

How to Use PLR the RIGHT Way

by Marg McAlister

I thought twice about even writing this article, because I know there are going to be lots of authors who are going to start steaming at the very thought of anyone using PLR (Private Label Rights) material as a basis for a published book. If you are one of them then let me tell you, I can understand your feelings. When you've slaved away for years learning your craft, then the idea of anyone 'buying a plot' can make you want to throw something.

But before you do, let me explain why I think that some writers will definitely benefit by using PLR as a springboard - and not just those who want to make money by doing as little work as possible. In fact, as you'll see when you read on, using PLR as a brainstorming-cum-learning tool means you will be doing quite a lot of work. The good thing is that it makes the whole process easier - and fun.



What is PLR?

When an author offers Private Label Rights, he or she is selling all or most of the intellectual property rights to their work (which may be an e-book, a story outline, graphics or software). Since the PLR material is offered to many buyers, the price is generally quite low. (If you were to commission a ghostwriter to come up with an outline, you'd pay a lot more. If you had to come up with an idea from scratch yourself, you'd be spending a lot more time.)

Generally, a PLR product can be modified extensively: rewritten, broken up into smaller parts, changed into blog posts, and so on.

if you buy a PLR product you should treat it as a guide or template, and then add/subtract/change details to make it your own.

Can You Use PLR for Kindle Books?

Short answer: you should NEVER buy PLR fiction, slap your own name on it, and upload it. The Kindle Publishing folks frown on this, and so they should. Put yourself in the place of their readers: would *you* like to download a book that sounds fantastic – only to find that you've already bought the very same story under a different title and author name?

You'd probably be hopping mad. And rightly so.

If you even *think* about using PLR 'as is' for a Kindle book, be prepared to have your account cancelled and watch your chance at a great writing career vanish.

Don't do it.

Let's move on to the 'right' way to use PLR fiction and outlines.

Why Would an Author Buy PLR? Can't an Author Create their Own Work?

I love to write both fiction and non-fiction, and I love creating my own plots. I guess that makes me fortunate, in the eyes of a lot of writers. I know, though, that a lot of people who would love to write a book really struggle with different aspects of plotting and writing a novel.

I've been tutoring and handing out tips to writers for years, and during that time, I've encountered writers who:

1. can create great plots *and* can write vivid, entertaining prose (the 'lucky' ones);
2. have wonderful plots in their heads but have no idea how to translate them to the page, or
3. write really well, but have trouble coming up with ideas

I can assure you that I meet many more writers who fit into Groups 2 and 3 than Group 1. They will sigh and say: "If only someone would give me a plot idea, I could write a great story!" or "I can write interesting scenes and create vivid characters, but I can't get the 'flow' right..."

And you know what? A lot of these writers have found careers as ghostwriters, because then someone else *will* give them a summary of what is needed, or a plot outline – and pay them for their time writing the story. They get to have the fun of writing fiction, without the headache of figuring out a story outline first.

That's where PLR comes in: if you want to try your hand at writing, but need an outline or template to get started, it can provide an excellent model.

More About The PLR Used Here as an Example

In this 'how-to' guide, we're looking at a product that has been created by Charity Cason, an experienced ghostwriter who also writes fiction.

Charity has come up with a set of 10 plot outlines, each of which has a summary written in the form of a short story (so you can see the flow) plus a one-page chapter-by-chapter outline and brief details about the main characters. The product is sold with these rights: *"You have PERSONAL USE rights only. You can use these outlines to create your own stories. You CANNOT sell or share these outlines with another person. You CAN share individual outlines with a ghostwriter you have hired for your OWN stories."*

How These Outlines Can Help You Come Up with Limitless New Plots

Once you take these story outlines apart and can see how they work, you can transfer the same process of analysis to any story you read. What you are looking for is the *theme* behind the story; the basic ideas, and the way characters are developed. You are looking at them under a microscope to see how they fit together, and why they will appeal to the reader.

