

# Constructing Writers™



*A fun little book filled to the brim with words of all sorts, ideas of all kinds, nuggets of wisdom from those who know, and the sheer unadulterated, unmitigated, unquenchable love of writing.*

The *Constructing Writers* book, cards and timer are all about constructing writers. Inside this book are tips, suggestions, ideas, writing prompts, writing games, imagination-tweakers, story-starters, and encouragement. We can only hope they will inspire, take you along paths you've yet to explore, make you ask questions, and HOPEFULLY, make you want to write. The *Constructing Writers* Kit comes complete with a set of cards: Genre, Location, Emotion, What's In A Name? Character Cards (What If My Character..., Character Quirks), Plot Twists, Sensory Cards, & Expository cards that are available nowhere else.

# Constructing Writers™



A book full of writer's stuff, a bunch of cards and a timer!

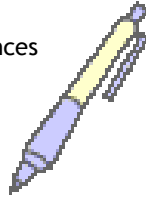
*Constructing Writers*™ is chock full of quotes from a dizzyingly wide array of writers, writing exercise suggestions, challenges and inspiration. *Constructing Writers*™ is a great addition to any classroom; a refresher for experienced writers, perfect for writing exercises, and ideal for personal use.

*A fun little book filled to the brim with words of all sorts, ideas of all kinds, nuggets of wisdom from those who know, and the sheer unadulterated, unmitigated, unquenchable love of writing.*

"Through joy and through sorrow, I wrote. Through hunger and through thirst, I wrote. Through good report and through ill report, I wrote. Through sunshine and through moonshine, I wrote. What I wrote it is unnecessary to say." —Edgar Allen Poe

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“My characters are fictional. I get ideas from real people, sometimes, but my characters always exist only in my head.”—S. E. Hinton

**The Writer is full of information, words, phrases, ideas, and things every writer should know.**

- 10. A Glossary of Words and Phrases You Should Get To Know
- 11. A Glossary of Words and Phrases You Should Get To Know
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- 15. A Descriptive of Words
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- 17. Writing Expositorily
- 18. Expository Writing Illuminated
- 19. Expository Card Writing Challenge

**It's not all about creative writing. Writers should be adept at all kinds of writing.**

20. **GETTING CREATIVE**

- 21. THE GENRE Cards
- 22. GENRE Cards Scenario Suggestions
- 23. GENRE Cards Illuminated
- 24. Genre Writing Challenge

25. **HOW IT LOOKS ON PAPER**

- 26. From Words to Sentences to Paragraphs
- 27. Been There, Scene That
- 28. Been There, Scene That, so pay attention

29. **HOW YOU GET ORGANIZED** **Users will learn how to begin the task of becoming a serious writer.**

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46. **WHO IS DOING WHAT TO WHOM, WHEN AND WHERE THEY'RE DOING IT, WHAT THEY'RE DOING, HOW THEY'RE DOING IT, AND WHY**

**Users will explore the absolute necessity of creating strong, memorable, realistic, and compelling characters.**

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47. THE CHARACTER CARDS
  48. CHARACTER CARDS Scenario Suggestions
  49. THE CHARACTER CARDS Illuminated
  50. Characterizing Your Characters
  51. Creating Characters (instead of just people)
  52. Heroes vs. Villains
  53. Heroes vs. Villains: Illuminated
  54. Why Is He/She *Doing* That?
  55. Now What Happens To Them?
  56. Character Writing Challenge I
  57. Character Writing Challenge II
  58. A Character of Traits

Short stories are designed to deliver their impact in as few pages as possible. A tremendous amount is left out, and a good short story writer learns to include only the most essential information.”  
—Orson Scott Card

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**59. HOW YOU'RE SAYING IT**

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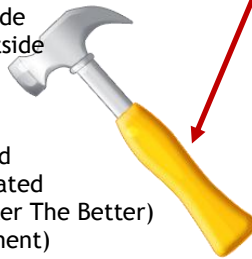
**Users will learn the importance—and fun—of creating locations that command the senses.**

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"Each piece of dialogue MUST be "something happening"...The "amusing" for its OWN sake should above all be censored...The functional use of dialogue for the plot must be the first thing in the writer's mind. Where functional usefulness cannot be established, dialogue must be left out."  
—Elizabeth Bowen

**Users will learn more about the elements of writing, how to create story, what it takes to capture their readers and create irresistible stories.**

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**Users will learn how to edit, what to look for to polish and tighten their finished product, and learn more about what writers have to put up with, and that it's worth it.**

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“Find out what your hero or heroine wants,  
and when he or she wakes up in the morning,  
just follow him or her all day.” —Ray Bradbury

**110. NOW GO WRITE SOMETHING!**

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*Constructing Writers™* Cards

Introducing the *Constructing Writers™* Cards.

