



Elements of Fiction Writing

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Wednesday, April 9 & 16, 2025 - 6:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. ET

OPTIONAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

TO SPARK STORY IDEAS:

- List three places you love and three you detest.
- List three people you admire and three you really don't.
- Think of two of the happiest events of your life and two of the saddest or most outrageous.
- Try writing 2 short stories based on one or more of these ideas. Begin writing one with an outline and a strong notion of plot. Begin the other with nothing but the starting point; tell yourself the story as you write, and see where it goes.
- Write a story inspired by a newspaper article, a poem, a song or a work of visual art.

OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS

- Go through your bookshelves and find examples of novels or stories with strong, compelling openings. Identify other openings that seem weak. Analyze what makes you feel this way about them. What did the writers do or not do?
- Think about stories or films with endings you admire and others that fell flat. What distinguishes the bad from the good? Did some ramble on too long? Did some end too abruptly? Did some pull a deus ex machina device to make the ending too simple and unbelievable?

CHARACTER

- Imagine two female characters, both abused wives. One kills her husband, the other stays in the marriage and lives stoically with the abuse. Prepare character sketches on each, including background, backstory, character/personality traits, interpersonal relationships with the spouse and others, particular events of the moment, etc, that might have motivated each to respond as they did.

CHARACTER AND SETTING, WORKING TOGETHER

- Describe a person eating alone in a fine restaurant; you decide whether they're there solo by choice or by default. Don't tell the reader, but make him understand from the diner's actions, posture, gestures, dialogue, etc.
- Describe a sunset through the eyes of a character living with a fatal disease; describe the same scene viewed by a person who's just fallen in love, then through the eyes of a person who is living on the street, homeless. Describe the scene as viewed by a person who's just been fired from his job.