This product gives you **10 Paranormal story outlines**. (Charity has also released a set of 10 mostly-contemporary romance outlines.) In a moment I'm going to show you how you can take one of those outlines and come up with a story that is unique to you. You will also see how you can use each story as a springboard to come up with *more* ideas.

If you do your work properly, your story will not be the same as anyone else's.

The first story in this collection of 10, *Princess of Gold*, outlines is based on the legend of King Midas. There are several legends associated with King Midas, but one may be summed up by the following: "King Midas was granted one wish. He asked for the capacity to turn everything he touched into gold. Unfortunately, he found this extended to food, drink and even his daughter, who was turned into a gold statue." Although King Midas was able to effect a cure for himself by bathing in the spring of the Pactolus, a river from Lydia, his daughter Zoe remained trapped in her gleaming prison.

The story outline tells us that seven decades have passed, and King Midas has now been dead for twenty years. His daughter remains just a golden statue. Even though she cannot move or speak, she is able to think, hear and watch what is happening around her. For 7 decades, she has been cared for by courtiers, and each year a 'Festival of the Princess' is held, During this time the 'courting period' is declared open, and various princes of the land offer gifts, in the hope that one of them may free the Princess.

This year, as in other years, the princess is disappointed. However, something *is* different. Ion, a young priest of Apollo (who has been entertaining her for a year with his music and dancing) asks permission to try his hand at freeing the Princess by giving her a gift. When he tells them he has been 'instructed to do so by the God Apollo', nobody is willing to risk offending a God.

Ion's gift is one of music, and to everyone's astonishment, his music and dancing finally free Princess Zoe. He then reveals he is not only a priest but the son of Apollo, and claims Zoe as his bride.

What you see above is a very brief summary of the story. In the PLR material, you get:

- a short story (around 2700 words) based on the legend,
- a one-page story outline arranged in chapters, and
- a few lines summarizing the main characters.

(Each of the 10 stories gives you the same: an outline written as a short story, a chapter summary and a few lines about the characters.)

The Benefits of an Outline Presented in the Form of a Story

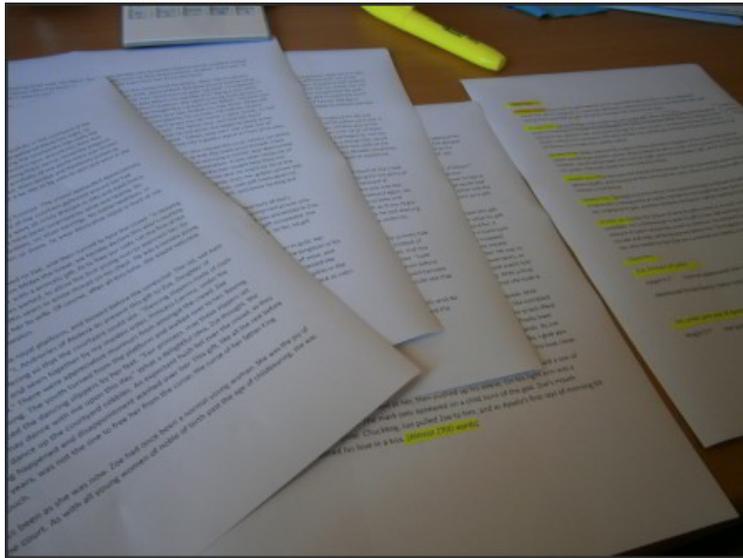
If you have problems getting your story ideas to flow, then you'll find the short-story format very useful. It gives you insights into the feelings of the main characters (emotional depth is vitally important in romance fiction) as well as showing you how one part of the story leads to the next. It also shows you how to ensure that you grab the reader's attention right up front by starting in the middle of the action. (We don't learn that the story is based on the legend of King Midas until we're about 1/4 of the way into the story, when we have had a chance to become involved with Zoe. By then, we are consumed by curiosity, wondering what happened to bring her to this unhappy state.) The legend of King Midas is woven into the events as they unfold, so the story never stops dead to simply re-tell a legend.



