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<h1>Writer's Workbench:</h1> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Confidence ✓ Writer's block ✓ Hooking the reader ✓ Characters ✓ Plot ✓ Dialogue ✓ Knowing when it's good <p>Email me to learn more!</p>			 <p>Jon P. Bloch, Ph.D:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Professor •Novelist •Book Reviewer •Author Interviews •Pop Non-Fiction •Lover of Words 	<p>Why do I do this for FREE?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If you've ever wanted to write, you have something to tell the world. •Writers need kindness. Critiques shouldn't cause writer's block. •You're entitled to more feedback than a few token words from an editor, publisher or agent. ("It doesn't work me," etc.) •It's hard to be objective about your own work. •It's fun to help people without worrying about money. 		

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**Mary Ann
Bernal**



Mary Ann Bernal, author of *The Briton and the Dane* novels, is an avid history buff whose area of interest focuses on Ninth Century Anglo-Saxon Britain during the Viking Age. While pursuing a degree in business administration, she managed to fit creative writing classes and workshops into her busy schedule to learn the craft, but it would take decades before her “Erik the Viking” novel was ultimately published. Mary Ann is also a passionate supporter of the United States military, having been involved with letter writing campaigns and other support programs since Operation Desert Storm. She has appeared on *The Morning Blend* television show hosted by KMTV, the CBS television affiliate in Omaha, and was interviewed by the *Omaha World-Herald* for her volunteer work. She has also been a featured author on various reader blogs and promotional sites.

Mary Ann is a New York “expat,” and currently resides in Omaha, Nebraska.

1. Why do you think it is that so many people are attracted to the general timeframe and culture of “The Briton and the Dane” trilogy?

The Dark Ages has its own mystique because historical documentation is limited. It was unfortunate that many libraries and private collective works were destroyed during the heathen onslaught, not only in Anglo-Saxon Britain but throughout the European continent as well. Educators have had to fill in the gaps over the years, often relying on questionable sources while attempting to write a history book of the era. Hollywood, on the other hand, was given creative license to interpret the mores of the times, creating stories that would sell tickets rather than being historically accurate, but then, since there are limited research resources, who is to say what really happened? And therein lies the enigma!

2. False modesty aside, what do you think it is that sets your trilogy apart from other books of the same or similar genre?

“The Briton and the Dane” trilogy is an epic adventure that would do well on the big screen since the story runs the gamut of deception, treachery, intrigue, and betrayal. The characters experience the same passion and live through conflicts that are seen in this day and age. The novels bring to light religious turmoil as Christianity eradicated paganism. Anger and resentment festers when paternity is denied, but the need for acceptance never wanes, even in the midst of battle (no spoilers!). Warfare was a common occurrence during the timeline of the story. Shedding light on the fear and anxiety of the warrior’s family awaiting news of the soldier’s fate correlates well with today’s society, the only difference being a timely notification of the dreaded truth.

3. Was each book equally difficult to write, or did it get easier over time?

The original novel, “The Briton and the Dane,” was slightly difficult because I wanted to bring the reader into the Dark Ages by limiting the use of modern words. For example, I write healer instead of doctor, the wound festers instead of the wound is infected, what be amiss, for what’s wrong? You get the idea. By the time I finished “The Briton and the Dane: Legacy,” I was so used to the terminology that I now have to consciously remember which century I’m writing in. However, each novel includes a Glossary that I am constantly updating. There is a Resources tab on my webpage that includes downloadable pdf files. In addition to the Glossary, there are maps and character lists for each book.

4. Do you rewrite/edit much?

When “The Briton and the Dane” was originally published, a lot of the verbiage was written substituting “be” for “is.” However, I discovered that many readers had difficulty reading the dialogue, which prompted me to rewrite the dialogue to make the novel easier to read, and “The Briton and the Dane (The Special Edition) was published the following year. As for the editing process, the truth is I never stop editing. I will admit that each novel went through at least six edits because a perfectionist is never satisfied, and being a perfectionist is the one fault I hope to overcome.

5. What do you think separates a good book from a bad book?

I do not believe there are any “bad” books per se, but an excellent story does trump mediocrity. However, you need to remember that pleasing 100% of the

population is unrealistic, and not everyone is going to like your work. Remember the old saying: "one person's trash is another person's treasure?" This certainly applies to everything in life, books not withstanding. As long as you are passionate about your story, that passion should be contagious. You have a God-given talent to write, and as long as you please yourself and God, there could never be a "bad" book.

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