These cards have been carefully created and crafted with one purpose: idea-generation, plot-plotting, brainstorming, and imagination-nudging. Okay, that's four purposes but you get the idea. The cards, when used properly, will illuminate such concepts as genre, characterization, plotting, emotion, setting, mood, conflict, obstacles, plot twists, etc. The cards will get you thinking.

**GENRE Cards**

**LOCAtION Cards**

1. Adventure	1. Old House	15. On A Boat	28. In A Hotel
2. Children's Fiction	2. Small Town	16. On The Beach	29. In A Jungle
3. Drama	3. Drawing Room	17. Inside A Book	30. On A Plane
4. Fantasy	4. In A Car	18. In Another Time	31. In A Courtroom
5. Historical	5. Restaurant	19. At The Zoo	32. In A Dance Studio
6. Horror	6. On The Phone	20. At A Party	33. Holidays
7. Humor	7. Amusement Park	21. In A Classroom	34. Haunted House
8. Intrigue	8. Library	22. At A Detective Agency	35. Inside A Store
9. Mystery	9. The Mountains	23. In A Garden	36. In A Castle
10. Personification	10. The Desert	24. In A Pet Store	37. In A Factory
11. Poetry	11. On a Train	25. In A Hospital	38. In A Magic Store
12. Romance	12. Cyberspace	26. In A Cemetery	39. In The Military
13. Sci-Fi	13. Big City	27. Sporting Event	40. On A Bus
14. Screenplay	14. Crash-Landed		
15. Gothic			
16. Western			

"Write about what really interests you, whether it is real things or imaginary things, and nothing else. (Notice this means that if you are interested only in writing you will never be a writer, because you will have nothing to write about...)" —C S Lewis

"Writing is the hardest way of earning a living with the possible exception of wrestling alligators."  
—William Saroyan

"How do I know what I think, until I see what I say?" —E.M. Forster

"I love being a writer. What I can't stand is the paperwork." —Peter De Vries

"The difference between fiction and reality? Fiction has to make sense." —Tom Clancy  
"Writers should be read but neither seen nor heard." —Daphne du Maurier



And Still More Cards...

**EMOTION Cards**

1. Adventurous
2. Annoyed
3. Child-Like
4. Curious
5. Frightened
6. Happy
7. Heartbroken
8. Jealous
9. Matronly
10. Mischievous
11. Paranoid
12. Secretive
13. Sinister
14. Stiff/Uptight
15. Suspicious
16. Teenager-ish
17. Tragic

"Fiction is the truth inside the lie."  
—Stephen King

**SENSORY**

1. Sounds
2. Sight
3. Colors
4. Taste
5. Smell
6. Touch

**EXPOSITORY Cards**

1. Personal Narrative
2. Process Essay
3. Persuasive Essay
4. Literary Essay
5. Research Essay

**What's In A Name Cards**

(character names)  
(5 cards)

"Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass." —Anton Chekhov

**charACTER Cards**

**Character Quirks**

(character traits, quirks and foibles)  
10 cards

**Occupations**

(occupations, professions and livelihoods)  
5 cards

**SITuATIOn Cards**

And Then . . .  
(situations, circumstances and possibilities)  
22 cards

*Plot Twists Cards*

1. Plot Types I
2. Plot Types II
3. Plot Devices
4. Internal Conflicts
5. External Conflicts
6. Motivations I
7. Motivations II
8. Character Arc I
9. Character Arc II
10. Black Moments



"It is worth mentioning, for future reference, that the creative power which bubbles so pleasantly in beginning a new book quiets down after a time, and one goes on more steadily. Doubts creep in. Then one becomes resigned. Determination not to give in, and the sense of an impending shape keep one at it more than anything."  
—Virginia Woolf

"Once writing has become your major vice and greatest pleasure only death can stop it." —Ernest Hemingway

"There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories." —Ursula K Le Guin

"To get the right word in the right place is a rare achievement. To condense the diffused light of a page of thought into the luminous flash of a single sentence, is worthy to rank as a prize composition just by itself...Anybody can have ideas—the difficulty is to express them without squandering a quire of paper on an idea that ought to be reduced to one glittering paragraph." —Mark Twain



## **Expository Writing: Illuminated**

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A Personal Expository Narrative by S. Thayne.

