Mental Models for Writers:

Elevate Your Thinking and Capture Success

with Michael La Ronn

SUPERSTARS
WRITING SEMINARS

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GALAXY MAVERICKS BOOK FIVE
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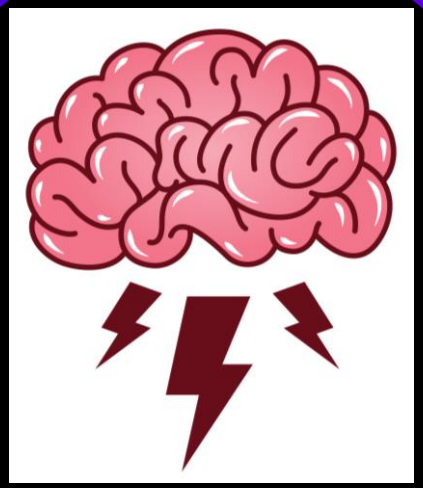
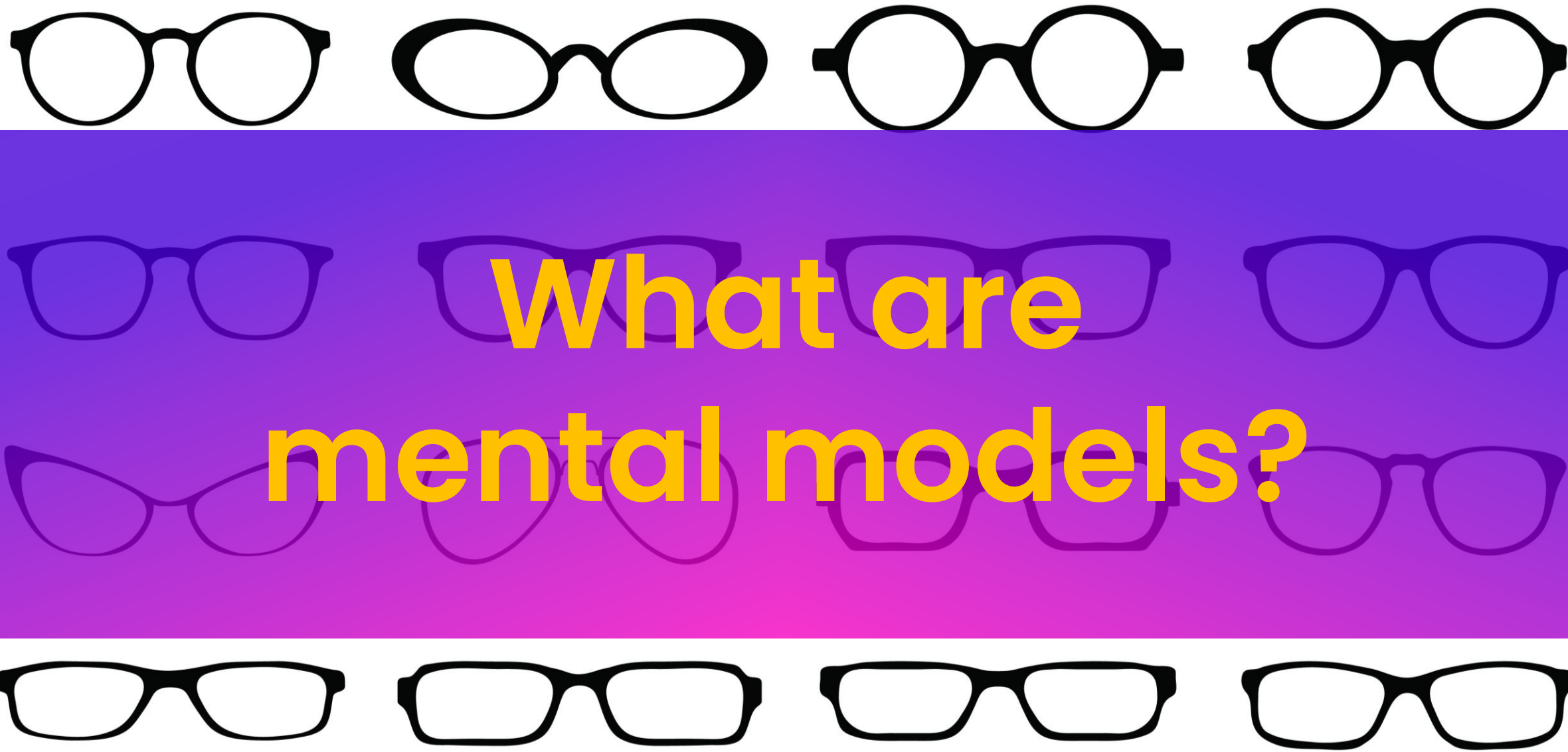
HORIZON DOWN
GALAXY MAVERICKS BOOK NINE
MICHAEL LA RONN
MAGIC SOULS
AN INTERACTIVE URBAN FANTASY
MICHAEL LA RONN
DREAM BORN
THE DREAM MAGE - BOOK 1
MICHAEL LA RONN
NIGHTMARE STALKERS
THE DREAM MAGE - BOOK 2
MICHAEL LA RONN
EVIL WAKING
THE DREAM MAGE - BOOK 3

