



# Creative Writing Course

by  
Tolulope Popoola  
*Author, Publisher and Writing Coach*

[www.accomplishpress.com](http://www.accomplishpress.com)

## Welcome to the Creative Writing Course!

Thank you for registering to take part in this course. I hope you enjoy the content, and it is useful for you in your writing journey.

This course workbook is for you to keep, and use throughout the course. It contains the teaching notes and the workbooks where you'll write your thoughts and ideas. You will need to refer to the notes often, so please keep them in a safe place.

I hope you're excited to begin!

## Before we proceed, let me introduce myself:



*Tolulope Popoola*  
*Author, Writing Coach and Publishing Consultant*  
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Hello friend. My name is Tolulope Popoola. I'm a writer, an author, a publisher and writing coach at Accomplish Press, and I will be your tutor for this Creative Writing Course.

Let me tell you a bit about myself: I have always been a writer, since I was a little girl. I remember writing my first fairy tale stories when I was six years old, in Primary 1. I thought that was cool, until I got teased by my classmates for being weird, so I stopped.

Still, I've always been an avid reader and I was addicted to books when I was growing up. In school, my favourite subjects were English Language and English Literature, and I used to win prizes for them. As a teenager, I was the weird one always scribbling things, and writing in a diary. I found that I expressed myself better with words when I write them down, so writing was my way of coping with the angst-filled teen years. But again, it was uncool, so I buried my writing skills and just focused on passing exams.

Fast forward to when I finished college and had to choose a university course, and I somehow ended up studying Accounting and Economics. Then I followed up with a Masters in Finance and Investment. After I graduated, I started working in Accounting and Finance jobs, and soon realised I was miserable.

In 2006, I discovered blogging and I was immediately attracted to the idea of writing an online diary. I started a blog, then another, and another! I wrote about daily life, about my career, I wrote about relationships, and slowly, I started trying my hand at writing short stories. Within a year, I had rediscovered my love for words, and I knew that writing was what I was meant to do with my life.

I took a writing class, and started writing an online blog series with a few of my friends, which was great fun. Shortly afterwards, in 2008, I decided to quit Accounting for good, and focus on being a writer full-time (with the support of my husband). It wasn't easy, but can you really say no to something you're passionate about?

So, in the past nine years, I've completely changed my career path. I've written two novels, and published one, I've written and published two flash fiction collections. I founded Accomplish Press, which is my coaching and publishing company, I've published books written by other authors, and I run writing classes and courses to help other aspiring authors to make their writing and publishing dreams come true.

In my work, I'm often contacted by aspiring authors who have questions about how to start writing their novel. They have the desire to write, they have good ideas, but they are feeling confused, stressed and overwhelmed about the process.

That's why I created this course to help you. If you're an aspiring author who wants to write a novel, this course breaks down the process into manageable steps for you so that you don't have to be confused or overwhelmed. This course is suitable for beginners who are writing a novel for the first time. It will be a road map for you to confidently start working on your novel in a few weeks. You will have clear guides to follow, and you'll actually enjoy the brainstorming and writing process.

I hope you're ready to learn and implement these strategies. Grab your pen and notebook, and let's begin.



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## Lesson 1

**Please use this workbook to write down your ideas.**

# Course Notes

## Choosing a Good Idea to Start

### What is your book going to be about?

The first advice I would offer an aspiring author is: Make sure they choose an idea that they are passionate about.

If you're going to write a novel, you're going to be thinking of it, working on it, dreaming of it, and talking about it for a long time. So you must choose a topic that really interests you one hundred percent. The topic must be so fascinating to you that you will invest months to explore it. You will be happy to research the facts around it, you will be happy to talk about it at home whilst having dinner, at parties with your friends, and basically live and breathe this topic for a long time, ranging from weeks to years.

I have had times when I thought I had a good idea, but by the time I started to write it, I realised it wouldn't work. I usually file such ideas away into a folder that I can mine later. Sometimes I've had an idea for a short story, and by the time I started working on it, I realised I had more and more material, that it could be developed into a novel. I actually started a whole online series that went on for two years this way. It started out as a short story that I wrote and published on my blog. Many people read it and commented on it, asking for a Part 2. I decided to expand that short story, and it became a series called "In My Dreams It Was Simpler" that I created and co-wrote with seven other writers.

This is why I wouldn't advice a new writer to start writing on a topic just because they are thinking it will bring them fame and money. Or choosing a topic just because it seems to be popular at the moment. Doing that will only carry you so far, because if you're not entirely invested in your idea and committed to seeing it through, you'll get half-way through the writing process and you'll get bored, distracted or miserable. Or all three.

Also you shouldn't feel obligated to write a book on a topic, because it's what people expect of you. That won't help you either. Again, unless you are personally motivated enough to commit your time and energy to the topic, you will quit. There are enough obstacles in the writing process to overcome already, please don't add a boring topic to the mix.

So how can you come up with an idea that you can really get excited about?

You may already have an idea that interests you, or you may need to think about it and brainstorm for a while. Spend time reading books that really interest you, listening to conversations or podcasts, listening to the news on current topics that interest you, reading biographies of people that you admire. Spend time thinking about the topics that come to you or linger in your mind for a while. Let your mind wander and keep your imagination fired up. Before long, you'll start getting lots of possible ideas. Your idea could come from a spark of imagination, from something you read, from an overheard conversation, from a song, or even from a place you visited that inspired you and captured your imagination so much that you felt moved to write about it. Your initial spark of inspiration could be the main character that you love or hate so much that you wanted to dig into their story. It could be a bit of history you discovered and you wanted to find out more. However it comes to you, when you finally find the right idea, it should be something that makes your brain light up more than any other previous ideas you've had.

I've had ideas from many different places. As they say, inspiration can strike anytime, so keep your ears and eyes open. Sometimes I get ideas through conversations I have with people, random sentences in music, from a TV programme, from a short story I read, from looking at a piece of art, or even from a dream.

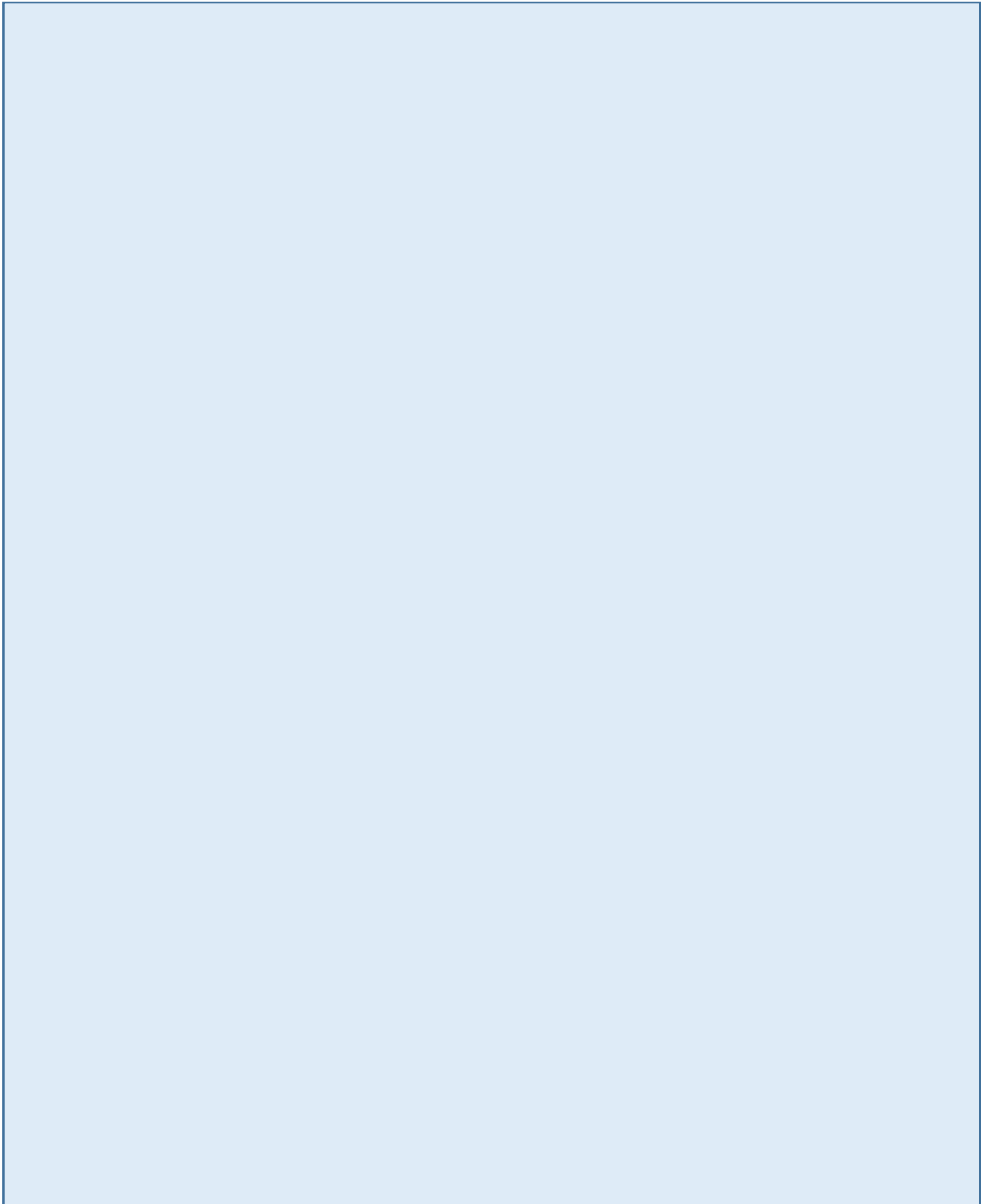
Sometimes, you may have more than one good idea and you're trying to decide which one to start with. Always choose the idea that you're more intrigued in, over any other. Go through all your possible ideas and imagine building a story around it. Does the story appeal to you? Would it appeal to anyone else? Can you see yourself writing on this story, creating characters around it, forming a viable plot? If the answer is yes, then you have a great idea and you should go with it. Start with as much enthusiasm as possible, because it is this enthusiasm that will keep you going until you have written the last word in your manuscript. You may still have the occasional bout of self-doubt, but your passion for your idea will be unshakeable.

Now, let's go into the workbook for this section.

## **Workbook 1 – Choosing a Good Idea to Start**

**The first step in writing a book is to start with the basic idea. What is your book going to be about?**

**Start by writing down some of your previous good story ideas in the box below:**



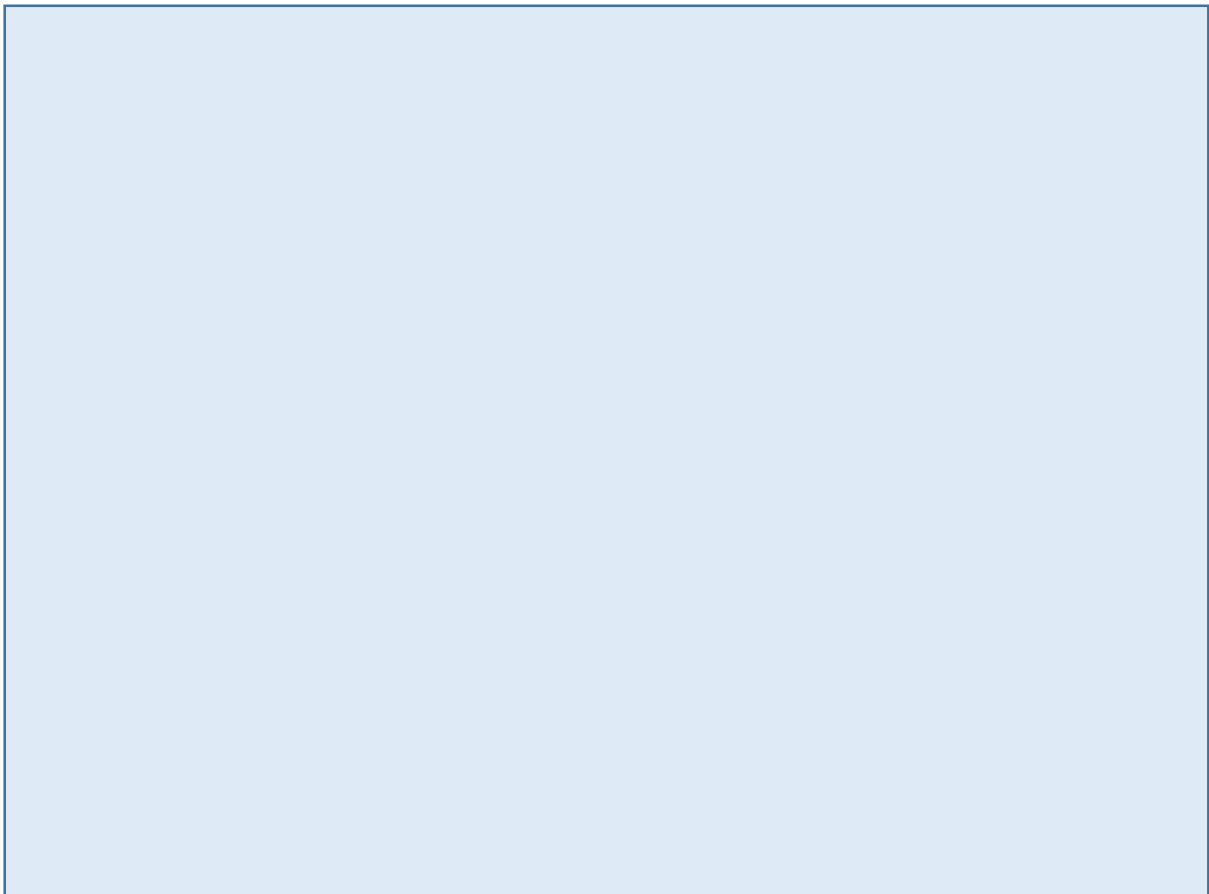
**If you have more than one good idea, expand each one slightly:**

A large, empty light blue rectangular box with a thin dark blue border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the student to expand on their ideas.

**Which of your ideas is best suited to a short story?**



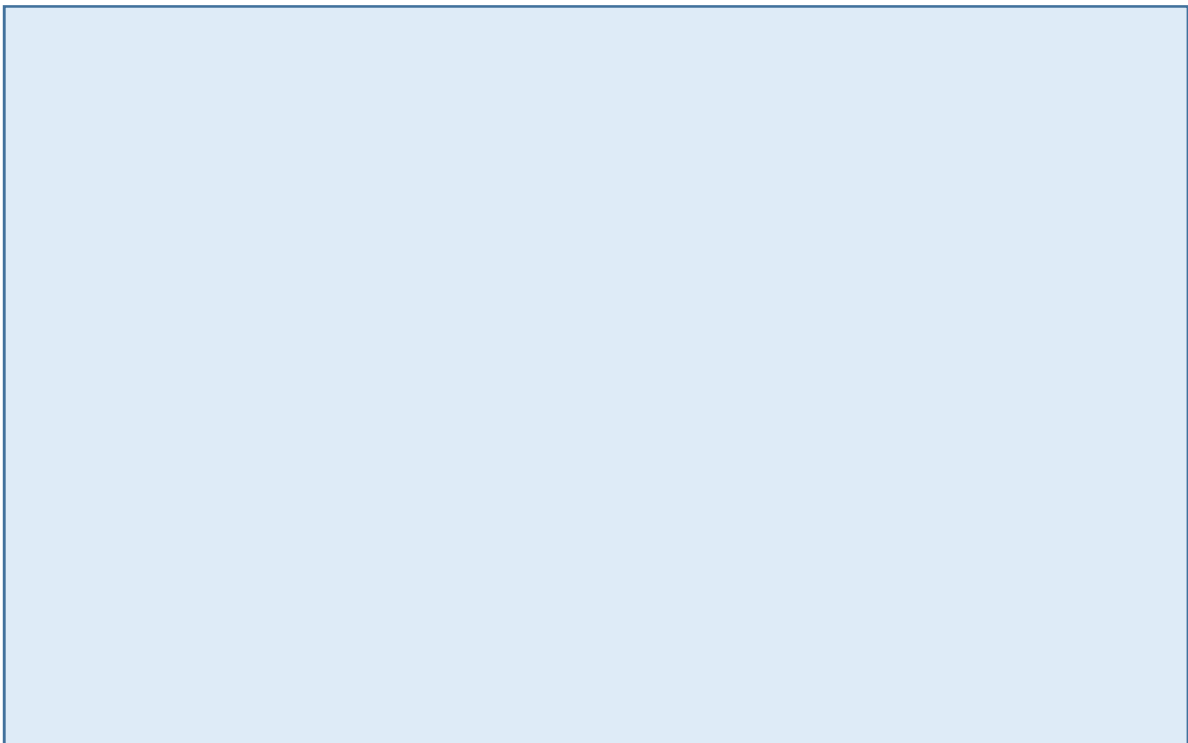
**Which of your ideas is best suited to a novel?**



