

NAME: _____

**:PREWRITE EXERCISES & CONSTRUCTION PACKET:
NEW SHORT STORY FOR PEER EDITING**

Complete each of the following pre-writes and story explorations in this packet. This packet will be due at the end of the day, Monday 4/12/11.

List of writing exercises:

1. Character quirks.
a. Date Done: _____ Signed Off: _____
2. Character's wallet/dresser/fridge/closet/car/etc.
a. Date Done: _____ Signed Off: _____
3. Negative exploration of wants.
a. Date Done: _____ Signed Off: _____
4. Opposing perceptions of similar scenes.
a. Date Done: _____ Signed Off: _____
5. Scene cannibalism.
a. Date Done: _____ Signed Off: _____
6. Story Arc
a. Date Done: _____ Signed Off: _____

If you don't finish an assignment on time, you should still do the assignment for partial credit. The draft of your story that comes from this work will be used both for the final story project AS WELL AS the story workshop that will comprise much of your 4th quarter grade.

Character quirks

Explanation:

In this exercise, you are creating specific actions, thoughts, and histories for your character that allows that character to become a complex (and thus, real) character. These things are considered “quirks” because they make your character specifically individual rather than a stereotypical member of a general group. The use of opposing quirks allows the character to have internal conflict as the realities of the quirks clash.

Write:

Create 4 quirks about your character that would be expected to clash with each other. For each quirk, write a half page scene that explores what that quirk is like in the character’s life or how that character came about to have that quirk.

Example:

Bobby is scared of fish (followed by a scene that showed this)

Bobby works as a waiter at a sushi bar (followed by a scene that shows this)

Bobby lives with three other guys. (followed by a scene that shows this)

Bobby hates messy areas (followed by a scene that shows this)

What’s in your character’s wallet/dresser/fridge/closet/car/etc.

Explanation:

This exercise allows you to explore your character’s life and history based upon the items that can be found in their possession at a given time. Even the smallest things in a wallet can show who a character is.

Write:

Write a page that explores the things in your character’s wallet/dresser/etc. For each item, you should write about where it came from, why it is kept, etc. Not every item needs to be written about extensively, just those items that can give you a full picture of that character’s personality and history.

Example:

Bobby’s wallet still has the original stock pictures in it. He places the pictures of his girlfriend behind the one with the happy kids playing on the swing set. Where there should be credit cards, he has multiple dog-eared frequent customer cards from the burger joints around town, each one filled almost to the brim and then forgotten when a new place became hot on yelp. <insert obvious old condom that’s been there for years description here>

Negative exploration of your character's wants. (Part 1 AND Part 2)

Explanation

For this exercise you must explore things that your character does not want to have, do, or be. The value of this exercise comes from the reasons and history of the character for not wanting these things. What happens is that the explorations of why the character does not want things helps us understand how that character came to be the person that he/she/it is. Once we know this character's history more, then it becomes easier to create complex understandings of what your character wants (thus, conflict!).

Write

Part 1

Choose 4 things that your character does not want to do or have or be AND THEN write at least half a page that explores the history/experiences of the character that led to them not wanting that thing.

Part 2

Based upon the information that you found in the explorations in part 1, create a page of writing about what your character does want. To do this, decide what they want and then create a scene that either deals with what they will do to attempt to get this thing, or why they won't get this thing, or anything else that will deal with how their story develops based upon that desire (and thus, conflict!!!)

Example:

Bobby does not want to be talk to people on the bus. His headphones sit silently in his ears but make him invisible to nonstop roar of the people around him. He works with a studied repertoire of grunts and head nods that allow his customers to communicate with him without risking the possibility of exchanging information about the person. <insert more here>

Bobby did not want to be the best in his class. He studied enough to get 100% and then chose questions specifically that would lower the score to somewhere between 83% and 87%. People with red As on their paper would sit proud or cower with their eyes down. Bobby's B sat on his desk unnoticed as Bobby stared straight ahead, waiting for the next part of class <insert more here>

Opposing perceptions of similar scenes by multiple characters.

Explanation:

By have different characters describe the same tangible scene in their own words, you can learn the different ways in which the world of your characters is reacted to and understood. The different specific details that are noticed show us the perspectives of the differing characters in the story. These differences help to understand the conflicts and resolutions that occur throughout the course of the story.

Write:

Decide upon any scene in your story and write half a page in which your main character describes what's happening and what's in the scene. You **MUST** use specific detail in this description. Then describe the same scene from the point of view of another important character in your story. Focus on the different details and meanings that your secondary character places more importance on. The histories of those conflicts created by these two characters are contained in their differing priorities in what they notice in the scene.

Example:

Bobby remained as close the wall as possible; the rainbow of fish flesh beneath the cook's class seemed to pulse as he looked at it through his peripheral vision. He kept his eyes down to his notepad so that he wouldn't notice the various Japanese fishing scenes on the tapestries that hung from every wall in the shop.

Johnny kept his hands around the warmed white porcelain of the house saki container. His eyes fell over the multitude of saki bottles that lined the wall behind the sushi bar like water flowing over abalone shell. His eyes flitted between this and the table where he saw that his date had left her small saki glass upside down on the tray it had arrived in.

Exploration using song lyrics: “Creative Cannibalism”

Explanation:

This exercise uses bits and pieces of song lyrics (or sometimes lines from tv shows or movies, etc) as a jumping off point for your own characters. Often times hearing the lyric incorrectly or combining parts of the song that the artist didn't intend to be connected will yield a good exercise as well (see the hawk and diamond example below).

This form of cannibalism of ideas allows your mind to make connections in your own story using details from other people's writing.

Write:

To do this exercise, first choose a song that you want to use the lyrics from. Once you have these lyrics, you will look for details or situations or turns of phrases or anything else that occurs in the plot or language of the song that make sense to apply to your characters or scenes in the new story you are working on.

Create a scene that explores whatever connection you have made between your character's world and the details taken from the song lyrics.

THIS EXERCISE DOES NOT MEAN WRITE
ABOUT THE TOPIC OR CHARACTERS IN THE SONG!

...instead use the details to add to the characters/scenes that already exist in your story's world.

Example:

EX: song lyric – *“Purple And green diamonds They swang From my chest Bigger a bigger I think The Hawks on my neck A billion”* Chris Brown. <http://www.eyeslyrics.com/>

From this lyric I might take the details and create a scene around my character having a lot of showy wealth in a ghetto. I might make a scene about my character creating a plan to steal these things or purchase them. I could also create a scene where my character and another character discuss each other's perceptions of wealth and such. I most likely would write a scene about a bird stealing diamond earrings out of the ears of my character.

Story Arc

Explanation:

Creating a story arc before you construct the first draft of your story allows you to outline what you have developed already and see holes or weaknesses in your story. You should also use the work that you have already done to fill in the parts of the whole so that you do not need to write the story from scratch. In the end, the first draft of the story is more of a conceptual Frankenstein of your explorations than a finished piece.

Write:

Create an outline of your new story via a conflict arc. Place short summaries of where the work you have done already will go as well as figure out what new writing you will need to do to connect the existing pieces of the story.

1. The outline/arc must have the following points.
2. Introduction of main character
3. Introduction of secondary character(s)
4. Introduction of scene(s)
5. Rising conflict
6. Continued rising conflict
7. Secondary conflict (sub-conflict)
8. Climax
9. (sub-climax of sub-conflict)
10. Resolution

Example:

1. Bobby gets up and prepares for work (use wallet exercise)
2. Johnny comes into the job (opposing scene exercise)
3. The sushi bar & alleyway behind it (scene cannibalism)
4. etc...