What you'll learn today



01 What mental models are and why they are important to understand

02 Top 4 mental models you can use every day in the writing life


What are
mental models?

Mental models defined

Technically: A framework that you can apply to a problem to help you solve it.

Practically: A pair of “glasses” that helps you see a problem differently (so that you can solve it).

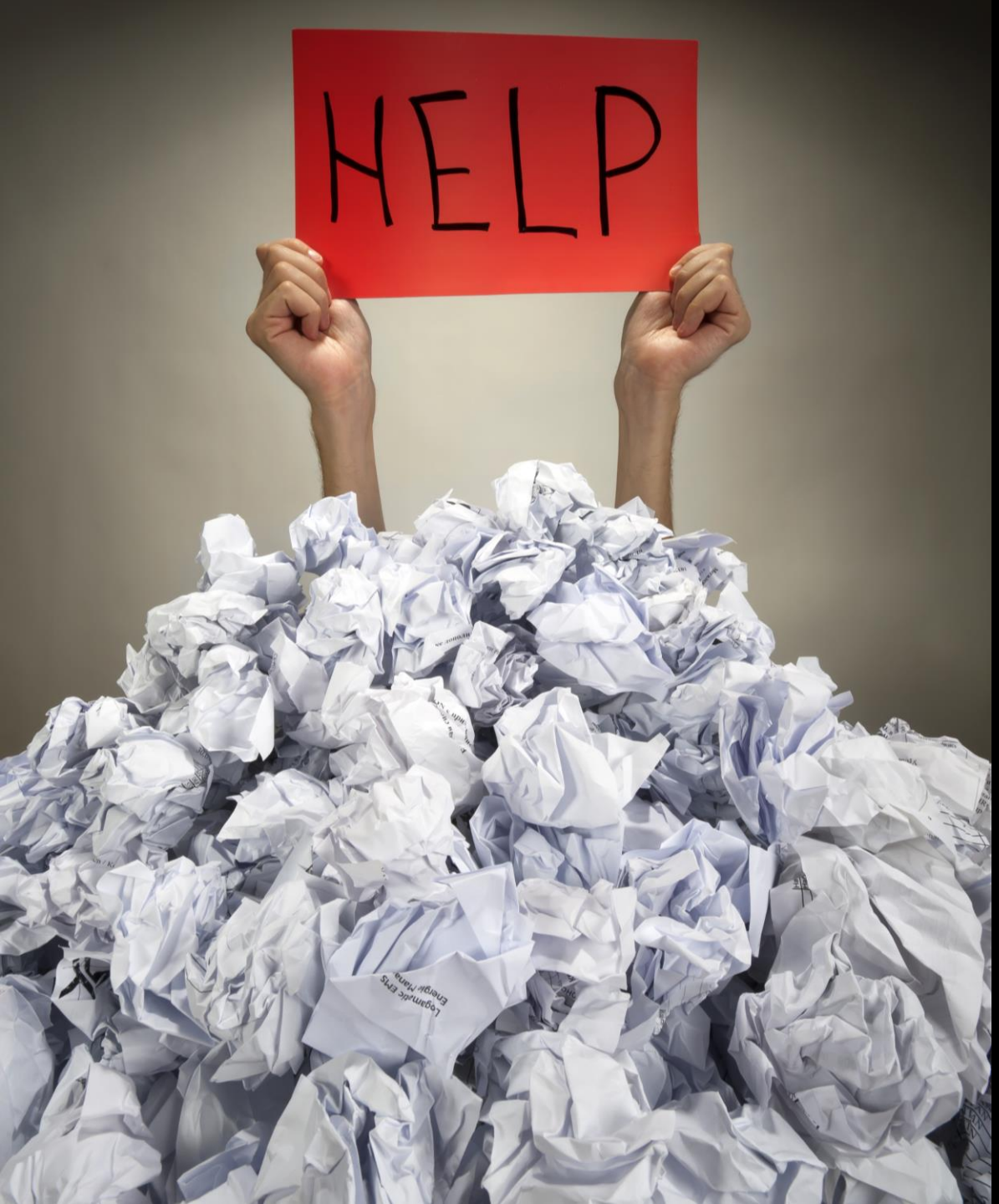
Popularized by businessman and investor Charlie Munger as a way to solve advanced business problems.

