



Novel fever takes the world by storm.

Symptoms include flashes of brilliance, questionable plotlines, and blatant use of mixed metaphors.

Berkeley, California (Oct 10, 2011) - At midnight on November 1, armed only with their wits, the vague outline of a story, and a ridiculous deadline, more than 250,000 people around the world will set out to become novelists.

Why? Because November is National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo, the world's largest writing challenge and nonprofit literary crusade. Participants pledge to write 50,000 words in a month, starting from scratch and reaching "The End" by November 30. There are no judges, no prizes, and entries are deleted from the server before anyone even reads them.

So what's the point? "The 50,000-word challenge has a wonderful way of opening up your imagination and unleashing creativity," says NaNoWriMo Founder and Executive Director (and 12-time NaNoWriMo winner) Chris Baty. "When you write for quantity instead of quality, you end up getting both. Also, it's a great excuse for not doing any dishes for a month."

More than 650 regional volunteers in more than 60 countries will hold write-ins, hosting writers in coffee shops, bookstores, and libraries. Write-ins offer a supportive environment and surprisingly effective peer pressure, turning the usually solitary act of writing into a community experience. That sense of community even extends beyond the page—so much so that several dozen marriages and at least six babies have resulted from NaNoWriMo over the years.

In a few years, those babies will surely take part in NaNoWriMo's Young Writers Program, a version of the event geared toward kids and teens. These budding authors also benefit from a community of their peers, as well as the free resources (including lesson plans, workbooks, and a snazzy classroom kit) used by thousands of educators worldwide.

Although the event emphasizes creativity and adventure over creating a literary masterpiece, more than 90 novels begun during NaNoWriMo have since been published, including *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen, and *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern, both #1 *New York Times* Best Sellers.

"Writing a novel in a month inspires incredible confidence in seasoned and first-time novelists alike," says NaNoWriMo Program Director Lindsey Grant. "Completing a draft of the novel they've been contemplating for ages gives participants a tremendous sense of accomplishment and leaves them wondering what else they're capable of."

For more information on National Novel Writing Month, or to speak to NaNoWriMo participants in your area, visit www.nanowrimo.org or contact press@nanowrimo.org.

The Office of Letters and Light is a California-based international non-profit organization. Its programs are the largest literary events in the world. Learn more at www.lettersandlight.org