Here is the opening paragraph:

Drums pounded and cymbals clanged as the dancers moved gracefully in the courtyard of the great palace of Lydias. All the noble men and women of the nation had gathered there this night, to celebrate the Festival of the Princess. From stolen vantage points along the courtyard's high walls the palace servants looked over the proceedings. Zoe watched as the dancers spun around her, their feet moving in time to the rhythmic beat of the drums. She loved watching them dance, loved the elegance of their bodies and the swiftness of their movements. The most acrobatic of the performers was thrown high into the air by her male counterpart. She spun and tumbled, then landed and flawlessly picked up the rhythm of the dance again. Zoe was delighted. What must it be like to be able to spin and whirl in the air, as free as a bird? Zoe thought it would be heavenly.

When you read through the story, do so with a highlighter and red pen in hand, so you can make notes.



Observe:

- How the story opens
- How we learn about the main character's problems/goals
- What obstacles are in her way
- How she feels about life
- How the other characters in the story feel about her
- How the story is structured so that all seems lost (before Zoe is given hope again)
- How the romance is developed between Ion (the hero) and Zoe, even though Zoe is a statue (we need to feel that they truly are meant for each other)
- How the story is resolved – and how the reader gets a surprise at the end (Ion's true relationship to the God Apollo)
- How tension and suspense is generated throughout
- What new information is given in each paragraph

- How each paragraph moves the story forward

Make notes about anything else that occurs to you. In a moment we'll be looking at ways in which you can change a story to make it unique, but you will probably have some good ideas of your own.

After reading through (and analyzing) the story outline, move on to the chapter-by-chapter outline. Glance back and forth from the short story to the chapter outline to see how it has been broken up. You'll see that the amount of information in each chapter varies.

The chapter outline is simply meant as a guide. You can introduce more chapters, or have fewer. You can introduce new characters, plot twists and sub-plots. Change the basic material as much as you like – in fact, the more changes you make, the better.

I confess that I am analytical by nature (well, I'm a Virgo; what can I say?) so after I had skimmed the chapter outline, I went back through the short story and numbered each of the paragraphs – there were 16 of them – and then made a note about how the content of each paragraph content related to the chapter outline. (You certainly don't have to do this. We all work in different ways, and brainstorm in different ways. Do whatever works for *you*.)

This is how the 16 paragraphs gradually built the story:

Paragraph #1: The main character, Zoe, is introduced. We are given the first hint that she has a big problem.

Paragraph #2: We discover that Zoe has been surrounded by courtiers for years, but there something strange about this household: they never wear any metal.

Paragraphs #3 and #4 : We learn that the courting period is open and the first candidate is about to approach. The Prince of Abdera approaches the Royal platform, and anticipation rises. But disappointment ensues – despite his gift, Zoe is still not freed from her curse. At the end of the paragraph, we discover that her plight has been caused by her father, King Midas, asking to be 'blessed' with the Golden Touch.

Paragraphs #5, #6 and #7: The legend of king Midas and the Golden Touch is retold, with a few embellishments so that it fits into this storyline. We discover that the head priestess of the Delphic Oracle has made a prophecy: "A son of might shall come to her, with gift freely given to shatter golden veil. Upon that day shall Lydias have Prince and Princess both, and know no king but Midas till the maid run free."

Paragraphs #8 and #9: We find out that the prophecy was the catalyst for an annual festival, and each year any unmarried Prince could try his luck to free the Princess. Seven decades has now passed, with a festival every year, but nobody has managed to free Zoe.

Paragraph #10: Zoe watches as each Prince offers his gifts, and begins to lose hope. There is a black moment, as she thinks again about her terrible plight.

Paragraph #11: Her thoughts drift to her sole comfort: the people who visit her and talk to her every day. One of them is Ion, described as the "sunny-haired priest of Apollo". He has been visiting her every day for a year.

Paragraph #12: We discover that Ion treats her kindly. He dances and plays her love songs on his lute. We learn that she loves to watch him dance and to listen to his music: some days, she can "almost feel the gold give way under his music". This is the first glimmer of hope in the story.

