

CREATIVE
WRITING
FOR TEENS

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LESSON 1: WHY WRITE FICTION?

Once upon a time, there lived a great truth-teller.

He knew story could reveal deep truths, truths people often did not want to look at for themselves. So He chose to put those truths into tales, which not only got the people listening but also remembering.

His name? Jesus.

If you look closely at the parables of the Bible, you'll see that Jesus rarely mentions God or the Temple. His stories are filled with ordinary people going on about their ordinary lives.

And so, Jesus's listeners paused to hear Him; they stopped to enjoy His stories. It was only after the truth was in their heads that they realized what they'd just experienced was more than they previously thought.

That's why we write fiction!

Nonfiction relates through logic. It involves the brain and invites the reader to follow a path of argument or assumptions.

Fiction invites the reader to involve their heart, their emotions. And when the reader accepts the invitation,

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picks up a novel, and begins to read, the writer has an opportunity to speak truth and to change the reader's heart.

Perhaps the question shouldn't be *Why write fiction?*
Perhaps it should be *Why not write fiction?*

PICK UP A BOOK

Every time someone picks up a book, there's an unspoken agreement between the reader and the writer.

The reader wants to be entertained, to enjoy a good story, to live in a different place or explore a different time. They want to escape their own life and experience someone else's.

The writer wants the reader to read all the way to the end of the story, to pay attention to the scenes and the characters, and to be immersed in the story.

The writer is the one with the most to lose.

If the reader's not happy, he just puts down one book and picks up another.

But if the writer's book is put down, not only will that story not get read, but future books by this author likely won't get picked up. If a reader is disappointed,

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he rarely just gives up on that single book; he frequently gives up on the author.

All the pressure is on the writer.

To win the reader over, the writer must think about the reader. The reader is the most important person for whom the author writes.

Writers cannot write for themselves.

They must write for the reader.

Consider the answers to these questions:

What is the title of the last book you read by your own choice?

How long ago did you finish that book?

What kind of books (genre) do you most like to read? (e.g., classic, historical, adventure, fantasy, mystery, humor, mythology, realistic, etc.)

How often do you read a book outside of your favorite genre?

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Go to a bookshelf or the library and pick up three fiction books at random. Read the first page or two and then ask yourself these questions.

1. Would you consider reading more of this book?
2. What is it you like best about the portion of the story you read?
3. Is there anything you didn't like? What is it?
4. Do you know when and where the story starts out?
5. How many characters have been introduced? Do you think you'd like any of these people if they were real?

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WEEK 1: YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This week, write a story. The story can be any genre you like and can be as realistic or fantastical as you prefer. Don't worry about how good it is or what might be missing—we'll work on that in the coming weeks. For this week, just write.

Here are the rules I want you to follow:

1. It must be at least two handwritten pages OR one typed page with a 12-point font. Longer is fine. If you've already written a story, you may pull one scene from that story to work on, but it still must be at least two handwritten pages OR one typed page.
2. You should ONLY write on every other line, or set your computer Line Spacing to 2.0. You'll use these spaces in the lessons to come.
3. If you are writing, follow the red guidelines on BOTH the left and right sides of your paper. If you are typing, your margins should be set to 1.0" all the way around. You'll use these spaces in the lessons to come.

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4. Here's the rule that's easiest for the students and toughest on your parents, but it's important: **neatness does NOT count.**

Students—you have to be able to read your writing!

But parents—the goal this week is simply for your student to write. Do not consider neatness, grammar, or spelling.