

# **Basics of Creative Writing**

**week 1**

**Beginnings & Building Blocks**

# Best writing advice anyone ever gave me

Practice with short stories first

Just do it

Have fun with it

Every first draft sucks

If it does, try to make it suck less, keep at it, move forward

You can't please everyone

Make time and do it some more

Read read read

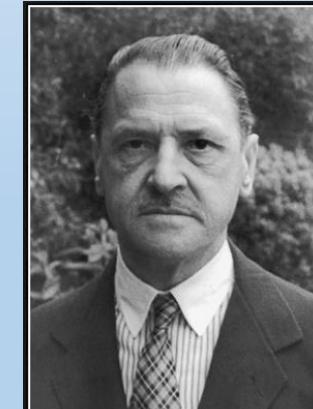
Get proofreaders <3 <3 <3

Don't despair, edit

Grow a thick skin

Write some more

Don't forget to have fun!



There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.

— W. Somerset Maugham —

AZ QUOTES

# Creative Writing Forms

Any writing that is original and self-expressive. Writing that wants to bring across more than just information.  
Feelings over facts.

Purpose entertain and share feelings or thoughts.

- 1) Free writing
- 2) Story – short, novel(la), book, (manus)cript, (screen)play / fiction – non-fiction
- 3) Poetry
- 4) Song lyrics
- 5) Journal/diary
- 6) Memoir
- 7) Speech
- 8) (Personal) Essay
- 9) Blog
- 10) Review
- 11) Vignette
- 12) Letter

“A mile below the lowest cloud, rock breaches water and the sea begins.”

China Miéville – The Scar

“Accidents ambush the unsuspecting, often violently, just like love.”

Andrew Davidson – The Gargoyle

“The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed.”

Stephen King – The Gunslinger

“Call me Ishmael.”

Herman Melville – Moby-Dick

“This book is totally true, except for the parts that aren’t.”

Jenny Lawson – Let’s pretend this never happened

## **17. Jeanne Villa**

She sipped her latte gracefully, unaware of the milk foam droplets building on her mustache, which was not the peachy-fine baby fuzz that Nordic girls might have, but a really dense, dark, hirsute lip-lining row of fur common to southern Mediterranean ladies nearing menopause, and winked at the obviously charmed Spaniard at the next table.

## **24. Dennis Barry**

Despite the vast differences in their ages, ethnicity, and religious upbringing, the sexual chemistry between Roberto and Heather was the most amazing he had ever experienced; and for the entirety of the Labor Day weekend they had sex like monkeys on espresso, not those monkeys in the zoo that fling their feces at you, but more like the monkeys in the wild that have those giant red butts, and access to an espresso machine.

## **11. David Pepper**

As an ornithologist, George was fascinated by the fact that urine and feces mix in birds' rectums to form a unified, homogeneous slurry that is expelled through defecation, although eying Greta's face, and sensing the reaction of the congregation, he immediately realized he should have used a different analogy to describe their relationship in his wedding vows.

## **20. Shannon Wedge**

Leopold looked up at the arrow piercing the skin of the dirigible with a sort of wondrous dismay – the wheezy shriek was just the sort of sound he always imagined a baby moose being beaten with a pair of accordions might make.

## **1. Sue Fondrie**

Cheryl's mind turned like the vanes of a wind-powered turbine, chopping her sparrow-like thoughts into bloody pieces that fell onto a growing pile of forgotten memories.

Edward George Bulwer-Lytton Prize  
“It was a dark and stormy night.”

# Story Structure - narrative

Beginning, middle, ending? Nah, try this instead:

- An emotionally engaging origin event
- Causally related consequences
- Inevitable conclusive event

How is this different from plot? Not much really.

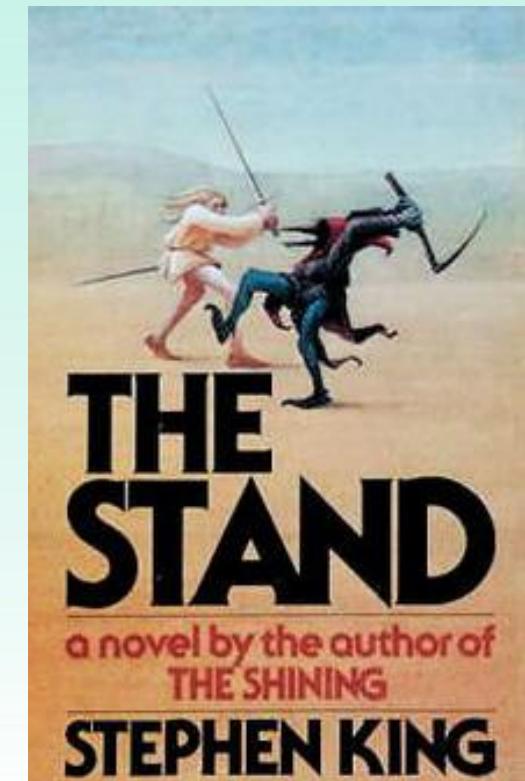
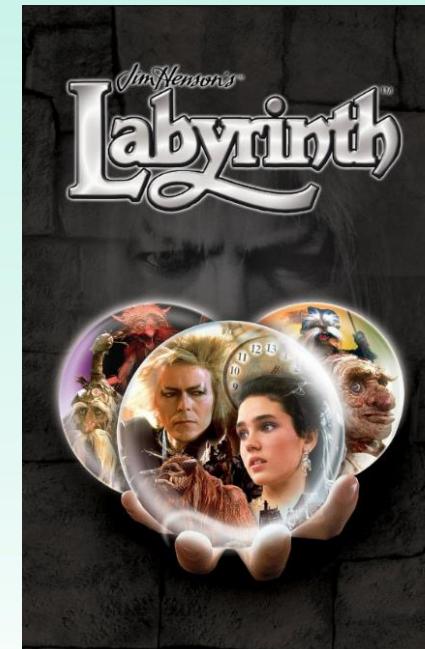
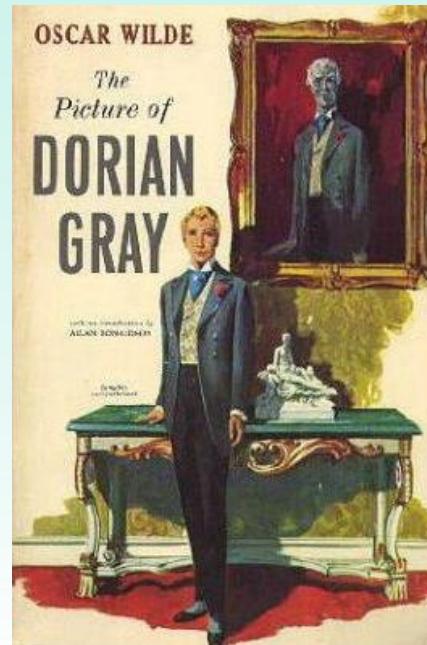
The plot is a series of events that makes up a story

Or...

- Narration
- Description
- Dialogue

# But how do I do this?

- 1) Orientation
- 2) Crisis!
- 3) Escalation
- 4) Discovery and/or choice (or twist)
- 5) Transformation and/or resolution



# **Basics of Creative Writing**

**week 2**

**Plot & Theme**

# Theme and plot

Theme: what is your story about?

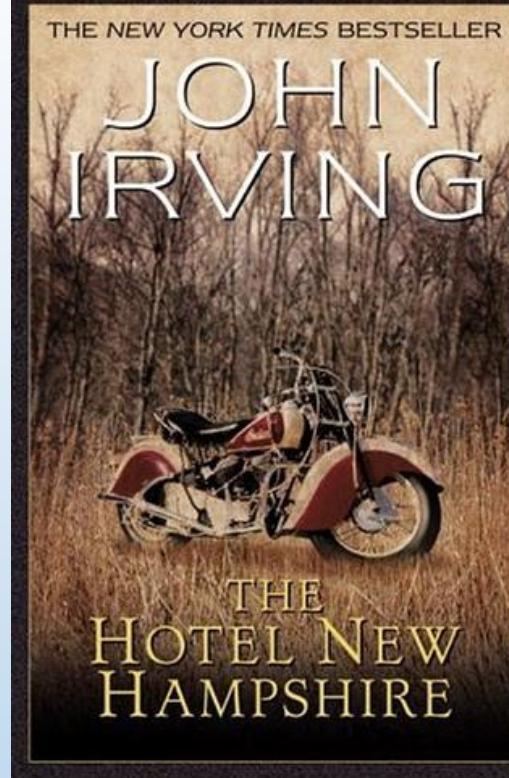
This is the heart of the story/ Implied central topic/  
The core message or question/ The Point

Plot: what happens in your story?

The explicit exploration of the dilemma



Art: Dave Gibbons



# Theme

Does not have to be unique, rather, make it relatable.

Pick one or two main themes, sub themes will happen on their own.

It is underlying, the reader will recognize it. Don't rub it in their faces.

The theme should be connected to the protagonist, but not exclusively define the protagonist.

# Plot

Start simple, then add.

## Tip from Pixar



Once there was a... Everyday... Until... Because of that... And so...  
Until finally... → building blocks

# Chapter

- Comprised of related scenes, working together to make a similar point
- ‘One happens because of the other’ – Lisa Cron.

One scene can be a chapter.

A scene can be broken mid-chapter and vice versa.

# Conflict <3

Before versus after. The most common versus:

- What the protagonist thinks is true vs what is actually true
- What he/she wants vs what he/she has
- What he/she wants vs what is expected of them
- The inner goal vs the external goal
- The fear vs the goal
- The protagonist vs the antagonist

Source: Lisa Cron – Wired for story

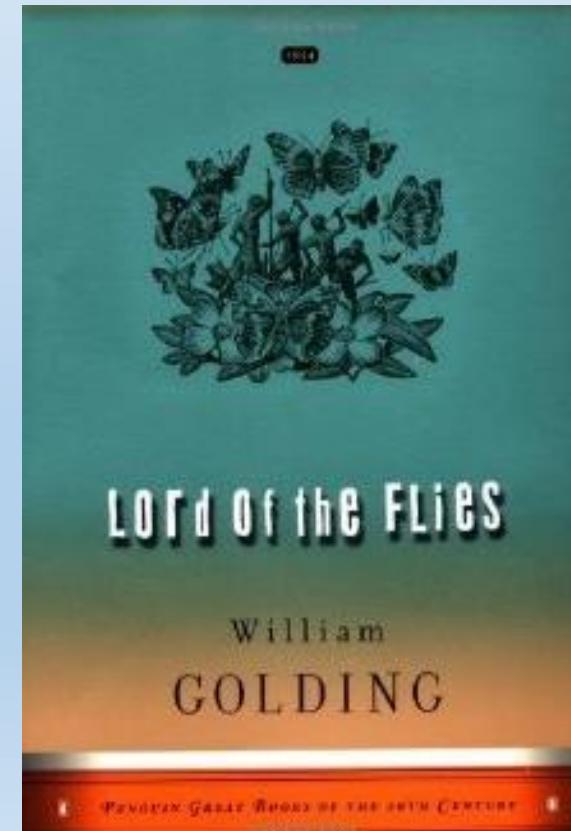
# And the plot thickens...

A situation can escalate because the story progresses naturally from character motivations – stick to your own rules. Follow the internal logic.

Because you are following a logical pattern, you don't have to connect all the dots - you don't have to explain everything

But, if it isn't internally consistent, it's not believable.  
If it's not believable, it doesn't belong in the story.

Can a plot thin?



# Tension = story fuel

Doesn't come from actions, but from how your characters feel about what is going on →  
“What's at stake?”

