

FAQs re:

The Character Generated Plot

I've had several enquires regarding specifics of the nine week, On-Line Character Generated Story and Plot workshops. Here are answers to the most Frequently Asked Questions;

- How does the session unfold? Is it like a conference call?

Yes, in many ways similar. But free-to-download and free-to-use VOIP systems (PC and Mac compatible) such as Skype, are much more flexible and efficient. All you need is a high-speed connection and a inexpensive microphone, of the kind which likely came with your computer. If not, a few bucks will get you talking. Your current speakers will do just fine. VOIP sound is crisp and very present . . . like we're all in the same room. And we can share documents while we speak. (We don't use the video aspect. It eats too much bandwidth, and besides . . . we're all about words!)
- What takes place in the sessions?

We work with specific timed exercises, where we discover and expand characters from three different perspectives. The exercises are then read to the group and critiqued using a series of pointed, respectful listening exercises designed to reveal to the writer what she or he has actually written, not what we might have misheard or imagined. From these exercises we develop the story. Our goal is a three page, 750 word story outline detailing the who what where when of your work. We get a strong sense of the theme and central conflict, the rising action, the climax, denouement and resolution of the piece. At this point we consider the plot, the how and why of the narrative.

- How many participants per session?

I currently restrict each of the sixteen hour sessions to four participants, maximum. This way, we all get equal time to learn, to write, and to be heard.
- What are the advantages to the group dynamic?

It is important to each participant that the group act as a kind of first audience/first reader. The group listens to the written work, and offers constructive, respectful observations aimed at improving the work. I moderate these sessions with a six-question listening exercise designed to support the writer and increase her or his understanding of their work. Everyone participates in the exercise in a prescribed manner. Every voice is heard.
- I worry that I may not be as advanced as other people.

The course is specifically designed to accommodate persons at varied levels, from committed beginners to persons moving from one discipline to another, to seasoned writers coming back to refresh their craft. The interchange of skills and life experiences between various levels, ages, genders and sensibilities . . . this is enormously enriching for all. I construct and maintain an atmosphere where every idea is valued, every criticism thoughtful and respectfully delivered and received.
- The cost (\$1,425.00 to \$2,000.00 cdn, group or individual) seems high.

Because we are dealing with the exchange of intellectual property, we must be very careful our ideas are both respected and protected. All ideas offered to you by me — ideas arising from thirty years of professional practice as a career writer, study and in-class teaching experience — become and remain your property. I have no future claim on ideas freely delivered by me, ideas which may appear in the final work, ideas which may in fact earn you money in the future, should your project

'take off.' The fee reflects the approximate tuition of an equivalent university course, from which the course emerged.

- I have no play, screenplay or prose work in progress. Does that matter?

Because the on-line Character Driven Plot course is a craft course, I teach the basic elements required to make a new work from the ground up. You may have an idea in mind, either slightly or significantly developed. You may not. It doesn't matter. It's important to put work in progress aside temporarily, only for the duration of the course, while a new work emerges from the craft exercises. In this way, you are free to learn the essentials of the craft without limiting possibilities to a preconceived, pre-developed work. The field is clear to learn the craft of writing without impediment or prejudice. Go back at the old work with new tools as the course proceeds.

- What kind of follow-up can I expect?

When you have the craft in hand, after the course is complete, it is wonderful to take what you have learned back to a work in progress. You'll be delighted by the insights which blossom when your abilities as a newly minted crafts-person are applied to work in progress, or even previously completed work. And many people find that the work emerging from the course by way of the dramaturged exercises goes on to completion. Several people, including newcomers, have had work go on to the professional stage; fiction writers have had work favourably evaluated by publishers. I'm always delighted to advise regarding production and publication strategies. I'll read a draft within one year following the course and provide a three page commentary tailored to your work for an additional fee.

- Are private, one-one-one on-line sessions available?
Yes. A series of one-hour courses with just you and me can be arranged, depending on mutually agreeable schedules, and my availability. Fees reflect the exclusive benefits of the one-on-one experience.

I hope this helps answer your questions.

Be in touch for more information.

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