

EXPLORING MY IDEAS

**Ten Short Stories Followed by the Author's Shared Ideas
with a Simple and Practical Guide
How to Explore and Compose Ideas into Short Stories**

FIDA ABBOTT

**Foreword by Lut Nero, Ph.D.
Dean Emeritus of Cheyney University, PA**

Praise for Fida Abbott and *Exploring My Ideas*

“Exploring My Ideas is a gem. This book comprises evocative short stories that were crafted from the writer's personal experiences and observations. The book also gives readers easy steps to build a story from their point of view, as well as publishing tips.”

— **Avy Loftus**, Director and founder, *Peace, Love and Hope* project, Montreal, Canada

“Fida Abbott's books are always inspiring and enlightening, including this one. As an author myself, I found *Exploring My Ideas* very helpful in helping me finding writing ideas and how to make them work. Whether you're a new or a seasoned writer, you'll find Fida's experiences super useful for your writing. I highly recommend this book to all writers and those who write as a hobby or a necessity.”

— **Jennifer Xue**, Author, Columnist and Entrepreneur based in the Pacific Northwest
She can be found at JenniferXue.com

“Written by an author who is herself, an immigrant to America, *Exploring My Ideas* provides a perspective that is enlightening and inspiring and occasionally challenging to our perspective as we travel along the path toward understanding what makes us all tick in the way we do. Her personal story of inspiration and enjoyment of writing will give her readers a new look on life and a way to understand and enjoy our own path toward getting our ideas out into the world.”

— From the foreword by **Lut R. Nero, Ph.D.**, Dean Emeritus of Cheyney University,
PA Former Director of Coatesville Area Public Library, PA

The short stories in this book are the work of fiction. Names, characters, dialogues, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or used fictionally. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

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This book is dedicated to all my readers who love reading
and/or writing short stories; and my late stepson, William, who doesn't have a chance to
read the short stories in this book.

Two short stories in this book are dedicated to my late father Imam Sujono, my late
mother Hartini Eineke Laurens, my late brother Agus Prihandoko, and my late
grandmother Martha Sumani, who are already together in heaven.

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Foreword

Allow me to tell you about a book that came about at the right time in the right place with the right stuff.

What is so special about *Exploring My Ideas* and the author, Fida Abbott? In a world where immigration and migration seem to be the order of the day, where people view each other as different and alien; this book helps us to begin to see some sameness among us. *Exploring My Ideas* opens a window into the common ground we all walk together and offers a path allowing us to communicate our inner thoughts with our neighbors and fellow human beings.

Written by an author who is herself, an immigrant to America, *Exploring My Ideas* provides a perspective that is enlightening and inspiring and occasionally challenging to our perspective as we travel along the path toward understanding what makes us all tick in the way we do.

Abbott uses her talent to teach us about publishing short stories while adding our own story about how we got to the point of being published. The short stories and author commentaries from a multicultural population is a somewhat unique approach to this type of project that only adds insight to the efforts of readers who will benefit from the lessons learned.

We first encountered Fida during our community spoken word program where her contribution to the discussion served as a wakeup call that added a fresh dimension to our community conversation. Her personal story of inspiration and enjoyment of writing will give her readers a new look on life and a way to understand and enjoy our own path toward getting our ideas out into the world.

The time and energy readers invest in reading her book, will provide a healthy return on investment. Read, learn and enjoy *Exploring My Ideas*.

Lut R. Nero, Ph.D.
Dean Emeritus of Cheyney University, PA
Former Director of Coatesville Area Public Library, PA

PREFACE

I might not have time to work if I have to pour all of my ideas into writing. As a housewife I work several jobs and have several online activities which include volunteering in the biggest online Indonesian news source based on the citizen reporter, leading an online Indonesian writing course, and contributing as an online certified instructor of Indonesian language for the United States Airforce. My house chores are not neglected, from cooking, washing dishes, cleaning the house, shopping, and doing laundry. It shows that there is almost no time left to write.

On the other hand, the ideas that grew over time affected my heart, which caused my mind to be unable to hold it anymore. It was like a glass of water with about one millimeter before spilling over the top, so I tried to wisely manage my time to be able to write. I took time writing on the sidelines of a break or lunch hour at work, or while waiting for my daughter who was attending a scouting activity, or when I was absent from work because of a National holiday or when a snowstorm hit. My Android tablet became the ideal device to write on when I wasn't at home.

Gradually I crafted a story. From one story to another story from what I saw, experienced, heard, smelt, and felt. My heart and mind became quieter because the ideas had been channeled through writing step by step. My hope is only one: may the short stories in this book become a blessing and inspiration for the readers as well as to provide them—the beginner writers or whoever enjoys writing—with an idea or a new view to show them that the idea of writing a story can be sourced from anywhere.