Paragraphs #13 and #14: Zoe suddenly realises that even though the last of the Princes has gone, there is something happening to keep the crowd there. It is Ion, asking permission to present his gift to the Princess. He tells everyone that it is a command from the God Apollo. Not wishing to risk Apollo's wrath, they agree to let him present his gift to the Princess.

Paragraph #15: Rather than offering a traditional type of gift, Ion begins to play his music and dance. Zoe, as usual, is entranced. She feels warm glow run through her, and wishes fervently that she could turn her body to watch him dance around her. Without thinking, she does so. Ion holds out a hand and to her surprise, she is able to take it.

Paragraph #16: Zoe the Princess is at last freed from her golden prison. Ion reveals that he is a child born of the god god Apollo. He claims his love with a kiss and Zoe is happy once more.

Continuing the PLR Analysis...

Now that I have analyzed the story and can see its shape, I refer to the chapter outline on the last page again. I go through the story, and mark off the "chunks" that are mentioned in the chapter outline. I can see clearly how the ghostwriter has:

- taken a well-known legend and built a romance around it
- introduced a sympathetic heroine (based on the Princess in the legend)
- introduced a strong and likeable hero
- built the suspense in the story carefully by showing the predicament of the Princess; building up hope; dashing her hopes yet again; introducing the hero who is going to try to break her out of her prison, and then
- created a happy ending.

If you are a writer who has problems either with crafting a plot or getting your story to 'flow', putting in the effort to analyze a piece of PLR like this will be time well-spent.

Naturally, you can use the same method to analyze *any* story you read. This will help you to hone your skills and develop as a writer. (I'm sure I don't need to say: "NEVER steal anybody else's plot or characters" – do I? You should use this technique only to learn more about plotting and story development. Use stories as a springboard for your own ideas – but never, never plagiarize.)

Some Suggestions for "Springboarding" from PLR or Story Outlines

Grow Your Own Characters

You should always change names, but try to go well beyond that. What else can you do to change characters?

- Give your characters different personality traits; introduce a character flaw; change the character's sex and/or age.
- Give your characters individual backstories that make them unique. (A 'backstory' is simply the character's background. Where were they born? What significant life events have they experienced?)

Did they suffer any childhood trauma? Did they have any siblings? What was their place in the family? How did they get on with family members? Etc. etc...)

- Move the characters to a different era; change their backstories and personalities to suit the times.
- If your story is paranormal, do a Google search for a range of paranormal creatures. Find out the accepted lore associated with these creatures or beings (fairies, werewolves, djinn, angels, vampires and many, many more) and then decide how you can play with them to suit your own needs.

Choose Your Own Setting

If your story is based on a legend, as this one is, it may have to take place in a certain place at a certain time in history. However, a great many stories can 'travel' very easily.

- Change countries (and therefore cultures)
- Switch from summer to winter
- Switch from alpine to tropical
- Switch from rich to poor or vice versa
- Choose a shack or a chalet; a castle or a houseboat; a forest or a beach.
- Switch from contemporary to historical; make your story a time-travel; set it in the future; move it to a different planet or different dimension.

Change the Plot Structure / Story Events/ Ending

- Where does the story start? Could you begin it earlier or later? How would this change the story? Would you need to develop a minor character into a lead character?
- Can you introduce different story events? A new subplot? New challenges? A new villain? How will the introduction of these different elements affect the outcome of the story?
- Can you change the ending? How can you add a twist? Can you leave the way open for a sequel?

Use the Outline as a Springboard

- You can, if you wish, simply read through the story and/or the outline and then start brainstorming. Write down any ideas, no matter how crazy they seem or how divorced from the original plot.
- What is the story theme? Can you express that theme in a completely different story?
- If the story is a legend, can you simply find a different legend and build a story in a similar manner? (We might sum up the King Midas story as "A Prince finally rescues a trapped Princess". What other myths and legends will fit that theme?)