Mental models are sharper lenses

Mental models are common best practices taken from other disciplines and applied to whatever problem you're trying to solve.

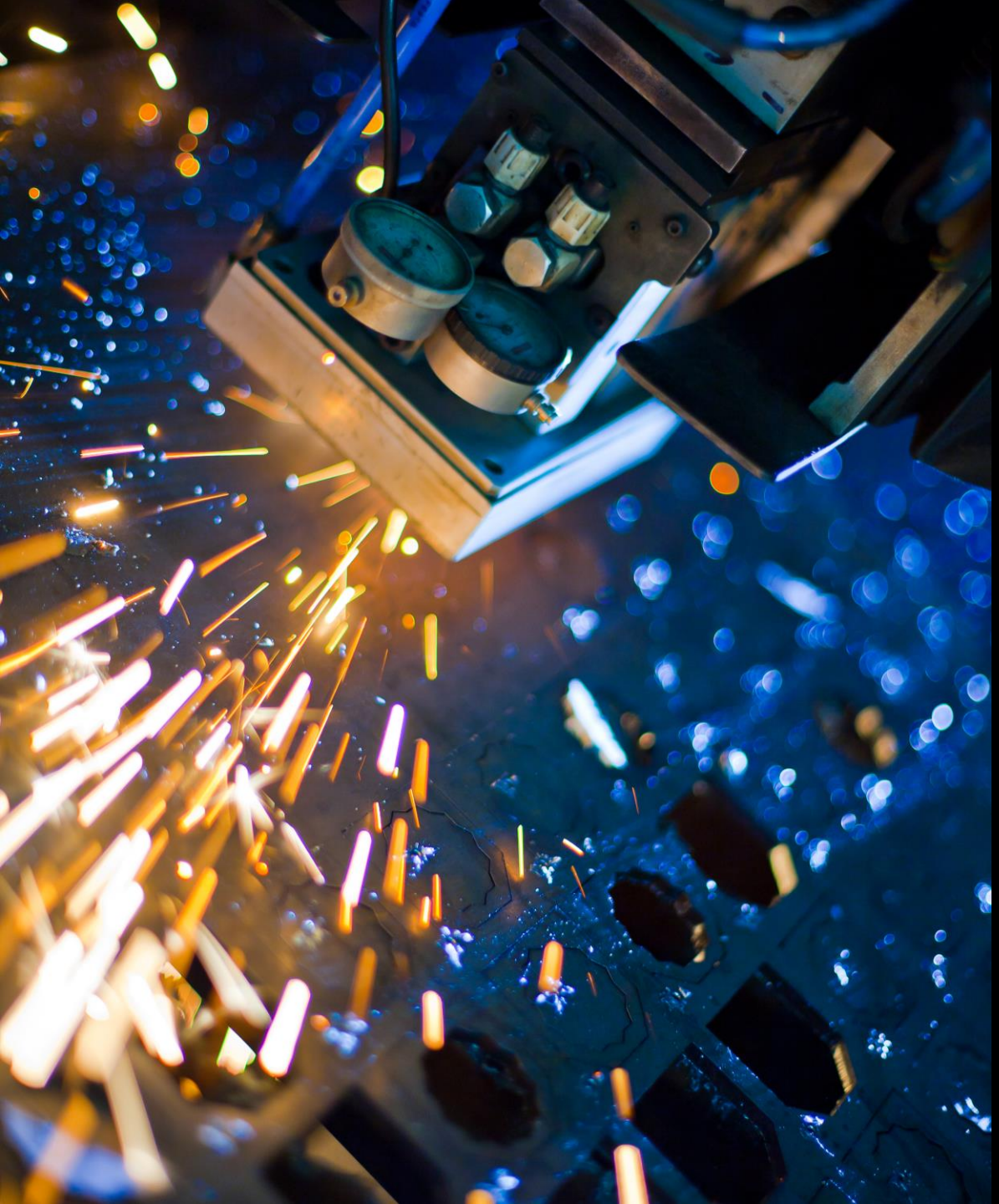
Examples of other disciplines include:

