

“All the stories and songs and myths and legends start somewhere... with a seed. As they’re told and re-told and passed around, they grow and change to become the stories we know.”- The Dire Wolf (Where the Water Tastes Like Wine.)

How many times have you heard that something has been done before? It’s the single biggest item of discouragement for any creator, and it can really cause some problems to confidence and creative drive.

There are so many great ideas out there in the world, and you might have one of them. But how do you stop your “space opera science fiction story that’s based on a starship crew” from becoming a thinly veiled parody of Star Trek? How do you avoid using orcs, dwarves, and fairies in your stories and making them like all the other fantasy tropes?

But there are easy ways to banish that fear and turn any idea into a workable and wonderful story. I’m going to show you how with three different methods I use to turn my working ideas into unique stories that are a complete joy to write.

1.) Look at and change the basics

Every single story has the same basic idea, whether it is romance or fantasy or historical. That idea is this- A character must do something they don’t want to, in order to prevent something worse from happening.

So, let’s say you want to write an epic fantasy starring dwarves as the main characters. In order to make your dwarves unique, then something needs to be done to make them different. Dwarves have various fantasy tropes applied to them such as this one:

They live underground and love wealth.

So, let’s look at changing that trope. What if, in your world, the traditional mountain kingdoms didn’t exist? Maybe they were destroyed, forcing the dwarves to come up to the surface and get used to life above ground?

Then you have questions, and those questions will grow into a fine story. Why were the dwarves forced above ground? Did the entire civilization collapse somehow? How do the other natives of the world react to having Dwarven kingdoms popping up everywhere?

The rest of the tropes and basics can stay the same, or you can change more. The most important thing is that changing one basic trope should inspire questions, and the answers to those questions are the seeds of your story.

2.) Focus on the motivations of characters

This is especially common in the superhero genre, where it seems that everyone has at least one dead parent. Comic book companies like DC and Marvel rip each other off all the time, especially with this trope, and the reason they can do it and get away with it is because each character reacts differently to the same circumstance.

It's not just the action that matters in the story, but also how your characters grow from it. If you are coming up with a character, don't just come up with the events in his/her life, but also how the character reacts to them. How did they drive him/her forward?

That's what makes every human being unique, and it will make every one of your characters unique too. Let's say you want a character to go down the: "I never knew my parents' route." That on its own isn't a story, but how does your character react to that knowledge?

Are they lonely and convinced that the rest of the world needs to be pushed away? Are they driven by wanderlust to seek out answers? Do they cherish the older parental figures in their life to fill the void?

There are dozens of different reactions one character could take, and all of them affect how they interact with the events of the story, the characters around them, and the world they are in. Once you have the reaction down, then you can play with the effects in the story.

3.) Embrace the odd.

Chances are, as you are asking these questions and making connections, there's going to be a point where a downright silly idea pops into your head.

What if my Science fiction story had flying tanks instead of airplanes? What if there was a fantasy society that subsisted on only honey? What if the political climate in my modern world revolved around who was the best singer?

Some of these ideas are silly, funny, and might not fit the genre or the tone of the world you are making in your head. But don't be so quick to dismiss them as ridiculous. Instead, play with them and break them down like in step 1 and look at their basics.

The silly ideas are unique after all, and they might morph into something you can use.

Let's take the idea of singing politics: How would voting be decided? Would different musical groups represent different states or countries? How would the deaf/mute communities get representation if they can't hear or speak music?

From all the questions, ideas can evolve. Maybe the story is about a deaf resistance fighter who is trying to change the way the world works or is seeking the means to get his/her hearing back. Maybe the idea of a deaf protagonist is something you can use in other works.

So, while most of the odd ideas probably won't make it into the final version of your book, it's worth taking the time to see what spawns from them.

Start Questioning

Take the time to analyze and play with the ideas in your head, and you'll be able to find the stories hidden within them. That's how I create my ideas, and how you can create yours. If you choose to work with me, then this is where we will start in the World Building Process.

If you need help, have a question, or want someone for a deep discussion, then please reach out for your free consultation call with me.

Keep on writing.

Brady



Brady Bourassa.

“What’s your story in just one line?”

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