180 DAYS
TO SAVE THE WORLD
Write and Publish a Short Story Collection

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Your Story |

Your Big Idea

Original vs. Unique:

A fictional story is simply a long, drawn-out lie meant to entertain and twist us into knots that keep us turning pages until we're unknotted. Fiction is like all art; it's subjective. That means that art is based on personal preferences. There is not much in art that can be put characterized into specifics. However, there is one thing about fiction that can be said for certain, and this is that there is no such thing as an original storyline.

If you have an idea that you think is completely new and original, it's okay, don't worry. There are only so many possible storylines available. They all have common plots like boy meets girl, someone travels through time, a stranger comes to town, a guy sets off on a noble quest, and so on. So, don't worry about coming up with an original story idea. **What you should be writing is not something necessarily original but something unique.**

To understand the difference better, look up the definition of these two words and write it here:

Original-

Unique-

A unique story means you can simply take a storyline that has already been done before and put your own spin on it. It's going to differ from the original because of the characters you create, how you write, and the twists and turns you put into the story. In other words, you are telling the same old story in a cool new way.

You can do that by adding a twist to an old tale. Cinderella is one of the best examples. Scholars disagree as to exactly how many versions of the popular fairy tale exist, with numbers ranging from 340 to over 3,000. These figures include picture books and musical interpretations. But either way, this story has been told over and over in many new and interesting ways.

Whether your short story is an adaptation of a classic story or a unique version of a typical plot, it must have characters we care about doing things we could only dream of. They will face giants and legends, get defeated and come back bruised but not destroyed. Remember that your readers are teenagers. They have vivid imaginations. To a young adult, the line between reality and imagination is pretty blurred. You can create amazing stories that will be sure to keep your readers hooked.

Let's practice taking something borrowed and turning it into something new. Take three classic stories or scenes from a story (book or movie) and put your own twist on it.

Write a one-paragraph summary for each new plot idea:

Story - _____

New Plot Idea:

Getting Organized |

Conflict

I cannot discuss conflict in fiction without first establishing an important baseline concept, and that is about value. I will start by sharing a few examples of items that were sold at auction:

The Giant Steel Rabbit

Jeff Koons' three-foot stainless steel rabbit, created in 1986, sold at auction in 2019 for $91 million, setting the record for the highest price ever paid for a living artist's work. Purchased by art dealer Robert E. Mnuchin, the sculpture is now regarded as one of the most valuable and iconic pieces of contemporary art. On a funny side note, when Koons was deciding on what animal to sculpt a likeness of, he almost chose a pig.

Leftover French Toast

In the late 1990s, two uneaten slices of French toast left behind by Justin Timberlake of the pop boy band NSYNC during a radio interview were auctioned on eBay. The unusual item sold to teenage fan Kathy Summers

for $1,025, making it one of the most infamous celebrity memorabilia sales of its time. When asked what she would do with the leftover and slightly burned toast, the teen fan said, "I'll probably freeze-dry it, then seal it...then put it on my dresser."

Da Vinci Painting

Leonardo da Vinci's Salvator Mundi became the most expensive artwork ever sold at auction when it reached $450.3 million at Christie's in New York on November 15, 2017. The winning bid was submitted by Alex Rotter, Christie's co-chairman, acting on behalf of an anonymous client. Hmm, maybe there is such a thing as having too much money.

Was a Da Vinci painting worth over 4 million dollars? Or two pieces of leftover French Toast work over a thousand dollars? Most people would say, "No, it wasn't." They would be wrong. The truth is that all the items I mentioned were worth that much. Why? Because someone was willing to pay that much for it.

One of the most elemental rules of a capitalist society is that a thing's value, or worth, is the equivalent of the highest amount someone is willing to pay for it. This is why the cost of attaining a story goal is so critical to storytelling. The true value of a story goal is best determined by what your main character is willing to suffer, or "pay," to attain it.

Let's review what the element of conflict is:

> Conflict - The ways we suffer
>
> Conflict is a part of every story because it is a part of life. Without conflict, there is no value in achieving your story goal. In fact, many conflicts should get increasingly bigger. Conflict causes suffering. The main character must suffer, and, in kind, the reader will suffer right along with him. Suffering is a part of life and one that every human can identify with.

Conflict should build and increase throughout your story. Even in a short story, you should be building with every scene. Let's briefly look at the different types of conflict. The table will show you the main types of conflict in stories.

Many authors will have more than one type of conflict in their story, but only if it makes sense. A story about the hardships of the Oregon Trail or a medieval dictator will not have person v. technology and, generally, not person v. supernatural. These will have strong person v. nature and person v. self or society conflict.

In a short story, multiple types of conflict are difficult to represent fully. It is best if you choose one mode of conflict and let that be the basis of your antagonist (or antagonistic force). If you are particularly drawn to two conflicts, make sure they go well together, like person v. self and person v. nature. In this case, your main character has many internal issues and a character arc while externally battling deadly nature. Now, let's discuss external and internal suffering.

Your Internal Editor

Years of spelling lessons, grammar worksheets, and research papers with red marks all over them have honed our internal editor to some degree or another. It is hard to break away from self-correcting. I guarantee that as you sit to write your first story draft, most of you will have this inner alarm that goes off:

Wait a minute, that doesn't sound right.

Is that a run-on sentence?

There must be a better way of saying that. Thesaurus.com?

Have I used that word too many times?

When do I need a comma again?

Those red lines under a few words are driving me nuts! MUST FIX NOW.

English teachers around the globe would chastise me for what I will tell you; your internal editor is a destructive force in creative writing! I will call it a draft monster that can throttle your creativity. If you give in to that editor and fix a misspelled word or try to fix a run-on sentence, then that editor grows and gets hungrier. Soon, you are writing your third draft of the opening scene when you should be working on the climax. Not to mention you forgot the inspired details you wanted to add to the next scene by the time you finished editing that one.

If you allow your internal editor to run rampant, then you will get a disjointed grouping of grammatically correct sweeping descriptions of a broken plot. Don't encourage your internal editor, at least not yet. There is a time for editing that comes later in the revision process. **For now, you will create. Later, you will correct.**

If you really struggle with your internal editor, try these tips to help you stop feeding the draft monster:

- Assuming you touch type (which is typing without looking at your keyboard), and everyone using a computer should change your font color to a very, very light gray or blue. Yes, you will barely see what you are writing, but you won't be able to read anything you are writing. Get it? You will just write. You will let your creativity flow naturally and fix the typos and format issues later. Naturally, don't forget to change the font color to black when you are all done with the draft. I know it's assumed you would do that, but it's like the warning label on liquid bleach telling you not to drink it. Duh, but it's there for a reason.

- Dictate your words. If you choose this route, I recommend using one of the many free voice dictators online. This is one of my favorites when I want to let it flow. Granted, you cannot speak as fast as you would conversationally, but it's far more accurate than other options. This will work great for specific scenes you are working

CHARACTER WORKSHEET

Character Name _____

Sketch or Paste Image

NickName _____

Physical Description

Positive Ideals

Personality

Negative Ideals

Habits / Quirks

Goals and Motivations

Background