
WRITING COMPELLING STORIES

Compass Rose Creative Services

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World, Character, and Quest

Write what your audience wants in your own voice.

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Stories that sell are stories that compel their audience to read, watch, or interact. Imagining, creating, and writing a story that is compelling is less daunting if you understand what your audience wants and needs. Crafting scenes and dialogue comes more easily if you understand your character arcs and plot lines. From the beginning of time, when stories were told around campfires and bards were made famous by the yarns they spun, the same formula has been true. Your audience must be fascinated by the story world you describe, the main character you follow, and the quest that must be completed.

Plan on paper, first

Write an outline. No excuses. This outline will serve as your road map. It should be revised, rewritten, and constantly reorganized. The outline is an organic and dynamic document. Your story must have a thread that is easy to track throughout the whole outline. Find your story holes and fill them before you write 500 pages that go into the trash can.

Your story must have three, distinct acts. Western cultures prefer linear stories and Eastern cultures prefer spiral story structures. With either story style, three acts help the audience track important story points and the main character's journey.

Interesting stories use the standard story formula and breathe new life into it. Talented writers do not see structure guidelines as a hindrance to their creativity, but rather the foundation necessary for a truly genius work.

Tried and True Writing Advice

Every scene in the story must:

- 1) Move story forward.
- 2) Offer new information about the main character.
- 3) Include only necessary dialogue only.

Falling action, or the third act, is essential. No matter how the story ends, the ending must be given its due time to unfold. Stories that stop short offer the audience no satisfaction for the time invested in reading your book, watching your movie, or attending your play.

Learn from the Masters

Art students spend years training and copying famous works. Creative writers should learn from this example.

The absolute best way to understand story structure and what your audience wants is to get out there and see for yourself. Constantly read books in different genres, watch movies from around the world, attend musicals and black box theater.

Spend hours in the Writing section at a bookstore. Gather as much information and as many examples as you can of engaging writing.