Arts/Entertainment	Business	Manufacturing
Mathematics	Philosophy	Sciences



Example Problem:
The Dreaded “Murky” Middle…

- You’ve outlined your novel, BUT…
- You’re stuck in the middle.
- You’re a “planner” type, so this is stressful.



Example Model:
Just-in-Time Mfg

- In the manufacturing world, this is a style of manufacturing where raw supplies are ordered only at the time the customer needs the finished product.

- This saves the manufacturer time, money, and effort **by only expending resources when they are needed**.

Let’s put on our “manufacturer” glasses to analyze our problem…

Just-in-time mfg becomes: Just-in-time problem solving

Instead of wasting your time planning for something that might not happen, solve the problem just-in-time, when the path becomes clear to you. Sometimes this may be at the last minute!

Consider using this model when you have:

- Complex problems
- Distant deadlines
- No clear paths forward

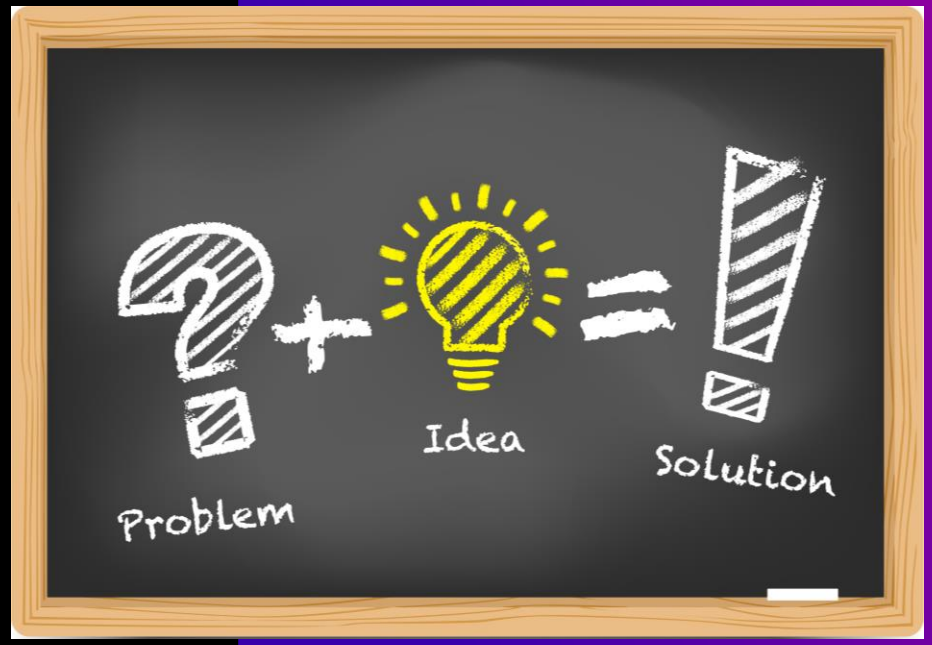
Perfect for "murky" middles!

Solve problems gracefully

- There are many, many mental models out there for you to discover.

- We're going to focus on a few models that will specifically help with **problem solving.**

- These models will help you solve problems at every step of the writing & publishing process.



Practical problem solving models

Model #1: Inversion

- **Inversion** is a mathematics technique that works by solving a problem in reverse or out of sequence.

- This was invented by mathematician Carl Jacobi, who famously said “Invert, always invert.”

How inversion works

Step #1: Define your goal clearly and visualize it in your mind.

