

What You Need to Create a Fictional Story

by Donny Seagraves

1. **AN IDEA** - I got the idea for my first published book, *Gone From These Woods*, from a real life event that happened many years ago in the family of my second grade teacher. Many writers get their ideas from the world around them, newspapers, books, movies, TV, etc. Ideas are everywhere.
2. **CHARACTERS** - The people in your story. One is your main or most important person in your story. All of the things that happen in your story are important to this character. We call this main character the protagonist. Usually there is at least one other character in a story who may be the opposer or what is called the antagonist. This person stands in the main character's way and attempts to prevent the main character from getting what he or she wants.
3. **SETTING** - Where the story happens. Things to consider when you create your setting are **place**, meaning the geographical location (for some stories this is important); **time**, (when is the story happening? Past, present, future? Daytime or night?); **weather**, (is it sunny, rainy, stormy, etc?); **atmosphere**, (a bright and cheerful story or is it a dark and frightening tale?)
4. **PLOT** - The structure of your story. **It should include a beginning, a middle, and an end.** You must have **conflict** in your story. Without conflict, you have no plot. Conflict is like an engine that makes a story move from the beginning to the middle to the end. Conflict is anything that stands in the way of the main character. Author Robert Newton Peck says, "A plot is two dogs and one bone." He adds, "A plot is merely a dramatic situation where a character (1) Wants something, (2) Tries to get it, and (3) Is opposed."
5. **POINT OF VIEW** - This is the angle from which the story is told. Whose head contains the camera that is "showing" us the story? Whose eyes are we looking through? Two of the easiest POVs to use are first person and third person. In first person point of view, the story is told by the main character or another character using the pronouns, I, me, we, etc. The reader sees the story through this person's eyes as he or she experiences it and only knows what he or she knows or feels. In third person point of view, the author tells the story using the pronouns they, she, he, it, etc. We know only what the character knows and what the author allows him or her to tell us. We can see the thoughts and feelings of characters if the author chooses to reveal them to us. There are other POVs that can be used in a story, but first master first person and third person POVs.

6. **DIALOGUE** - What your characters say. Conversation. Make sure the dialogue you put in your stories moves the story along. Use dialogue to reveal things about your characters, but don't use dialogue only to give readers a lot of information. When writing dialogue in your stories, use quotation marks to indicate words which are spoken by your characters. Also, always start a new paragraph when you change speakers. Never have two people speaking dialogue in the same paragraph. Make sure the reader knows who is talking. The most common way to do this is to use the word, "said." For example, "I'm cold," John said. Avoid using too many other ways of saying, "he said," or "she said," in your story. The word said tends to disappear. Words like "he shouted," or "she screeched," tend to stand out and slow the reader. **Tip:** One of the best ways to learn to write dialogue is to listen to how people talk. But don't just transcribe real conversations and put them in your stories. Make your dialogue sound natural, but not too natural. In real life, people say um and uh a lot. Don't put these words in your stories.
7. **THE FIVE SENSES - Touch, Taste, Sight, Smell, Hearing.** Try to use all of these in on each page, if you can. The five senses will make your writing more alive and interesting.