Also comes from questions in the reader's mind →  
“What will happen next?”

(Wanting: one wants more, more want one.)

**BRIDGET  
JONES'S  
DIARY**



# Tension = story fuel

What creates tension?

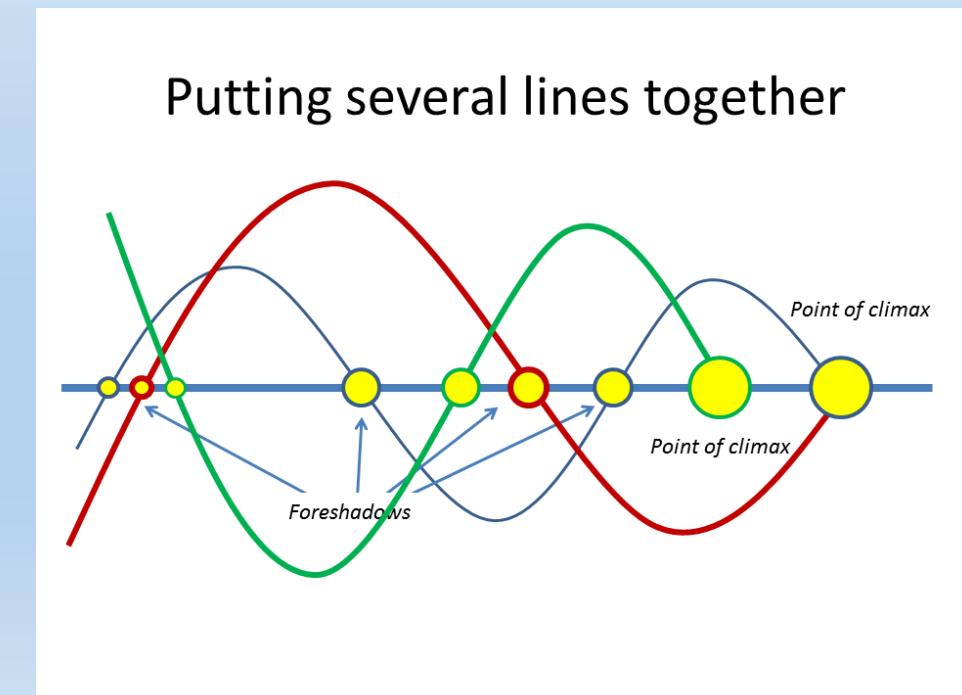
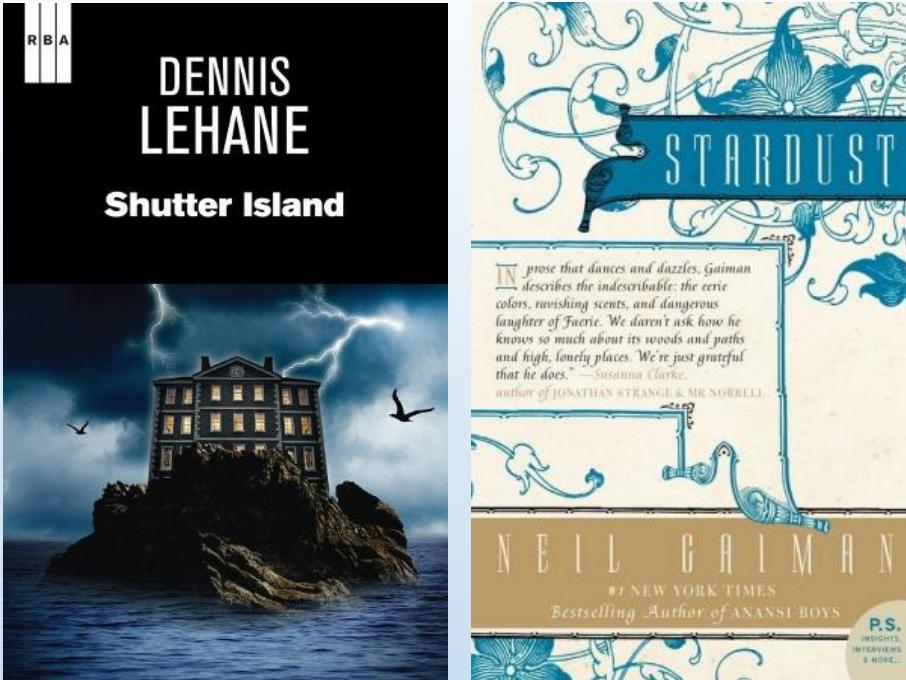
- Setbacks
- Conflicting motivations
- Unanswered questions/ongoing mysteries  
(but a mystery does not mean withholding info necessary to understand the plot)
- Power dynamics
- Time pressure/scarcity
- Something isn't right
- The guy with the gun/things that go boom

# The weave – multiple storylines

- Set up the stakes in a believable premise
- Work towards the revelation/twist by planting the seeds (in obvious places, but without drawing too much attention)
- Fuel the fire of conflict (and keep the reader engaged)
- Let the reader (not) expect the twist
- Make the twist validate the rest of the story

Source: mythcreants.com ↑

Source: Peter Kaptein →



# **Basics of Creative Writing**

**week 3 & 4**

**The People**

# Characters

Are the ones that create tension, by wanting things = drive for the story.

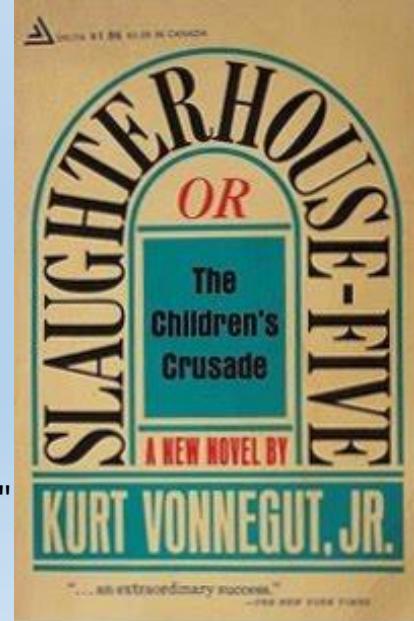
Think of your characters as the hungry caterpillar

Pebble or putty?



Struggle over an external and/or internal source of conflict.

(page 23): "He was a funny-looking child who became a funny-looking youth — tall and weak, and shaped like a bottle of Coca-Cola."



# Faves?

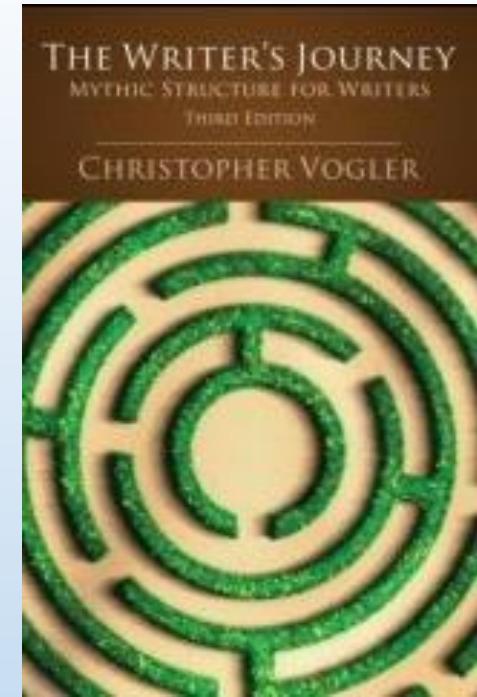
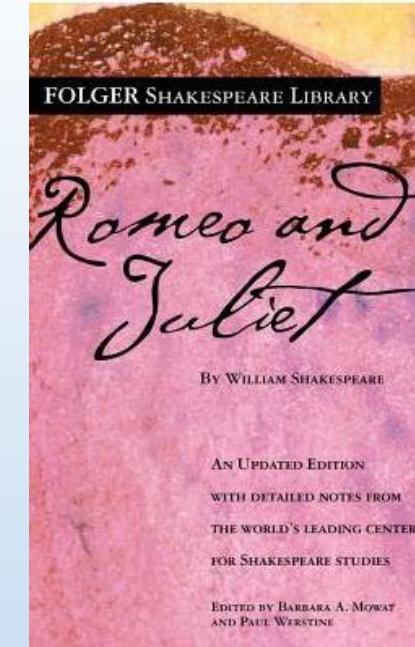
A character is not just what they look like.  
Just describing the way they look, is not enough.  
It doesn't make a reader get to know them.

Who are they really? What are their habits?  
Beliefs? Dreams?  
What do they want? What are they good/bad at?  
What are they afraid of? Which secrets do they keep?

Don't stay on the superficial level of actions, make the reader empathize with them.

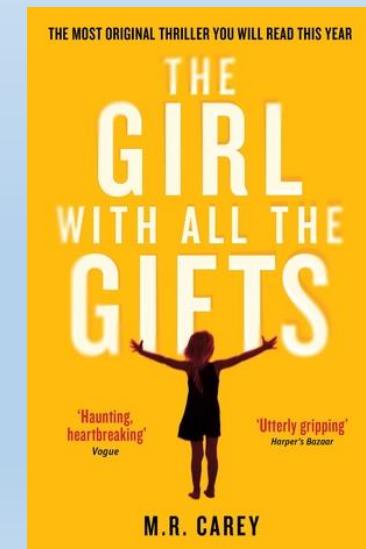
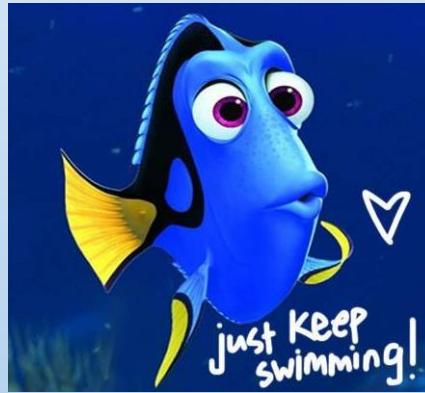
## Archetypes

- The Hero
- The Mentor
- The Ally
- The Gatekeeper
- The Shadow
- The Trickster
- The Fool/ Clown
- The Temptress
- The star-crossed lovers



## Flat Characters/ stereotypes

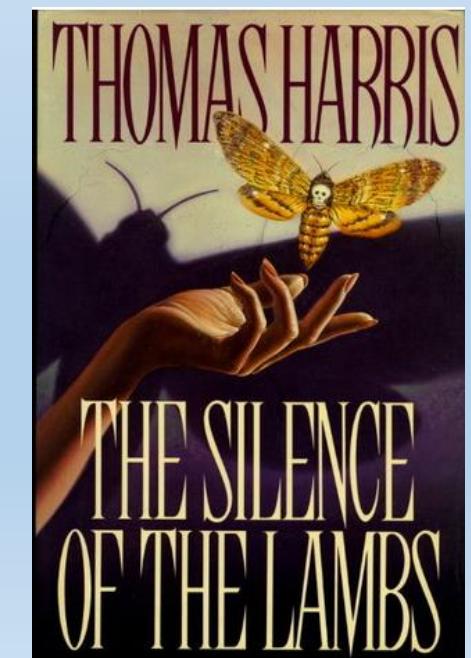
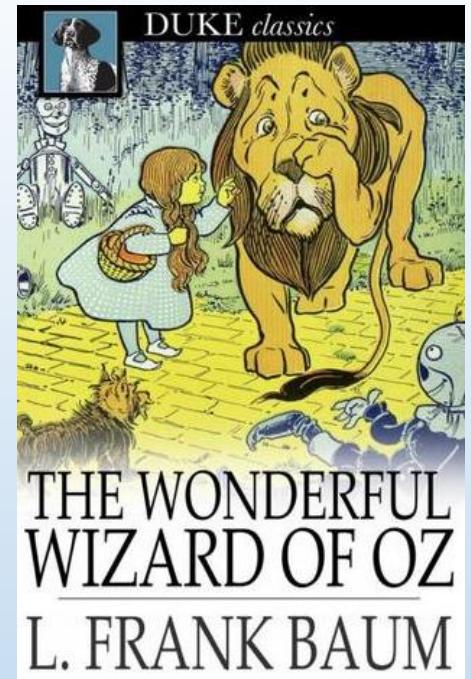
- The donut cop
- The bomb shell blonde/ the Mary Sue
- The perfect prince
- The mad scientist
- The evil overlord
- ... Any more?



