



Story Time Episode 3: Why You Tell Your Stories

PILAR: Hey, welcome back. So good to see you again. Last time, we learned about the story elements, “Character, setting and goal.” Today, we’re focusing on just one element -- the “Lesson” -- because that’s the main purpose of a story. The lesson is what the writer wants some of the characters in the story to learn.

Stories are a way to share our ideas on how we see the world and how we would like the world to be. Because we love stories, whether it’s reading books or watching TV and movies, stories are a powerful way to tell the audience something really important. That’s why when we write, it’s important to think about the lessons we want our characters to show the audience what to take away from our writing.

Now, let’s hear from one of our professional writer friends, Ligiah Villalobos. She’s going to tell us more about the lessons and her stories.

LIGIAH: Hello, young storytellers. My name is Ligiah Villalobos and I am a screenwriter working in both film and television and I wanted to talk to you a little bit about how I come up with stories. Most writers really do think about stories first. They think about, “What is the story that I want to tell?”

I actually have a really hard time coming up with a lot of stories but there are always things that I want to talk about and that I



want to explore which, in terms of writing, that is called a “Theme.”

So I always think about what is it that I want to say, suppose that I want to talk about racism or I want to talk about girl power.

Then once I know what it is that I want to say with the script that I’m going to be writing, I can create a story around that theme or I can create a character that is going to take me through a story that is going to explore that theme or that subject matter.

So is there any of you out there who have a hard time, sometimes, like I do coming up with stories? Maybe think first about what are the subject matters that are important to you, what are the themes that you want to explore and maybe that will help you get out of what we call a “Writer’s block” and get you writing it on to your story. So I hope that’s helpful and good luck with your scripts and your stories.

PILAR: Just like Ligiah said, it’s helpful to start with the lesson and the theme in your story.

Today, you’ll be doing a few writing activities to help you write stories with lessons and themes that are important to you. You’ll need the Favorite Stories worksheet and our Lesson and Theme worksheet. You can find those on our website or you can just grab a paper and pencil and write it down or you can even say your ideas out loud. Hey, Vira and Curtis, can you tell us about lessons and themes?



VIRA: For sure. We're both here in the Imaginarium where we can be anywhere and do anything we set our mind to. Today, we're learning about the lesson or something we learned. When I want to focus on learning something, I like to head to a nice quiet space. -- Hmm, well maybe not that quiet. How about we head to the library?

CURTIS: I hope you feel ready to learn. First, let's dive a little deeper into themes so we know how they connect to a lesson. The theme of a story is the big idea or concept that the story is about. Things like teamwork, friendship and standing up for what's right could all be themes.

VIRA: The lesson is a specific thing you want the audience to take away about the theme. For example, if the theme of a movie is "Teamwork," the lesson might be that you should ask for help when you need it or that teammates shouldn't keep secrets because it can hurt people.

To recap, a theme is a big idea your story addresses and a lesson is a specific thing you want your audience to take away, almost like you're telling them to do a specific good deed.

CURTIS: Why don't you think of your own examples? On your paper or workbook, write down your three favorite stories whether they're movies, books or anything.

What's a theme and a lesson from each of those stories? What about that story made you think about that theme and lesson?



Is there anything the story makes you think about or anything that you want to do when you hear or watch that story?

Take a moment to think about or jot down your top three movies and their main theme and lesson.

[Pause]

Like Pilar and Ligiah said, lessons make a strong story.

VIRA: For writers, stories are a way to spread a message and make the world a better place. When you write about a lesson you believe in, the audience can tell you're passionate about what you're writing and it makes them more interested in the story.

Let's think about a lesson for the story you'll write. Try and have your story elements from the last video if you have them or if you don't, feel free to go to our last video and come up with a character, setting and goal to go with your lesson.

CURTIS: Come up with a theme and a lesson for your story. Let's start by coming up with some themes and lessons you like. Are there any ideas that are important to you that you'd want to write about? What would you want an audience to do or remember in order to make the world a better place? Let's pause to take a couple of minutes to brainstorm our favorite themes and lessons connected to each one.

[Pause]



VIRA: Tamara, have you been here the whole time?

TAMARA: Of course. I needed a quiet place to continue working on my story then I saw you two and started following you guys.

CURTIS: Did you come up with some ideas for your favorite lessons or themes?

TAMARA: Well, I really like the theme of friendship because my friends are really important to me and friends, like you guys, are always helping me.

CURTIS: Well, that's what friends do.

TAMARA: Something I've learned, and I think would benefit others to know, is that friends can come from the most unlikely of places. And sometimes, friends are people we don't expect to be friends with.

CURTIS: Well, it sounds like friendship is pretty important to you. Why don't you take a look at your Character, Setting and Goal worksheet from last time? Are there any lessons that the main character could learn as they're trying to get their goal? If you can't choose, try to pick a top three and talk to other people or even yourself about how those themes and lessons have been important in life.

VIRA: Tamara, were you able to continue writing your story earlier?

TAMARA: Yes. I actually found a way for my theme and lesson to fit my story from last time. Since I really like the theme of friendship and the lesson that friends can come from all sorts of places, I thought Inyo can make friends with an alien dog while she travels through space. Inyo will be traveling through outer space to find the best dog food recipe which is a pretty surprising place to make a friend.



CURTIS: That is pretty surprising. And making friends with an alien dog is also kind of surprising which fits with your lesson, that sometimes the ones you don't think you will be friends with do end up becoming your friend.

TAMARA: That's true. Thanks for helping me think like that. I can't wait to keep writing stories.

VIRA: Tamara wanted to connect her lesson to the story ideas she came up with last time. You can do that or not. What's most important is that you choose a lesson and theme that's important to you. We'll have plenty of time to come up with more ideas. Let's take a break to review what we've learned just now. Take it away, Pilar.

PILAR: Thanks, Vira and Curtis.

Today, we learned another story element -- the "Lesson." We also learned what a theme is and how it connects to the lesson in the story. You came up with lessons and themes you want to write about.

If you'd like to share what you came up with today, tell someone in your family about a theme or a lesson you want to write about and why. You know, if you haven't picked yet, maybe they can help you decide.

Once you decide, please share your ideas with us by asking a grown-up to email us or they could post it on social media and



tag us. We really want to know the lessons and the themes that are important to you.

Well, thanks again for joining us and we hope to see you next time. We're going to be brainstorming the ideas we want to turn into our five-page screenplays. Bye.

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