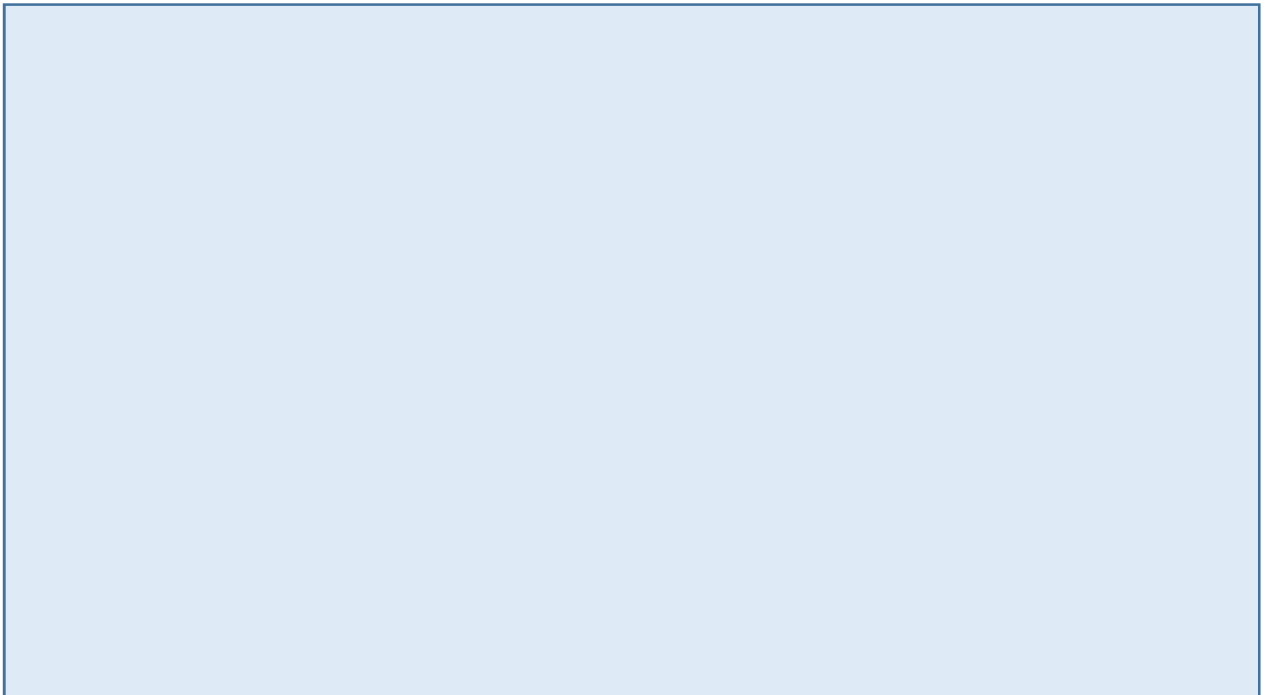
**If you don't have any specific story ideas at the moment, write down a list of topics or themes that interest you, e.g. family relationships, dating relationships, crime and mysteries, legal debates, office politics, etc.**



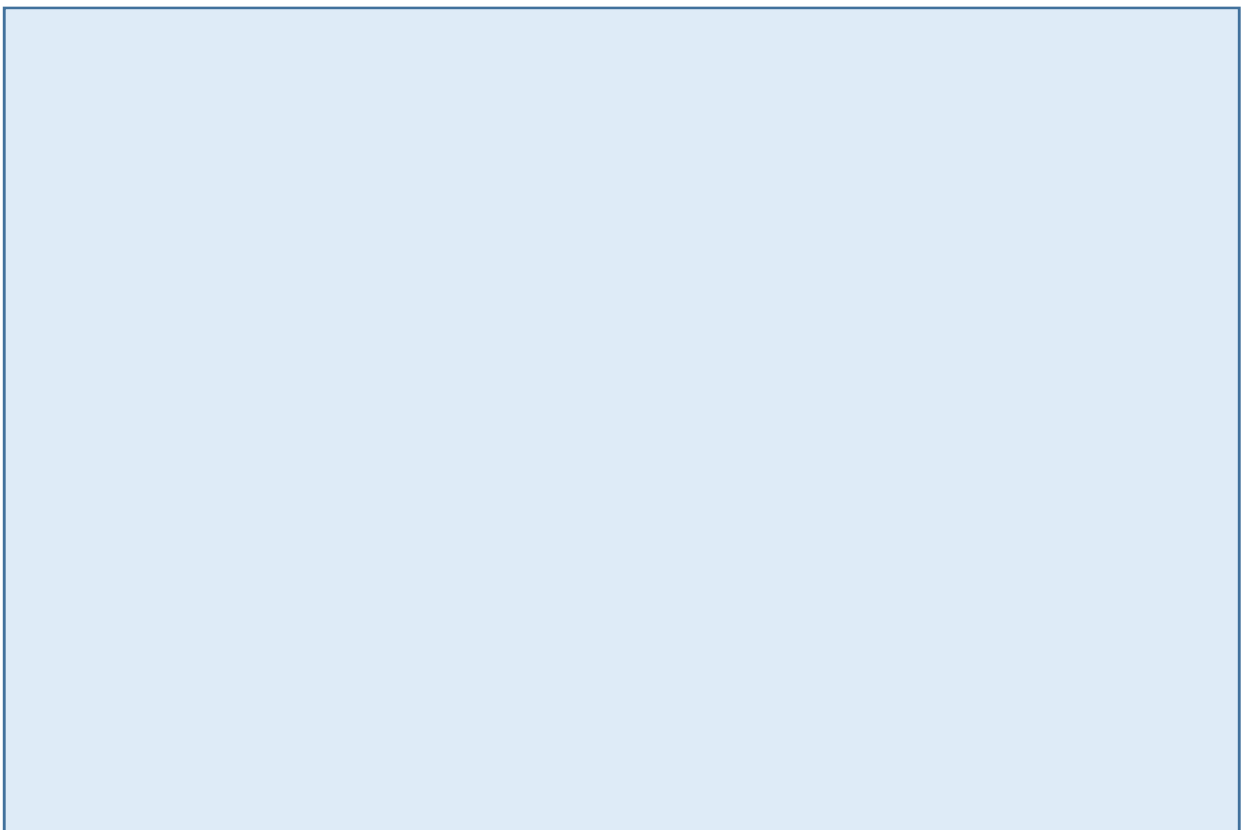
**What are your usual sources of inspiration? Can you mine them for interesting ideas?**



**Where can you get other good ideas from?**



**If you're happy with your chosen idea, excellent! What would you do next? How would you proceed?**





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## Lesson 2

**Please use this workbook to write down your ideas for the characters in your story.**

# Course Notes

## Part 2 - Choosing Your Protagonist

Now, you've chosen a great idea that gets you excited and enthusiastic whenever you think about it. Well done! Your next step is to think about the characters that will execute this story. And out of all the characters, your first focus should be on the main character, or the protagonist. The protagonist is the person that the novel is about, or his life and journey is the main focus of the novel.

Now as you were trying to come up with an idea for your novel, you may have already started thinking about the protagonist. But if you haven't decided yet, that's not a problem. Your story may have two or more people who are very important, and you may still need to do some thinking and brainstorming before you pinpoint exactly who the main character is.

To illustrate this, here's an example:

Let's say the idea for your story revolves around a huge bank robbery that was in the news. You heard about it, and you followed up on the story for many days. You found out that the robbers made away with millions of pounds, helped by an insider at the bank. During the raid, a gunshot was fired, killing an innocent customer. You also discovered who the robbers were, including the ringleader. You found out that since the robbery, the Bank Manager has been wrongly accused and suspended from his job, pending an investigation. A group of detectives have now been assigned the case, and the public is awaiting their investigation, and watching to see how and when the bank robbers will be apprehended and brought to face the law.

Now, you have an interesting idea for a novel, but who is the protagonist? In this example, the protagonist could any of the following people:

- 1) The ringleader among the gang of robbers
- 2) The insider at the bank
- 3) The suspended bank manager
- 4) One of the detectives investigating the crime
- 5) The wife of the innocent customer who was killed during the raid

The protagonist you choose will determine a lot of things, and how the story unfolds. If you're not sure, you should do a quick sketch of all the possible protagonists, and choose the one who you would like to follow up the most, and whose story you would find most intriguing.

**Based on the story above, you could choose to focus on:**

**The suspended bank manager** – Fingers have been pointed at him in suspicion. He is completely innocent but he has to prove it. He is out of a job and helpless while an investigation is going on. The stress from all this is now affecting his marriage and home life. Is he found guilty of negligence? Did he have an idea of what was going on, and used the robbery to cover up?

Or

**The ringleader among the gang of robbers** – He was a bright, promising young boy, but he had a troubled home life. His mother was a drug addict, so he was often lacking care and love. His father ran off with another woman. The young boy grew up and got into petty crime. Once after he was arrested and released from prison, he joined a gang of car thieves. Slowly he built a reputation for his intelligence and ability to outsmart even the most sophisticated anti-theft technology systems. He started planning the bank robbery a long time ago, and got his chance when he met an accomplice who worked inside the bank. He did the job, not for the money but for the thrill.

You can see that the protagonist you choose will drastically alter the direction of the story. You could also choose two protagonists, to make your story even more interesting. It's up to you!

You can also go through this process for choosing an antagonist for your novel. For example, in my novel, the story featured a betrayal by a friend. Since my protagonist had many friends, I had to choose one person to be the antagonist, and I also have to give her a motive to do so.

Now, let's go into the workbook for this section.

## Workbook 2 – Choosing Your Protagonist

Now, you've chosen a great idea that gets you excited and enthusiastic whenever you think about it. Well done! Your next step is to think about the characters that will execute this story. And out of all the characters, your first focus should be on the main character, or the protagonist. The protagonist is the person that the novel is about, or his life and journey is the main focus of the novel.

Now as you were trying to come up with an idea for your novel, you may have already started thinking about the protagonist. But if you haven't decided yet, that's not a problem. Your story may have two or more people who are very important, and you may still need to do some thinking and brainstorming before you pinpoint exactly who the main character is.

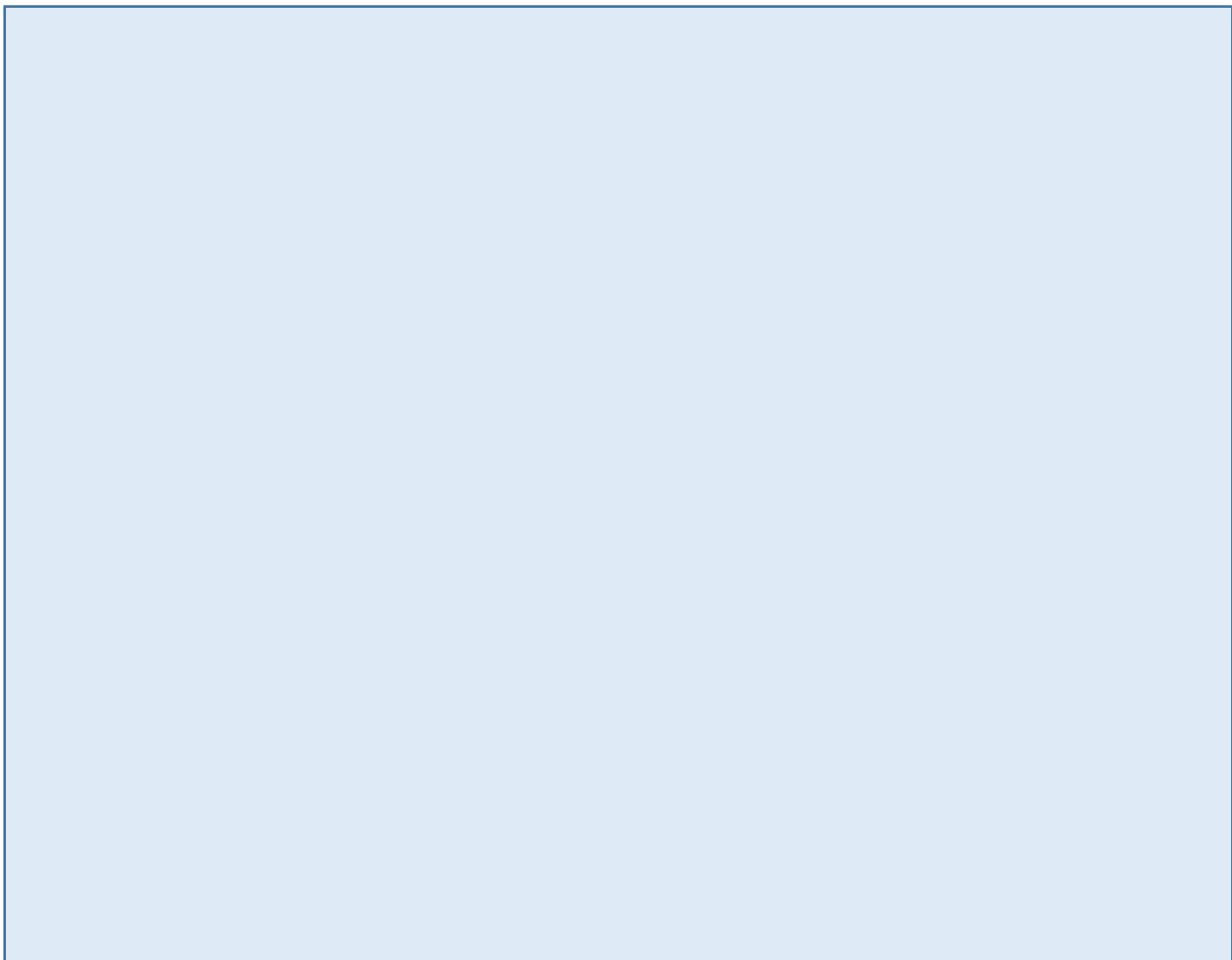
**Write down who you think is the main character for your story in the box below:**

**If you have more than one main character, define who the story revolves around a bit more:**

**If you have more than one main character, define who the protagonist is, and who the antagonist is.**



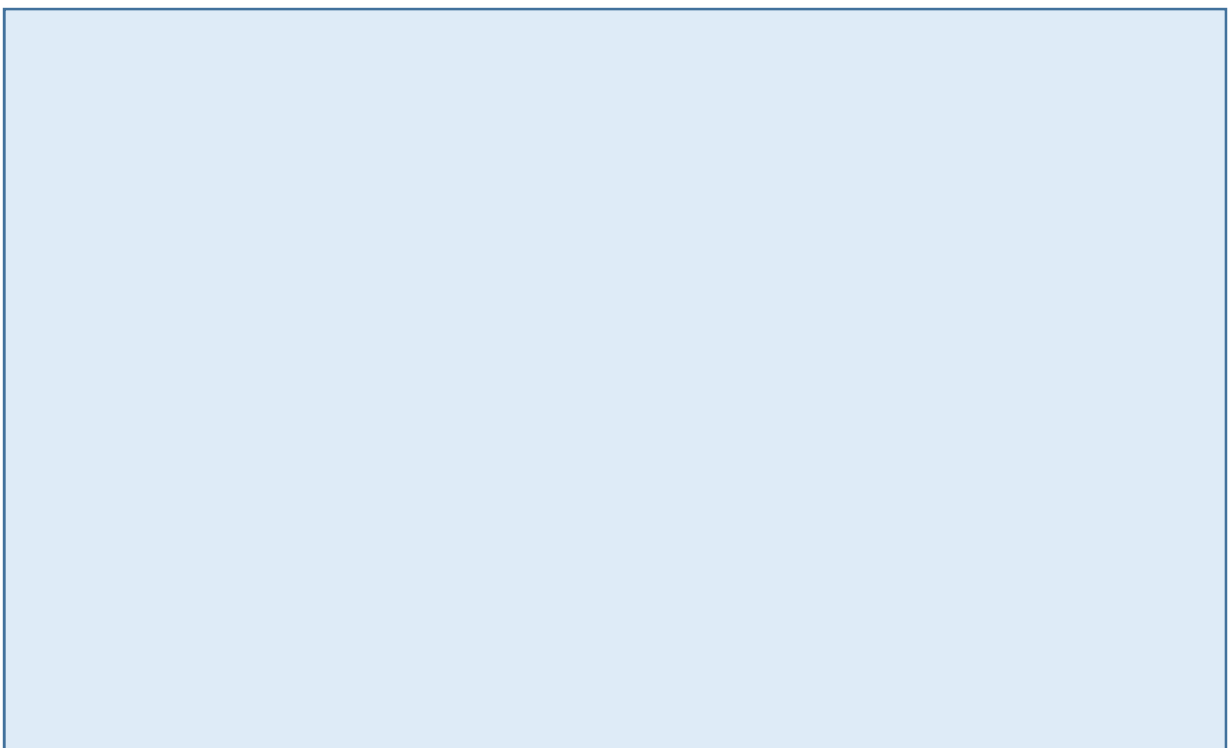
**Why does the story revolve around this main character?**