### ***Hummingly Enchanted***

As spring moves into summer I have been utterly fascinated by a construction project going on outside the window in front of my desk. A wee small, very determined hummingbird has chosen a rather interesting spot to build her nest. I'm going on the premise that she is a she since she's a bit drab and works very hard.

The aspect of this project that I have found particularly fascinating is the exact location she has chosen. Let me set the scene. The roofline in front of my window has a light fixture and an extension cord running from it that connects to the far wall. Picture that, a thin extension cord strung between two points. The cord is slightly bowed but seemingly stable, but it is also no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch wide! I had first noticed this small bird fluttering around the cord and using her long beak to nudge and clean for a few days, then I noticed bits of fluff and flower blossoms and snippets of string beginning to adhere to the cord. For the first week or so her attempt looked like nothing more than a mere bump of fuzz on the smooth surface but this week the construction had moved along exponentially and before I knew it, there it was, a very nicely constructed, incredibly sturdy nest that both rested along the top of the cord as well as bulging out on both sides and formed a nicely rounded and very comfy looking little bowl shaped nest.

I'm sure great hummingbird thought went into the location of her nest; it is under the roofline, thus sheltered from the elements and any predators. The fact that to this human her site looked incredibly unstable and precarious was apparently, all in the eye of the beholder. As I watch her nestle her little hummingbird butt down into the comfy confines of the nest I can only be in awe of her sheer determination and vision. And it reminds me that where there's a will, there's a way. What at first glance may seem utterly impossible can be accomplished with hard work, a little luck, and a lot of spit.

### ***Hummingly Cranky***

Or should I say obstreperous?

Esme has settled in to her completed nest and has made herself right at home—literally. As I mentioned, her nest is on the roofline of the Grammar Punk building. Did I mention the nest is above the front door?

We've all been chewed out, right? You've been yelled at by a disappointed teacher, belittled by a schoolyard bully, and taken to task by a ticked off parent, we've all been there. But I'm here to tell you that those experiences all pale in comparison to being chewed out by a very protective and irked hummingbird.

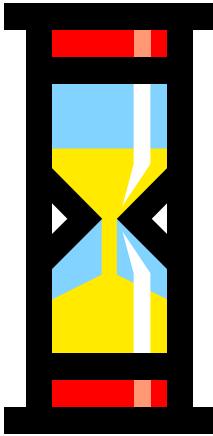
Fortunately, we are able to utilize the back door, (okay I insist on it) so the bothering of the bird has been minimal. However, a delivery person came to the front door the other day—ignoring the Please Use The Back Door for Deliveries sign—and was in the mood to chat. Needless to say, Esme was not amused.

The poor guy couldn't have been there for more than three minutes but Esme made the most of it, literally hovering, dive-bombing, and swooping pretty darned close to his head, she chattered angrily the whole time, threatening hummingbird vengeance of the most dire kind until he finally went on his way. Who knew hummingbirds could be so loud? She's still shooting me dirty looks.

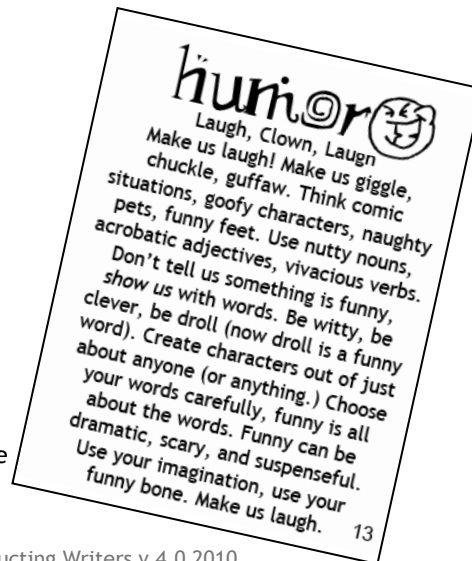
## GENRE Writing CHALLENGE

Write in a specific genre. Challenge yourself, pick one out of your comfort zone. Really, this will be fun.

