

Story Genius Novel Writing Method Worksheet

The words and ideas provided in this worksheet belong exclusively to Lisa Cron and are excerpted from her book *Story Genius*. I used quotation marks whenever they would not interfere with the convenience of the checklist. This is in no way my own invention and is merely a tool I use personally to apply the *Story Genius* method. For the maximum impact, I suggest reading the book concurrently or prior to completing this worksheet for your novel.

The What If (Ch. 3)

- ☐ Write about the instant you got your idea for your novel. Try your best to remember the very moment you first stumbled on your idea.
- ☐ Write about why you care about this story idea.
- ☐ What point will your story make in a few brief lines? (As Cron says, “reduce it to its essence.”)
- ☐ Now write your what if: Your story idea phrased in the form of a few sentences beginning with the phrase “What if...” Keep revising until it is as specific as you can get it, “with context, conflict, and a hint of surprise. In essence: something that will make your point.”

The Who (Ch. 4)

- ☐ Write a sketch of who your protagonist is BEFORE your novel begins. Answer these questions:
 - Who is this person on the inside?
 - Where are they in their life, specifically?
 - What do they believe?
 - What do they want?

The Why (Ch. 5)

- ☐ Write a paragraph about what your character wants at the beginning of the story. “Be as specific as possible...if you can’t close your eyes and envision it, it’s not there yet.”
- ☐ Write a paragraph explaining why your protagonist wants what she wants. What will getting it mean to her (even if she’s wrong about this, what does she THINK getting it will mean)?
- ☐ Define your protagonist’s misbelief: “write down what she wants, and what the fear is that’s keeping her from achieving it” and also consider, given your protagonist’s misbelief, “what does she think the very worst thing that could happen would be?”

The Worldview (Ch. 6)

- ☐ Sketch the “origin scene” in your protagonist’s life when she acquired her misbelief.
- ☐ Now, sketch out what your heroine went into this origin scene believing. In other words, before her misbelief, what did she believe?
- ☐ Now write out a fully fledged scene describing when your protagonist’s misbelief took root in her brain.