



writing workshop with zanni louise

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Hello! I'm Zanni. It might sound creepy, but stories have been following me my whole life. Know what I mean? I believe everyone can write or tell a story. I'd love to share some of the things I've learnt about storytelling.



Finding ideas

Ideas are everywhere! I find that simply by paying attention, and opening my ears and my eyes, I can find ideas in the most unlikely places. Words of a song. Something someone says. A dream. A campsite kitchen. A dad joke.

The trick is, you need to write your ideas down, or tell someone, as soon as they come. Otherwise, they will disappear!



Writing is a bit like gardening

Just as a gardener wouldn't trek into the desert, plant a seed, and expect a magnificent tree to grow, nor should a writer. Writing takes time, practice, cultivation and nourishment. Write daily. Freely. Let your pen move, or your keypad type, and don't worry too much about the consequences. There is no such thing as a mistake, when you are being creative. You'll get plenty of time to prune – I mean *edit*. But first, have fun growing your story, and see what wonderful fruits might grow. And if you have to delete? No problems. Your words will turn into delicious compost, ready for your next story!

Exercise: Close your eyes and sink into a recent memory. Now, open your eyes, and write for five minutes, without stopping to edit, or worry.



Create delicious characters

Start your story with your character. Who is at the centre of your story? By creating a believable, relatable, and loveable character, you engage your readers. Readers connect to the story through the character, so the more they care about the character, the better! And if you want to create a horrid, unlikeable character? Go for it. But find a way to make your reader care what happens to them.

Exercise: Interview your character.

What is your name?

Where do you live?

How old are you?

What are you like?

What do you like?

What do you want?

What do you need?

Ask your friends to interview your character.

You might be surprised by what you find out!



What is the problem?

If you know what your character wants and needs, then you can probably work out what their problem will be. Brainstorm things, people, feelings or circumstances that are going to make it hard for your character to get what they want. As you write your story, things will get harder and harder for your character. They will work harder and harder to solve their problem. When things are as hard as they can get, your character has a realisation, or changes direction. They solve the problem for themselves. Every story will be different, but this is a place to start. Think about building the tension through your story.

Exercise: Brainstorm five external and five internal problems your character can face.



Edit, prune, develop

Editing seems like a scary word. But it's not! The magic really happens when you work over your story. Look for glitches in your story. Does it make sense? Is your character relatable? Is their world believable? Do we care about what happens in the story?

I like writing my stories as if they are rehearsals for a play. I write the same story over and over, in different ways. Sometimes, I hone in on a section, other times I look at the whole picture. Stories can take years to develop.

But at some point, we need to let them go free...

Exercise: Take a sentence, and play with it. Try new words. Take words out. Think about new and interesting ways to express familiar phrases.



Be brave

Writing takes courage. You are making something new. We need to be courageous, to try new things, and discover new possibilities.

Sometimes, we need to be brave to share our story with the world. Maybe we are reading it to our mum. Maybe we are leaving it in an envelope for a stranger. Maybe we are turning it into a book. Stories connect us to others. So by sharing our stories, we make new and wonderful connections.

If you'd like to share your story with me, you can email me at hello@zannilouise.com. That would be so lovely!