1. Select a Genre Card.
2. Read the Genre Card.
3. Stop and think in the style of the genre selected for a few minutes. Get into the mode of the genre. Take as long as you like. We'll wait.
4. Okay, stop. Ready to try your hand at it? Don't worry, it will only last three minutes. For now.
5. Pencil, pen, keyboard, whathaveyou warmed up and...
6. Flip the 3-minute timer over and...
7. Write about the genre, write a scene in the genre, write something about the genre. Just go with it. Get the genre firmly in mind, then...
8. Ready, set, WRITE! And write some more. Think about what you're writing. Of course you're thinking about what you're writing. But you should also *feel* what you're writing. Get involved with the subject, let the words come from that place where thinking sometimes just gets in the way. Just write. And write some more. Then, when the three minutes of sand has run out of your timer, stop. And read what you've just written. Then do it again. And again.



We told you this would be fun. If it wasn't, you're not trying hard enough. Or maybe you're trying too hard. Just write.



## A Space For Everything

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### Creating a Writing Space

Getting started. You know that writing is something you want to do. Need to do. Have to do. You're prepared. You have a notebook and pen, a computer and keyboard, a laptop. You might even have an idea or two bouncing around in your head. So, you're all ready to write. Right?

Not so fast.

*Where* are you going to write? Where is your writing space? Where can you be alone with your writing implement of choice, your story idea and your muse? As in real estate, location, location, location.

Why does it matter, you ask? A writer can write anywhere. Once I start tapping away on my keyboard (or scribbling away in my Mead spiral bound notebook with the daisies on the cover and my heart and soul inside) nothing can stop me. I'm a writer. Writer's write. Right?

It matters.

A writer has to have a space, a nook, a corner set aside specifically for writing. Precisely what kind of space is not so important. It can be that old desk you got for Christmas one year, the one where you carved your initials in one corner and has a drawer that always sticks. It could be a favorite armchair, a window seat in a nice secluded corner, maybe it's the backseat of your car in the garage because that's the only place you can get some time on your own. Wherever it is, it's yours. All yours. And it's there waiting for you whenever the urge to write strikes. Having that space matters.

So now you've identified your space; what does it look like? We're going to assume your main writing space has a desk-like surface, what else is occupying that space besides your writing implement of choice—and your elbows? Is it cluttered with bills or receipts, or the odd pizza box, maybe your snoozing cat?

Not that we're trying to tell you what to do, but... This is your space! This space belongs to a writer, treat it that way. Get a good source of light, hang a corkboard over your desk and tack up a picture you like, some quotes you find inspiring and change them up when you get tired of them or they become too familiar. Make it look like a writer spends time there. This is also a great place to hang up those looks-like pictures—photos you cut out of magazines of people who look darn near like the characters in your head. Or photos of the house in your story, the bus your character takes to work every morning, the pic of the Yorkie your character is crazy about even though her new boyfriend is deathly allergic... Inspiration, it's all about inspiration. Got it?

## Plotting With Constructing Writers Cards

Now let's move from thought to action. Select a Genre, find a character by giving it a name, an occupation, a quirk or two or three. Then give that character a situation, an emotion, in a location, add sensory input and a situation in which to act it all out. Outline by listing the individual pieces of your plot (the cards) and then flesh it out from there. Just like that you have the skeleton of story. Listen to your characters and let them tell you what happens next.

See, not as hard as it sounds. It's even sort of fun. And challenging, daunting, not a little terrifying. And addicting. Trust us.

Keep plotting tight by:

- Keep back-story where it belongs. Don't put it all in front, don't put it in large chunks, keep it relevant and spread it out over the entire story.
- Watch for sagging. Keep conflicts and complications and action moving. The middle of the story is notorious for letdown, watch for it. Aim for a peak mid-story.
- Don't string your reader along towards the end of your story or work. Make your denouement brisk and sharp; end the story when it needs to end.
- Keep the peaks and valleys peaking and valleying, especially towards the end. Reach for your final conflict but don't stretch it too far from the denouement. Your reader is striving for the resolution, give it to them.
- Have the ending in mind as you begin plotting. Be prepared that the story may veer from the original plotline, stories do that, but have a good idea how the story will end.



