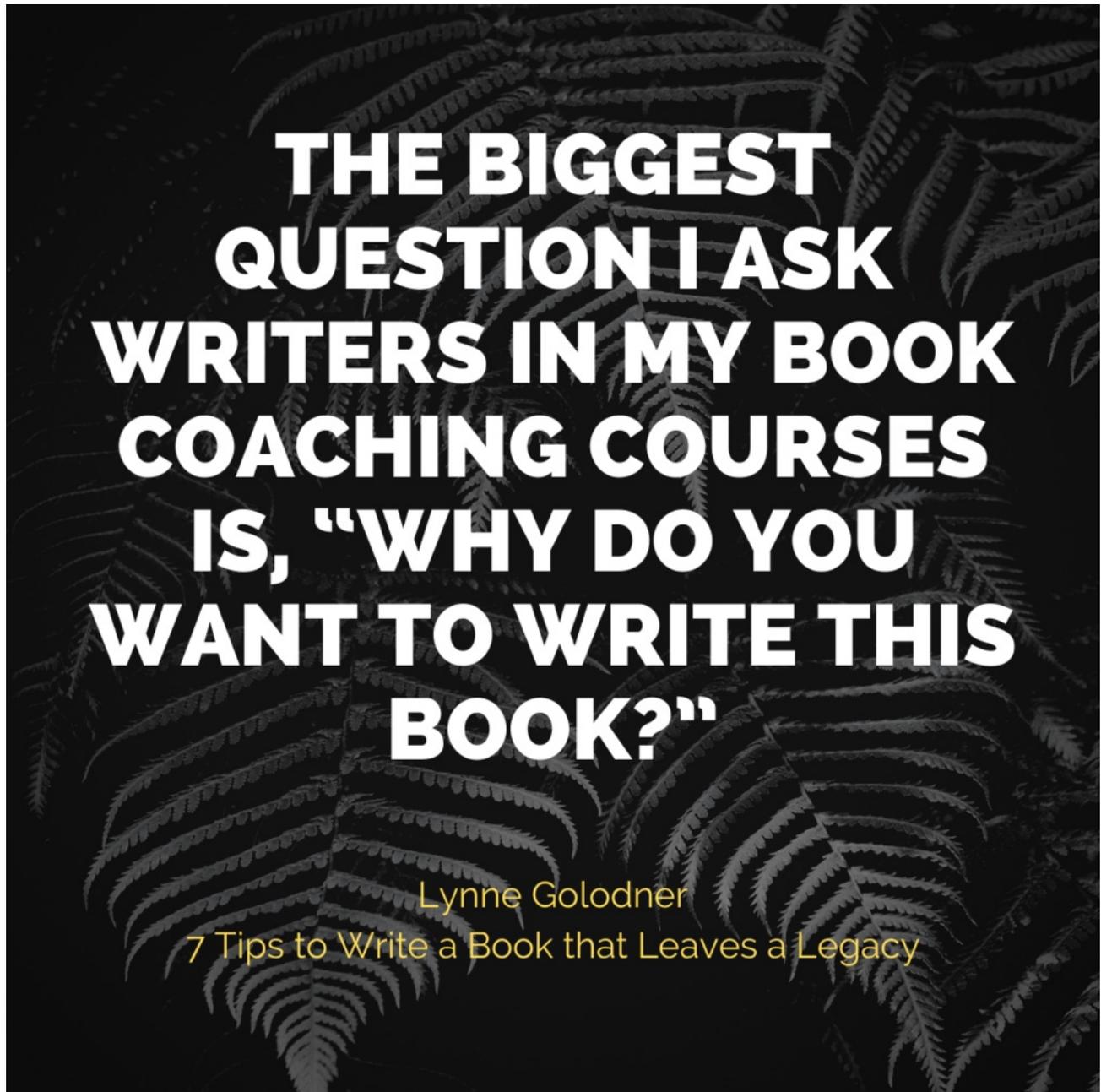


earth.



A distant cousin of mine who lived in New York and was more a part of my mother's generation than mine, traced his family back several generations and wrote a huge book about what he discovered. Reading it taught me lessons about my own heritage and ancestry from a new angle – stories of beloved relatives that I'd never heard or considered. And, it introduced me to characters in my own life story that I'd never met.

All of this taught me things about myself as much about the people who came before me.

The biggest question I ask writers in my book coaching courses is, "Why do you want to write this book?"

That question is followed by “Why now?” and “Who is your audience?”

Discovering answers to these questions is the first step toward writing a book that leaves a legacy.

Once you know who you’re writing to, and why, do some free-writing to help focus your storytelling. Set a timer for 10 minutes and see what comes up in answer to these questions:

1. What life lessons would you like to share?
2. What are your top 2 or 3 experiences that changed you?
3. What do you hope people will remember about you?
4. What do you think is your life’s mission?
5. Do you have a sense of personal purpose or meaning? If so, what is it?
6. What are your favorite memories?
7. What are your worst memories?

After this exploration, you’ll have a lot of fodder for writing! In fact, you may have more than enough for one book, and that’s OK. Because you’ve recorded these ideas on paper, you can start with one and dig in, and then focus another book on the next topic. Who knows – you may have several books or a series in you, just waiting to come out!

Once you get started, focus your time and structure your writing. I like to create an outline of chapters to guide my progress. Then, I set a daily time and place for my writing.

I also set weekly goals – like, this week I’ll write chapter 1. Or, I need to get through the first 10 pages by Sunday. Structuring your book project into manageable chunks makes it easier to complete.

I never edit while I’m writing a first draft. That’s for after the whole manuscript is done. Sometimes, especially when I’m writing about a period of time in my life, I may need to do research about that time or place in history. I just write a note in all caps where I’ll need to add some factual details and keep writing.

Finally, to leave a legacy with your book, it’s important to be honest, get vulnerable, and focus more on your journey than on what you want to tell others. By writing descriptively about your experiences, with details, dialogue, and compelling characters, your readers will glean the lessons you want to convey from the narrative. Tell the story more than the lessons – the legacy will come out more powerfully if you do!

Lynne Golodner is the author of 8 books, with her ninth due out in February 2021. A former journalist, she is the host of the Make Meaning Podcast (www.makemeaning.org), a book coach, and a marketing/PR professional (www.yourppl.com). Lynne lives in Huntington Woods, Mich., with her husband and four teenagers.

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