Only has one characteristic/motive and/or is predictable/cliché and never questions this one motive

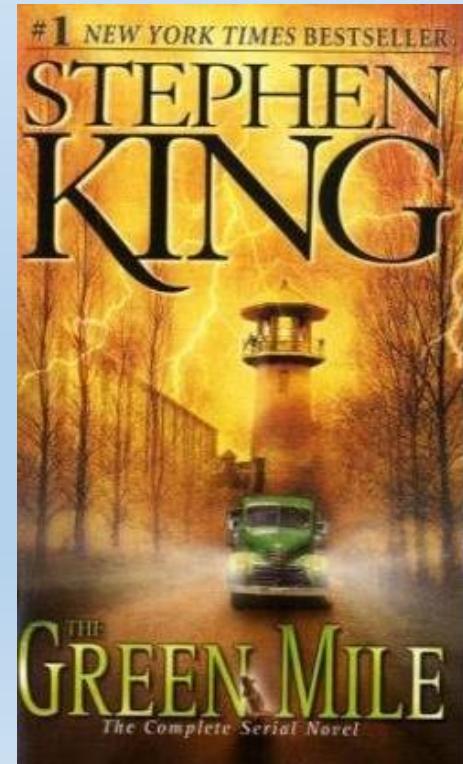
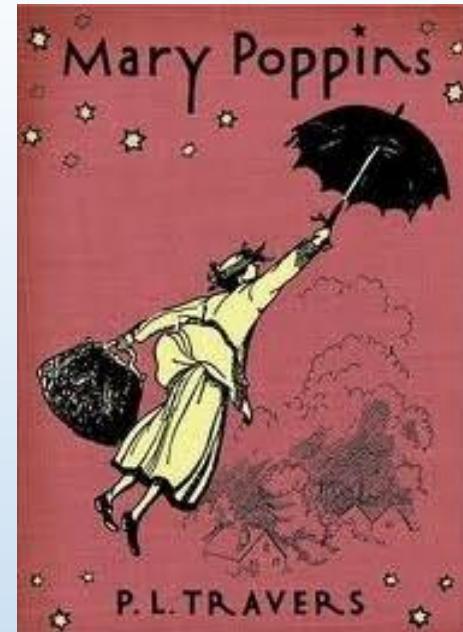
# Tips:

- Don't have too many characters
- And a max of three main ones
- At least one of them wants something badly (up to 3 wants)
- Preferably, make them understand why they want it
- Make them all sound distinctly different
- Consider having a diverse cast (gender/age/culture)
- At least one of them gets into trouble
- Make them relatable or at least understandable in some way
- Name use: 35% - he/she: 50% - function (the girl, the dentist): 15%



# How?

- Description is not just adjectives an physical attributes
- Make details specific
- Make the characteristics have a purpose
- Choose a limited amount of (functional and revealing) dominant *traits*
- History – background - foreshadowing
- Quirks, idiosyncrasies, pet peeves
- Some values/beliefs are stronger than others. We naturally understand the patterns of human weirdness. Obsession, tunnel vision, core narratives, sticking to wrong beliefs
- Don't censor yourself. It doesn't have to be nice.
- Make it funny/sad
- Body language
- Set them in motion
- Sometimes objects can define a character
- Surroundings also affect characters



# The protagonist(s)/ the hero/ the MC

“The protagonist is the character whose fate matters most to the story.” – Stephen Koch

The base for comparing all else within the story.

They are the catalyst - they need a goal and they need to choose.

They don't need to succeed for the story to succeed. You don't admire them for their success, but for their struggle. And have them aim for more than just success.

Give them opinions. Ain't nobody got time for blank slates.

What are they good at? Challenge them by confronting them with an opposite.

Coincidences to get them into trouble? Great!

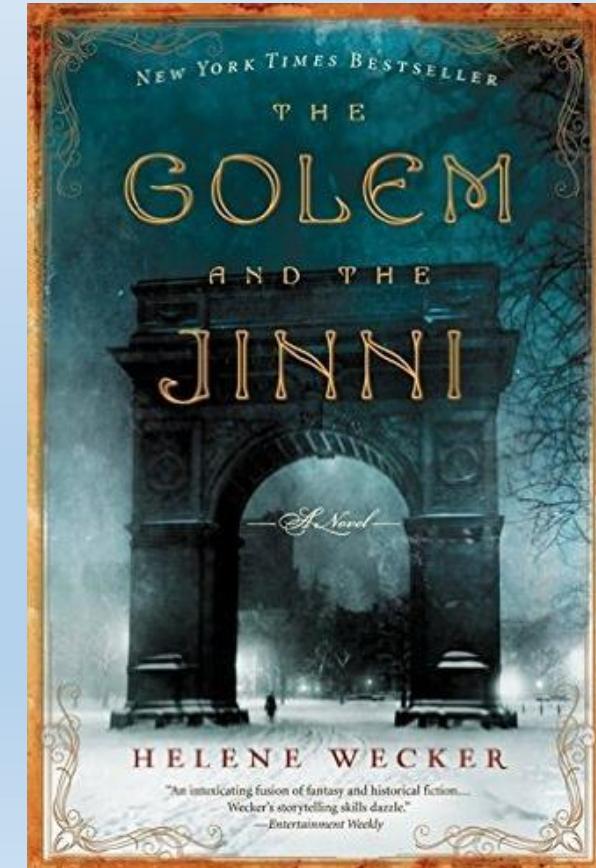
Coincidences to help them out of trouble? Too easy.

# The essence of writing your protagonist

Does the protagonist react to what happens and can the reader understand the link between what happens and how the protagonist responds?

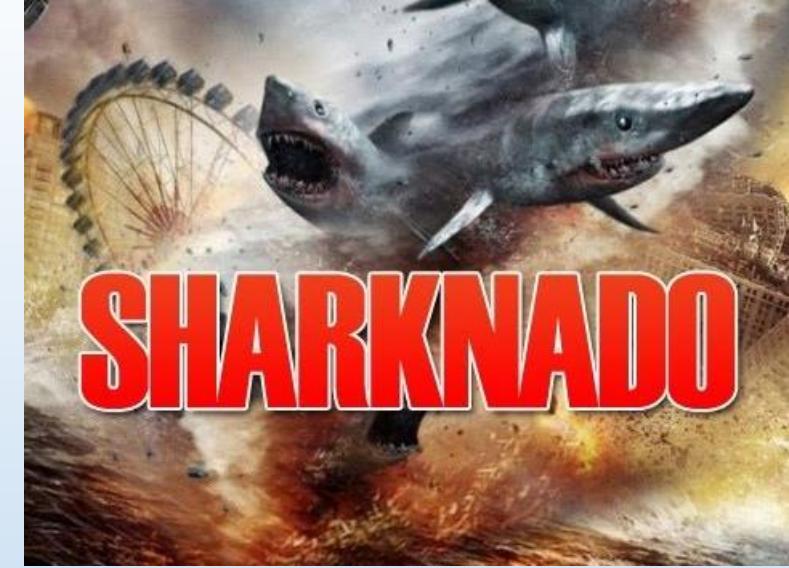
Write what you know... On an emotional level.

Make your reader feel the consequences of your character's actions.



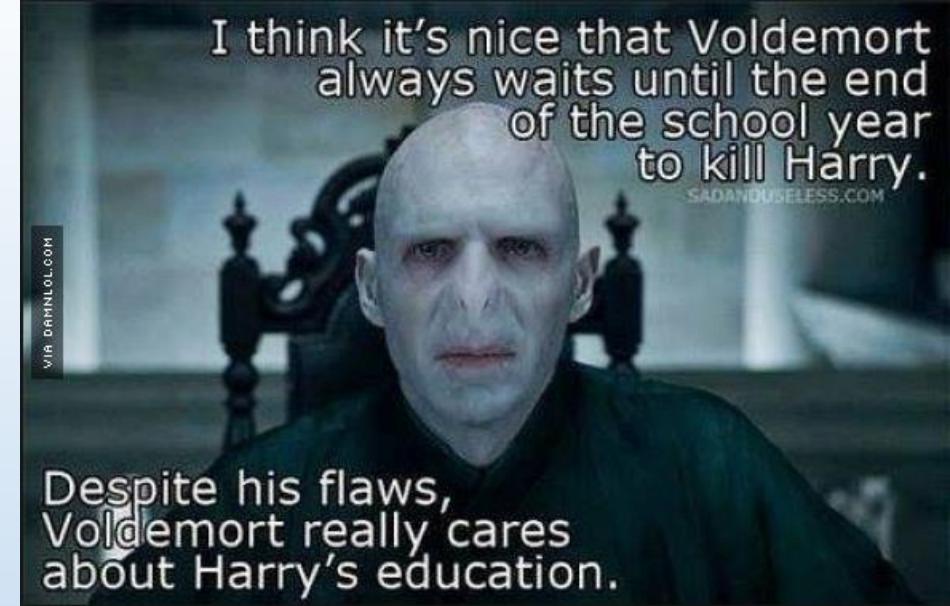
# The antagonist

- Thinks they're the protagonist
- Works against the protagonist (words and/or actions)
- The adversary, but not necessarily the villain, or even bad
- Treat them as a person (even if they're not), not as a plot device
- Pure evil is a snoozefest
- Give them some backstory
- Make them understandable by giving them relatable motives: obstructing the lead does not have to be their goal
- Make them at least as strong/capable/smart as the protagonist, yet not too OP
- Hidden antagonists do work behind the scenes that you should mention here and there
- If you can, try to personify abstractions (political parties, religion, corporations, a sickness, racism, the war, etc)



# What they have in common

- They (think they) are (at) the center of events
- Compelling/relatable
- Motivated
- Failure means more than not succeeding
- They must work within the rules of your story world
- They depend on each other for the story to succeed



shitty-check-please-aus

I once wrote a story where Willy Wonka was the true villain behind the dementor attacks because he knew that would increase chocolate sales

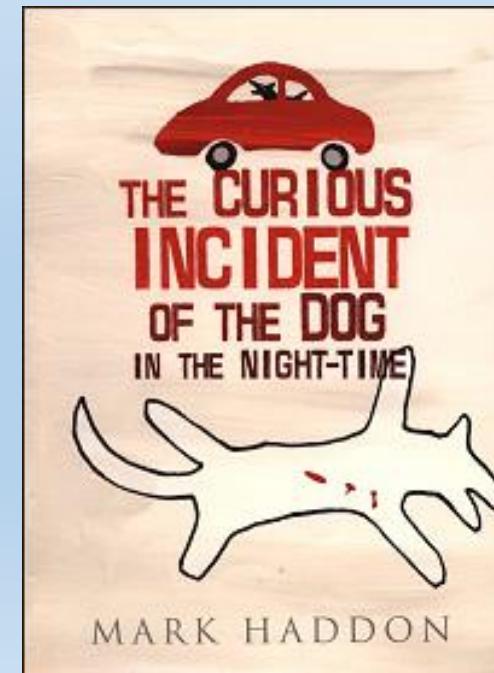
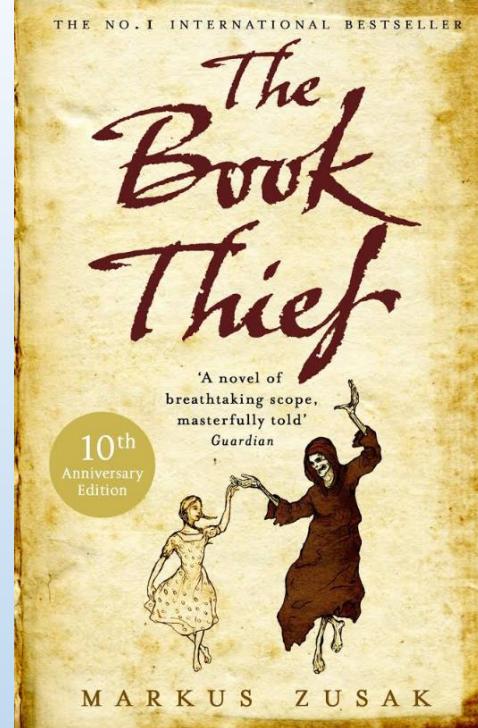
# **Basics of Creative Writing**

## **Week 5**

**Perspective, tense  
Show and tell**

# Perspective

Who is telling the story affects the story.



