

Creative Writing II

with Johnny Worthen



Week 2 – Building Blocks

Today's Plan

- Workshop
- Theme
- Personal Essay
- Layers
- Narrative Pieces
- "Scene & Sequel"



How goes your project?

Theme

- Theme can be seen as a question/idea you're investigating
- Though it's optional to consciously write with theme in mind, every story has one (since the mind is *meaning making machine*)
- Some themes are so common and used that we ignore them and take them for granted
 - "Believe in yourself"
 - "Good guys always win"
 - "The power of love"



Personal Exploration

- Regardless of what we're writing about we're writing about ourselves
- Characters and situations = reflections and mirrors
- Writing is therapy
- Creation and Art
- Changing the universe through life and expression



Home Challenge Exercise: *The Personal Essay*

- What is your favorite childhood memory?
- Or (more easily but not recommended) What is your WORST memory?
- Describe it:
 - MOOD - *make the reader feel what you felt*
 - Rich with details (real or imagined)
 - Use all senses (real or imagined)

Layered Writing

- Narrative can (should) do multiple things at once:

- Characterization
- World building
- Mood
- Subplot
- Theme
- etc.



Parts of Written Narrative

- Exposition
- Description
- Dialog
- Action



Opportunity: Exposition

- Giving the reader information that they need to understand what's happening

- Economical
- Telling and not showing

- Can still do multiple things at once

- Only give information - *any information* - when the reader wants and needs it.



Exposition Example

- *Michael lives out of his car. His address is a post office box in Draper, Utah and a Gmail account in cyberspace, but in Vegas he'll splurge for a cheap motel with a hot shower, clean sheets, and a night's sleep where he can stretch his legs—a luxury the backseat of his car doesn't afford him.*



- WHAT IMMORTAL HAND, Johnny Worthen

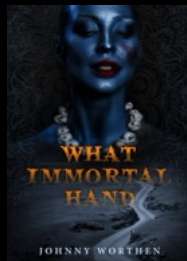
Opportunity: Description

- Basic mechanic that can be hijacked to serve multiple function
 - Word choice
 - Key Details
 - Subtexts
 - **Sensory Details - not just sight.**



Description Example

- *Michael Oswald's car smells of cigarettes and unwashed clothes. The backseat could be mistaken for a shanty and the front seat of the classic Mercedes looks like a wall for a firing squad, pockmarked with cigarette burns and torn upholstery.*



- WHAT IMMORTAL HAND, Johnny Worthen

EXERCISE: Senses

- Write a description of one of the following. Include as many senses as possible
 - Scene of a car crash
 - First contact with aliens
 - Waiting with other candidates for a job interview
 - A walk in an autumn forest
- Paint a Mood
- Remember Layers

Opportunity: Dialog

- Letting characters speak for themselves
- Window into the the character
 - What is said
 - What is NOT said
 - How it's said
- Drama and conflict
- **SUBTEXT!!!!**



Scene & Sequel

Scene as used in the phrase “**Scene and Sequel**” is **NOT** the same as **Scene** used to mean a **dramatic unit of story often defined by setting and characters**

Scene and Sequel

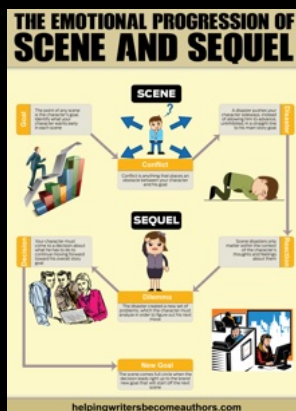
- Writing is linear, things that happen simultaneously are still presented in sequentially. And that's good.
- Scene: Something happens
 - What it means to involved (POV) character
 - New plan to deal with it
- Scene & Sequel can happen multiple times in an actual "Scene" or be spread out over chapters.

Opportunity: Action

- SCENE
 - The Plot happens
 - Change and challenge
 - Pressure erupts
 - Story altering events
- SEQUEL
 - The Character happens
 - Reaction and meaning, new direction and decision



See Handout

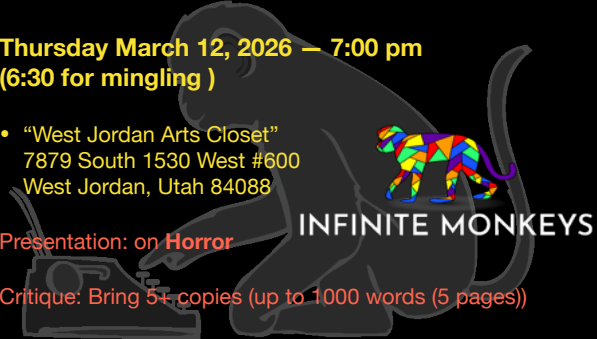


Home Challenge Exercise: *Sequel*

- Write a sequel paragraph that follows one of these:
 - *The mugger grabbed at her purse strap but missed, raking his fingernails across her shoulders instead. It was a signal to run and she ran. Around the alley, under a streetlight she slowed.*
 - *"I just want to talk. Really, let's talk. I'll meet you at Louie's in the back. I've already reserved the table." He was about to say "I love you" when the line went dead.*
 - *The headline read: Xoir Pharmaceutical Files for Bankruptcy.*
 - *Their parents were fighting again. They retreated into the nursery and found a space in the closet where they could pull the door shut and hide.*
- Remember layers

LUW Infinite Monkeys Meeting

- Thursday March 12, 2026 — 7:00 pm
(6:30 for mingling)
 - "West Jordan Arts Closet"
7879 South 1530 West #600
West Jordan, Utah 84088
- Presentation: on **Horror**
- Critique: Bring 5+ copies (up to 1000 words (5 pages))



Homework for Week 3

- READ: *Hills like White Elephants*, Ernest Hemingway
- Write for Critique
 - Up to 300 words **Romantic** Scene
 - 'Scene and Sequel'
 - Use Senses
 - Layer subtext