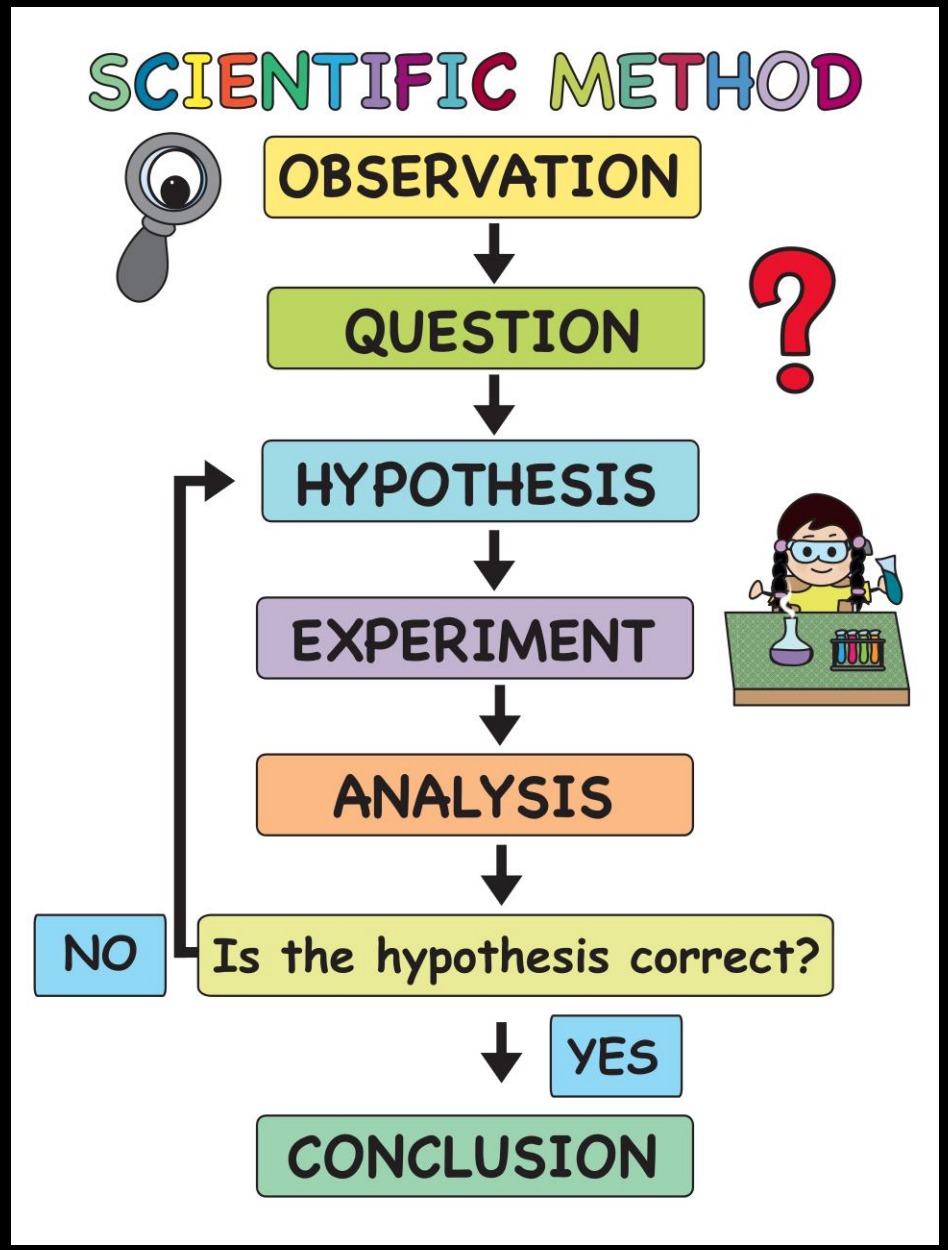
Step #2: Ask: What can I do to NOT achieve the goal?

Step #3: Don’t do the answers from Step #2.

Other uses for inversion

Consider using this model when you have:

- Problems you can easily visualize
- Problems that require attention to detail
- Problems that involve you guiding other people through a process (like book buying)