# Perspectives

1st person

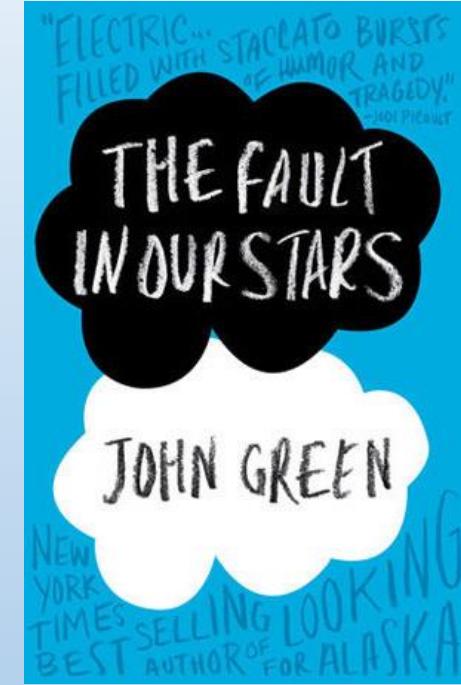
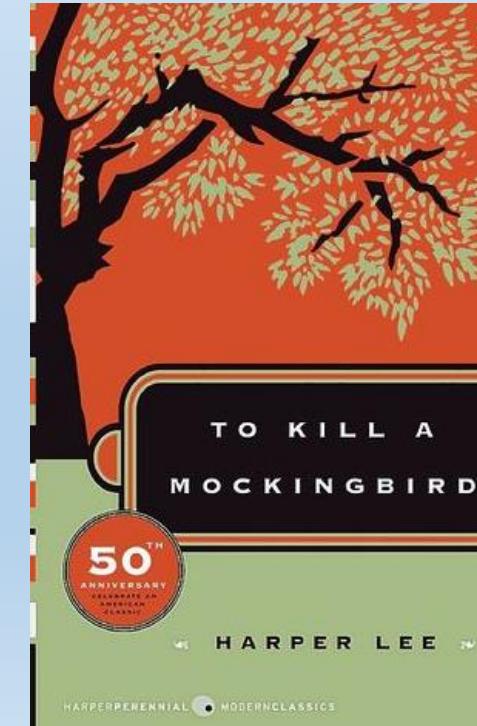
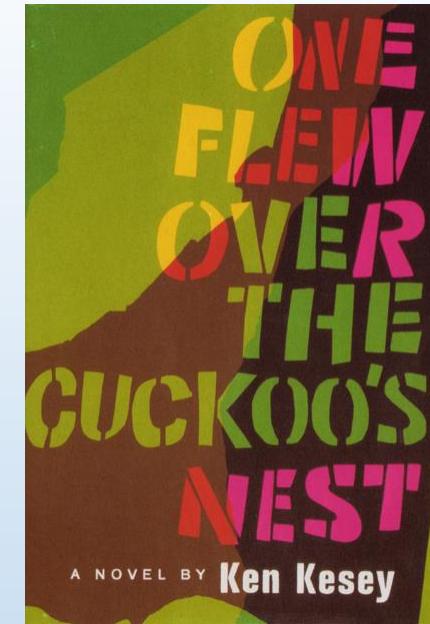
The ultimate subjective experience

Risks:

Too much 'I'

Too much 'tell'

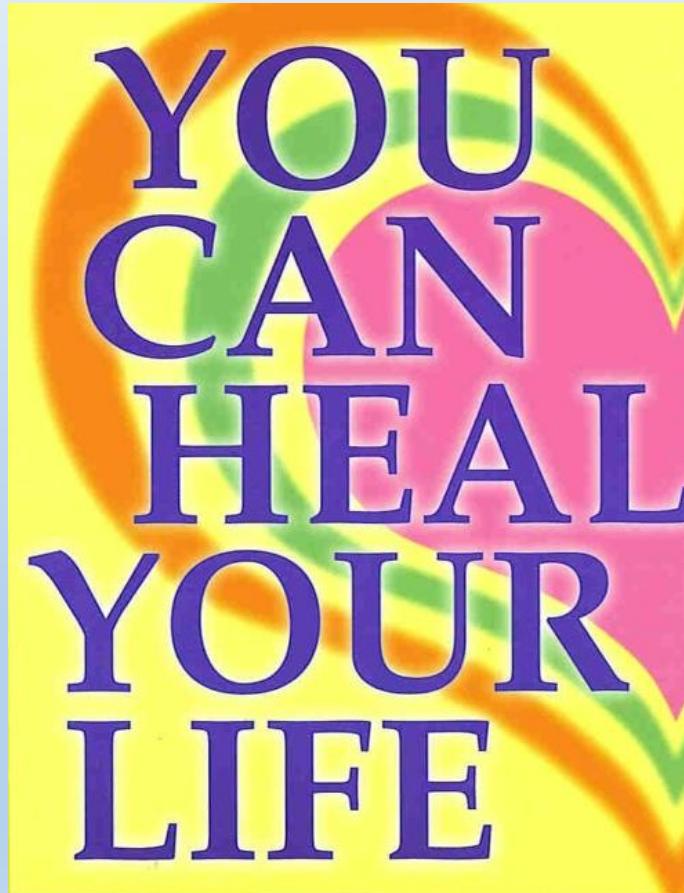
False notes



What do these  
three storytellers  
have in common?

# Perspectives

~~2nd person~~



Louise Hay



Creepypasta

November 21 at 6:34am · \*

You wake up in the middle of the night. Your cat is cozily nested behind your knees and the weight of your blanket warms your tired body nicely. You sigh happily. When you are about to drift again into a sweet slumber, your cat hisses and runs frantically off your bed and hides behind the curtains.

She has never acted so oddly before, and that upsets you. You look around in your room for anything that could have startled her but nothing is out of the ordinary. You stay still and listen for anything unusual. You can hear your cat drinking water from her bowl in the hall, making that disgusting slurping sound that always disturbs you. Relieved that nothing is wrong, you lie back down and pull your blanket up to your chin.

But before you close your eyes, you see the shadowy silhouette of your feline friend ducking under your desk, her hair standing up. You gasp. If it isn't your cat drinking water then where does the sound come from?

Slowly and as silently as possible you get off your bed. But despite your best efforts, the old wooden framework groans loudly. You freeze. The slurping sound stops for a second before it resumes. Any doubts that this was your imagination's doing are cast away.

Heart pounding on your chest, you tiptoe your way to the door. You step out of your room and look across the hallway, towards your cat's bowl. And there you see her.

Your mother, crouching on hands and knees. Her limbs are long and skinny and her fingers are gaunt and bony. Her messy hair covers her pale, distorted face; her skin stretched against her cheekbones. She is licking greedily the water in your cat's bowl with a tongue black as coal and twice the normal size.

Suddenly, she stops. She slowly turns her head towards you. She stares deeply into your eyes; her pupils two unmoving dots of malice.

You jump in panic and run back into your room while your mother gallops on all fours towards you. You close the door behind you, moments before it starts shaking violently; loud bangs echoing across the house. You quickly throw your body against the door, blocking it. The whole doorframe quakes fiercely, but you hold firm.

Then, the banging stops. An otherworldly sense of stillness hangs in the air. After a few seconds of excruciating silence, the knob starts turning.

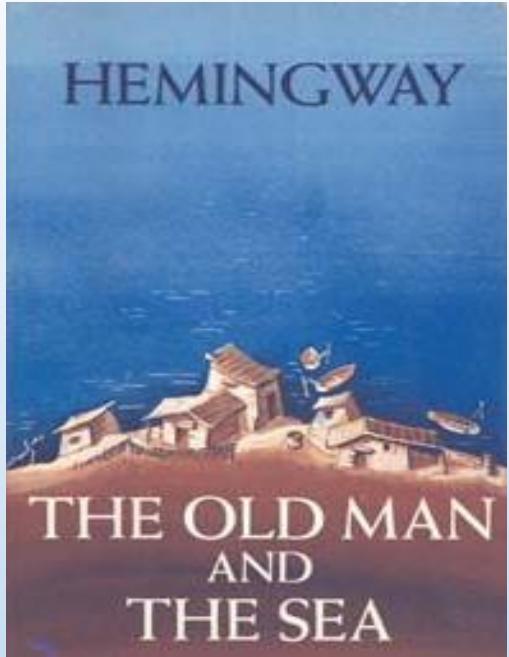
"Honey, is something wrong?" you hear your mother's soothing voice from the other side. "Why did you close the door? I am worried. Please, let me in."

Original Author: MrDuplican

# Perspectives

3rd person

- Objective

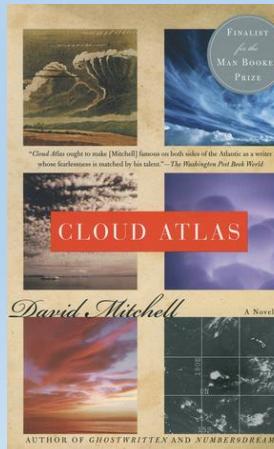
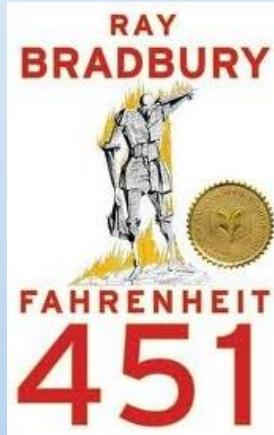
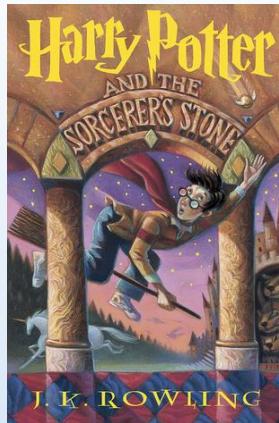
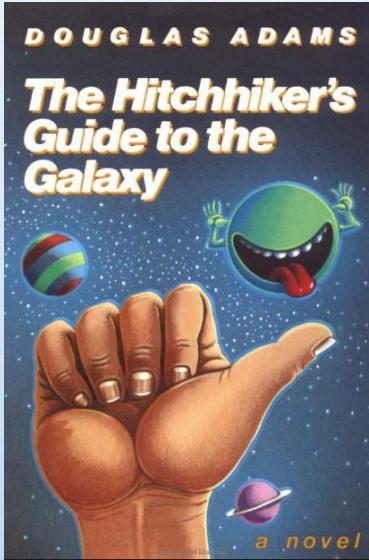


- Distant or Moving Omniscient/All knowing

When all-knowing goes bad: “Geralt was a dipshit, but unaware of this fact. Moreover, little did he know his colleagues were planning on pulling a horrible prank on him.”