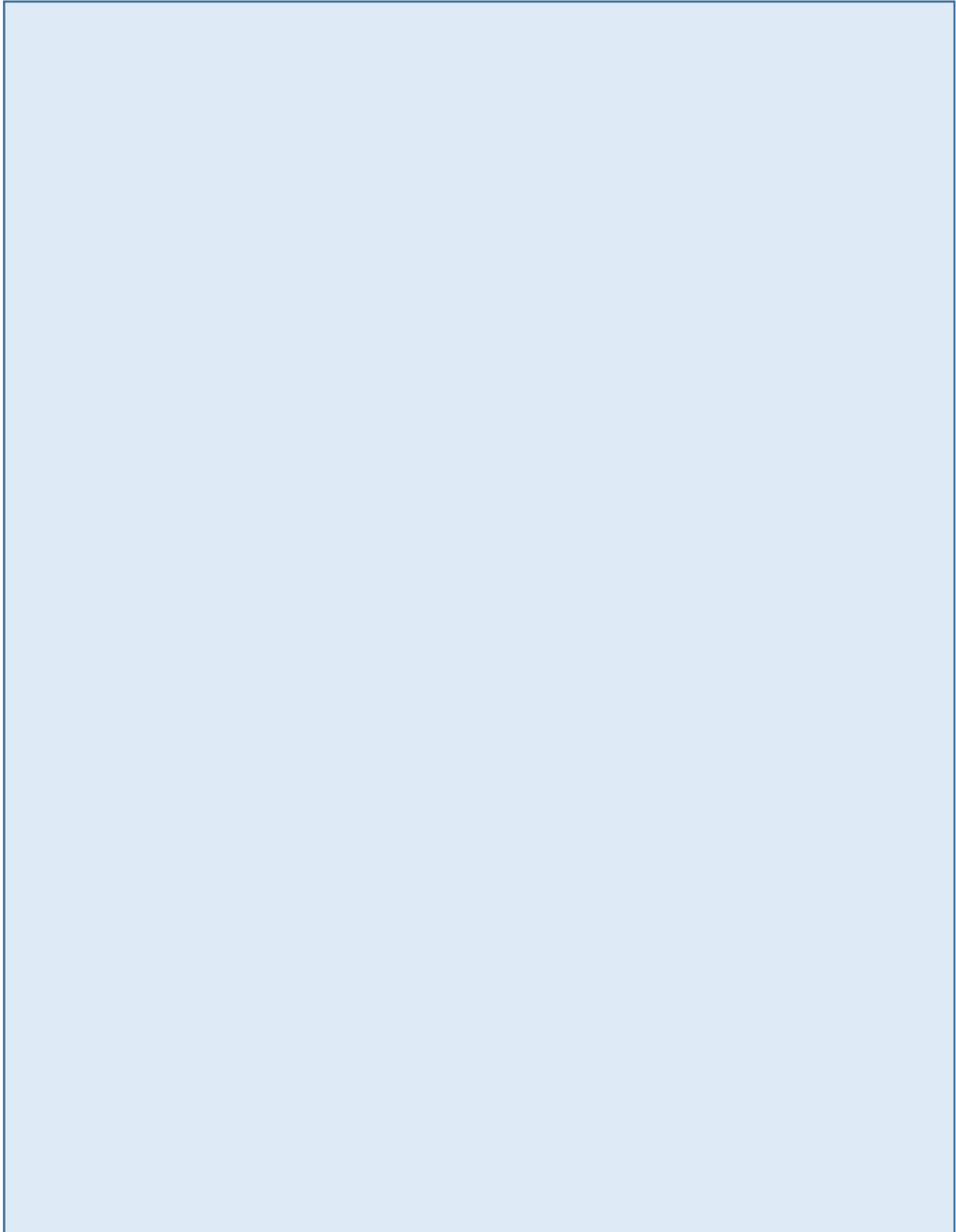
**What is your protagonist's aim?**



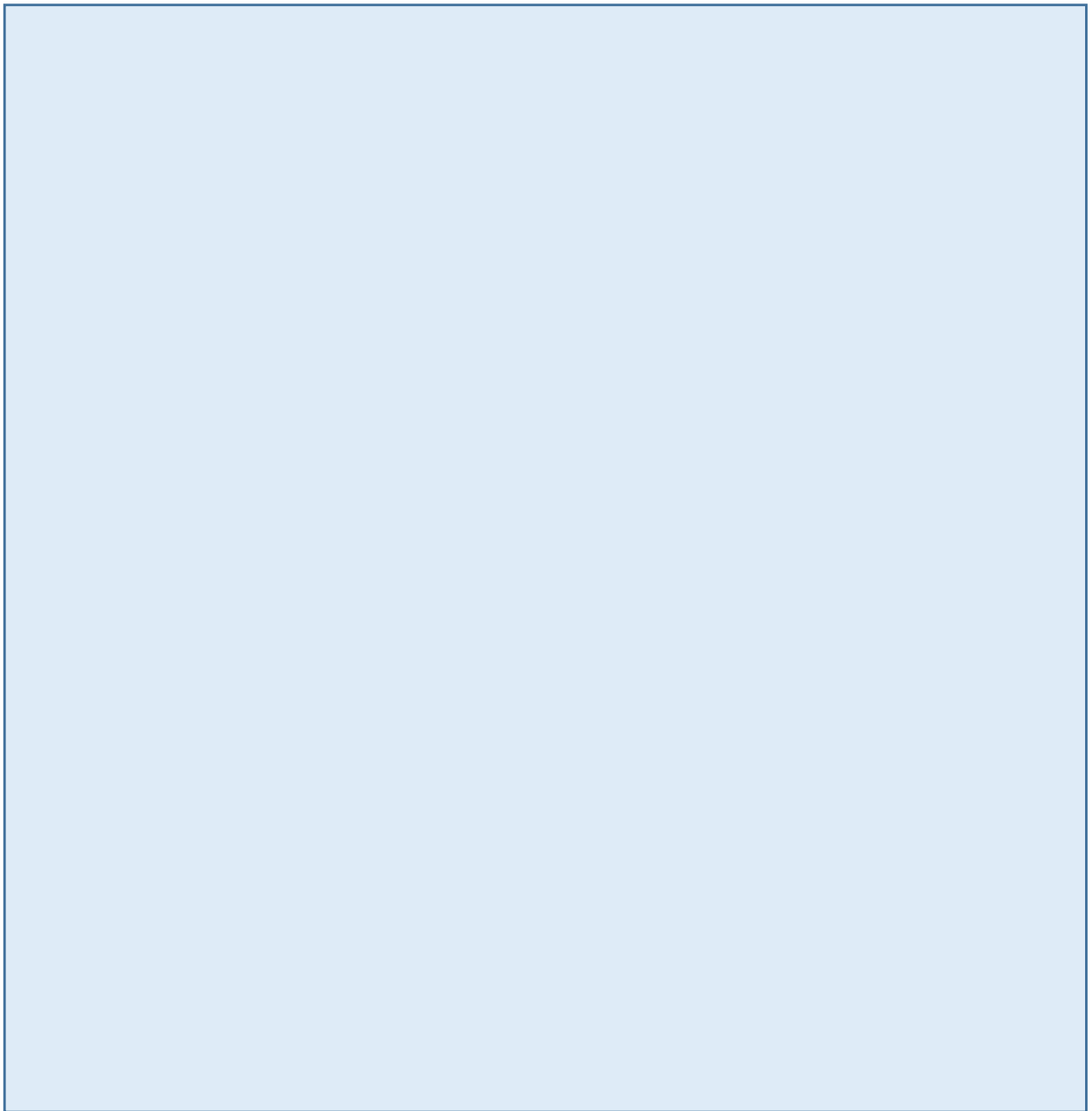
**What is the antagonist's motive?**



**Give your protagonist a personality, a history and a background. Try to be as detailed as possible. Describe his or her physical appearance. Describe his or her hobbies, likes and dislikes, age, favourite food, family background, endearing aspects, a character flaw, educational background, social circle, goals and ambitions, quirks, etc. The more you know about your protagonist, the more real he or she becomes, so go really deep.**



**When you're done with your protagonist, do the same exercise for your antagonist.**



**Assignment: Create a similar profile for all the major characters in the story. E.g your protagonist's family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, etc.**



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## Lesson 3

**Please use this workbook to write down your plans for choosing a Point of View for your story.**

## Course Notes

### Part 3 – Choosing Your Novel’s Point of View (POV)

Now you have chosen your protagonist, and you know who your story should focus on. Now closely related to this, is the novels’ point of view. How do you tell the story of your characters? Which narrative works best? There are many different types of point of view, but the most common ones are:

First person, second person, third person limited narrative and the omniscient view narrative.

**The first person POV** refers to the I, we, me, my, mine, us narrator, often the voice of the main character or the main characters in the story. The advantage of the first person narrative is that it comes naturally to most writers. It can create a distinctive internal voice and your reader gets to read the thoughts and motives of one character at a time. It also creates a closeness to the character, because the reader experiences the story directly through the eyes of one character.

**Example:** *I called him, but he wasn’t answering his phone. I immediately decided to pay John a visit tomorrow.*

**The second person POV** is when the writer uses “you” to describe all the actions and emotions going on in the story. This POV is rarely used in long fiction, such as novels but more commonly used in short stories.

**Example:** *You called him, but he wasn’t answering his phone. You immediately decided to pay John a visit tomorrow.*

**The third person POV** uses he, she, it, they, them narrator. This POV is the most common in modern fiction. It offers a variety of possibilities for limiting omniscience: information that the narrator and reader are privy to in the telling of the story.

**In third-person unlimited omniscience**, the author can show us the thoughts of any character, and the story can shift from one character’s POV to another. Stories written this way can benefit from the contrasting viewpoints and conflicting points of view. However, the story might get confusing if there are too many character’s points of view and their voices are not distinctive enough to tell them apart.

**In third person limited omniscience**, the author enters the mind of just a few characters, usually one per chapter or scene.

Each of these POVs can work well for any novel, it's up to you as the author to choose which one suits your story, and which one you're most comfortable with.

I personally enjoy writing in first-person. I like getting into the head of my character, seeing things through their eyes, and letting the story unfold through their thoughts and emotions. Most of my short stories are written in first person POV.

For my novel, *Nothing Comes Close*, I had two protagonists, Lola and Wole. I wrote the story in first person POV and alternated the chapters between the two main characters.

I've received feedback from many people regarding this narrative method, and most people said that they enjoyed getting to read from the two lead characters in the book. Usually in most romance novels, the reader gets to experience the story from the heroine's POV, so it was quite unusual that *Nothing Comes Close* allowed the reader a glimpse into the hero's POV too. I'm really glad that readers like it, because I enjoyed writing both characters and the differences in their views.

Please note, that your POV can change by the time you get half-way through the writing of the story, or even when you're in the subsequent drafts. It is not unusual for an author to decide to change the POV of their book, during the editing process.

Now, let's proceed to the workbook.

## **Workbook 3 – Choosing Your Novel’s Point of View**

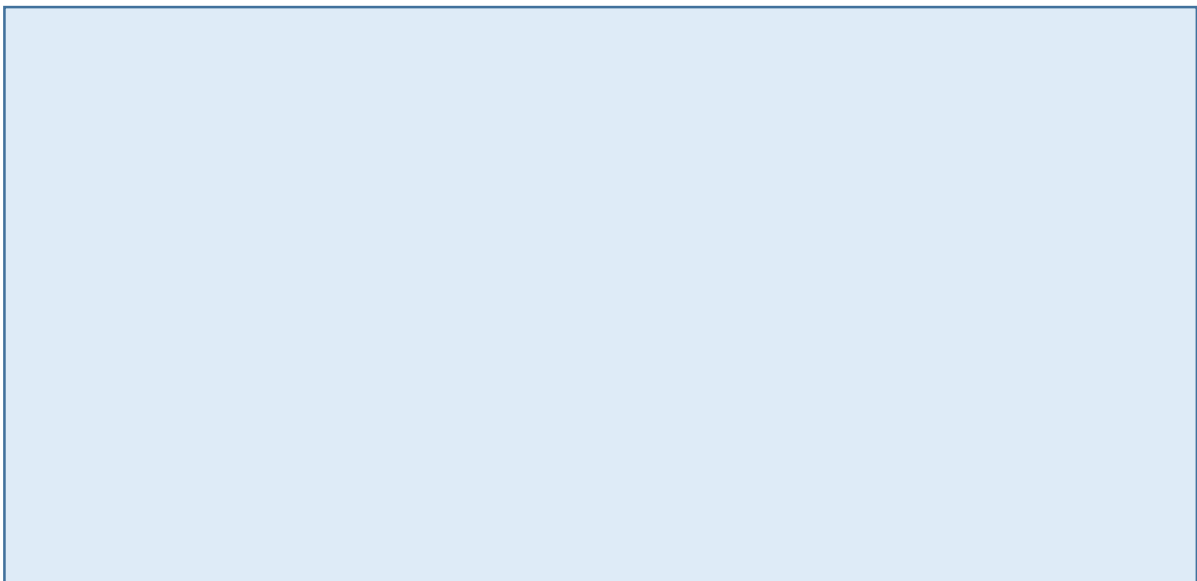
So you now have a story idea, and you have your main characters.

Now, how do you narrate the story? Would you narrate it from the eyes of one character as in first person point of view, or from an omniscient point of view?

**If you’ve written a novel or short stories before, what POV do you usually write in?**



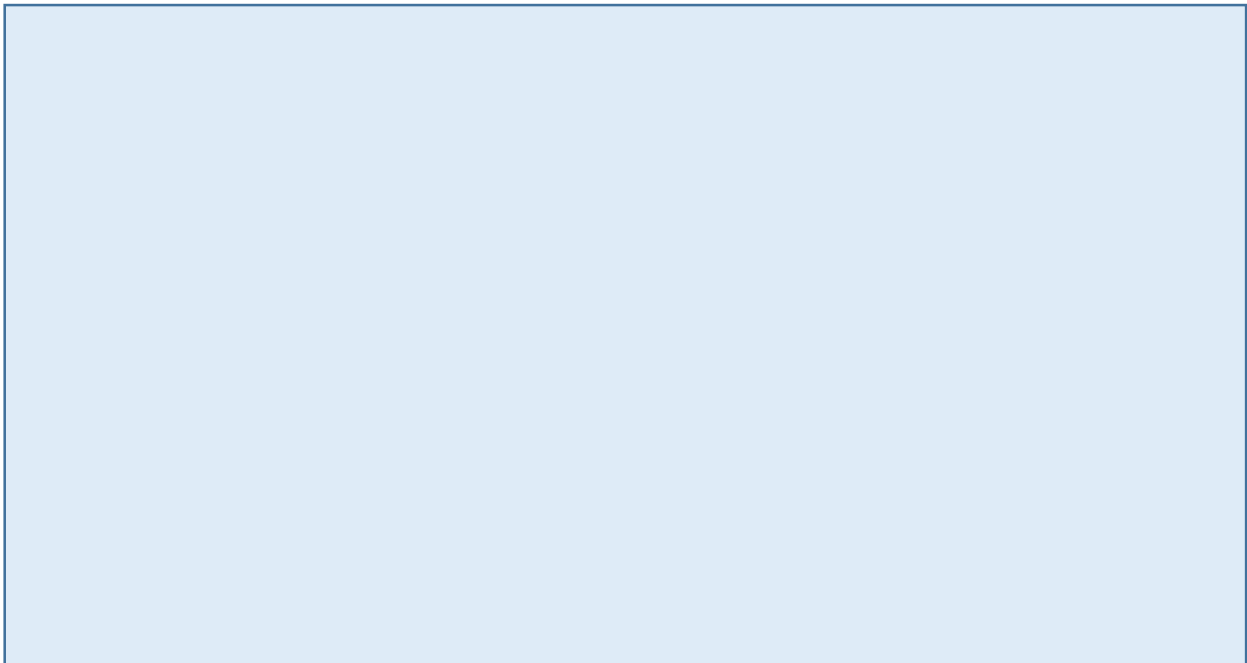
**Which POV do you think works best for the story you’re trying to write?**