"Just get into the habit of putting words down, and try not to miss a day." —*Emily Hahn*

"My working habits are simple: long periods of thinking, short periods of writing." —*Ernest Hemingway*

Being a writer is like having homework every night for the rest of your life. —*Lawrence Kasdan*

"Writing is easy. All you do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead." —*Gene Fowler*

"Writing is both mask and unveiling." —*E.B. White*

Plotting With Cards: Illuminated

**MYSTERY**

What's happened? A crime has been committed! There could be a body of some sort. An investigator of some kind may attempt to discover "whodunit." The setting is carefully detailed, the players all have secrets, misunderstandings, and hidden agendas. There are clues, Red Herrings and missteps of every type. Maybe a carelessly mislaid bit of evidence, inkling, suspicion or whosit where you least expect it? Floors may creak, a doorknob begins to turn, a shot could ring out. It's all very mysterious. 8



My Character is...



exterminator; poet; lighthouse keeper; chemist; lifeguard; scientist; treasure hunter; shoemaker; valet; matador; pawnbroker; explorer; inventor; disc jockey; test pilot; student; monk; dragon slayer; carpenter; priest; executioner; King; coach; jeweler; lifeguard; hobo; candy-maker; private detective; sheriff; choreographer; dishwasher; lifeguard; hobo; candy-maker

What if My Character...

has a pet monster; is president of a huge corporation; thinks he was abducted by aliens; has a green thumb; is a reluctant hero; is a makeup artist for movie stars; brings home a puppy; collects butterflies; isn't sure she wants to get married . . . 5 minutes before; the ceremony is about to start; enters contests for a living; races rubber duckies; refurbishes old houses; likes to wear sweaters for . . . ofu 2

What's In A Name?

Dee Dee, Polly, Bailey, Dick, Duzzok, Curt, Sandy, Patrick, Zoe, Marvin, Eloise, Jean, Pip, Denise, Crandall, Frank, Bruce, Dolph, Dill,

At a Detective Agency



Someone is looking for something. Is your detective agency large and modern and staffed with ex cops? Or is it a small one-man (or woman) operation? Is the agency located in a high-rise in a big city, or is the setting much more humble? Where is your agency? When is it? Would Raymond Chandler feel at home or would the CSI folk feel more comfortable? What do the customers come looking for? Do they seek missing things, people, or something more intriguing? Or menacing. Can it be found? What will happen when you do? 22

Suspicious SMELL

acidic, antiseptic, acrid, aromatic, balmy, briny, burnt, choking, clean, flowery, salty, metallic, grassy, nutty, savory, gaseous, heady, mildewed, creamy, moldy, musty, odorous, reeking, sweaty, rotten, savory, scented, dusty, sharp, sickly, damp, dank, piney, earthy, greasy, fishy, fragrant, fresh, bitter, perfumed, piney, pungent, putrid, fruity, harsh, vinegary, citrus, rancid, sour, spicy, spoiled, stagnant, sweet, sharp, lemony 6

al, mistrustful, wary, disbelieving, optical, circumspect, s and needles, dubious, walking on s. fearful, troubled, stealthy, very, doubtful, menacing, creepy, sneaky, insidious 2

## Secondary Characters

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Subplot is what happens to your secondary characters. And your secondary characters people your subplots. Sounds simple enough. Yeah, right.

Secondary characters keep your main characters company, add complications, layers, depth, and *story* to your story. They might be best friends, worst enemies, casual acquaintances, or the family pet. While secondary characters won't be as well-developed as your main characters you the writer should know them inside and out. Give them quirks, affectations, mannerisms, style. Make them memorable in their interactions with your main characters, just not more so than the main characters. Let them do the work of revealing back-story and items of interest your main characters may be too busy to mess with.