- Close Limited/shifting

Be clear about when you shift perspective – empty line.  
Make sure the voices are different enough.  
Keep the perspectives separated. Rosa can't know with certainty what Brenda is feeling. One perspective per scene.

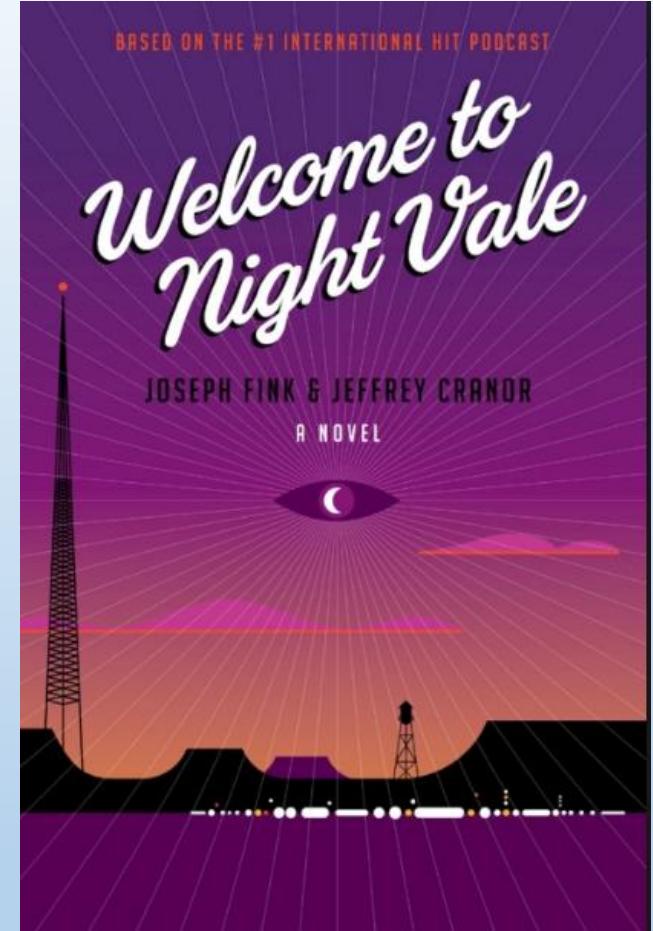


# Perspectives

1,2,3 – objective, omniscient, limited:  
Whichever you choose, stick to it within one story.

....Unless the point is to experiment.

“The only pawnshop in the town of Night Vale is run by the very young Jackie Fierro. It has no name, but if you need it, you will know where it is. This knowledge will come suddenly, often while you are in the shower. You will collapse, surrounded by a bright glowing blackness, and you will find yourself on your hands and knees, the warm water running over you, and you will know where the pawnshop is.”



# Tense

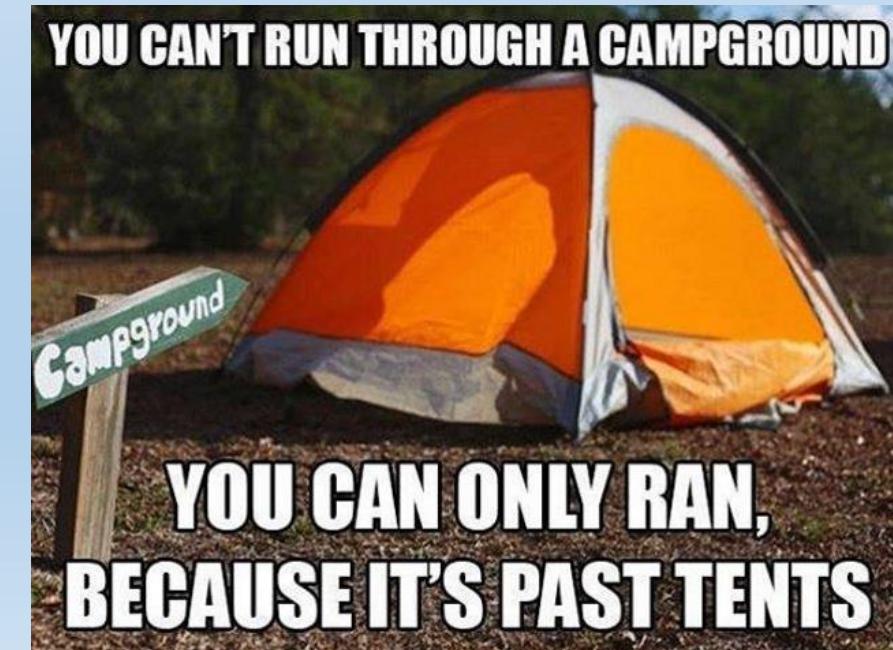
- Past tense (incl. flashbacks)
- Present tense
- ~~- Future tense~~

theravenbcys  
past tense of william shakespeare? william shookspeare

the-cloud-road  
Wouldwas Shookspeared

bookavid  
delete this  
Source: theravenbcys  
77,179 notes

*Whichever you choose, stick to it within one story. Unless the point is to experiment...*



# Tell and show

*Phil went outside, into the cold.*

As he stepped out into the snow, Phil shuddered and tightened his scarf.



*Tina was scared of him.*

All color drained from Tina's face. She pressed against the wall to get as far away from him as she could.

*The man said he was the village baker.*

The man wore an apron stained with egg, flour, and other pastry ingredients. He wiped his greasy hand on it before offering to shake mine.

*Holly was very attracted to her new fitness instructor.*

At the start of every zumba class, Holly's cheeks turned red before she even started exercising. Looking at Evan was already enough to raise her heartbeat.

*Susan appeared to be angry.*

Susan slammed the brakes and leaned over to open the door on his side. 'Then get out,' she hissed.

*The kids were very cruel and bullied Rachel.*

'Snip snip,' Lucy said, clasping Rachel's ponytail in one hand, and a pair of scissors in the other. 'Let's see if Jim still wants to take you to prom without your goldilocks.'

Translate emotions into written body language (Part One)	
Emotion	Possible Body Language
Anticipation	rub hands together, lick lips, unable to sit still, grin
Awe	slack-jawed, unable to move, fixed gaze
Amusement	throw head back, slap thighs, clap hands, shake with laughter
Anger or Aggression	shake fist, point finger, stab finger, slam fist on a table, flushed face, throbbing veins in neck, jutting chin, clenched fists, clenched jaw, lower eyebrows, squint eyes, bare teeth, a wide stance, tight-lipped smile
Annoyance	press lips together, narrow eyes, roll eyes, exasperated sighs
Anxiety	fidget, twist a ring, chew on a pencil, bite lip, swallow constantly, quickened breathing, hold breath, darting eyes, sweat, clammy palms, high-pitched laughter, hunched posture, pace, stutter, play with hair
Attentiveness	furrowed brow, lean forward, sit up, take notes, mimic body language
Boredom	yawn, avoid eye contact, tap feet, twirl a pen, doodle, fidget, slouch
Confidence	clasp arms behind body, lift head, push chest out, stand tall, make firm and precise movements
Confusion	tilt head, narrow eyes, furrowed brow, shrug
Contempt	lift chin, purse lips, sneer, stretch or turn away, dismissive hand-waving
Cynical	twist lips, half-smile, shake head, press lips with a slight frown, roll eyes
Deception	one-sided shoulder shrug, look down, scratch nose/ear/neck, feet kick out or shuffle involuntarily, sudden change in demeanour, hesitation in speech, shifty eye contact, long blinks, shrug, unwarranted smiles or laughter, shake head 'no' while saying 'yes', lick lips, cover/touch mouth
Defensive	cross arms or legs, arms out with palms forward, hands up, place anything in front of body, hands in pockets
Desire	flirtatious behaviour, wink, look up through the lashes, glance over the shoulder, make eye contact, touch hair or clothing, straighten spine, strike a 'cowboy' pose with thumbs in belt, dilated pupils, arch, stretch, women cross and uncross legs
Disbelief	wide-eyed (shock), narrow-eyed (sceptical), twist mouth, crinkle nose, crease brow
Disgust	crinkle nose, curled lip, flinch, turn away, cover nose, gag, squint eyes shut, protect body by turning shoulder (cold shoulder)
Displeasure	fake smile, pout, frown, cross arms
Distress	Stroke/rub nape of neck, wide eyes, shallow rapid breathing, beat walls, huddle in a corner, clasp hands over head, rock, wring hands, run hands through hair, adjust cuffs, men hold hands together in front of crotch
Embarrassment	blush, stammer, cover face with hands, bow head, trouble maintaining eye contact, look down and away, blink back tears
Fatigue	rub eyes, stare into space, yawn and/or stretch, nod off and jerk awake, grit teeth, close eyes, move slowly, slouch
Fear	hunch shoulders, shrink back, mouth open, widen eyes, shake, tremble, freeze, rock from side to side, wrap arms around self, shaking hands
Frustration	shake head, massage temples, clasp wrist in opposite hand or behind back, aggressively run hands through hair, show white knuckles

Translate emotions into written body language (Part Two)	
Emotion	Possible Body Language
Grief	curl into foetal position, face contorts, slump, cover face or head with hands or arms or pillow, stare, shake with sobs, tremble, turn away, difficulty swallowing
Happiness	smile, laugh, hum a tune, crinkle eyes and nose, swing arms, spin loosely, dance, jump, hug, giggle
Honesty	maintain eye contact, smile with eyes and mouth, look up, palms up, open arms
Impatience	nod quickly, tap fingers, sigh, check the clock, tap feet, increase pitch in voice, look away
Jealousy	tight lips, sour expression, narrow eyes, crossed arms
Overwhelmed	palms to forehead, splayed fingers cover eyes with one hand, eyes wide and staring into space, hands grip onto something
Passion or Eagerness	lean forward, nod, wide eyes, steady eye contact and raised eyebrows, hand on heart, double-handed handshake, feet pointed inwards
Playfulness	wink, waggle eyebrows, nudge, smile, tickle
Pleasure	tilt head back, part lips slightly, eyes wide or closed, languorous movements, stretch, arch neck or back, flush, quick breath and pulse
Possessiveness	handshake with arm clasp, place hands on or around someone's shoulders / neck / waist, place hands on wall near them, stand in personal space with body positioned toward person, run a knuckle down someone's cheek, stare others down if they get too close
Pride or Dominance	chin up, chest out, shoulders back, hard handshake, lean back with hands behind head and feet up, unblinking focused eye contact, hands on hips, straddle chair
Reluctance	cross arms, make fists, drag feet, pinch nose, put hands over ears
Sadness	droopy body, bowed, wrap arms around self, hesitating movements, bottom lip jutting out, lip quivers, cry, sob, shake, drag feet
Secretiveness	tight-lipped smile, hands in pockets, look away, cover face, look down
Shame	slump shoulders, look down and away, bury face in hands, bow head, straight mouth
Shock	hands over mouth, mouth open, gasp, freeze and stare with wide eyes and raised eyebrows, smack palm against forehead, step back
Shyness	blush, avoid eye contact, keep distance from others, back away if others come too close, fold arms, bend head, 'hug' walls
Smugness	slight close-lipped smile, one raised eyebrow, slightly tucked chin, enigmatic smile, raise eyebrows, steeple fingers
Suspicion	narrow eyes, glance sideways, raise eyebrow, rub eyes, shake head, blow out cheeks, frown, tighten lips
Thoughtfulness	steeple fingers, pinch nose, close eyes, tug ear, stroke a real or imaginary beard, furrow brow, narrow eyes, tilt head and press lips together, rest chin on hand, lean back and look up
Triumph	clench hands above head, tilt head back and yell, pump fist in air, jump, roar, whoop

# **Basics of Creative Writing**

## **Week 6**

### **Talk, Style, Action**

**\*\*\* I left out the punctuation, because it's different for different languages, subject to change and easy to find online**

# Tips for writing dialogue

Eavesdropping is fun

Write like people talk (direct question and answer rarely happen irl)

But don't make it too real (...uhm, catchphrases)

Make characters sound different

Read it aloud, see if you can still breathe properly while talking tha talk

Use silences

Make it fit the era

Novels are not the place to be PC

Don't rant too much (yet, never mind the three-sentence rule)

Leave out the boring/obvious bits ('bye,' and hung up the phone, 'what tea would you like?')