As English is my second language, I gladly look forward to the impressions and suggestions from readers. What you need to do is very simple: please, send them to the contact box at www.abbottsbooks.com or you can meet me on *Facebook*. Be free to write your review on the Website where you bought this book.

Enjoy.

Fida Abbott
www.abbottsbooks.com

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One day I asked my husband if he had ever read short stories that were similar to the short stories I wrote. He gave a positive response with a little joke. He said he would read my short stories and kiss me for each one he had ever read before. Then I stated he should not kiss me if its opposite. We had a good laugh together.

After he read a few short stories I wrote, he paused and nodded. He agreed he had not read the previous similar topics. So, I was the winner. As its sanction, he should not kiss me. But anyway, he kissed me. We laughed again.

Our conversation continued. My husband was curious to know some things about what I had written. He asked me, "Have you been in jail before meeting me?"; "Are you a sex addict?" Of course, I laughed at those questions. Why? It showed as a reader, he really felt the story came alive. Then I commented to him jokingly, "Come on! Be honest! Say if your wife is good at writing short stories!" As I said it, I could not restrain my laughter. He was the same as me, but he was still able to frown—stifling a laugh. After my laughter subsided, I explained to him what I wrote about the prison atmosphere because I saw it through movies on the television screen. While resources about the sex addict, I found them on the Internet in addition to watching movies that had the same theme. He gleamed in his eyes, signaling that he could not believe what I said—of course, he was kidding. Before he responded, I went on to explain that all were because of skills of describing something in words or sentences. Knowing that my explanation was correct, he did not want to lose. He responded with a serious face, "Oh, yes! You were in jail before meeting me, and a sex addict." As I didn't want to lose either, I replied him with a serious joke by saying, "Once again you say that, I would tickle you!" We both finally laughed together.

From the story above, we can conclude that it is true if the ideas of writing can be sourced from anywhere, either from the Internet, movies, books, magazines, songs, photos/images, journals, television shows and commercial, or even from our experiences or other person's experiences. Just what we need then, how clever we are in communicating through narrative forms, description, and dialogue, which of course, all require those skills. It shows that in the story above, my husband believes that our own experiences are the most powerful story idea to write down. Because it comes from our own experience, the writing process becomes much easier. That's why he insisted the ideas of my short stories he had read were from my own experiences although he was making a joke in the whole conversation and I could understand it.

Speaking about the idea of writing, one of the online writing course participants that I led asked a question on Yahoo Group: *How to explore the idea of writing?* This question arose when he got the assignment to write a flash story as a warm-up before writing a short story. He did not know about it. I understood because the topic about how to explore the idea of writing would be given in the following week.

While waiting for a response from a mentor who guided him, as a moderator I responded to his question. I wrote that the right tip for those who were just learning to write was to take their own life experiences and write it into a story. I recommended him choosing one of the interesting stories of what he has experienced. His mentor also justified my answer. He followed our instructions and stated it was easier to write. Thus, his story was quite interesting and unique. Why was it interesting and unique? The answer is because he dug his idea from his own experience. It means nobody has the same exact experiences as his. Because of his own experiences, he became familiar. It made him easier to express his thought into writing.

The experience itself can be sourced from our five senses: from what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. When our character in the story is sad, we can describe it by showing how his face looks. When it's silent, we can describe it by showing what our character hears. For example, only the sound of crickets is heard. When our character is hungry, we can describe how

his stomach feels. When enjoying a delicious meal, we can describe how the foods taste. When our character finds a rat rod, we can describe how the stench made our character almost faint, and so forth.

Hence the sources of the idea are widely available and each day we may be able to get it, especially when having memorable or interesting experiences. Because of those I often get a lot of ideas to compose a story. Then I came up with an idea to share with the readers of how I incorporate these ideas into the topic of an interesting story. There are ten short stories that I put together and accompanied by a background explanation of how I got the idea to write those short stories. Besides the reader can enjoy short stories that are full of color of relationship, horror, family, mental health, crime, and so on, they will be inspired to pour a variety of ideas into writing a short story. Not only that, at the end of this book, I also include several chapters containing guidance for beginners or new aspiring writers who want to practice writing a short story.

Chapter 2

Short Stories

A Dream

I was still staring at her close-up portrait in the six by eight frame beside the five self-published books she had authored. They were displayed on the corner table—not far from her casket where her thin body was laid. Her face was very pale. I could not recognize her beautiful face under thick makeup.