Some Examples

If you want to use the story of King Midas, how can you make it different?

- You can take the concept of King Midas and the Golden touch and give it a contemporary setting. For example, your modern-day girl might have a father who is obsessed with making money. She has been brought up in a palatial home with everything she wants – but the one thing she does *not* have is love and affection. The equivalent of Princess Zoe's "gilded cage" might be an arranged marriage to save the family finances.

Or... maybe she truly does have a great deal of affection for her father, and he has agreed to a “golden deal” which appeared to guarantee his family’s financial security, but ended up being fraudulent. Perhaps our modern day Princess Zoe is forced to work for the man who tricked her father, to save her father from going to jail. Perhaps she can see no way out until her “son of Apollo” turns up. And she might this hero be? Well he could be an FBI agent working undercover to find evidence, or he could be the son of another man who has been duped. The possibilities are endless, as are the opportunities to develop romantic relationships, suspense, and tension.

- In the original myth, Princess Zoe, although a very likeable girl, essentially waits for her prince to come along and rescue her. These days, a contemporary heroine likes to take charge and get herself out of trouble. A good many fairy stories, myths, and legends have been retold over the years giving the heroine a much more proactive role. And this brings us to...

Using the myth of King Midas as inspiration, think about how you might re-tell other fairy tales, myths and legends. For example:

1. The Three Little Pigs.

Here you have three brothers, all trying to avoid the wolf at the door. They all use the same strategy: building a house to make themselves safe. The 'wolf' can be any villain; the 'three pigs' can be any three brothers; the 'house' can be any kind of refuge.

How can you change this story, introducing a feisty heroine, and tie it all up with a happy ending? The heroine doesn't have to end up with the smart brother who builds the strongest house. She might end up with the brother who doesn't quite have the street smarts of his older sibling, but who will offer her more love and affection. (Of course Lovable Brother will have to think of another way to get out of the clutches of the "wolf". Or better still, the heroine can think of a way to outsmart the bad guy, with her beloved's help.)

2. The Legend of Godiva:

Lady Godiva was the wife of the ruler of Coventry, who lived about 1000 A.D. When her husband imposed a heavy tax on the people, she decided to protest by walking the streets of the city naked, covered only by her long hair. You could convert this story by setting it in a fantasy world, with magical creatures, or you could again move it into the present day. It's easy to imagine, say, the daughter of a prominent citizen who rebels by doing something to embarrass him – maybe becoming an exotic dancer or even a life model for art classes. Think about how her actions could start a chain of events that she could not predict. How might she end up fighting for her life? Who might be stalking her? Where would the romantic interest come from?

3. The Legend of the Fountain of Youth:

Reputedly, this is a special fountain that conveys eternal youth upon those who drink the water. Imagine what this might mean to a woman who wakes up, disoriented and thirsty, and finds herself in a strange world. Naturally she would seek to slake her thirst in a crystal clear fountain (or waterfall – this is your story you can do what you want). As soon as she does so, she finds herself propelled into an adventure – and falls in love with another immortal with whom she can spend eternity.

4. The Legend Of El Dorado:

Another story based on gold, but different to King Midas: the South American legend of El Dorado tells the story about a tribe in a secret kingdom behind the water falls of the Amazon River. Gold was ample on the streets of El Dorado, and legend has it that the chief of the tribe would cover himself with gold dust then take a dip in the pure water. Imagine how you could develop a paranormal romance from this story. Does the heroine stumble across the chief while he is bathing? If so, why can she see him? How did she find this place? Has she somehow travelled between pockets of time or space? Let your imagination take hold...

Are you beginning to feel your imagination starting to soar? Fire up your Internet browser and search for common myths, legends and fairy stories. You will find enough ideas to keep yourself going for years.

If you would like to buy or read more about Charity Cason's PLR romance outlines, you can find them here:

[10 Detailed Romance Fiction Plots](#)

[10 Detailed Paranormal Romance Fiction Outlines](#)

[Read an interview with Charity on the Writing4Success Blog.](#)



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