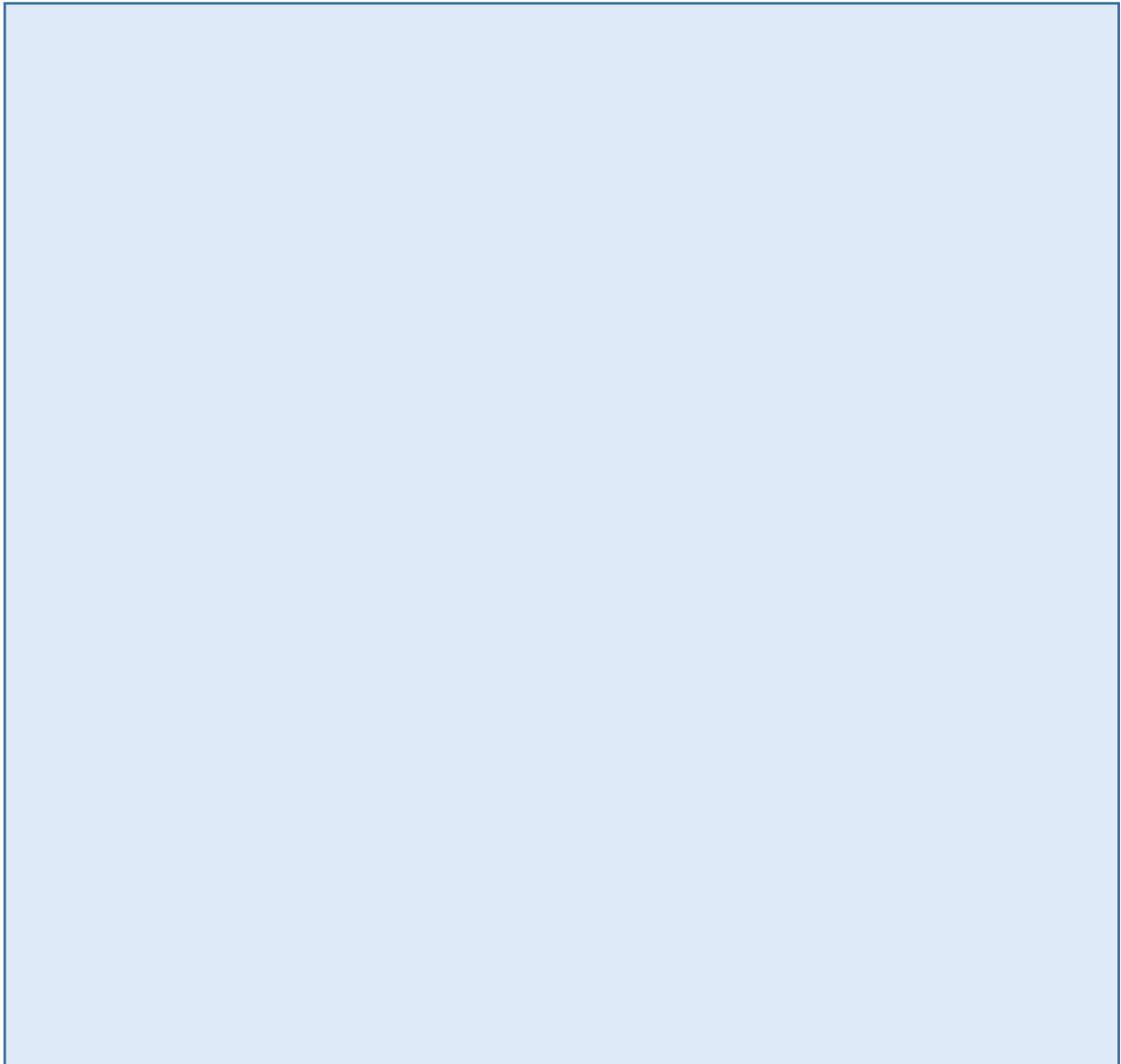
**If you have more than one main character, will they all have their own POV if you're writing in first person?**



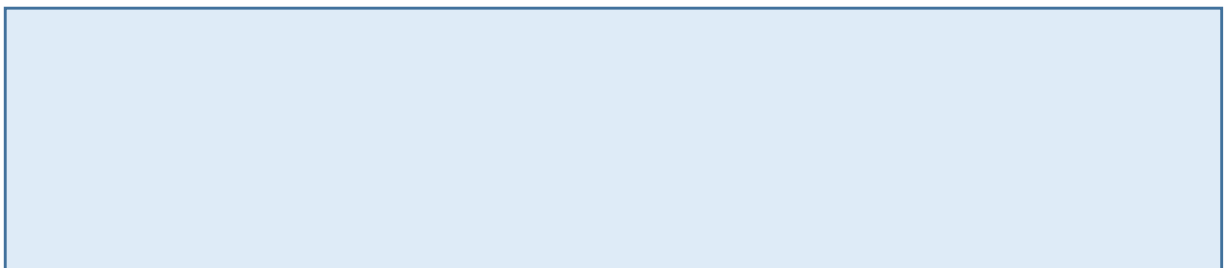
**If you choose to write in third person, would you be writing from a limited POV or an omniscient POV?**



**Write down a sample paragraph using your story idea and main characters. Use three different POVs for this example. Which one sounds the best to you?**



**Based on your examples in the box above, would you be inclined to stick to your chosen POV, or switch to a different one?**





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## Lesson 4

**Please use this workbook to write down your ideas for your story's Setting (Time and Place).**

## Course Notes

### Part 4 – Choosing Your Novels Setting

Now you've started working on the story idea, you've chosen the central characters and you've worked out which point of view serves your story best. You now need to decide on where and when the story happens.

Of course, while choosing your idea, you may have already decided on the setting. Perhaps, it was the setting that intrigued you enough in the first place and prompted your story idea. Maybe it's a strange little town that you visited once, and you wanted to explore the local myths surrounding the old castle in the centre. Maybe you discovered a history about your town, or a recent excavation uncovered a hidden temple somewhere in Mexico. In this case, the location of the story matters a lot, and your story will revolve around that setting as much as it does about the characters.

If we go by the bank robbery example we covered in the previous section, your story will most likely be set in a city, and the bank will be on a high street or in a business district. It might be a real place that exists in the present or in history, or it might be an imaginary place that you made up completely. You can also set your novel somewhere in between, such as a fictitious small town within a real country, with some elements based on reality and some elements being fictional.

If you were writing in a genre such as fantasy or sci-fi, your story could be set in a very different place, such as another planet, an alternate reality. In historical fiction, your story's location might be real, but you can choose to set in in a specific time in history such as the old Wild West, ancient Egypt, during the First World War, or a time period outside of recorded history (the future, the Stone Age, etc). Or if you were writing an urban fantasy, you have the option of injecting imaginary elements into the present day, real world.

With real places, research is of paramount importance. You'll need to discover and include specific details about the place and time period in your novel. You should be able to describe the places in your novel well enough that the story will seem authentic to someone who lives there now.

Most of my stories are set in real places, usually places that I've been to, places I've visited, lived at or worked in. Sometimes I've had to write about a different city, and that usually

required me to do research into the place so that I can weave elements of the setting into the story. Sometimes I add fictional things to a real place, or if it's a story where the setting is not of paramount importance, for example, a scene indoors, I can completely make it up to suit the character's needs.

If you're writing historical fiction, the setting in the past must ring true to a reader who has also studied the period. Even imaginary places must be just as detailed, but you have the luxury of inventing some of the details rather than researching them. (Of course, you may need to respect the conventions of your genre. For instance, in hard core science fiction, you generally cannot break known rules of physics, but you can in fantasy.)

As you research, you may find new ideas for the characters and plot or make a discovery that completely changes your initial premise. You as the author have freedom to change your story to fit in with your research.

Whichever path you take, your finished novel should take place within a clearly defined world. And that world should be defined by enough specific details to seem believable, consistent, and intriguing to the reader, to make the characters' actions and choices understandable within it, and to help the plot make sense.

Nothing Comes Close was set in London, Milton Keynes and Lagos. I've lived in both Lagos and London, but I've only visited Milton Keynes once. So I had to research the city to be able to write some of the scenes in the book. Research was necessary for me to be able to describe the roundabouts, the journey to the M1 (the motorway), the police station and some other places. For the scenes set in London, I could describe Lola's journey from her office to the underground station based on my own experience of working in Central London. I could talk about the coffee shops, the noise of traffic, the newspaper vendors and those other things that make a scene in London rush hour seem very realistic to the reader.

Think about the setting for your story. Now let's go to the workbook.

## Workbook 4 – Choosing Your Novel’s Setting

So far you’ve started working on the story idea, you’ve chosen the central characters and you’ve worked out which point of view serves your story best. You now need to decide on where and when the story happens.

### Place and Time Period:

**Do you already have a place in mind where your story is set? If yes, write the setting(s) below:**

**Is this a real place or a fictional place? Or is it a real place, with some aspects fictionalised?**

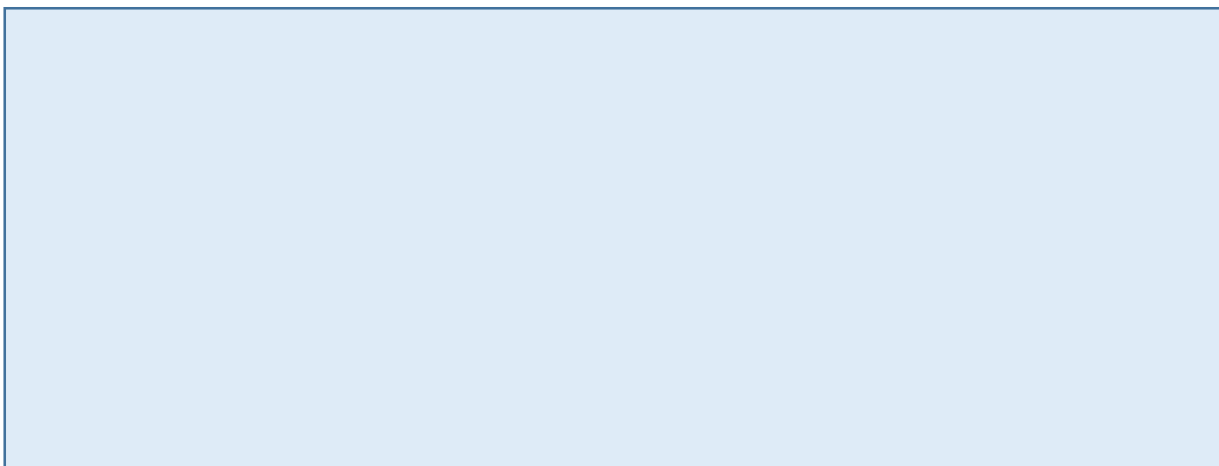
**What about the time period where your story takes place?**

**Is it a contemporary story, or does it take place in the past or the future?**

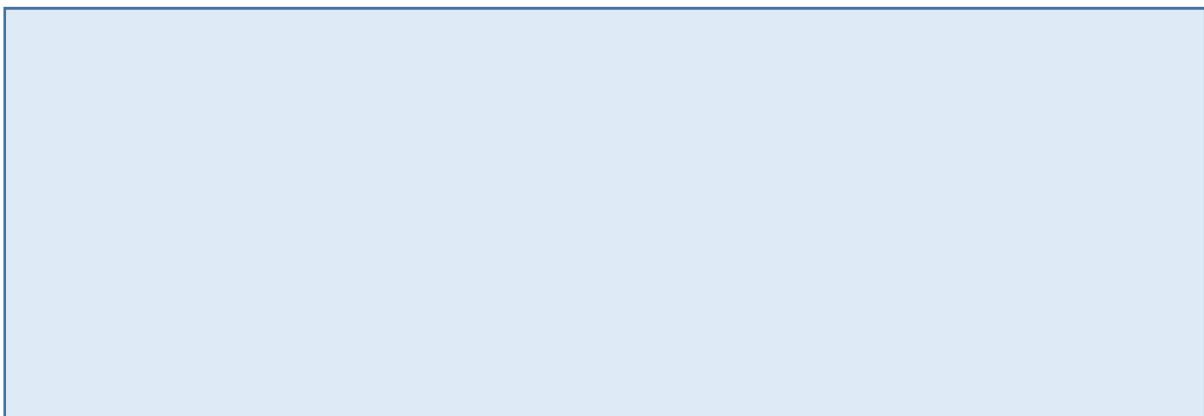
**If your story is set in a real town or city, what aspects of that environment would you need to include when you're writing the story? Think about the sights, the sounds, modes of transportation, street names, places of interest, the weather, local food, etc.**



**If your story is set in a real place, what aspects do you have to research, to ensure accuracy?**



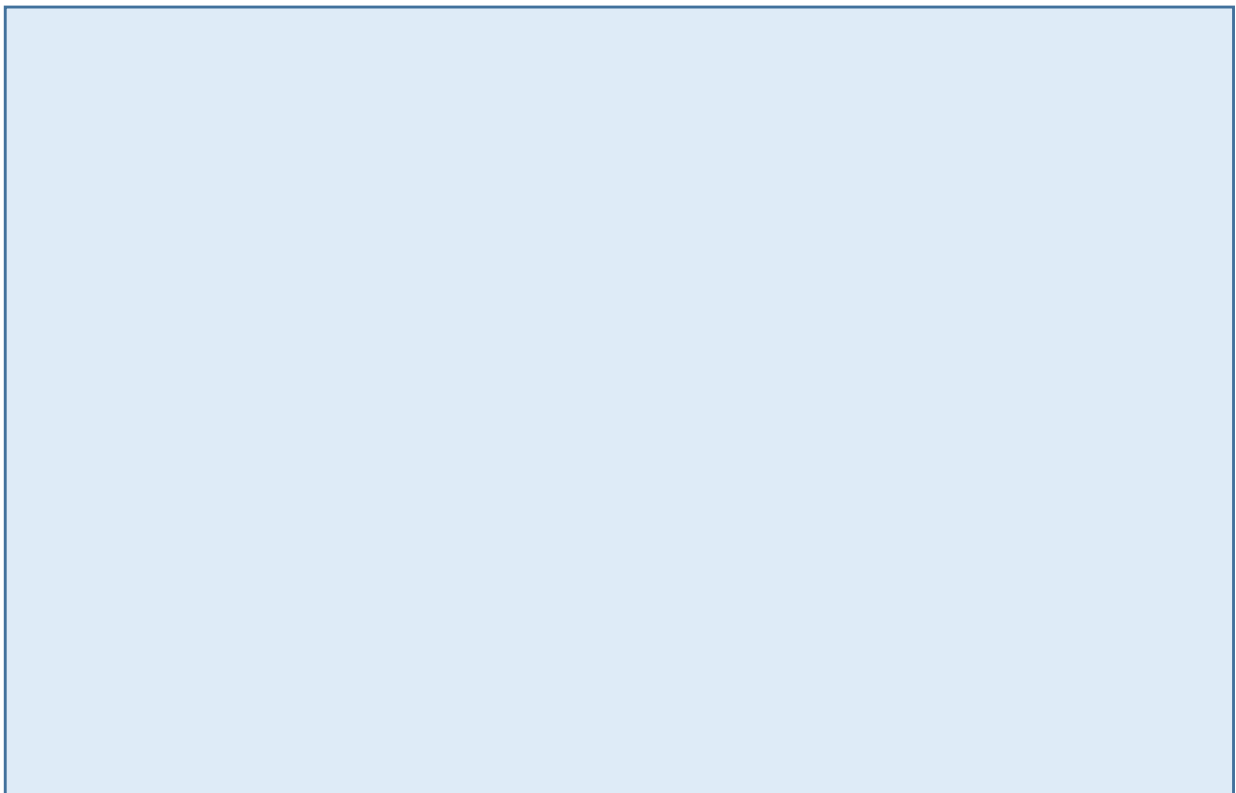
**If your story is set in the past, how will you portray that time period? Think about things like: customs of the past, the technology available, the popular historical figures of that era, music, jobs available (there were no bloggers in 1870!), different clothing**



**If your story is set in the future, or contains elements of fantasy, write down some of the things that will help you create a believable world for your characters. Examples could be time travel, teleportation, intelligent robots doing things like house chores, etc.**



**Think about how your characters will be interacting with their setting. Write down the things that they would need in their everyday lives that you must include. Example, if your character is a banker in the city in 1997, would he have a car or would he take the train to work? If your character is a teacher in the 1950s, what would her school and classroom look like?**





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## Lesson 5

**Please use this workbook to write down your ideas  
as you create your plot outline.**

## Course Notes

### Part 5 - Writing Your Plot Outline

**Now we have the basic elements of your novel done. The next step in this process is to bring it all together and outline your story.**

There are many different schools of thought on whether an outline is beneficial to a writer, or even necessary. Personally, I think if I'm writing short fiction, I don't need an outline, but if I'm working on a novel, I definitely need one. My outline acts as a road map of my story, so I know where I'm going, and the series of events that have to happen so that I get there, and my characters also achieve their own goals. Often, I have to refer to my outline to guide me whenever I'm feeling stuck, so I always recommend having a basic structure to aspiring writers.

Different methods work for different writers, but I recommend a six-step method that helps me look at the plot and create a flow for how the story unfolds, and how it comes to a resolution.

**These six steps are:**

**1) Define the Story Goal** – The story goal is, generally speaking, what your protagonist wants to achieve or the problem he/she wants to resolve. It is also the goal/problem that involves or affects most, if not all the other characters in the story. It is “what the story is all about.”

For instance, let's say we want to write a story about a 38-year-old female executive who has always put off having a family for the sake of her career and now finds herself lonely and regretting her choices. In this case, we might choose to make the Story Goal for her to find true love before it's too late. When you're starting to write the outline for this story, the things that might come to your mind are: what obstacles are in her path? who are the people in the story that will help or hinder her to achieve this goal? Did she make wrong choices in her past regarding choosing a suitable mate? What qualities is she now looking for in a man? How much is she willing to sacrifice and compromise for the sake of true love? Will she recognise true love when she finds it? And so on.

In other words, after we have chosen a Story Goal, we will build a world around our protagonist that includes many perspectives on the problem and makes the goal important to everyone in that world. That's why choosing the Story Goal is the most important first step in building a plot outline.