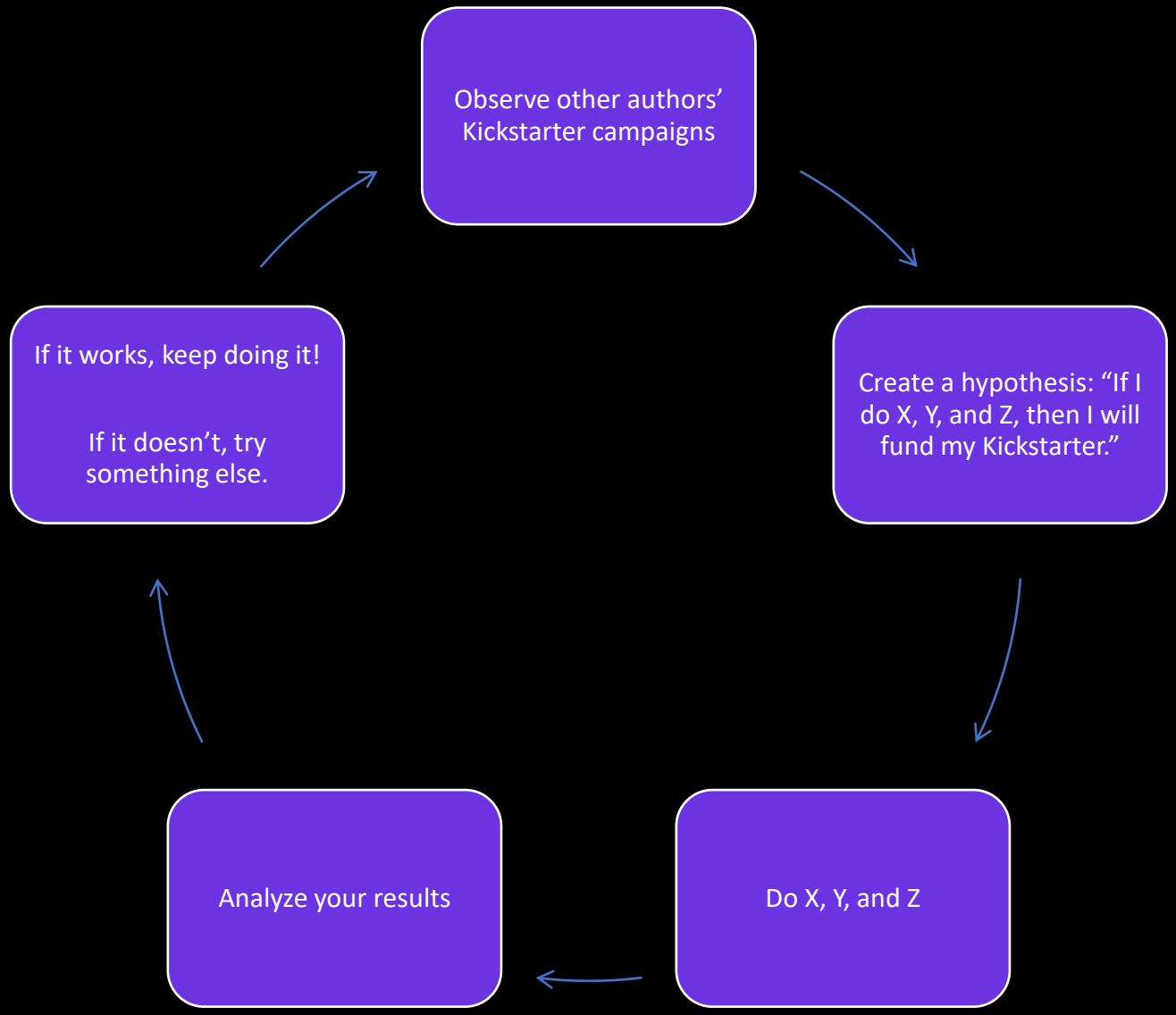


Model #2:

The Scientific Method

- In the scientific method, you must be skeptical.
- Developed by many throughout the ages (Aristotle, Francis Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, etc.)