Please use adverbs (-ly) sparingly in dialogue

Drop/add words for characterization

# Dialogue

- Does it add to or further the plot?
- If it's common knowledge, it wouldn't be in the conversation – AYKB
- Use simple tags - 'he said/she said'- more than: announced, claimed, expressed, declared, puffed, screamed, hissed, mentioned, gabbed, squeeked, offered, suggested, implied, remarked, uttered, crooned, moaned, belted, etc. Try to avoid goofy tags.
- Avoid or limit phonetic spelling ('fuhgeddaboudit', 'jeuwopeean')
- New character -> New line

**Very personal tip:** Suffer from staircase wit?

**Matter of taste?** You can dress up dialogue with setting and motions or not (keeping it clean) Whatever you do, the dialogue needs to be understandable without the dressing up

# Examples

'Did you get everything on the grocery list?' she asked hopefully.

'Yes, I got everything on the list,' he answered.

'Thank you very much,' she said, as she started to unpack. 'But did you also buy the mango juice?' she asked worriedly.

'Of course, I know how much you like it. I got the whole-wheat bread though, because they were out of cornbread.'



# Prepping for some action

- Be in the moment
- Understand what you want to convey
- Visualize the scene
- And think about the psychological repercussions



# Writing about fighting... Or chases

- The sensory experience is not just blows and motions
- Consider muscle memory
- Describe the impact of the actions on your characters' body, thoughts and feelings
- Make your fight (or fighting style) unique (don't repeat scenes)
- What is the function of the violence?
- Why is it necessary? Why does your character fight?
- Don't overdo the choreography details – readers will fill the blanks
- How good of a fighter is your character, really?
- Don't forget about what happens around the fighters (play with focal point)
- Adrenaline is not your friend, it will make you shaky and wear you down quickly

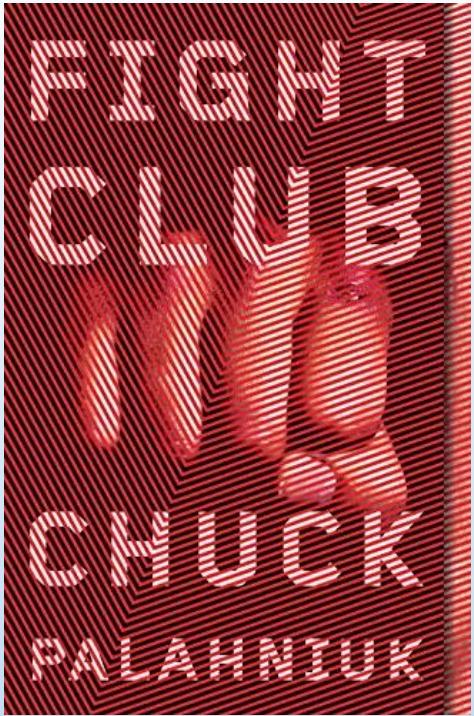
# More fighting... Or nah?

Skip the violence

*“ I asked Tyler what he wanted me to do.  
Tyler said, “I want you to hit me as hard as you can.”*

At this point a new chapter begins:

*“ Two screens into my demo to Microsoft, I taste blood... My boss doesn't know the material, but he won't let me run the demo with a black eye and half my face swollen from the stitches in my cheek.*



# Do your research

- Existing martial arts moves
- Effects of stress/endurance/exhaustion
- Impacts of punches and kicks
- Injuries



Smosh.com

- Does the weapon/fighting technique match the era/location?
- How does one wield this weapon? (weight, material, training)
- Is this thing moving at the actual speed it would be moving at?
- Does this come across as realistic, or believable?

# **Basics of Creative Writing**

## **Week 7**

**Senses, setting**

# Senses

Sight

Hearing

Smell

Taste

Feel - skin/hair

- gut feeling/intuition
- hunger/stamina

Expertise

Spider sense/sixth sense

...other senses?



Lesneyman, flickr



aquaworld.com

## **Brian's Writing Tip #30**

### **Don't confuse narrative and descriptive writing.**

It happens all the time. I ask a student to write a description and instead he tells me a story. I get it – it's uncommon to see descriptive writing in isolation. Most of the description we read comes as an integrated part of narrative writing, and it feels uncomfortable for students to describe without giving the description meaning in the context of a story. But while descriptive writing is an important component of story-telling, it can be a useful exercise to separate these two modes of writing. Remember that narrating involves meaningful action that leads from conflict to resolution. Description is simply using words to paint a picture of a person, a place, a creature, or an object. That picture may reference any of the five senses to bring the scene to life, but it does not include narrative features like character, conflict and plot.

# **Narration vs description**



# Setting

Why is it important?

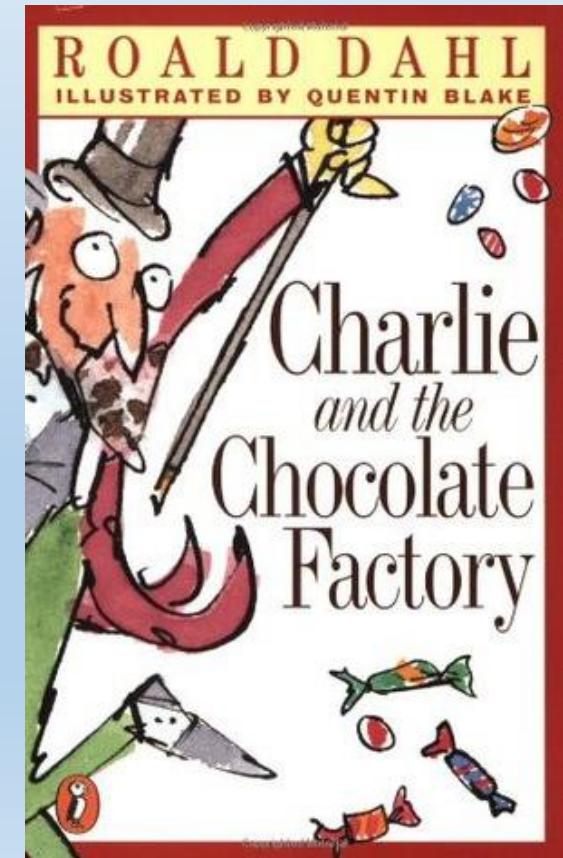
You can create meaningful context through images - shape and affect your characters. A character is often an extension of the setting they originate from.

Setting is more than just describing the location.

Tips:

- Have some.
- But not too much (pacing, infodumps).
- Give it some kind of purpose in the story

A setting should enhance the effect of the story, not draw attention away from it.



# Setting

You can think outwards:



# How to describe setting

- Make it specific (what does a ‘field’/‘mountain’/‘mansion’ look like?).
- Yet still recognizable (local store chains, obscure car brands won’t have much appeal).
- Use sensory details.
- If it’s historical or culturally specific, do your research. Pretty please.
- Vocabulary/slang can indicate backdrop and status
- Writing historical fiction or fantasy? Units of measurement! (distance, height, weight, etc)

# Subjectivity

Preferences? ‘nice and chilly outside’/‘I love those dark days before Christmas’  
What are they use to? (What is a short walk?)



Nightmare before Christmas



# Functional or atmospherical?

Mention it's a wooden table, because when it breaks a part of it can be used as a stake to kill the vampire.

Mention the knotted tree with the high branches, so someone can climb it later.

Set it in a deep, dark forest to foreshadow bad times ahead.

Set it on a boat to increase the sense of claustrophobia.

Mention it's a candlelit dinner, because you want to create a romantic atmosphere and influence the character's emotions.

Mention the long shadows in the hotel lobby because you want to set up a scary mood.



# Passive/active

Action-bearing verbs:

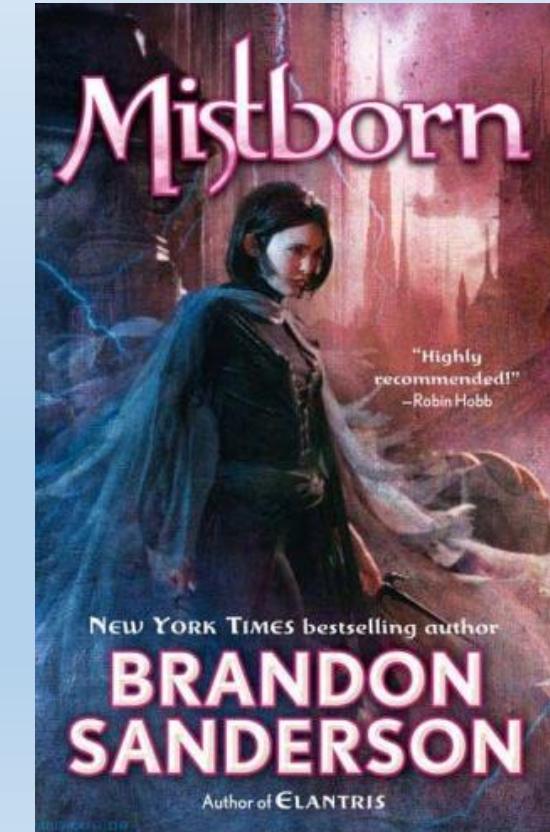
‘The dead leaves crunched underneath his sneakers...’

‘The wind swept across the rooftops...’

‘The gentle splashing of the waves over the sand calmed her nerves.’

Passive backdrop? Or pro-active scenery?

- Natural disasters (hurricanes, volcanoes)
- Magical forests and fantasy worlds



# Plz don't do dis, fanks

'Kevin lived on the third floor of his apartment complex. He looked out the window and was amazed at what he saw. It was like a scene from a zombie outbreak film. From his apartment window, he could see his parking lot where his car and other residents' cars sat.'