A few notes about Secondary Characters

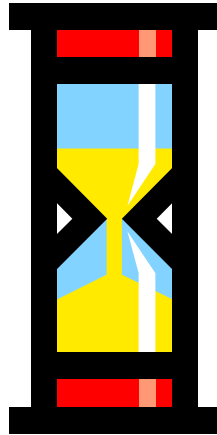
- Don't let them overshadow your main characters, who are, after all, the main focus of your story.
- Don't forget about them once you've released them into your story; depending on how strong you make them, don't let them dangle without some sort of resolution.
- Don't throw in too many of them. Have as many characters as you need to tell your story but we don't need to know everything about all of them. Don't clutter up your story with too many people and names and faces for your reader—and the writer—to remember or try to forget.
- Keep your secondary characters stuff to themselves. If their conflicts and personal lives don't move the story of your main characters forward leave it out.
- Don't let your secondary characters get too long-winded. Avoid large blocks of text from your secondary character's point of view.
- Be sure and include your subplots and secondary characters in your plotting and outlining. A good, deep, well-developed story depends on the layers subplots and secondary characters provide. Where would Batman be without Robin?

To reiterate, secondary characters, like subplots have an important, even vital place in your story, it is just as important that they stay in their place. Don't include a cast of thousands, don't let their story override the main characters story, and don't give them a louder voice than necessary. Robin *never* pushes Batman out of the way to pose for the camera.

## SENSORY Writing CHALLENGE

Write with your senses. All five of them. Again, not as hard as it sounds. And again, this will be fun.

1. Select a Sensory Card.
2. Read the Sensory Card.
3. Stop and think in a sensory mood for a few minutes. Test the air of your office, smell the scent of paper and ink, the smooth touch of paper, the colorful theme of your desktop, the taste of Diet Coke... Take as long as you like. We'll wait.
4. Okay, stop. Ready to try your hand at it? Don't worry, it will only last three minutes. For now.
5. Pencil, pen, keyboard, whathaveyou warmed up and...
6. Turn over the 3-minute timer and...
7. Pick a sense from the card. Pick one of your own. Get the idea firmly in mind, then...
8. Ready, set, WRITE! And write some more. Think about what you're writing. Also *feel* what you're writing. Get involved with your senses, let the words come from that place where thinking sometimes just gets in the way. Just write. And write some more. Then, when the three minutes of sand has run out of your timer, stop. And read what you've just written. Then do it again. And again.



We told you this would be fun. If it wasn't, you're not trying hard enough. Or maybe you're trying too hard. Just write.



## Suspense Anyone?

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**Suspense:** *Uncertainty*: the state or condition of being unsure or in doubt about something; *enjoyable tension*: a feeling of tense excitement about how something will end; *anxiety*: state of anxiety or intense worry about something.

Suspense is another of those things that is an aspect of nearly all types of fiction—NO MATTER THE GENRE. Yes, you really can create suspense without creaking floorboards and a dark and stormy night. Suspense is about style, sentence length, word choice, voice, setting, mood, and story intent. Suspense is all about *what happens next*? And making certain your readers care to find out.

To create suspense, first you have to:

- a) Create characters your reader can care about, emphasize (or decidedly not), identify (ditto), even worry about.
- b) Keep your characters—and your reader—in the dark about what will happen next.
- c) Don't reveal too much too soon; disperse the action, secrets, surprises, intrigue, etc. in bits and pieces throughout the story.
- d) Don't be too predictable; avoid *fait accompli* situations.
- e) Create realistic (even if they are seemingly impossible-to-overcome) obstacles.
- f) Set the scene carefully/use description and word choice to set the mood.
- g) Create foil characters (villains)/keep them subtle—or over-the-top horrible.
- h) Foreshadow events, *hint* at things to come.
- i) Watch your writing style. Using varying sentence lengths and scene lengths can keep the action escalating and intensify the suspense factor.
- j) Keep your reader guessing. Will Rhett leave Scarlett? Will Ahab get the whale? Will the girl get the boy (or visa versa)? Will the monster win? How will it all end?

### Suggested Exercises:

1. Select one Character, Emotion, and Location card. Write one paragraph simply describing an external conflict such a character with that emotion in that location might have.
2. Switch out the EMOTION and do it again. Then switch another card and do it again.
3. And again.