**2) Consequence** - Once you have decided on a Story Goal, your next step is to ask yourself, “What disaster will happen if the goal is not achieved? What is my protagonist afraid will happen if he/she doesn't achieve the goal or solve the problem?”

The answer to these questions is the Consequence of the story. The Consequence is the negative situation or event that will result if the Goal is not achieved. Avoiding the Consequence justifies the effort required in pursuing the Story Goal, both to the characters in your novel and the reader, and that makes it an important part of your plot outline. The combination of goal and consequence creates the main dramatic tension in your plot.

In some stories, the protagonist may begin by deciding to resolve a problem or pursue a goal. Later, that goal becomes more meaningful when he discovers that a terrible consequence will occur if he fails. Other times, the protagonist may start off threatened by a terrible event, which thus motivates him/her to find way to avoid it.

In our earlier example, the Consequence could be that the female executive fails to find true love and she lives a lonely and miserable life, full of regrets. It is this consequence that she is trying to avoid throughout the story.

Write a list of possible Consequences you could have in your plot outline. Then choose one to be the counterpoint to your chosen Story Goal.

**3) Requirements** - The third element of your plot outline, Requirements, describes what must happen in order to achieve the Story Goal. You can think of this as a checklist of one or more events. As the Requirements are met in the course of the novel, the reader will feel the characters are getting closer to the attainment of the goal. Requirements create a state of excited anticipation in the reader's mind, so that he looks forward to the protagonist's success.

In our example of the female executive, what would be the Requirements? If the Story Goal is for our protagonist to find true love, perhaps she will need to join a singles club or dating service so she can meet single men. Perhaps she will need to cut down her hours at work, so that she has some time to socialise outside of business engagements.

When you're outlining your novel, list out some events that need to happen for the goal in your novel to be achieved.

**4) Forewarnings** - While requirements show that the story is progressing towards the achievement of the goal, forewarnings are events that show the consequence is getting closer. Forewarnings make the reader anxious that the consequence will occur before the protagonist can succeed. In the plot outline for our story, events that could constitute Forewarnings might be: the protagonist has a series of bad dates that make it seem like she will never find the right guy, or the protagonist meets a woman at a singles club who tells her that at their age all the good men are already married.

While the Story Goal and Consequences create dramatic tension, Requirements and Forewarnings take the reader through an emotional roller coaster that oscillates between

hope and fear. There will be places in the plot where it seems the protagonist is making progress, and others where it seems that everything is going wrong. Structure these well, and you will keep your reader turning pages non-stop.

**5) Costs** - Good plots are about problems that mean a lot to the characters. If a problem is trivial, then neither the protagonist nor the reader has a reason to get worked up about it. You want your readers to get worked up about your novel. So you must give your protagonist a goal that matters. One sign that a problem or goal matters to the protagonist is that he/she is willing to make sacrifices or suffer pain in order to achieve it. Such sacrifices are called Costs.

Costs can come in many ways. Protagonists can be asked to give up their pride, self-respect, money, security, an attitude, an idealized memory, the life of a friend, or anything else they hold dear. If you make the costs steep and illustrate how hard the sacrifice is for the protagonist, the reader will feel that the protagonist deserves to achieve the goal.

In the case of our female executive, perhaps she must give up a promotion she has worked hard for because it would require her to travel so much that she would have no chance of settling down and raising a family.

**6) Climax and Resolution** – Now that you have the basic requirement for creating an interesting plot, you have to bring everything together so that your story ending makes emotional and logical sense to the reader. At the climax of your story, the main character, in pursuit of the Story Goal, arrives at a tough situation. He or she then makes a decision or does something that determines decisively whether or not the Story Goal will be achieved. More precisely, he decides whether or not to change himself or his behaviour. Your main character should have a particular way of trying to solve problems that is key to the plot development. With some characters, it is a type of behaviour. With others, it is a personality trait that either helps or hinders them. In our example, perhaps the female executive decides to take a chance on a man she met even though he was not her usual ‘type’ and he seemed like a risk.

**The Resolution is how your story ends.** Generally, stories can end happily (the protagonist achieved the Story Goal), the story ends unhappily (the protagonist failed to achieve the story goal), or somewhere in-between.

Throughout the process of choosing your story, choosing your protagonist and outlining the novel, you may already have in mind how you want the story to end. If you’re aiming for the story to end happily, then you’ll make sure that at the climax, your main character makes a decision that leads them towards the happy ending. In our example of the female executive, it may mean that she accepted the proposal of the man that she had been dating and fallen in love with, after he proved himself to be trustworthy.

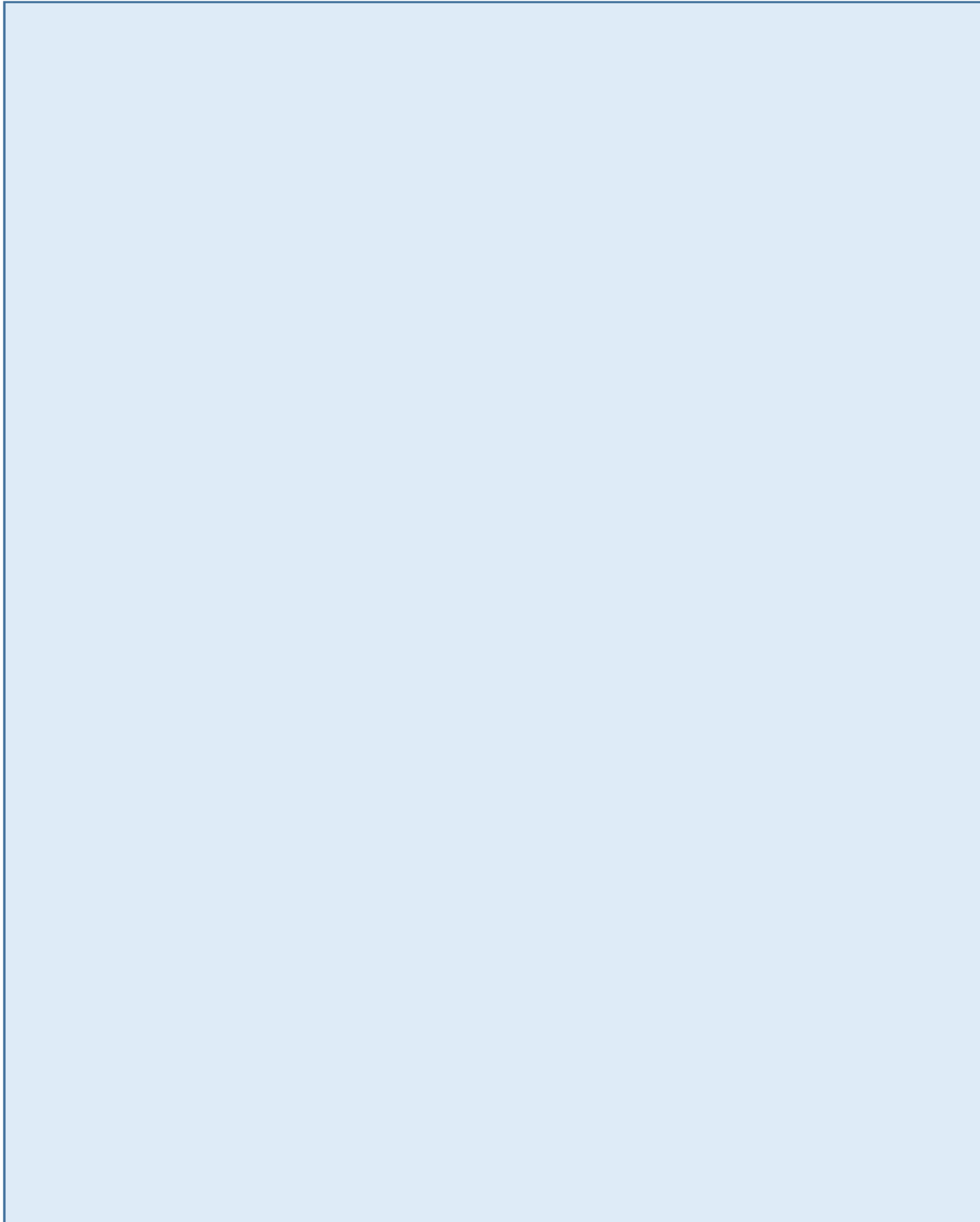
Of course, not all stories end so neatly. Sometimes the protagonist achieves the Story Goal, only to realise it wasn't worth it in the end. And sometimes, the protagonist fails to achieve the Story Goal, but this turns out to be a good thing.

Now you have your plot outline! You could decide to break the story down into a chapter by chapter outline, or even a scene by scene outline. The important thing is that you have a very good plan of what you're going to do with your idea, your characters, and your setting, so that when you start fleshing it out, the story flows without too many hiccups, and most importantly, you won't feel overwhelmed and tempted to quit.

Now let's move on to the workbook for this topic.

## Workbook 5 – Writing Your Plot Outline

**Start by writing down the Story Goal – The story goal is, generally speaking, what your protagonist wants to achieve or the problem he/she wants to resolve. It is also the goal/problem that involves or affects most, if not all the other characters in the story. Put your story goal ideas in the box below:**

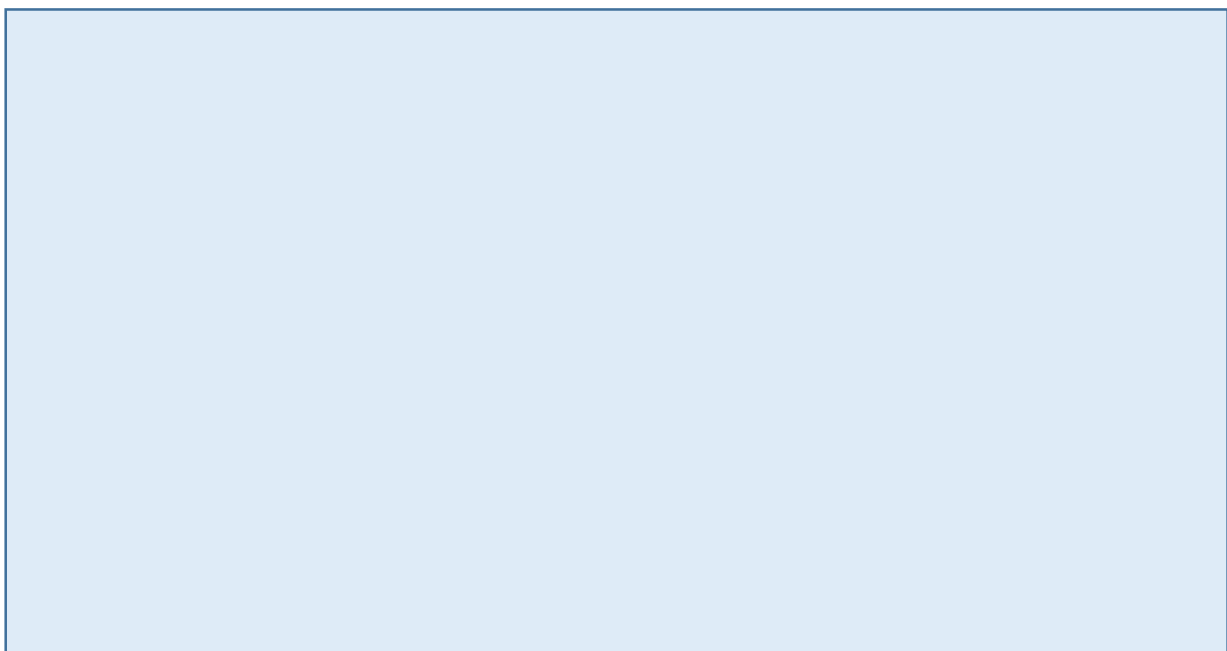


**The Consequence is the negative situation or event that will result if the Story Goal is not achieved. Avoiding the Consequence justifies the effort required in pursuing the Story Goal, both to the characters in your novel and the reader, and that makes it an important part of your plot outline. The combination of goal and consequence creates the main dramatic tension in your plot.**

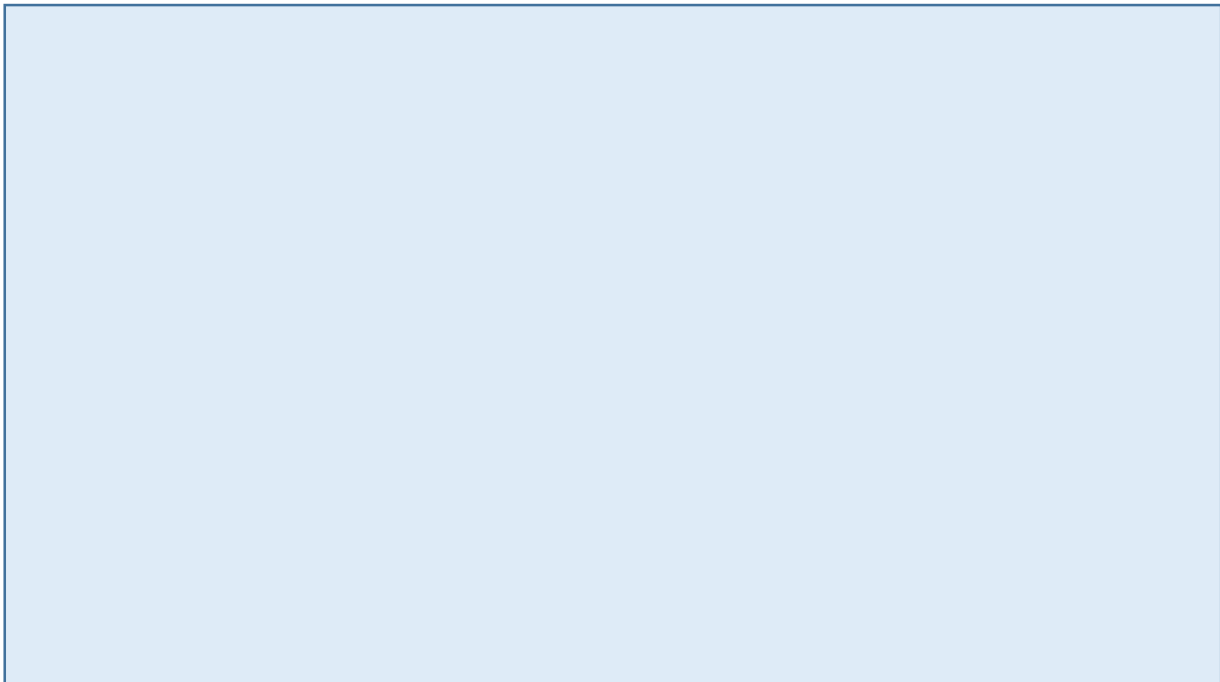
**Write down two or more consequences for your protagonist if he or she fails to achieve the story goal:**



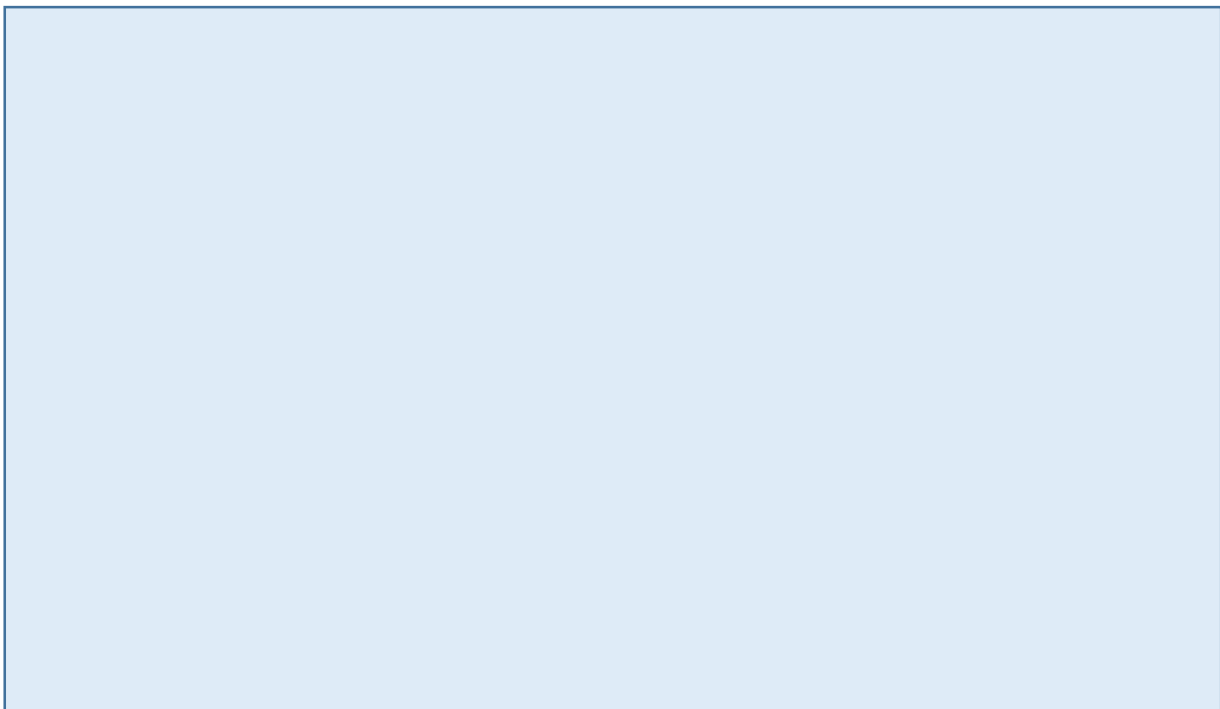
**Requirements describes what must happen in order to achieve the Story Goal. Write down two or more Requirements for your story in the box below:**



