

FICTION FROM FACT WRITING WORKSHOP

This workshop encourages writers to expand one personal fact into a fictional story. It frees writers from binding biographical associations, logic, and strict time frames to spin a creative tale.

1. Pick a fact, any fact.

A. Ideally, you should keep a fact box of specific meaningful incidents with a wide emotional range--sad events, funny occurrences, poignant memories. Each slip inside the box will only be a sentence or two. Brainstorm to begin such a box--use old photo albums, recordings, etc.

B. Nobody is stopping you from using other peoples' facts! Toss in clips from newspapers, magazines, second hand anecdotes, jokes, etc.

2. Create a new character.

Because the fact will usually have the pronoun "I," lose it and rename your character. On a separate page, create a "character bubble." Brainstorm all kinds of details--age, gender, build, hair, facial features, interests, likes, dislikes, traits, qualities, groceries in cart, decorations on walls, favorite music, character's opinions, etc. The more you know your character, the truer you can be.

Minor characters can have minor bubbles. Make sure your main character (protagonist) has a troublesome complement (antagonist).

3. Time and Place

This is more liberating than you may think. Set a story 200 years ago, and it's historical fiction. Set it 10 years from now, and you have sci-fi. Will it be fantasy? Your setting should have as much power as any character.

4. Character + Conflict = Plot

Your original fact often involves a conflict already. But now you must shape it to fit the new character you've made. For example, a fall off a bike at age 6 can become a treacherous crash in the Tour de France at age 27. You'll want your character to have an inner conflict--a motivating factor--that is clear from the beginning. Perhaps your character has been reckless. Show examples building up to a climactic event. Throw obstacles in the way of your character's goal. Make the climax force the character to grow in some way.

5. Emotions.

As you develop the plot, make time to flesh out the emotions, knowing what you know about the character. Ask yourself, "How did s(he) feel about this?"

6. C.O.O.L. dialogue.

C= does dialogue match your character?

O= does dialogue express opinions or outpourings of emotion?

O= does the dialogue propel the story onward?

L= does it use the least number of words? Sometimes, it's best to *show* the emotion with action, or with *monologue* that's not shared with other characters. Can you use *silence* to heighten tension?

7. **Reread** the story as you go along. Rereading helps you get a sense of pace, character and direction.

8. **The ABCs of Revision**

A = Action. Strong action verbs? or boring "was" and "were."

B = Beginning. Is it exciting? Revealing of conflict?

C = Character. Sympathetic? Authentic? (not stereotypic)

D = Description. Use specific adjectives. Similes? Metaphors?

E = Edit. Chop, cut & paste, polish.

F = Finish. Is conflict resolved? Is resolution too predictable?

G = Grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.

9. **Entitle**

Make it memorable, specific.

VARIATION: FICTION FROM ART WORKSHOP

Find your characters in books of photography and art. Use or abuse the context--of the work of art. Look for conflict, then brainstorm. Change genre? Genders? Ages?

HAVE FUN !!