

Basics of Novel Writing

Why Write This Story?

Why Do You Write? You aren't reading this if you do not have some desire to write something. So, where does that desire come from. Why do you want to write? Who do you want to write it to?

Even more specifically: Why does *this* story have to be told?

Is it because you have a great idea for a story, something compelling that everyone would want to know about? Something dramatic or emotional that people can relate to? Something historical that will interest readers?

Or is it your character and his qualities that drive your story. Is she fascinating, more so, happy, lucky?

Or is it the setting? Something new and interesting that will connect readers, or the familiar feel of home and the struggles of family?

Is there a part of you that is really passionate about this story, this character or setting, and is there enough passion there to translate to the reader?

My favorite thing about my story idea right now is:

“If there's a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.” ~Toni Morrison

Questions Readers Will Ask Themselves

What's this story about?

Is anything happening?

Why should I keep reading?

Why should I care?

You can answer these questions through dynamic characters, compelling storytelling and engaging setting.

Middles

Raising the Stakes

The middle of your story is the reader's chance to get to know the character better and start to connect even more with them. An excellent way to do this is by raising the stakes involved for the character. It's commonly said that it's far more believable for things to get worse than for them to get better. If your character Dylan is running from the cops and suddenly they stop chasing him without explanation, the reader is going to be very confused. On the other hand, if Dylan is running from the cops and rams his car into a telephone pole, all while he can still hear the sirens, this keeps the action moving and believable. Below is an excellent example of why I shouldn't write crime dramas, but bear with me as I use the example anyway.

Personal Stakes:

How can things get more emotionally detrimental for my character?

Example: As Dylan ducks into an alley he receives a text message from his girlfriend, breaking off their relationship.

Is there someone the Lead cares about who can get caught up in the action?

Example: As Dylan ducks into an alley he receives a call from "the bad guy" and his girlfriend has been taken hostage until he returns the goods he stole.

Are there dark secrets from the past that can be revealed?

Example: Dylan explains to his girlfriend that he has been stealing from his boss to protect his father's sordid past with the mob.

Characters

A Matter of Life and Death

We talked about character stakes in the section on middles, but now it's time to decide what will happen to your character if they are not victorious over the opposition. Death can come in many forms, and not just the traditional six feet under variety.

Your character may face death in the form of:

Professional (Loss of Job, Credibility, etc)

Financial Death (loss of wealth, inability to care for family)

Moral (Values will be tested, and the inability to stand up for the values)

Loss/Obsession (A place or a thing - The Overlook Hotel in The Shining or the Ring in Lord of the Rings)

Actual Death (overcoming foes or disease)

Relationships (loss of significant other, friendship, parental approval)

Psychological (loss of sanity, loss of control)

My character faces Death in the form of:

When s/he:

She will overcome these obstacles by:

The Opposition

Unless you are creating a 1960's Adam West's Batman type villain (complete with evil lair) there has to be some humanity to your opposition. It makes him/her/it more believable.

Three things I love about my opposition:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____