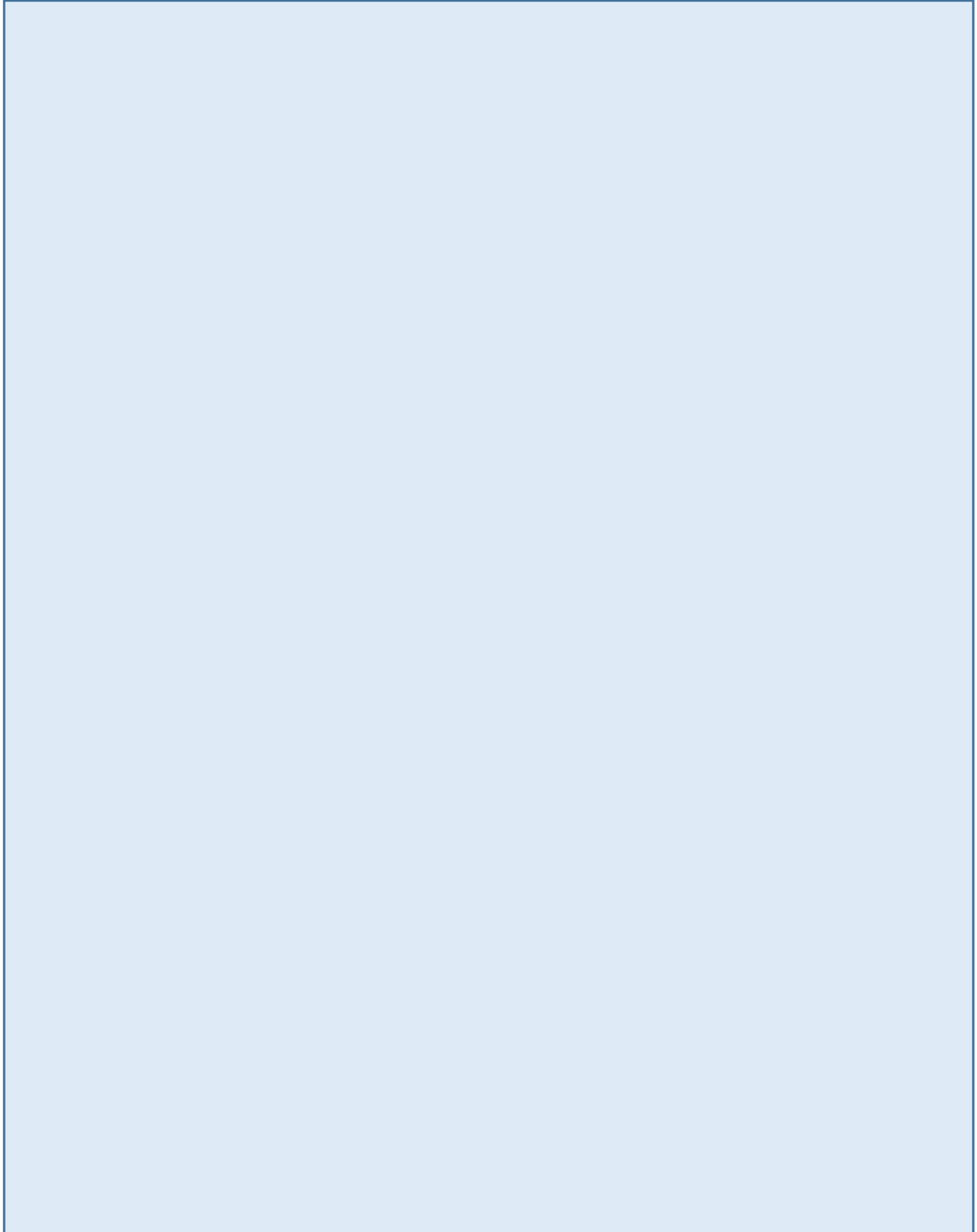
**Forewarnings - While requirements show that the story is progressing towards the achievement of the goal, forewarnings are events that show the consequence is getting closer. Write down one or more Forewarnings for your protagonist in the box below:**



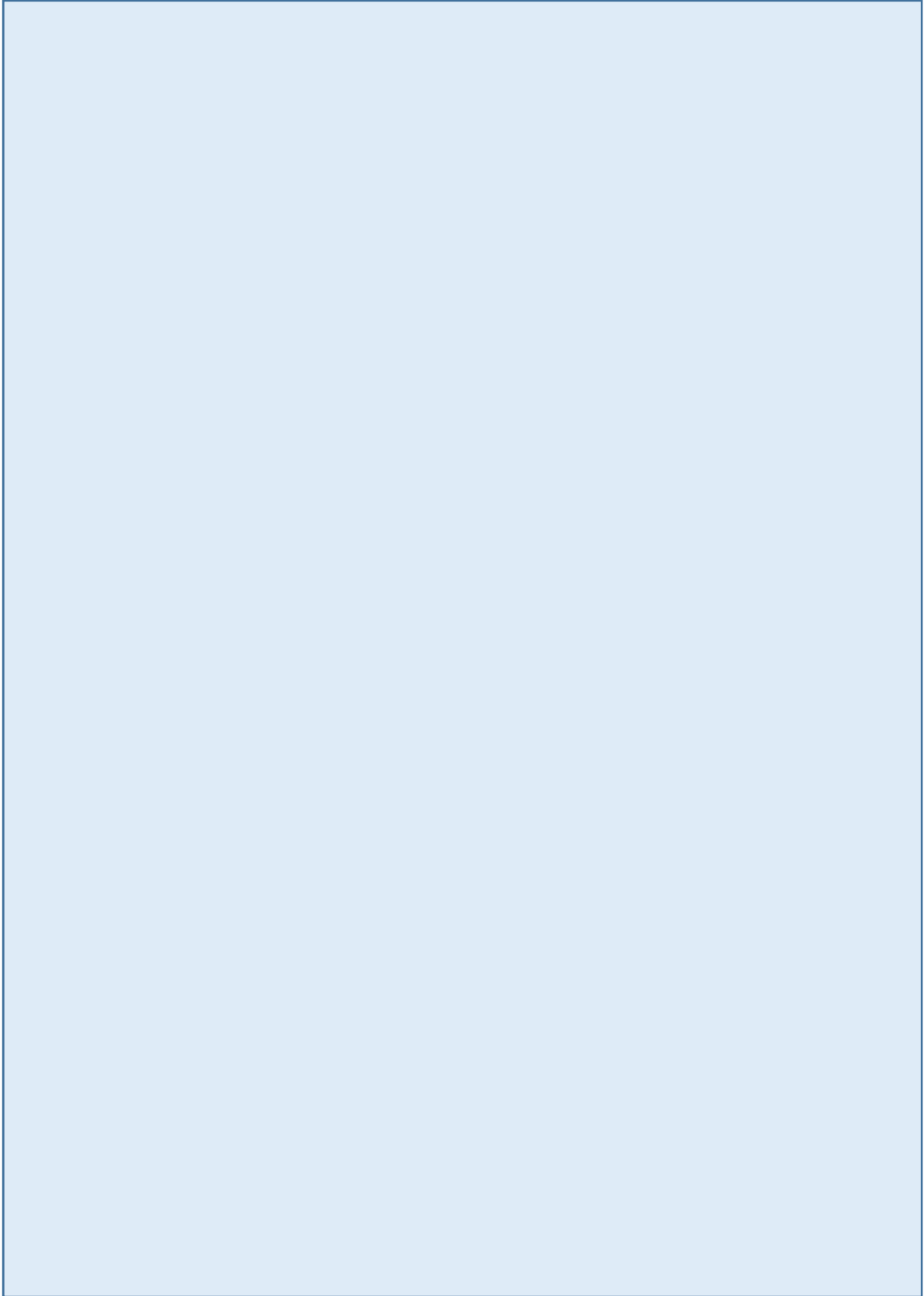
**Costs are the sacrifices that your protagonist has to make to achieve the Story Goal. Write down two or more costs in the box below:**



**Climax and Resolution – Now you have to bring all the features you’ve written together so that your story ending makes emotional and logical sense to the reader. Write down your climax and resolution. Has your protagonist achieved the Story Goal? Will your story end happily or unhappily?**



**If you're happy with your plot elements, you can now write a good summary, or synopsis of your novel.**





# Creative Writing Course

*by*  
*Tolulope Popoola*  
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## Lesson 6

**Please use this workbook to write down your ideas as we discuss the genre you're writing.**

## Course Notes

### Part 6 – What Genre Are You Writing?

If someone was to ask you about your current work-in-progress and ask specifically, “what genre is it?” would you know how to respond? When deciding which genre to write in, most new writers start with the one they’re most familiar with, and the one they enjoy reading. Some may decide to learn the styles and rules in a particular genre that appeal to them before they start writing.

Broadly speaking, genre may fall under one of two categories: **Fiction and Nonfiction**.

Any genre can be either: a work of **Fiction**, which narrates nonfactual descriptions and events invented by the author or a work of **Nonfiction**, which portrays experiences, events and facts that are true. Each genre is a different, complex type of story with its own peculiarities. Since this course is mainly for writers who want to write a novel, we will focus on **Fiction**.

If you’re writing fiction, essentially, while initially developing a story in your mind, you should be aware of who your protagonist is and what they are trying to achieve. If your story is mainly about a character finding love, then you’re writing in the Romance genre. If your story is about a character trying to solve a crime, then your story could fit into Mystery or Crime/Detective genre. If your story is about a setting with magical or supernatural themes, then your genre is most likely Fantasy.

For this part of the course, we’ll be discussing a few of the most prominent **Fiction genres**.

**Romance** - Romance is one of the most popular genre of fiction. A romance novel is the one in which a love relationship between a man and a woman is the main idea of the plot. The story is either told from the viewpoint of the hero or the heroine. Conventionally the story starts with the lovers’ encounter and moves forward with their falling into love and intimacy. Like any other genre, romance writers also add a lot of tension and conflict into the plot in order to make the story captivating. The reader often wonders if the hero or heroine will achieve the love they seek. The resolution is usually the union of the lovers after having faced many social, psychological and emotional hardships. Most Romance novels have a happy ending where the main characters are in love and their future together is optimistic.

Romance has many sub-genres including fantasy, historical, science fiction and paranormal.

**Science Fiction** - Science fiction is a speculative genre in which the element of science and technology play the main part throughout the plot. The plot is usually set in future, where the prevailing scientific facts and technology witness a hypothetical, futuristic application.

The story goal revolves around science and technology and its effect on people. Most of the themes in science fiction deal with ground-breaking experiments, space travel, extra-terrestrial life, time-travel or the existence of a parallel universe. This is one of the most creative genres of fiction and it requires a lot of research and first-hand knowledge to craft a flawless science fiction.

**Fantasy** - Fantasy is a genre that usually comprises of magic, super natural elements, mythological and neo-mythological beings and imaginary worlds. There are some overlaps with science fiction in Fantasy, but unlike science fiction, science and technology are not the main catalysts of the story. Fantasy also involves the suspension of reality and disbelief. The writer who wants to write in the Fantasy genre must be able to craft a world where strange things happen, such as animals speaking or people flying, but the reader experiences this as normal. Sometimes the plot contains a normal setting with just a few magical elements, and in some stories, the entire setting is fictional and unreal.

**Thriller** - Thriller is a broad genre of literature, which relies heavily on stimulating the reader's moods, giving them heightened feelings of suspense, excitement, surprise, anticipation and anxiety. Stories in this genre keep the reader on the "edge of their seats" as the plot builds towards a climax. A thriller is usually a villain-driven plot, whereby he or she presents obstacles that the protagonist must overcome. The villain could be a person, a situation or even a government organization that is a threat to the main protagonist.

Plots in a thriller novel are usually based on illegal or violent activities such as kidnappings, murders, stalking, acts of terrorism, false accusations and political sabotage. Grief, false hope, heartaches, anxiety and near-death experiences are a few important elements of an outstanding thriller. Like Romance, there are many sub-genres of thriller such as legal thriller, spy thriller, action-adventure thriller, medical thriller, police thriller and historical thriller. Most thrillers are fast-paced, with a lot of action to keep the reader going.

**Horror** - Horror fiction is a genre of literature, which is intended to frighten, scare, or startle their readers by inducing feelings of horror and terror. It creates an eerie and frightening atmosphere. Horror is frequently supernatural, though it can be non-supernatural

Historically, the horror genre has origins in folklore and religious traditions, focusing on death, the afterlife, evil, and demonic beings such as witches, vampires, werewolves, zombies and ghosts. Modern horror also includes these elements and some stories incorporate psychological and social menaces. One of the best-known contemporary horror writers is Stephen King, known for writing books like *Carrie*, *The Shining*, *It*, *Misery* and many others.

**Mystery** - Mystery fiction is a genre usually involving a mysterious death or a crime to be solved. And a closed circle of suspects. Each of the suspects must have a credible motive and a reasonable opportunity for committing the crime. The central character is usually a detective or officer of the law who eventually solves the mystery by logical deduction from facts fairly presented to the reader. Sometimes mystery books are nonfictional or based on a retelling of true crimes that happened and have been resolved.

There are some elements of Thriller in this genre, but the emphasis in Mystery is on the puzzle or suspense element and its logical solution. Sometimes these stories are labelled “whodunit” because that is the main question the protagonist is trying to resolve. The Sherlock Holmes series is one of the most popular examples of a Mystery novel.

**Historical Fiction** - Historical fiction is used to describe novels set in a specific period in history, such as the French Revolution, Ancient Rome, the First World War, the Gold Rush, Ancient Egypt, etc. An essential element of historical fiction is that it is set in the past and pays attention to the manners, social conditions speech, clothing, modes of transport and other details of the period depicted. The Historical Novel Society defines the genre as works “written at least fifty years after the events described”.

Writing historical fiction often involves a lot of research on the part of the writer, so as to accurately portray and how life was at a point in the past. Tolstoy’s War and Peace offers an example of 19th-century historical fiction used to critique contemporary history. The novel is set 60 years before it was composed, and alongside researching the war through primary and secondary sources, he spoke with people who had lived through war during the French invasion of Russia in 1812.

Not all stories fit neatly into these well-defined genres, and some stories may have elements of more than one genre. The next categories of fiction are less about the genre and more about the target market that they appeal to.

## **Young Adult**

Young-adult fiction or young adult literature, often abbreviated as YA, is fiction written, published, or marketed to adolescents and young adults. Authors and readers of YA novels often define the category as literature written for ages ranging from sixteen years to the early twenties, while Teen Fiction is written for the ages of ten to fifteen. Young Adult as a category started in the early 1950s and gained popularity through the 1960s and 1970s. In the 80s and 90s they continued to grow, as publishers and bookstore owners started publishing and shelving YA books under different sections from Children’s books and books marketed to adults.

The themes and story lines of the YA category are typically consistent with the age and experience of the main character, but YA spans different genres. YA stories that focus on the specific challenges of youth are sometimes referred to as problem novels or coming-of-age novels. The protagonist is always of that age, as are most of the characters. A variety

of issues that young people can deal with such as friendships, getting into trouble, interest in the opposite sex, money, divorce, remarriage, problems with parents, grandparents, younger siblings, concern over grades/school, popularity, puberty, race, etc. can be dealt with in a YA novel.

### **Children's Fiction**

This is a wide category of fiction that is well defined by its own name. The stories and books are for young children, from toddlers on up to about eleven years of age. Children's fiction is often divided by age or school grade, such as nursery rhymes, songs and poems for very young children, fables that teach morals and adventure stories for older primary school age children. The books usually feature characters that belong to the same age group that they targets as readers. Children's book often include colourful illustrations of the story and the main characters. There's usually a lot of imagery, with simple dialogues and themes.

There are six categories of children's literature (with some significant subgenres):

(i) Picture books that teach the alphabet or counting for example, pattern books, and wordless books (ii) Traditional literature, including folktales, myths, fables, legends, and fairy tales (iii) children's fiction, including fantasy, realistic fiction, and historical fiction (iv) Non-fiction (v) Biography and autobiography (vi) Poetry and verse.

### **Literary Fiction**

Literary fiction refers to a type of novel or work of prose where the story focuses more on a complex character's internal issues, a political commentary or the mastery of the language and less on the plot. Literary fiction often aims to do more than just tell a story. The author may be trying to do something unprecedented with language, style or structure.


Many people believe that the main difference between literary fiction and mainstream genre fiction is that literary fiction stories are more 'character driven' as opposed to 'plot driven'. They don't have a concrete plot, or a happy ending. The character may or may not be a good person. Literary fiction tends to be unpredictable, because the story usually doesn't have a specific format like in genre fiction.

