

Triple-threat Heather Whitaker is a writer, teacher, and freelance editor living in Tallahassee, Florida who was originally pursuing a PhD in physics at Florida State University.

“I’ve always loved physics – I love understanding how the world works,” Whitaker said.

But she was also interested in writing, a more creative path that had been nagging her since elementary school.

“When I was in graduate school I read books on writing and I didn’t tell anybody, because when you’re a physics student you didn’t tell people you wanted to write for children,” Whitaker said.

In 2005, she decided to leave school, just shy of obtaining her PhD.

“I don’t regret leaving because I’ve gotten to do some other great things,” Whitaker said.

When she opened herself up to new opportunities, everything snowballed. Her secret studies paid off, and good friend Julianna Baggott, author of the popular *Pure* trilogy, recognized Whitaker’s talent for editing.

Whitaker read one of Baggott’s manuscripts and offered feedback. Baggott was quick to acknowledge Whitaker’s skill and encouraged her to begin charging for her services.

Whitaker’s clients appreciated her understanding of the craft of writing. Not only could Whitaker identify problems in a manuscript, pointing out weaknesses in plot or character arcs, she knew how to aid the author in strengthening his/her story.

As both a writer and an editor, Whitaker has a unique perspective on the relationship between these two very different types of composing. Not to mention a sensitivity to what the author is going through.

“What you’re doing is you’re taking their baby and you’re telling them what’s wrong with it,” Whitaker said. “With every single manuscript I take on the angst of the writer. I give them my best feedback, and when that author is able to take my suggestions and it makes them feel better about the story, that’s the greatest reward.”

Whitaker brings a certain depth and careful consideration to her work. She believes in reading a manuscript once, so as to have fresh eyes.

“With every sentence I read, I’m looking at it on the word, line, paragraph, scene, and story level,” Whitaker said.

Her clients’ interest in her skills led to requests for writing workshops.

The former physics student still didn’t feel quite right about giving writing advice, when she herself had no qualifications or college degree to boast of. But she cast these doubts aside and offered her first workshops during summer 2012.

The workshops were well-received and Whitaker invited her students to become members of critique groups, in which she could teach on various aspects of storytelling and they could share their work and receive feedback.