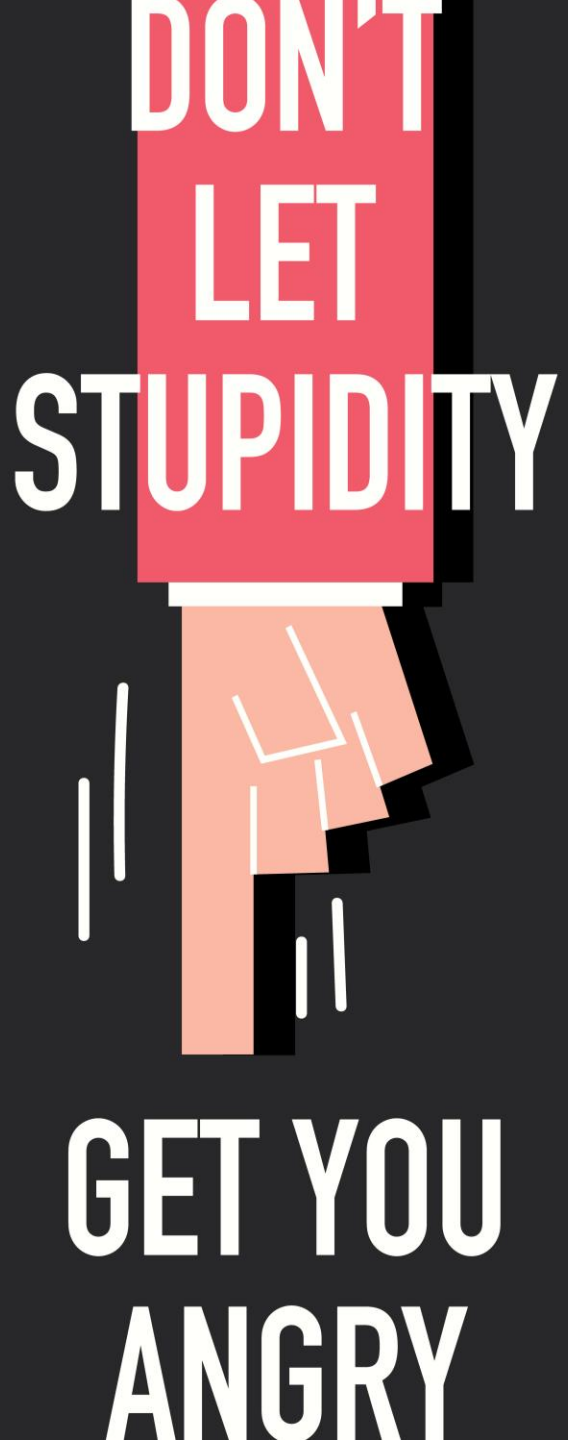
How the scientific method works (Kickstarter example)



Other uses for the scientific method

Consider using this model when you have:

- Problems that require “doing”
- Tasks that can be easily (and quickly) repeated
- Problems where you can easily quantify the results



Model #3:

Hanlon's Razor

- "Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity."
- More general: "Never ascribe to malice what can be explained by other causes (incompetence, ignorance, neglect, etc)."
- This is a useful model to eliminate unlikely explanations of human behavior.

How Hanlon's Razor works

When someone does something that makes you think they're out to get you…

Step #1: Stop and take a breather.

Step #2: Assume that the person had good intentions.

Step #3: Engage with the person from that perspective and play stupid, yourself.

This is **absolutely critical** in building interpersonal relationships, especially in the writing life, which is increasingly collaborative. Much of our communication is in email, over the Internet, and *not* in person.

This does **not** apply to social media. Don't engage trolls.

Other uses for Hanlon's Razor

Consider using this model when you have:

- Problems that involve other people
- Problems where you and the other person(s) aren't on the same page
- Problems that involve **written** communication

Caution: There still could be bad intentions, though…

Model #4:
Play Who Wants to Be a Millionaire!

- This one will help you think outside the box and rely on the power of your network.
- Bring the gameshow into your writing office to help you solve your next problem.

How the Millionaire Model works

When you're dealing with a problem that you can't seem to solve, imagine yourself in a captain's chair with Regis Philbin staring at you under hot lights.

Your options:

Other uses for the Millionaire Model

Consider using this model when you have:

- Problems where you can seek advice from others more experienced than you
- Problems with a big helping of “you don’t know what you don’t know”
- Problems that require creative thinking