Now let's move on to the workbook for this topic.

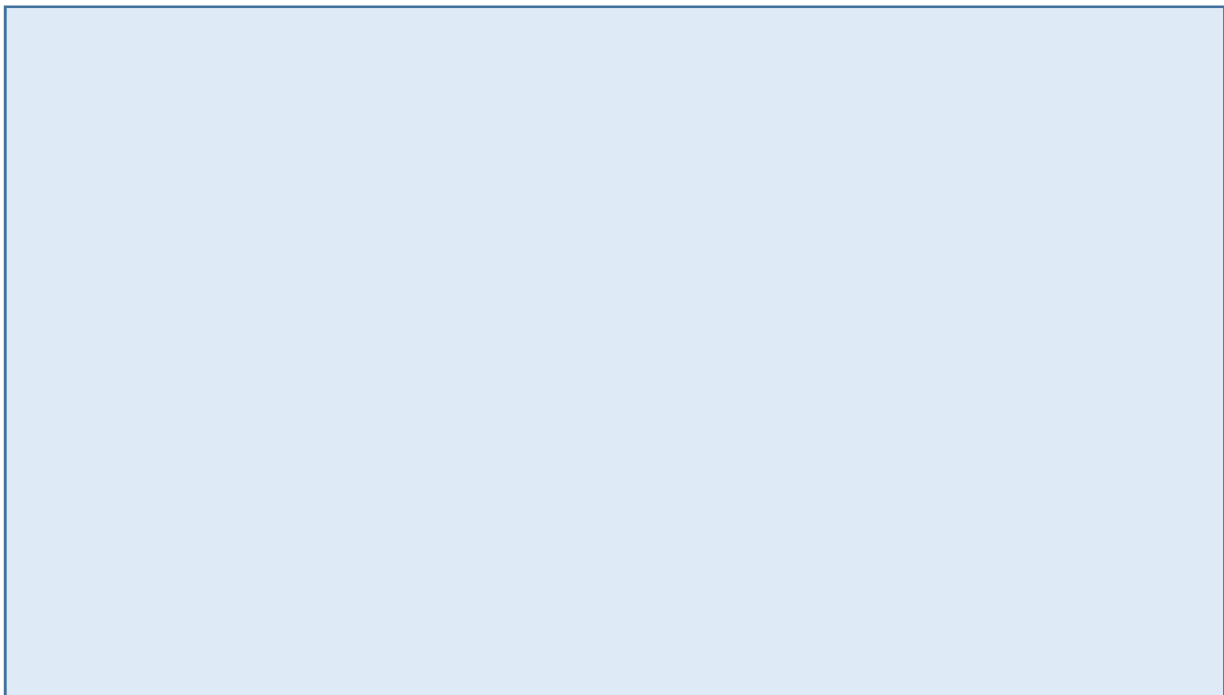
## **Workbook 6 – What Genre Are You Writing?**

Knowing the genre your story falls into will help you with applying the rules while you're writing. It will also help you with attracting the right readers, and categorising your book when you finish writing, and you're ready to publish it.

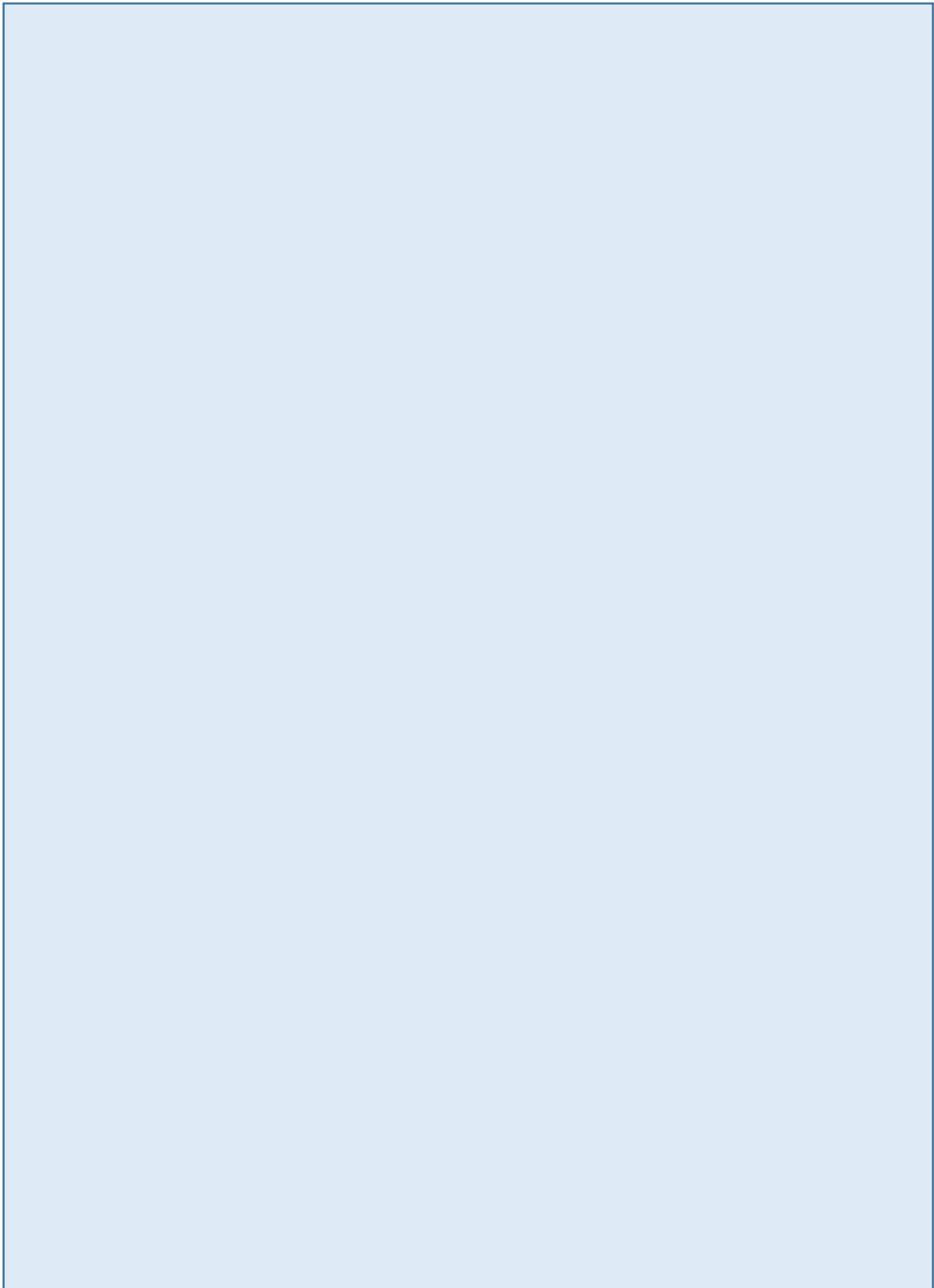
**Based on the Story Goal, and what your protagonist wants to achieve, what's the Genre for your story?**



**If your story is Literary Fiction, or it doesn't fit neatly into any of the genres discussed above, how best can you describe it?**

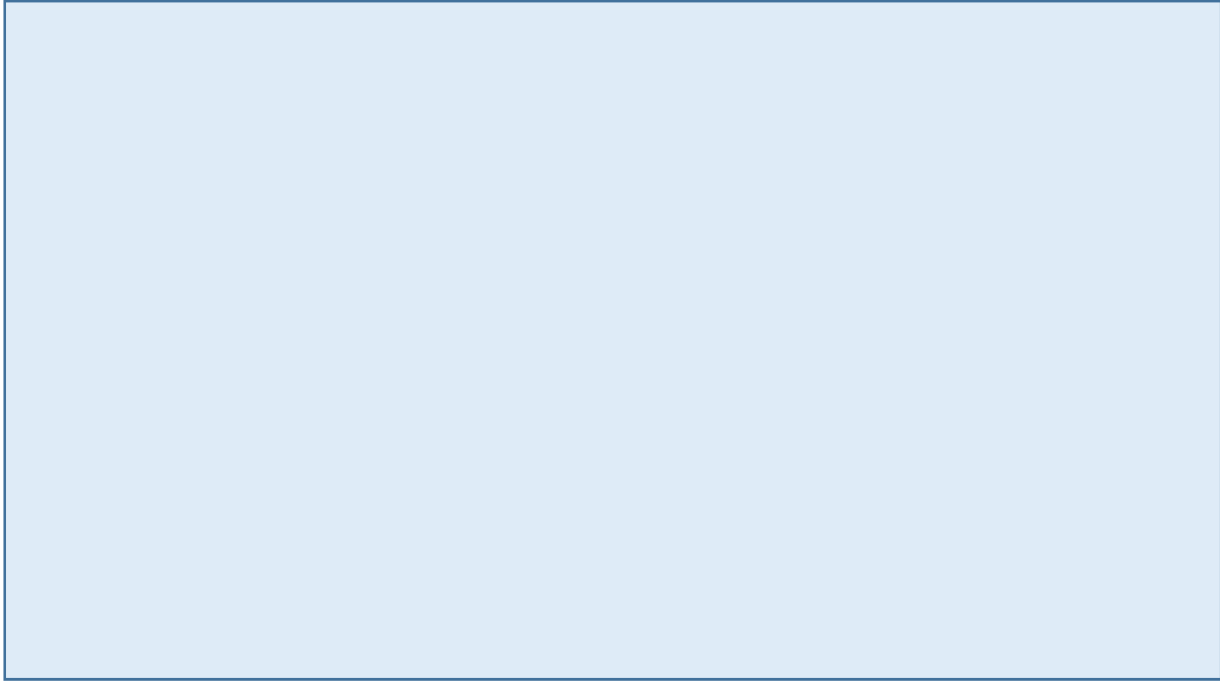


**What are the rules of the genre you're writing? For example, if you're writing Romance, there is usually a set pattern where the protagonist finds a love interest, and the story usually ends happily. Write down the rules of your genre here:**

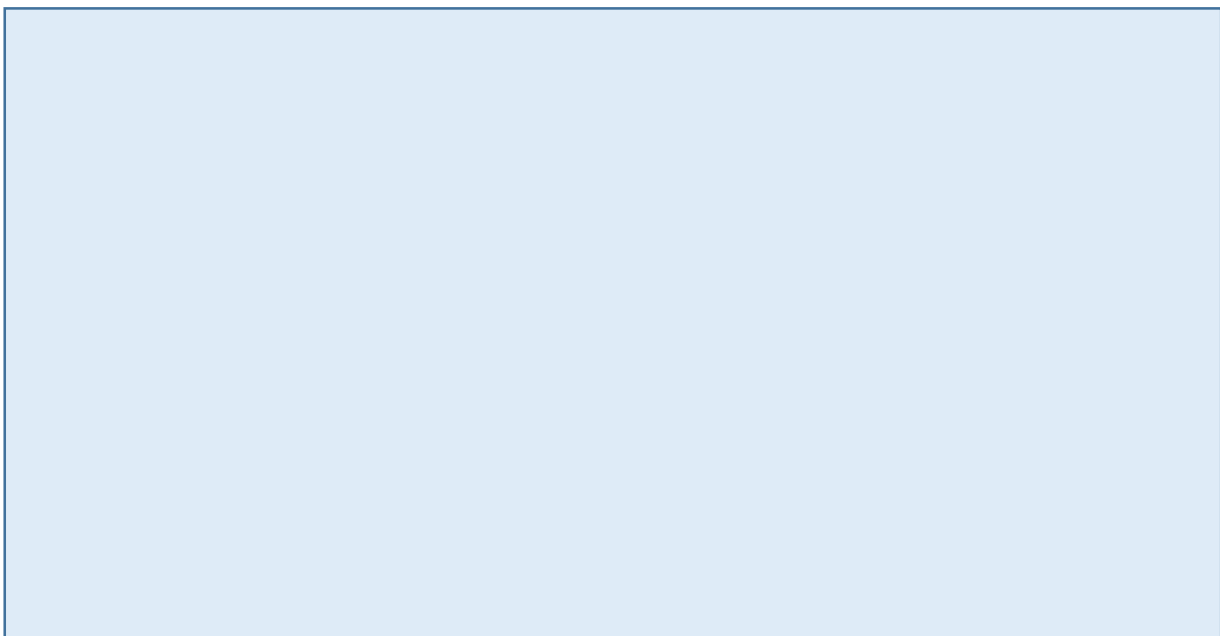


**As a writer, you can decide to break some of the rules of a genre, but do so with caution! If you plan to change some of the rules that apply to your story, think carefully about the expectations of your readers. For example, most Romance novels end happily. If you want to write an unhappy ending, there must be a compelling reason.**

**Write down how you plan to change the rules of your genre.**



**Your reader will be expecting to know the genre of the book they are reading upfront. This means your first chapter must set the tone for what's to happen throughout the book. For example, in Romance, the first chapter introduces the female protagonist, and she meets the male protagonist. Write down how you will structure or change your first chapter based on this genre expectation:**





# Creative Writing Course

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## Lesson 7

**Please use this workbook to write down your ideas  
on Narration, Description and Dialogue.**

## Course Notes

### Part 7 – Narration, Description and Dialogue

**At this point, you should have made a lot of progress with writing your first draft.**

When you're writing a work of prose, for example a novel or a short story, you will be using these three elements: Narration, Description and Dialogue.

**Description:** We use description to help our readers form a picture in their mind as they read. When you use description effectively, you can help a reader form a picture of what your characters look like, what they are wearing, what their environment looks and feels like, the world they inhabit, how they are feeling, and so on. Description also helps to bring your setting (time and place) to life.

**Dialogue:** In a dialogue, at least two people are talking. They exchange information, ask questions, answer them, comment, fight, tease, etc. The way they interact with each other says a whole lot about their relationship. A teenage girl will speak and act differently when she talks to her best friend, her teacher or her little sister or her mom. When you're writing, pay attention to the words your character is using. The way people speak and interact in a conversation says a whole lot about them. The words a character chooses can and should expose the character's background, personality, and emotional status. The CEO of a multibillion-dollar company would choose different words than a military general, a stay-at-home mom, or a teenage girl.

**Narration:** The narration is what you, as the author, reveal to your reader, in between the other elements. This is where your Point of View comes in, as your narrator will either be you, as the omniscient author, or the limited perspective of one of your characters. Narration can be used to explain the thoughts of your character, and reveal things that the dialogue cannot.

As writers, we use these elements in our story to do the following:

- Describe scenes for your reader
- Explain what is happening in a scene
- Highlight aspects of your character's personality
- Reveal what your character is thinking
- Explore the relationships between your characters
- Drive the story forward

And so on.

Most of the time, you'll need to balance the scenes you're writing by blending these elements effectively. This is one reason you should put your protagonist in a scene with other characters as often as possible. Scenes that weave together these three elements engage the reader at an emotional level much more effectively than scenes that are only dialogue, only narrative or only description.

**Example: Please read this excerpt from my novel, *Nothing Comes Close*. It contains all three elements of writing prose.**

I had to admit I was enjoying myself, and I was glad I made the choice to hang out with Kene this Saturday. We were just leaving the album launch. Kene had behaved outrageously, flirting with all the pretty girls, posing for every camera and drinking free alcohol. I stayed sober, just in case I was going to end up being the designated driver by the end of the night. We stepped out of the bar and got into Kene's car that was parked just around the corner and started heading to the birthday party.

"Who's the celebrant?" I asked. "Anyone I know?"

"I don't think you know her. Her name is Titi and I met her through another girl who recently joined our label."

"Is she also in the music business?"

"I can't remember. I don't think so."

The party was already in full swing when we arrived. The house was full of people, many of whom were standing around eating, and talking. A few brave ones had taken to the dance floor in the open space living room. A mixture of the smell of perfume, food and drink filled the air. It reminded me of the house parties Kene and our friends used to throw when we were at university. These were usually parties that happened for no reason at all. When we were in a good mood or Kene wanted to get some girl's attention, we'd just throw a feel good party. And he was good at that; especially when it came to seducing a girl. Once his mind was made up, there was no stopping him.

"Let me find Titi," Kene said to me, his voice raised above the music.

"Sure," I replied.

Kene went through the house, greeting some of the guests while I went to the garden to wait for him. Within minutes, I was accosted by a lady wearing a dress that showed off her curvy body.

"Hi," she said as she approached, smiling. "I'm the celebrant's friend. Have you just arrived?"

"Hello. Yes I've just come in with a friend."

"My name is Funmi," she said, "I'll get you something to drink. There's a buffet in the kitchen if you're hungry, okay?"

"Thanks."

She went off and a moment later another girl with the most striking eyes I'd ever seen approached me. I was immediately drawn to her, and, judging from that bold yellow dress she was wearing, I concluded that she must be a really confident person.

"Funmi wasn't sure what drink to offer you, so let me give you the options. My name is Lola, by the way."

"My name is Wole."

"We've got juice, white wine, beer, punch and –"

"I'll have the wine, please."