I was ashamed because I hadn't read any of her five books since I met her two years ago. She was Debby—her nickname. We became friends since I was a member of Agape Episcopal church in Philadelphia after I moved to that city three years ago. She was also my coworker. I got a job as an administrative assistant in the company where she worked as an assistant of human resources.

At the front of her displayed books, my right hand reached out to one of them. Its title intrigued me, and I was interested to look at it. *Damn! Why do I want to look at it at this time? Why not a year ago when she handed me an invitation card for her book launch at the public library?* I thought.

Let Me Finish, was the last novel she wrote. It had been self-published a month before the doctor diagnosed her having ovarian cancer. She only survived eight months. The cancer was stage three already. She once told me she missed for pap smear two times that her doctor

recommended her to take every several years. She was aware of the pain in her tummy. After several tests, the doctor confirmed she had ovarian cancer.

I flipped to the back of the book, so I could see the back cover and read the summary. In a half minute, I was quite interested to read it. The book was about the efforts of a young girl who was pursuing her study in college while taking care of her sick mom and her twelve-year-old little sister. Her mom was a single parent since her dad passed away from a car accident, two years before the doctor confirmed her mom had lung cancer. Sounded interesting, I decided to take the book with me after donating. I took my light brown wallet from my dark brown handbag.

“Thank God I bring cash with me,” I said to myself. Because I only had twenty-eight dollars, I decided to use twenty-five dollars and inserted them in the box marked Donation for the Books to honor her artwork in writing.

“What are you doing?” Jenny’s voice woke me up from the deep thought of my dear friend Debby.

I turned my head toward her. At the same time her head moved forward closer to me, then I showed her the front cover of that book.

“I’m going to read this book. Have you read it already?” I whispered.

“No. Let me see it!” She whispered, too.

I handed that book to her. In a flash, she looked the back cover right away and then the front cover.

“It’s her latest book,” I said—still whispering—with the purpose to attract her to read it too.

“So, it’s going to be a donation to have this book?” Her voice showed that she was interested to read that book.

“Yes, any book you want. The donation will go toward her family.”

“How did you know?”

“I asked one of her family members who was standing beside me when I came to this table.”

She nodded and glanced for several moments at other four displayed books. One by one she read the books' summaries on the back covers. "I haven't read any of them, Tina." She squeezed her lip.

"How long have you worked there and known Debby?" My eyebrow lifted when asking that question.

"Hmm . . ." she was thinking in a second, "I was new like you, around six months before you. I didn't know much about her. I knew she wrote her last book."

"Did you get her invitation at that time when she launched her book?"

"Yes, but I could not come. I had a visit from a friend and her family from Washington DC. I was planning to buy it from her, but then . . . she took medical leave for her treatment, till she passed away."

We both were in silence for a second, sunk in our own deep thought.

Then I reminded her, "It was available on Amazon."

"I heard too, but I hadn't checked it out. I felt bad."

"Are you going to get it now?"

"I'm going to get two books. This and this." She showed me two books. One was the same book I chose, and another book entitled The Sunshine, a romance novel. "But I didn't bring enough cash, so I'm going to write a check instead." Then she opened her purse and took out her checkbook.

I glanced at her, curious to know how much she was going to donate. She wrote two zeros after number one and before decimals. "You're a generous person," I whispered again.

She smiled but wasn't fully happy. Her eyes showed how sad she was. "I wanted to share little bit blessing. Maybe it will help to pay her medical bills." Then she dropped her check in the donation box. "Let's go back to the office, Tina," she said, "I hope she is happy to see us read her books."

"We are going to miss her," I said while followed her to leave the funeral home.

“That’s why I want to read her books.”

She walked toward Debby’s husband who was wearing a black suit and black tie, standing with other family members who also wore black. We both stopped to shake him and others. His face looked tired and both eyes were a little bit swollen.

“We both were Debby’s friends at work. We are very sorry for your loss,” Jenny showed our condolences.

“Thank you and I appreciate your willingness to read her books,” he said with a low voice but firm.

“We love to,” I said.

“Before she passed away, she had a wish that her family and friends who read her books would write a short review at any online store where her books were available to purchase,” he said.

“I would,” Jenny and I said almost at the same time.

“I appreciate that,” he responded with a slight smile.

“Mr. Martin, I’m sorry we have to leave now to go back to work,” Jenny said.

“Sure. Thank you for coming,” he responded.

“You’re welcome,” Jenny replied.

We both walked toward the door. When I was just about to close it, Jenny reminded me, “Tina, we only have fifteen minutes to go back to the office. Come on! Let’s go!”

Right away I looked at my wristwatch. It showed it was twenty minutes before one. “It’s twenty minutes before one! Not fifteen!” I said it aloud.

“Whatever Tina! Run! Get in the car!”