From creepypasta.org called: The State of Nature

Author: Zsimoni

*This is better →*



The last of us

# **Basics of Creative Writing**

**week 8**

**Endings  
Sentences**

# When is a story finished?

Plot-based story:

- Your MC has reached or failed to reach their goal, or;
- The main issue/conflict/mystery/question has been solved, or;
- You're back at the beginning

Character or theme based story:

- There have been enough major events, or;
- You've reached a natural point of resolution, or;
- There's an echo of the past you can reflect on



Looney tunes

# The End

## #1 rule: IT MUST MAKE SENSE

If you don't know what the main issue/question in your story is, it is unlikely you will write a good ending.



shut up, mike   
@shutupmikeginn

I hate it when people complain a movie doesn't make sense.  
look around you dumbass, nothing makes sense

4:23 PM - 29 Oct 2016

4,838 10,664

# Do's and don'ts of writing an ending

*Yaaaaas!*

- Let your MC play an active part in the ending
- Maximize action
- Hold the biggest surprise for the ending: tension – shock - relief
- Resolve the main issue
- Redeem the MC
- Tie up loose ends, answer the questions

*Nope!*

- Introduce new characters or new story lines in the last quarter
- Easy escape routes and dumb luck resolutions
- Philosophize or inform too much (so easy on the exposition)
- Change voice, tone, theme, attitude

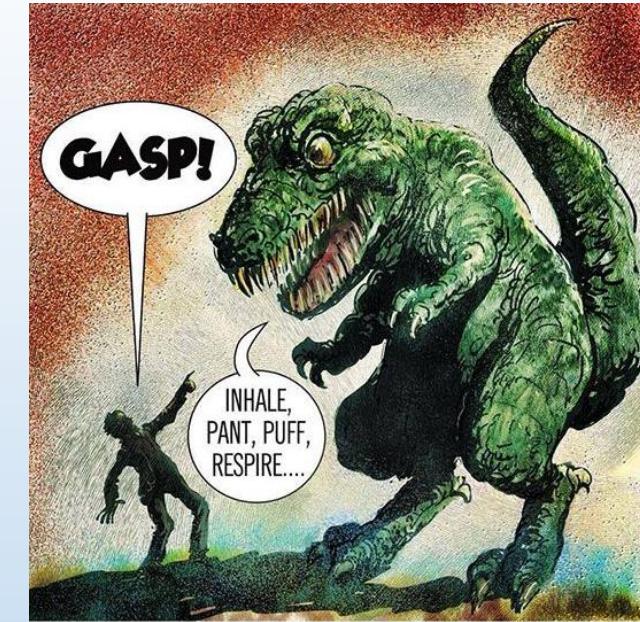
# Types of endings

- Inconclusive/open (low stakes, mundane, real life, literary)
  - The ‘tidy package’ – conclusive/closed
  - Middle road: With a hint at how it will end
  - Surprise! (climax built on clues, commercial)
- 
- :D
  - :(
  - Somewhere in between (hopeful, melancholic)

# Make the words

- Don't be too formal (unless the story/article explicitly needs it)
- Favor active over passive (The letter was written by him. / He wrote the letter.)
- Simpler words make for more accessible reading
- Be specific
- Verbs over nouns (-ization) 'He did the categorization of samples in the lab.' / 'He categorized the samples in his lab.'

Being vague  
is almost as fun  
as doing this  
other thing.



Thesaurus.

Can't find the source...



# But not all the words

- Limit the use of long sentences
- Get rid of redundant adjectives and adverbs
- Delete redundancies in general (“an expert with a lot of experience”, ‘a young toddler’)
- Don’t repeat the same word too often within a paragraph or on one page
- Use metaphors sparingly
- Delete filler words and catchphrases (that, while, so, because, when, and then, etc)
- Try to avoid using a lot of weak words (very, really)
- Limit self-referencing (I think, I feel, I believe, in my opinion)
- Avoid the masculine generic – the doctor, the teacher, the researcher – can be of either gender. Don’t automatically make it a ‘he/him’.



# **Basics of Creative Writing**

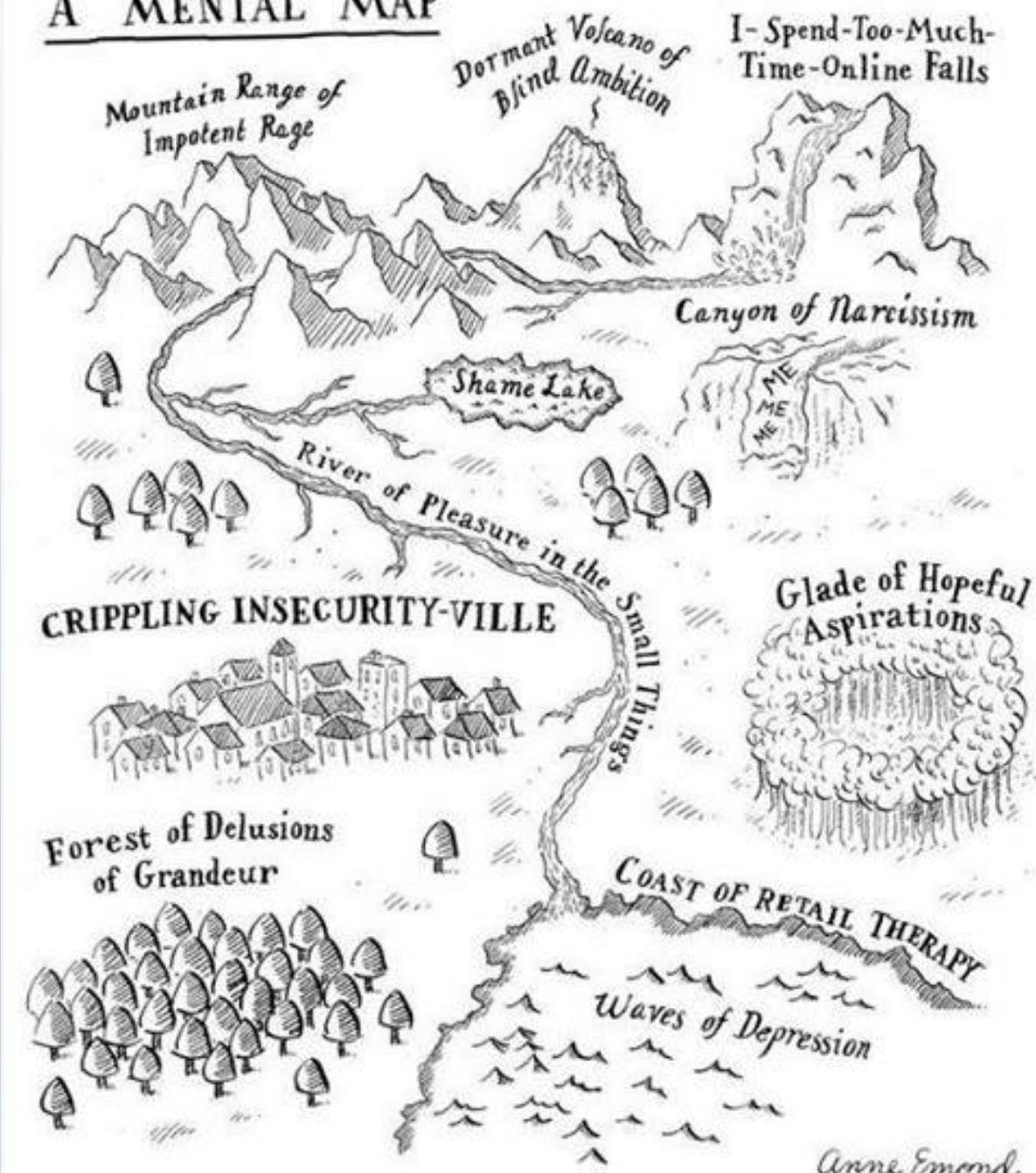
**week 9**

**Go with the flow or find your own :P**

# How do you write?



## A MENTAL MAP



# The writing process – possible steps

Ideas and inspiration

Joy and excitement

Plotting (with post-its)

Character building

Research

First draft

Crippling self-doubt

Procrastination station

Rewrites

Proof-reading

Let it rest

Reread

New hope

Edits

Second/third... Draft...



The loopdeloop of self-loathing, which is perhaps sort of healthy?

Aaand...Editor feedback

Edits

Final draft!

Amazement at finishing something

Restlessness



tumblr. [Follow](#)

when you want to write something really deep but it ends up sounding like



People die if they are killed...

#silly posts from my twitter #humour #writer problems #writing #writer #silly  
#lol #amwriting #am writing #nanowrimo #camp nanowrimo #the life of max

111,583 notes



# CONFIDENCE BOOST!

“If I waited for  
*perfection*,  
I would never write  
A word.”

- MARGARET ATWOOD

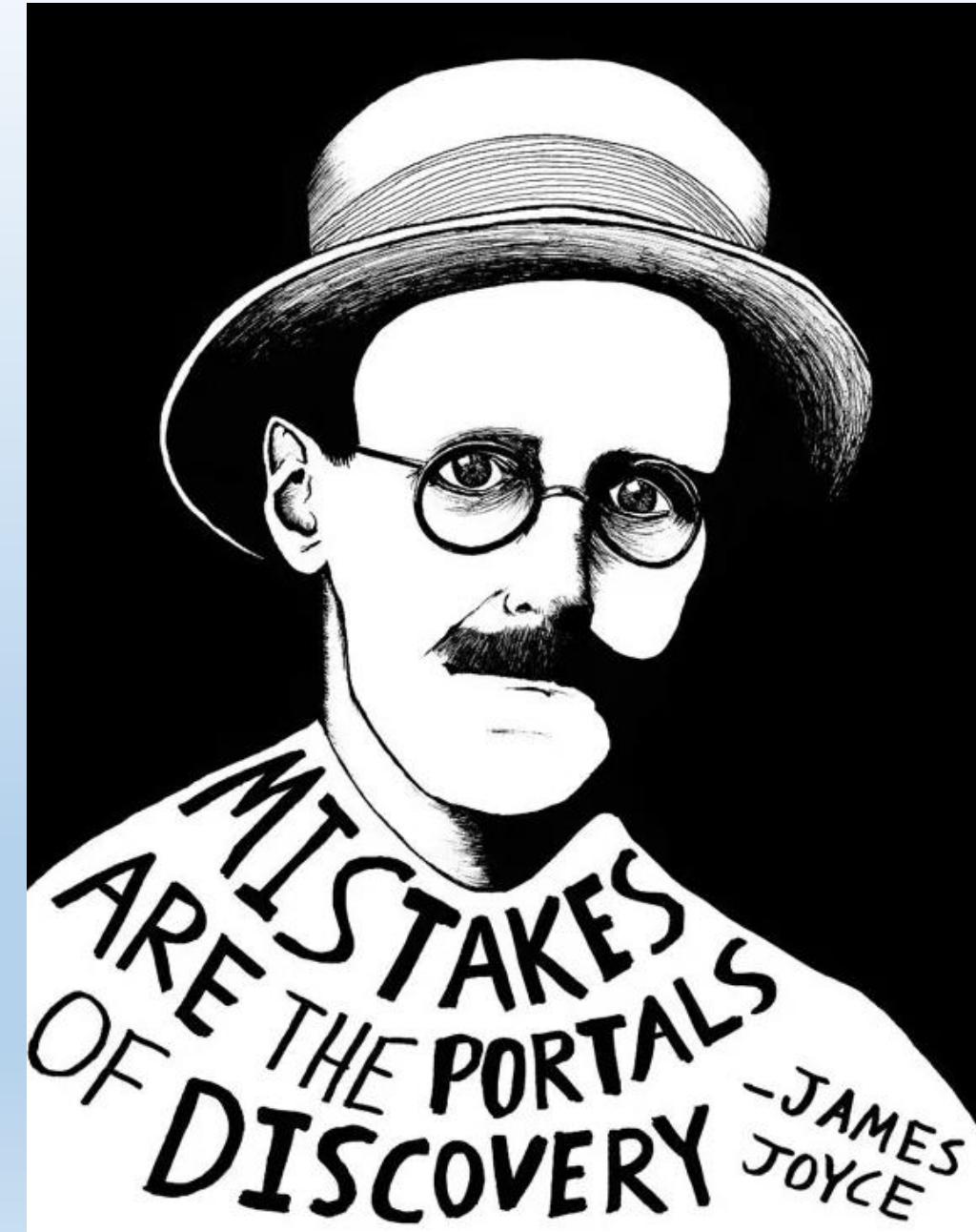


terences.deviantart.com

# Still...We suck

If you hide your ignorance,  
no one will hit you  
and you'll never learn.