"Okay, I'll be right back." She disappeared through the glass doors and Kene reappeared at that minute with a girl who looked vaguely familiar.

"This is Titi," he said. "Titi, this is my friend Wole, he's the one I was telling you about."

Titi smiled at me and said, "Thank you for coming. You look a little familiar."

"I think we may have met before." I agreed. "I can't remember where though."

"Well, imagine that." Kene said, raising an eyebrow in surprise. "It is a small world."

"Yes it is," Titi said, giving me another quizzical look. "Well, enjoy the party guys, and I'll catch up with you again before you leave, huh?"

"Okay, we will." Kene said.

When she was out of earshot, Kene leaned closer to me and said, "Man, isn't she something! Shame she's got some dude hanging around her already."

"Hmm." I said, not really listening. I was trying to figure out how I knew Titi.

"Well, maybe she can hook me up with one of her friends instead." Kene continued. "I've already seen some interesting prospects."

Lola reappeared with a glass of wine.

"Here's your drink Wole."

"Thank you. This is my friend, Kene."

"Hi Kene," she said.

"Nice to meet you...?"

"Lola."

"Cool."

She went away again, and my eyes followed her into the house, the kitchen and back into the living room, where she started dancing. I was so focused on watching Lola that I didn't hear what Kene said, until he tapped me.

"Go get her, tiger."

"What?"

"You're captivated by that Lola chick. Go and talk to her, and let me find someone interesting to talk to."

I laughed, but I didn't hesitate. I left Kene in the garden and went into the living room to join Lola on the dance floor.

She seemed surprised but she didn't object when I started dancing next to her. We found a rhythm and began to move in tandem. She was a great dancer, anticipating my moves and stepping to the music. I enjoyed the dance until the music changed and she wanted to get a drink. I followed her to the kitchen so that we could talk. We had to raise our voices to be heard above the music, but I didn't mind. Eventually I got some finger food and we went to sit in the garden. I was fascinated with the way she smiled and gestured with her hands when she talked. Soon we forgot about the rest of the party and chatted for a long time. Occasionally, Lola had to play hostess, but I followed her around and didn't let her out of my sight. Usually, I'm the one who has to drag Kene out of functions, but this time was different. He was the one ready to leave when I wasn't.

I got up to leave, reluctantly.

"It was nice meeting you, Lola," I said.

"Same here," she replied.

"I would love to continue this conversation." I said. "Can I have your number?"

"Sure," she said, getting up from the garden bench. "Let me get my phone so that I can save yours."

I watched her go upstairs. I loved the fact that she was direct, and didn't do unnecessary *shakara* like many ladies.

She came back and said, "Let me have your number, so I can call you."

I gave her my number and she called my phone.

"There, now you have mine." She said. "The ball is firmly in your court."

"I'll be in touch," I said, catching a glimpse of Kene looking for me. "Got to go now."

“Okay, let me go and re-join my friends inside. I expect we’ll start clearing up soon. Bye Wole.”

Kene gave me a curious look when I joined him in the car.

“I thought you weren’t looking to meet anyone?”

I shrugged.

“You can’t plan these things. She was nice, so we’ll see.”

“Well I was on the prowl tonight and I met a tasty one.”

“This guy, when will you change?”

“Hopefully never.”

Kene thankfully wasn’t drunk and he dropped me off at home around four in the morning. I was expecting to be tired and fall asleep immediately but thirty minutes later, I was still lying on my bed fully alert. I tossed and turned for a bit. When I still couldn’t sleep, I got up to search for a blue folder that I kept away from all the other documents in my home office. This one contained stuff that I didn’t want prying eyes to see.

## **Striking a Balance**

As you write, you’ll need to strike a balance between these three elements. There are no hard-and-fast rules about when and when not to blend dialogue, description and narrative. You’ll find your ideal rhythm as you weave your story together.

But there are a few questions you can ask yourself about your story, especially when you are rewriting the first draft, and editing. These questions can help you know which elements are most effective for a particular scene, and which might be better used elsewhere.

- Is the story moving a little too slowly, and do I need to speed things up? (Use dialogue to speed things up.)
- Is it time to give the reader some background on the characters so they’re more sympathetic? (Use narrative, dialogue or a combination of the two.)
- Do I have too many dialogue scenes in a row? (Use description or narrative.)

- Are my characters constantly confiding in others about things they should only be pondering in their minds? (Use narrative.)
- Likewise, are my characters alone in their heads when my characters in conversation would be more effective and lively? (Use dialogue.)
- Is my story top-heavy in any way at all—too much dialogue, too much narrative or too much description? (Insert more of the elements that are missing.)
- Are my characters providing too many background details as they're talking to each other? (Use narrative.)

Whether we're using dialogue, description or narrative to move the story forward, any or all three of these elements are doing double duty by revealing our characters' motives. And to understand a character's motive is to understand the character.

Now let's move on to the workbook for this topic.

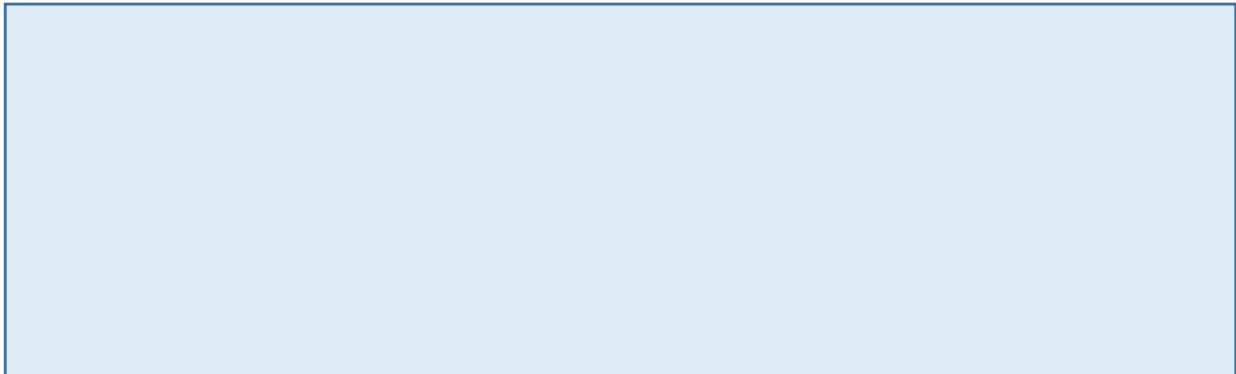
## Workbook 7 – Writing Narration, Description and Dialogue

Use the excerpt from *Nothing Comes Close*, in the section above. If you have a highlighter or a pen, mark out which areas are Dialogue, Narration and Description.

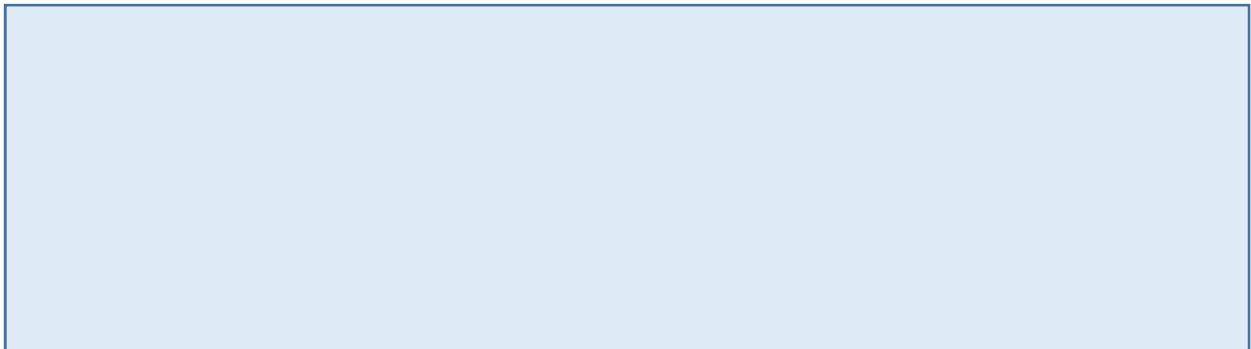


Most writers have one strong point when they are writing with these elements. Personally, I find dialogue comes to me easily, while description is my weakest point. That means I have to make a deliberate effort when I'm writing, or editing to describe my characters and my scenes effectively.

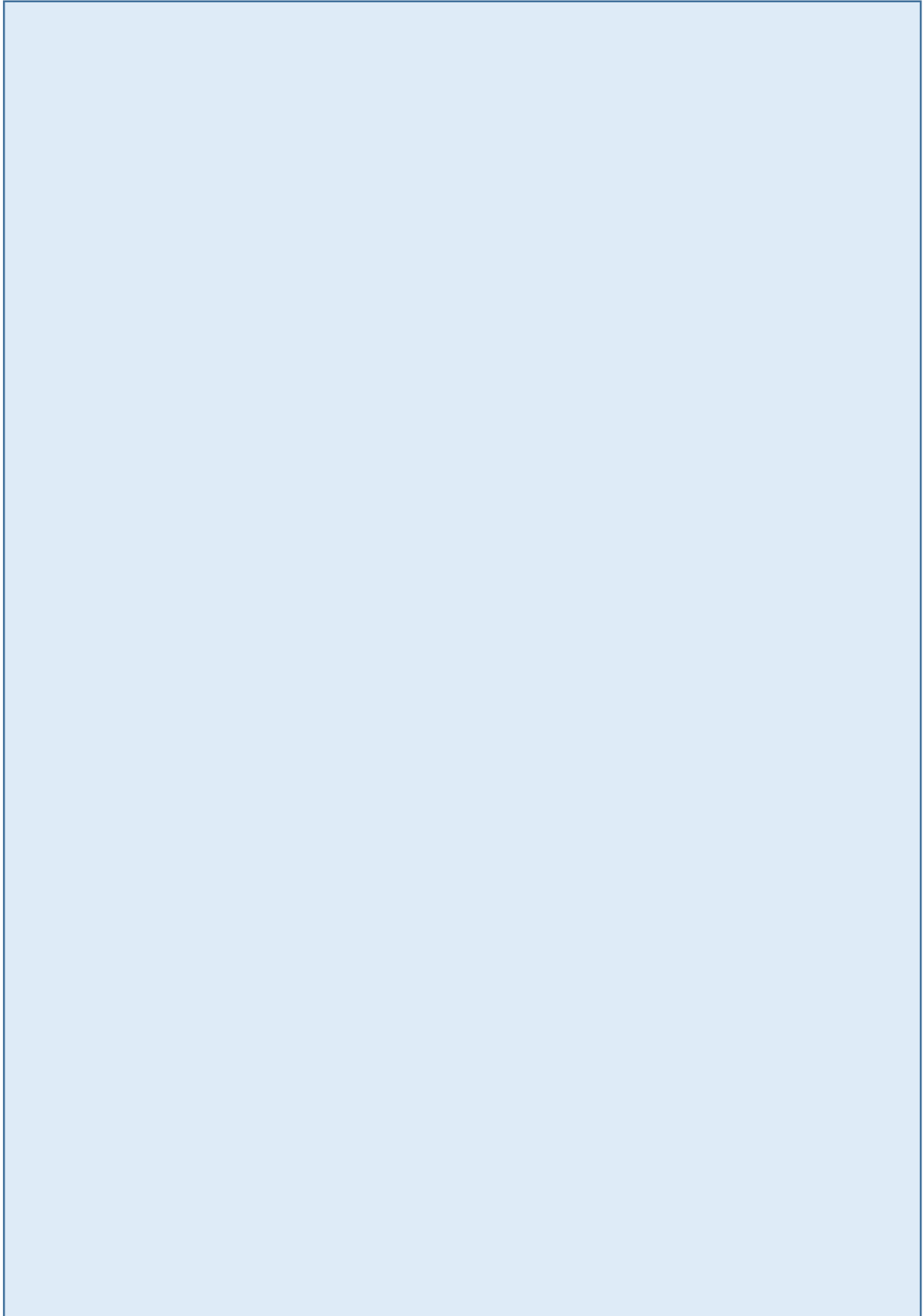
Which one do you think is your strongest point?



Which element do you think is your weakest point?



**How can you ensure, when you're writing, that you've got the balance right with each of the elements?**





# Creative Writing Course

by  
*Tolulope Popoola*  
*Author, Publisher and Writing Coach*

[www.accomplishpress.com](http://www.accomplishpress.com)

## Bonus: Lesson 8

**This is a bonus lesson, for when you've finished writing your first draft.**

## Course Notes

### **Bonus Lesson – Editing and Proofreading**

Well done if you've finished your first draft!

You've done very well to get this far, and I'm sure you are feeling very proud of yourself.

Do take some time to celebrate your achievement, because you are many steps ahead of where you were just a few months ago.

#### **So, what's next?**

Now, you've finished writing your book, maybe you've gone through several drafts. Is it time to publish it? I would say, not yet. You need extra sets of eyes to look at your work, and judge it without bias or sentimental attachments.

Many new writers underestimate the importance of beta-readers, editors and proofreaders and the work they do to improve a manuscript. However, if you want to be taken seriously as an author, please do not compromise on this. You'll need at least two beta-readers, a professional, experienced editor and ideally, a proofreader.

#### **Beta-readers**

Beta-readers are people like your peers, other authors, avid readers, your writing group members and so on, who know what goes into a good story, and can read your manuscript with a critical eye. They will give you feedback on it, and point out things that you may have missed, like loose ends, sub-plots that are quite wonky, sentences that don't quite make sense, or maybe give you feedback on your characters or how your story ends. Beta-readers will help you to create a cleaner draft, but they should not replace professional editors.

You must approach your beta-readers politely, as they are doing you a favour by taking time out of their schedule to read your work and provide feedback. Even if they give you suggestions that you don't agree with, say thank you graciously, and consider it. You should not get into an argument with them, and always be prepared to return the favour if someone who read your manuscript, asks you to do the same at some point in the future.

## Professional Editors

It is important to note that proofreading and editing are not the same. An editor is more involved in the manuscript than a proofreader.

When you're looking for an editor to work with, don't assume that the creative writing student next door or the retired English teacher your husband knows can pass for a professional editor. There's a specific skill to editing, and it's best to trust your manuscript and the success of your book to a professional who does it for a living. It's best to start with personal recommendations. You can start by asking other authors that you admire who they have worked with. You can search online, but beware of unscrupulous and unprofessional editors. Use websites like *Writer Beware* to weed out incompetent ones.

There are different kinds of editors: developmental editors (who work with the most "raw" of manuscripts); substantive editors (who do significant restructuring and rewriting); and line editors (who do the final editing at the line-by-line level with an eye for clarity, succinctness, and style). Though many editors specialize in one of these areas as their strong suit, most are capable in all.

Before you pay out any money, check the editor out thoroughly. Ask for testimonials and check their credentials. Agree the fees and rates beforehand, and have it put down in writing. And always ask for a sample edit so that you can judge the quality of their work, and see if you can work together effectively. Most editors will provide a sample edit for free, usually around 1000 – 1500 words.

Quality editors can be quite expensive, but don't be tempted to skip this important function. It is an investment in your writing career that will pay off for a long time. Your manuscript will be much better after it has been professionally edited, and your readers will appreciate the quality of your work.

## Proofreaders

When your manuscript returns from the editor, it requires one last step – proofreading. The job of a proofreader is primarily to ensure technical correctness of language (grammar and spelling) and catch typos. While proofreaders may offer editorial suggestions for problems like run-on sentences, confusing syntax, and the like, they will generally stick to making sure the text is error-free. And ideally, they'll have few editorial suggestions because the manuscript should have already been through the hands of a competent editor.

**Please do NOT skip any of these steps!** If you publish a book that has not gone through a thorough editing and proofreading phase, you are risking bad reviews from readers and consequently, poor sales when you publish it.

## **Congratulations! You have now completed the Creative Writing Course!**

So, well done my friend, we've come to the end of the Creative Writing Course. I hope you really enjoyed the course, and you have found the content absolutely useful to your writing process.

### **To recap, the Chapters we've covered are:**

- 1) Choosing your story idea
- 2) Choosing your protagonist
- 3) Choosing your novel's POV
- 4) Choosing your novel's setting
- 5) Writing your plot outline
- 6) What genre you are writing
- 7) Elements of Writing: Dialogue, Description and Narrative
- 8) Editing and Proofreading

I would love to hear your feedback. If you have any comments or questions about this course or any other topic regarding writing a novel, feel free to get in touch. You can send an email to: [publisher@accomplishpress.com](mailto:publisher@accomplishpress.com) or you can contact me through my website, or through Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

If you're working on a novel and you need one-to-one help or guidance on these and other topics such as conflict, suspense and so on, I offer coaching sessions where I can walk you through your novel, step by step.

Also, when you finish writing your novel, I have publishing courses and packages, to help you take your book from a manuscript, to a published book, whether you want to publish it as an ebook, in print, or both.

If you would like more information about my coaching, consulting and publishing services, please visit my website at [www.accomplishpress.com](http://www.accomplishpress.com)

Thank you and I wish you all the best in your writing and publishing journey.

**“A professional writer is an amateur who didn't quit.” ~Richard Bach**