"The more matter-of-fact you are in your language and your treatment, the more goosebumps you can raise on your readers' skin without being tasteless." —*Graham Masterton*

"The crisis may be a recognition, a decision, or a resolution. The character understands what hasn't been seen before, or realizes what must be done, or finally decides to do it. It's when the worm turns. Timing is crucial. If the crisis occurs too early, readers will expect still another turning point. If it occurs too late, readers will get impatient—the character will seem rather thick." —*Jerome Stern*



A deconstructed short story:

# The Halloween Man

Exposition

The Halloween Man walked down the empty street, hard shoes clacking on the pavement. His season had come, his time, his opportunity.

Hook

The Halloween man had been who he was for a long time, a very long time; as long as there had been men who paid tribute to the change of seasons and hoped to influence their fate. The Romans called his day Pomona Day, the Celt's Samhain, later, it was the eve of All Saints Day. It didn't matter, the celebration had the same purpose: bidding farewell to the season of the sun and bracing to endure the season of darkness and cold. October 31<sup>st</sup>, All Hallow Even, All Hallow's Eve, Hallowe'en, or Halloween—it didn't matter.

Fashion frightful masks to scare away bad tides, offer fruits and nuts to appease Nature, leave fare at your door to stave off mischief, it didn't matter. The purpose was the same, celebrate a bountiful harvest, frighten away a fierce winter.

This day was about changes, choices, chances.

It was why he was here, one month of the year.

Metaphorical

The Halloween Man walked and walked, the slow thrum of fall beating in his heart.

The change was well on its way.

Setting

Trees had changed their clothes from summers bright greens to autumns oranges, reds, browns and gold's like vain women dressing for afternoon tea. During the day, the sky was that shade of cobalt blue unique to fall, the color of summer's twilight, blueberry Popsicles, deep water and the cold still to come. Smoky breezes rustled bared branches, the sound of old bones rattling together. Cinnamon buns, pumpkin pie, roasting marshmallows, burning leaves hung on the air; the elusive bouquet of a fleeting season.

Orange Jack-o-lanterns brightened windows, cut-yellow smiles glowed with candles light. Paper skeletons leered from door fronts, bats dangled, spiders spun, monsters mingled, black cats arched, witches watched. Inside those warm, clean houses, mothers put finishing touches on costumes for pint-sized goblins and ghouls, princesses and firemen, super heroes and cartoon characters.

Bowls of candy waited on front hall tables, steaming cider, rich, meaty chili, sugar cookies cut into monstrous shapes. There would be barrels filled with apples for bobbing, dishes brimming with ghoulish guts; cold spaghetti, peeled grapes for eyeballs, congealed oatmeal for brains.

Old horror movies flickered on television sets, black and white mummies shambled, arms outreached, Frankenstein picked the same flower over and over, vampires terrorized maidens.

Foreshadowing

## CONSTRUCTING A WRITER

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“Close the door. Write with no one looking over your shoulder. Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It’s the one and only thing you have to offer.”

—*Barbara Kingsolver*

“Give them pleasure. The same pleasure they have when they wake up from a nightmare.” —*Alfred Hitchcock*

“If you tell me, it’s an essay. If you show me, it’s a story.” —*Barbara Greene*

“Each writer is born with a repertory company in his head and as you get older, you become more skillful casting them.” —*Gore Vidal*

“A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short or that he avoid all detail . . . but that every word tell.” —*William Strunk*

“It’s better to write about things you feel than about things you know about.” —*L. P. Hartley*

“The good writer, the great writer, has what I have called the three S’s: the power to see, to sense, and to say. That is, he is perceptive, he is feeling, and he has the power to express in language what he observes and reacts to.” —*Lawrence Clark Powell*

“The faster I write the better my output. If I’m going slow I’m in trouble. It means I’m pushing the words instead of being pulled by them.” —*Raymond Chandler*

“Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving.” —*John Dewey*

“Tell the readers a story! Because without a story, you are merely using words to prove you can string them together in logical sentences.” —*Anne McCaffrey*

“I think the first duty of all art, including fiction of any kind, is to entertain. That is to say, to hold interest. No matter how worthy the message of something, if it’s dull, you’re just not communicating.” —*Poul Anderson*

“The unread story is not a story; it is little black marks on wood pulp. The reader, reading it, makes it live: a live thing, a story.” —*Ursula K. Le Guin*

“The most original authors are not so because they advance what is new, but because they put what they have to say as if it had never been said before.” —*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

“You don’t have to be great to get started, but you have to get started to be great.” —*Les Brown*