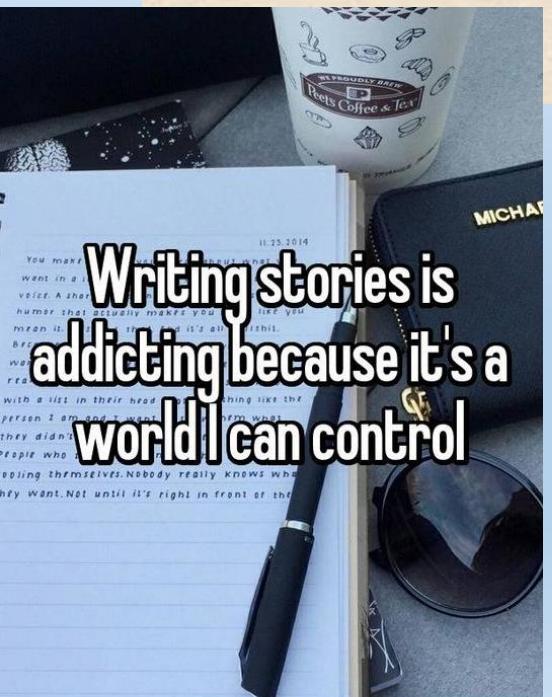
*Ray Bradbury, 1920-2012*



# Why do you write?

If you don't care for obscenity, you don't care for the truth.

Tim O'Brien



whisper

I write to give myself strength.  
I write to be the characters that I am not.  
I write to explore all the things I'm afraid of.

- Joss Whedon

"Writing a novel is a terrible experience, during which the hair often falls out and the teeth decay. I'm always irritated by people who imply that writing fiction is an escape from reality. It is a plunge into reality and it's very shocking to the system." — Flannery O'Connor

pinwords

votgs lady-feral

"The ceramics teacher announced on opening day that he was dividing the class into two groups.

All those on the left side of the studio, he said, would be graded solely on the quantity of work they produced, all those on the right solely on its quality.

His procedure was simple: on the final day of class he would bring in his bathroom scales and weigh the work of the "quantity" group: 50 pounds of pots rated an "A", 40 pounds a "B", and so on.

Those being graded on "quality", however, needed to produce only one pot — albeit a perfect one — to get an "A".

Well, came grading time and a curious fact emerged: the works of highest quality were all produced by the group being graded for quantity.

It seems that while the "quantity" group was busily churning out piles of work-and learning from their mistakes — the "quality" group had sat theorizing about perfection, and in the end had little more to show for their efforts than grandiose theories and a pile of dead clay."

— Art and Fear- David Bayles and Ted Orland (via qweety)

Perfection is intimidating. I think most artists blocks come from the fear of creating something imperfect.

(via buttastic)

putting it even more simply: just *make shit*. eventually it'll be good shit.  
maybe most of it will just be *shit!* but you can't make *good shit* if you're not making a *lot* of shit.

GET EXCITED AND MAKE THINGS.

(via aintgotnoladytronblues)

Kind of important. I've spent way too much of my life thinking about the perfect things I could make without actually making the damned things.

26,336 notes

... ↗ ❤



# Where to find your stories

What bothers me?

How do I look at other people and how do other people look at me?

Is there something I'm ashamed of?

Where do I want to go?

I wish I could... /What do I want to do? (revenge)

What do I stand for?

What preoccupies my brain?

## WHAT IF...?

How would it have been if...?

Hemingway's advice: start with writing the truest sentence that you can think of.



*That's a term coined by someone who was just generally unhappy with the fact that women aren't smiling literally all the time.*

Ode to my resting bitch face Olivia Gatwood– Button Poetry

# Creativity and inspiration

“The dynamic principle of fantasy is play, which belongs also to the child, and as such it appears to be inconsistent with the principle of serious work. But without this playing with fantasy no creative work has ever yet come to birth.” – Carl Gustav Jung

"Stories of imagination tend to upset those without one." – Terry Pratchett,  
The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Fantasy

# F\*\*\* inspiration

“Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work.” — Stephen King

Routine and discipline.

500 words a day are a book a year.

# The flow and the block - techniques

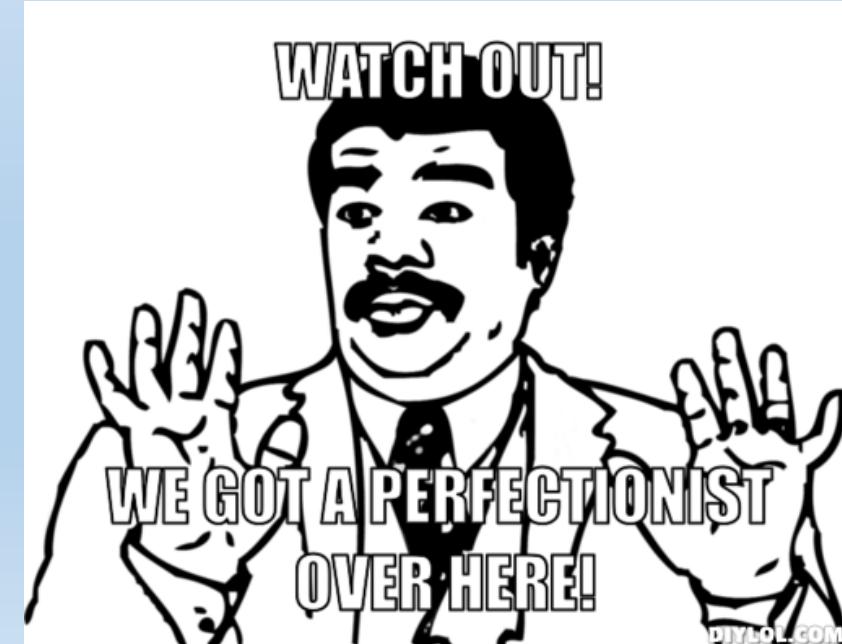
*Methods to help you write:*

- Morning pages – Julia Cameron
- Prompts
- Snowflake Method - Randy Ingermanson
- Pomodoro
- Listen to music and song lyrics

# The block and the block

*What do I do when I get stuck?*

- List all the things that you think would NOT happen next.
- Delete, back up until the point you think you can continue again.
- Go for a walk. Shower. Clean something. Think about why you got stuck.
- Discuss it with a proofreader, they might have a brilliant idea
- ‘Get in late and leave as soon as you can’



# **Basics of Creative Writing**

**week 10**

**Proofreading**

# Art vs Craft

On balancing structure and creativity



# Proofreading

Levels:

- meta-editing (story level – continuity, logic, believability, build-up of events, pacing, characters)
- word-edits (language level, catchphrases, nuance)

How:

- Try to think about what the writer meant by writing this, though stay (constructively and respectfully) critical

Steps:

- *Ongoing commentary* in the sideline to let the writer know what the writing does to you as a reader.  
Where do you get excited? Angry? Tearful? Are there nice accents? Do you get bored anywhere?
- Indicate where in the story what part(s) of the text feels ‘off’ to you and why.
- Suggest how to fix it.
- *Separate analysis* of story structure, character development, use of language, whatever needs attention

vandaar dat ik me moet voorbereiden om de slechterik te zijn. Ik heb dat nooit gewild, dat snappen jullie toch wel? Ik doe alleen maar wat ik kan. En als jullie mij en ons land zo in een hoek blijven drukken, dan is het niet anders. Het spijt me.'

te beginnen jupjup



Corina Onderstijn

You may call me Rage-y McRageFace by now ^^

# Criticism

With critiques, be appreciative and flexible without compromising. Don't make changes that will alter your book in a way that doesn't feel right to you.

# Contests €€€

NL

[www.schrijvenonline.org/wedstrijden](http://www.schrijvenonline.org/wedstrijden)

[www.schrijverspunt.nl/actuele-schrijfwedstrijden](http://www.schrijverspunt.nl/actuele-schrijfwedstrijden)

[creatiefschrijven.be/wedstrijden/](http://creatiefschrijven.be/wedstrijden/)

ENG

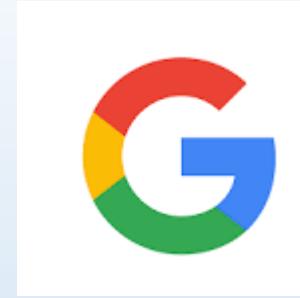
[thewritelife.com/writing-contests/](http://thewritelife.com/writing-contests/)

[www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions](http://www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions)

[www.writermag.com/writing-resources/contests/](http://www.writermag.com/writing-resources/contests/)

[fundsforwriters.com/contests/](http://fundsforwriters.com/contests/)

[www.dystopianstories.com/writing-competitions-contests/](http://www.dystopianstories.com/writing-competitions-contests/)



## Wedstrijden

Hieronder vind je alle schrijfwedstrijden die bij ons bekend zijn, gesorteerd op deadline. De doorlopende wedstrijden staan aan het einde van de lijst. Wil je discussiëren over een bepaalde wedstrijd, kijk dan op [het forum](#).

Wil je een wedstrijd aanmelden? Vul dan [dit formulier](#) in. Onvolledig ingevulde formulieren worden NIET in behandeling genomen.

Wil je op de hoogte blijven van de nieuwste schrijfwedstrijden? [Meld je dan aan voor de nieuwsbrief](#)

De wedstrijden die online verschijnen proberen wij zo goed mogelijk te filteren en stuk voor stuk te controleren, maar dat lukt helaas niet altijd. Als je het idee hebt dat er iets mis is met een wedstrijd kun je dit aangeven op [het forum](#). Dan kunnen wij hieraan kijken en de wedstrijd verwijderen.

Wedstrijd	Deadline
Middeleeuwse schrijfwedstrijd Anno Domini 892	31 mei 2017
EdgeZero editie 2016	31 mei 2017
Ongehoord! gedichtenwedstrijd 2017	31 mei 2017
Literaire Prijzen stad Sint-Truiden 2017	31 mei 2017
Op reis	1 jun 2017
Zaanse jongeren poëziewedstrijd	1 jun 2017
Zaterdagavond	30 jun 2017
Schrijfwedstrijd De Zon - Blogs, verhalen en gedichten met het thema De Zon	30 jun 2017
Denkraam gedichtenwedstrijd 2017	1 jul 2017
Sophia's zomer schrijfwedstrijd 2017: De eerste dag	1 jul 2017
Baarnse Literatuurprijs	7 jul 2017
<span style="color: #800000;">tip!</span> Droomverhalen	23 jul 2017
Lichtvoetig	1 aug 2017
<span style="color: #800000;">tip!</span> De Gouden Eeuw - Schrijfwedstrijd	1 aug 2017
Volzin-schrijfwedstrijd 2017	1 sep 2017
De Schrijverspodiumprijs: een dichtwedstrijd voor iedereen	6 sep 2017
Bloeidente duinen / de HUGO	15 sep 2017
Poëziewedstrijd stad Oostende	1 okt 2017
De Nijmeegse Literatuurprijs	31 okt 2017
<span style="color: #800000;">tip!</span> Schrijfwedstrijden Tijdschrift Oerkraft	15 nov 2017

# WEBSITES

Mythcreants.com

Tvtropes.com

Thewritepractice.com

Wonderbooknow.com

Writersdigest.com

Writersrelief.com

Creative-writing-now.com

Writermag.com

Reddit.com/r/WritingPrompts/

Facebook: writing about writing

aerogrammestudio.com

Find proofreaders:

Scribophile.com

Library reading/writing circles



\* G R O N I N G E N \*