Models we discussed

JIT problem solving

Solve problems at the right time

Inversion model

Solve problems backwards

Scientific method

Never assume; test results for yourself

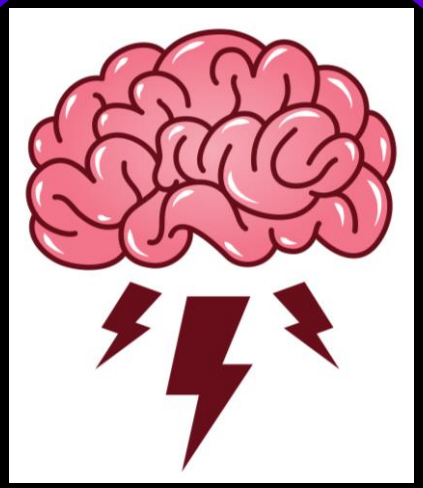
Hanlon's Razor

Always assume good intentions of others

Millionaire model

Use your lifelines to get to the answer

Recap



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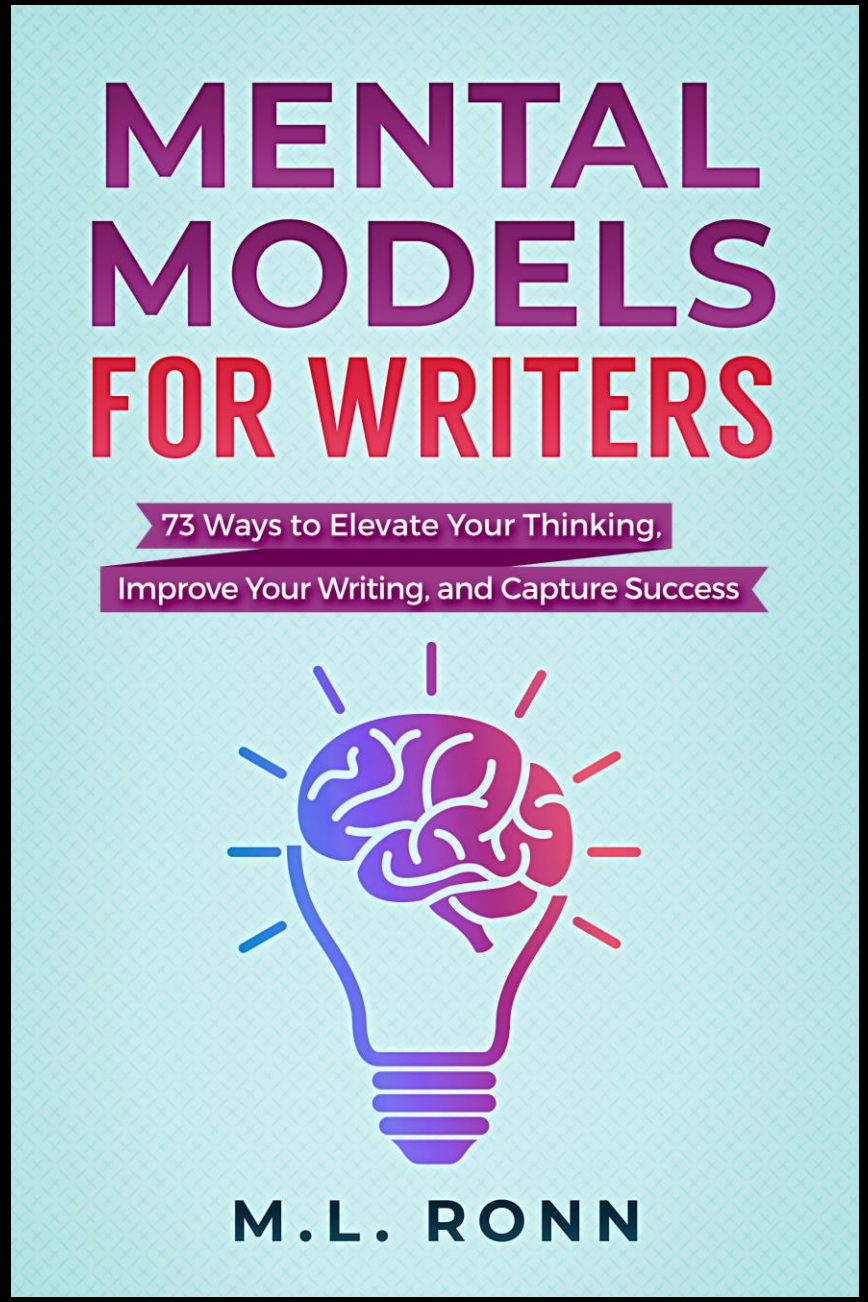

MORE HELP FOR YOU

I wrote a book on mindset that includes 73 ways to rethink about the writing and publishing life.

Get it at www.authorlevelup.com/superstars24.

Thank You

Michael@authorlevelup.com

Slides available at:
www.authorlevelup.com/superstars24

Appendix

Resources to learn more about mental models

Inversion

Interview with Charlie Munger on Inversion (9 min Video)

Inversion Method Explained (9 min Video)

Hanlon's Razor

Hanlon's Razor: A Mental Model to Think Rationally and Making Fewer Enemies (5 min Video)

Books on Thinking and Mental Models

Super Thinking: The Big Book of Mental Models by Gabriel Weinberg and Lauren McCann

Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman