporating symbolism into my work is to make my character obsessed with having a “literary” life. She is desperately looking for symbolism in her life so it can possibly make decisions for her, but she realizes that things don’t always work the way they do in novels. This works in my favor in two ways. One, it provides a sense of irony in that the character doesn’t know that she is, in fact, in a novel. This brings in the sense that there is an omniscient force (me, and the reader) watching over her every move without her knowing it. Her obsession with symbolism also provides me with a direct pathway into incorporating symbolism into this work—the character looks for symbolism and therefore provides me with it, and the fact that she is obsessed with finding it is symbolic of her character, as well.

November 6 (12,347 words)

I’ve been searching the internet about how to incorporate symbolism into writing—I figure that good, strong symbols are a great way to give a backbone to my stream-of-consciousness route that I have given this novel. So far, it seems like the type of symbol that works for my writing is using actual objects to represent something else, which is what I have been doing so far. I am going to spend the next few days analyzing each of the symbols I have so far, explaining why I chose them and how they work to structure my novel.

November 7 (14,982 words)

The main character’s family is a central part of the journey through her mind, especially her mother. Her mother is a strange, eccentric character, making her a perfect target for including symbolism in this novel. One way I do this using the mother is in the first few sentences of my novel, when I discuss her mother’s alcohol addition in comparison to her boyfriend’s nicotine addiction. While this not only shows that she forms similar relationships outside her family based on her relationships in the family, I also bring in the component of why her mother, even though she is a “recovering” alcoholic, disapproves of cigarette smoking. The heroine sees these both as equally bad habits, which again shows the similarities between those two relationships as well as uses addiction to highlight the somewhat dysfunctional relationship with her mother and the rest of her family. Her mother takes on projects when she is in recovery, most recent of which is what the heroine describes to us as “the bomb shelter.” The bomb shelter represents many things for the heroine. For one, it symbolizes how she lives in seclusion, in shelter, with her family because she fears the outside world, the bomb. It also symbolizes her fear that perhaps her family is s ticking bomb, as well.

November 8 (15,431 words)

The reader’s relationship with her father is significant and symbolic, as well. Her father is a classic case of a hit- and- run dad, starting new families every decade or so like new businesses. The heroine receives a plastic, childish hair clip (with a plastic flower or butterfly on it, something girly like that) from her dad every year even though he has yet to visit. As I mentioned before, the heroine is obsessed with finding symbolism in her own life and has yet to find it, or so she thinks. It’s ironic because she believes that saving the clips would be symbolic, but she just throws them away so there couldn’t be any symbolism. On the contrary, the fact that she throws them away represents her maturation. Later, she states, “life isn’t shit, and life isn’t butterflies,” which alludes to the butterfly barrettes, symbolizing that her dad will never come home and she has accepted this, and as she grasps this, she leads herself into adulthood.

November 9 (19,800 words)

The main character faces an ongoing struggle of keeping her childhood close while struggling to reach adulthood at the same time. This is a difficult task for her, but it makes it easier for me as a writer to use symbols to represent this transformation between childhood and adulthood.

November 10 (20,433 words)

The dichotomy between the heroine’s childhood and adulthood is represented through the future home she will have, which she idealizes. She aspires to reach adulthood through “The Yellow Kitchen,” which I will describe in further detail later, while at the same time seeking to preserve the fun, lighthearted nature of her childhood through “The Fun Room.”

November 11 (21,004 words)

I have already decided on a title for my work—*The Yellow Kitchen*. This title is incredibly symbolic in that it represents my heroine’s hopefulness for a change in her life, to reach adulthood, and to do this in as normal of a way as possible. She has been collecting yellow kitchen equipment at yard sales, antique malls, etcetera, so that when she can finally move into a house or an apartment on her own, no matter how much of a dump she may live in, she will have a cheerful kitchen to come home to, filled with sunflower- colored casserole dishes and sunny- golden measuring cups. She contemplates her yellow kitchen as she wonders if the baby inside her will postpone the move out of her parents’ house or quicken it.

November 12 (23,400 words)

“The Adult Switch,” which the heroine comes up with early on in the novel, is a fairly obvious symbolic item in my work. She contemplates why adults stop being “fun,” that maybe a bug in their heads flips a switch and it happens automatically. She also wonders and plans on how she can either prevent or postpone the flipping of said “switch.”

November 13 (23,708 words)

I forgot to mention that when I first started writing this novel I had my heroine refer to love as a sun shower, and I think *My Sun Shower* is a great alternate title to this work. She claims that love is “like a sun shower because it’s so insanely unexpected and so utterly beautiful that you can’t even believe it’s real, but to your absolute amazement, it is. (A sun shower is when it is sunny outside but it is drizzling rain at the same time, and it almost looks like pure glitter is falling from the sky.)”

November 14 (24,566 words)

One thing that the main character struggles with throughout my novel is her unplanned pregnancy. It is still early, only three weeks in, and she is trying to make a decision on what to do—this is one of the instances where she obsesses over symbolism, as she attempts to have the symbolism make a decision for her when she ruminates over the letters in the words “adoption” and “abortion.”

November 15 (25,789 words)

Every time she thinks about her pregnancy, she goes on about how she is super tired and needs a bubble bath, her comfort that she cannot get to because she loses herself in some train of thought. I am planning on ending the work with her *finally* soaking in the tub to relax her body and mind, but I haven’t decided whether or not I am going to have her make a decision about the pregnancy yet, or what decision she will make—this is my struggle as a writer, because I am growing to love and feel connected to this character.

November 16 (26,244 words)

One thing that I incorporated into this novel which is kind of unique is adding in excerpts of the main character’s own writing into the mix. This not only breaks up the monotony of the pure stream- of- consciousness style but her writing samples also provide landmarks for representation of the different stages in her life and how she dealt with them. The short stories represent the attention span of a young girl, the poetry represents the dedication and anguish of a maturing high schooler, and the non- fiction represents the expansion in knowledge of a college student. When she reflects upon her own writing, she discovers some re-occuring themes including her a daughter’s relationship with her father as well as the reappearing symbol of a guardian angel.

November 17 (26,453 words)

It was a lot of fun making up some poetry and stories that are supposedly the heroine’s own, personal work to add into the novel. It was like several mini projects in this one novel—it was great and turned out really well. It may seem like a stretch, but I think the main character’s own writing helps the reader get more of a glimpse into the narrator’s past as well as get a taste of her own writing style, making her a more dynamic character. (Note: The last piece of her writing I included, the one about “flow,” is an actual assignment that I fulfilled for my positive psychology class this summer—I felt the need to use it because of the excellent, relevant point that it makes.)

November 18 (28,765 words)

The narrator’s writing also provides more symbolism that I infused into the work, as each of the different pieces of writing and different styles represent a different time in her life when she was in different sorts of situations and dealing with a different set of problems.

November 19 (30,009 words)

One strand that connects the writing of the narrator is that in each of her pieces the main character has some sort of dark, hidden past or a deep, sketchy secret. This represents the narrators own secret, her pregnancy, as well as the other, familial problems she is facing in her life as she reflects back on her past as a writer and as a maturing young woman.

November 20 (32,078 words)

It was much more difficult to finish all of the main character’s personal writing than I thought, because I had to come up with a bunch of additional plots and ideas. But I think that it was a necessary part in order to cut through the stream- of- consciousness for a while, for me as a writer as well as for the readers. The symbolism brought by the stories and poems are an incredibly important aspect as well, of course.

November 21 (34,560 words)

It’s getting more and more difficult to come up with more words, and I have less than 10 days to finish this project. It’s hard writing in every single inch of my free time that isn’t taken up by studying, but I am sure the end result will be worth it—I am not even done with my novel yet I am already proud of what I accomplished so far. Let’s just hope I hit that 50,000 word mark by November 30th at midnight.

November 22 (40,332 words)

I think I can I think I can I think I can! 🡨 that’s what I keep telling myself and it is working so far!

November 23 (42,921 words)

I hope I don’t hit a last minute writer’s block or anything, knock on wood!

November 24 (42,921 words)

Food coma. No writing can be done today. Happy Thanksgiving!

November 25 (43,755 words)

Seriously it’s so close now I can feel it—once Thanksgiving is over you can feel in the air that December is just around the corner. While I am still recuperating from yesterday’s food coma and this morning’s early shopping spree, I am also still plugging along and advancing my word count.

November 26 (44,532 words)

The last stretch seriously seems like the longest!

November 27 (44,667 words)

I’ve decided to have her not make a decision about her pregnancy at the end. I realize it is a loose end, but I want the readers, myself included, to be able to make their own assumptions. Sometimes I feel like the end of novels can ruin the entire work, and if I have her make the wrong decision I could lose a lot of my readers’ respect. I may be doing that with my final decision, too—it is risky, but I think it will work. I will send her to take a bubble bath to clear her head (as I had planned before), and it will end there. I am choosing to do it in this way because the entire novel does not span a huge amount of time, it is just her thoughts about what is happening in the past and what may happen in the future, so I wanted to leave the present at her disposal and let her relax for once without dealing with all her crazy problems. I realize it’s crazy to see a character I made up as a real person, but I have been with her for almost a whole month and almost 50,000 words, so it is hard for me not to connect with her on a deeper level.

November 28 (45,232 words)

Still pluggin’ away.

November 29 (45,334 words)

I’m struggling with exams and whatnot to find time for much writing.

November 30 (45,921 words)

As I get through this last day, running out of time, I wonder why the NaNoWriMo people didn’t pick a 31- day month to stage this contest, so I could have more time. But I am sure even with that extra day, more time would still be needed. Ultimately, I am incredibly happy with my work, not only because I infused structure into a stream-of-consciousness work using various methods of symbolism (the bubble bath, the hair barrettes, the “adult switch,” the yellow kitchen, of course, and others), but also because I incorporated the narrator’s own writing, as well as pictures and hyperlinks linking to web pages and videos as an unexpected twist to my novel, making my final work a multi- modal masterpiece (okay, maybe it isn’t a *masterpiece*, but I just could resist the alliteration there. You can take the girl out of the novel but you can’t take the novel out of the girl!). I didn’t make it to exactly 50,000, but I got pretty close, all the while juggling school work and extra- curriculars, and that alone is something to be proud of. I’d like to make some changes to the work, but that is a project for another day.