Introduction to Storytelling for Queer Writers Worksheet

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Intro

A lot of people ask me, "How do you know what to write about? Where do you even start?" The answer is going to be different for everybody, but I found it most helpful to get inspiration from a story I already like when I was drafting my first manuscript. Please come to this workshop with a familiar story in mind (this could be a short story, novel, any written work) and we will break it down to identify what about this story compels you and how it ties into queer identity. I find my queer identity is intrinsically linked to my storytelling – they are one in the same!

The goal is to have an outline for your story after this workshop. You can use these prompts countless times for as many stories as you like. Your story can take any form – these tools will be useful for short stories, oral re-tellings, novels, plays, anything you so desire!

Necessary Materials

Please re-read your favorite story and come with a short excerpt of it to use during this workshop and the ability to fill out this worksheet.

Age group

All ages. Please do not include adult content in your excerpt or in-group discussion (save it for after the workshop!)

Discussion

Why do you personally relate to this story? Or why don't you? Relate it to your own life experiences or goals. This usually contributes to why we feel so compelled by a piece.

How did you feel reading this story? Did you like it even though it may have been sad?

What genre(s) can this story be classified as?

Is this story implicitly or explicitly queer?

What does the plot of this story focus on? Does the queerness contribute to the plot or is it in the background? (Bonus: When is the climax? Is the story slow to start, or does it jump into action right away? Does it end with a bang or a whisper?)

Who are the most important characters? (Bonus: Who is your favorite and why? The protagonist? The anti-hero? The villain? The animals?)

Where does this story take place? How does this contribute to the story? Does the setting turn into a character or plotline itself?

What about the author's writing do you like? (Dive into: vocabulary, sentence structure, dialogue, tone.) Highlight a particular line or two that stands out to you and break it down into each literary tool listed.

What don't you like? Is there anything that jumps out to you after your re-read that rubs you the wrong way? This could include plot devices, character traits, or language. Do you think the author included these things to intentionally make the reader uncomfortable?

Your Story

What personal experiences are you going to combine with the inspiration from your favorite story to create your own unique piece? Think about what you want to share with your reader, and what was relatable from your favorite story and why.

What overall tone do you want your story to portray? Do you want the reader to feel heartbreak, happiness, anger, rage, all of the above? This is an important big-picture thing to keep in mind while writing and can contribute to identifying your genre.

How will your story include queerness? Will it be implicit or explicit? Is this lived experience for you, or will you be drawing inspiration from relationships with other queer folks?

What perspective is your story going to be told from? Feel free to think outside the box and brainstorm character ideas.

Setting? How important is the location of the story to set your tone? Is it one the readers will already be familiar with, or will you have to put time into describing the surroundings? Does this fit with the pace you would like your story to have?