I was going to follow what Jenny did—run to the parking lot and got in the car. But when my right foot was about to take the first step, I slipped. Because it happened so fast, I could not balance my body, and then, bump! I fell down.

I could feel my cheek hit the ground. It was painful, but it was strange. The ground felt fluffy, and the whole of my body was upside down with my right hand under my chest, while my left hand was holding something. Slowly, I opened my eyes. In several seconds I didn't know where I was. Feeling confused, I closed my eyes again and calmed myself down, trying to remember what happened.

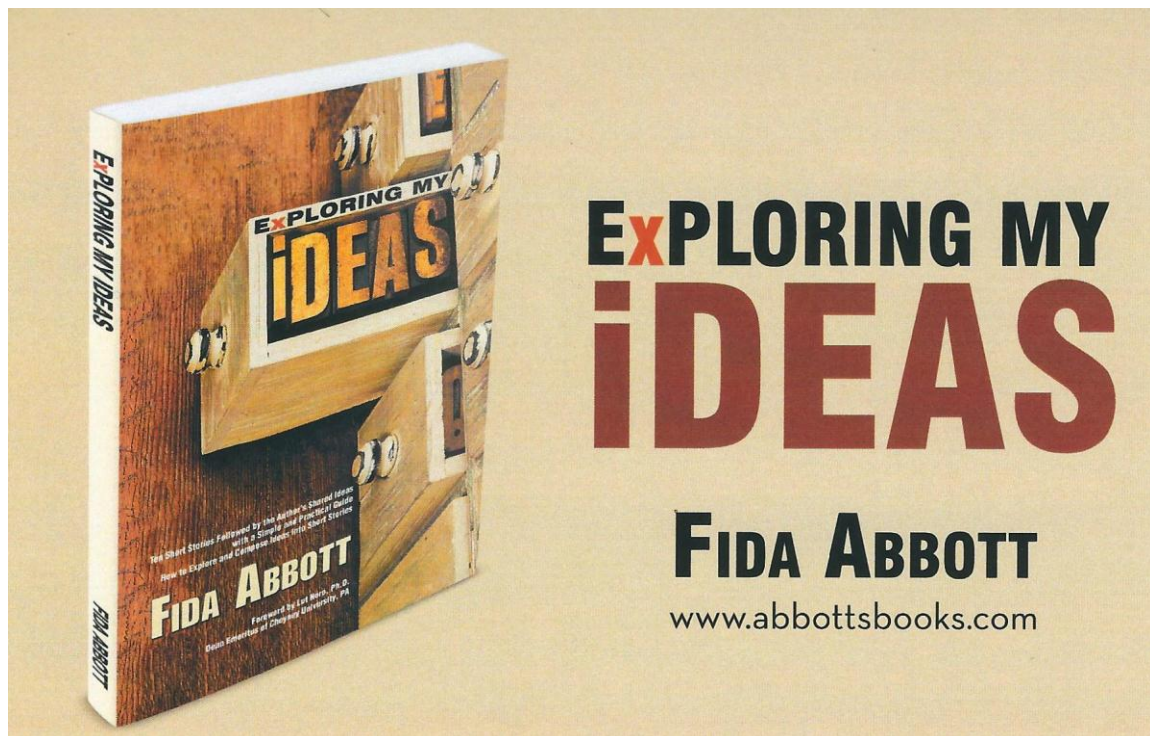
Gosh! Then I remembered. Again, slowly I opened my eyes, lifted my head and pulled my body up and my right hand out from under my body. I saw it was a book on my left hand. After pulling my left hand slowly and taking a sitting position on the light brown-fluffy carpet, I leaned my back on the edge of the bed. I looked around and realized, I had a dream. I flipped the book and read its title. *Let Me Finish* and her name Debora Martin crafted beautifully under its title. I wiped my face with both of my hands. Oh, God! I could not believe that I had a dream of my late friend, Debby, who had just got buried a day before. I then remembered last night I read her book on my bed and fell asleep, had a dream and fell down. With both hands still covering my entire face, I prayed in my mind, *God, let Debby rest in peace and be happy knowing there are many people read her books, including me.*

The story behind the short story above:

As an author, I always wonder who reads my books. Readers are very important to every author. If there is no reader, why would we work so hard to write books? So, I challenged myself in the story as a person who acts as a reader.

It was not easy to make a strong story, so I made the subject of the story—Debora Martin—so dramatic, that she died of cancer after a few months her latest book was published. By this way,

it would be easier to develop the story. To make the story more interesting, I twisted the story at the end as the main character—Tina—had a dream of the subject in the story—Debby—who passed away and was buried a day before the dream. (*)



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Thank you for your interest to reading my book. (Fida Abbott)