

What's your story in 2011?



To speak with authority means to author one's own story, to speak with confidence and calm about one's own authentic experience. To be "authentic" means to act on one's own authority. In other words, to be true to one's self.

INTRODUCTION

This year, be the author of your own story!

At the start of the year, our minds and hearts inevitably turn to the growth we want to see for the New Year, the big and small changes we desire for our work and life. Now is the time to harness that energy for change to consciously create a vibrant, renewed story for 2011.

Pause for a moment at the start of this New Year and take the time to create a vision that empowers you in planning and responding to life's opportunities and challenges. Imagine a narrative that conveys exactly what you would want to experience in life... a narrative that could function as a roadmap along the way to remind you of what is important and to make things more interesting and fun.

What goes into writing such a story?

You'll get the full framework below, but you can launch yourself down the path with these elements: the overriding message (What's at stake? What's the point of the story?), the initiating incident (Why this? Why now?), the turning points (The critical decisions; the choices you will make), and the resolution (What will you learn? How will you grow?)

Create a process that works for you. Choose your environment, and tools. Is a yellow pad and pencil your style, or is the click, click of the computer more satisfying? Is the solitude of your home office, or the companionship and coffee of the local café more energizing? In getting the words on paper, go for what comes naturally. Jot down the main ideas that stimulate big pictures and or write out all the details. Take 15 minutes to pull together a quick but vivid story or create a living document / work in progress to review, revise and amend, as you journey through the year.

It really doesn't matter **how** you use the exercise. What matters is renewing your story in a way that is meaningful to you.

PROLOGUE

A prologue is a preliminary event that leads to something more important. The cumulative experience of your life shapes the rationale for the story going forward. Key moments, intersections, patterns and events foreshadow what's to come.

Consider the past year; what in your past experience do you want to focus on in the prologue – what brings you to where you are today? What events shaped your life, your choices... your career? Who influenced and/or inspired you most?

The prologue sets up the rest of the story; so, what will be your next chapter: romance, adventure or action? Will your story build on itself by developing greater consciousness or awareness to amplify the current path? Or will your story take a new direction by introducing novel aspects and the element of surprise?

The page beckons. The pen is in your hand. All it takes is your own imagination.

STORY

Plot

Start with the protagonist (you!). What's the main story? What needs to occur? Summarize the quest. What are you seeking? What is your personal/professional journey and what makes it so important to you?

Message

What is the overriding message of your story? What would the audience learn from your story? What's the point of the story?

Events

What are the major events and turning points? Pay close attention to what gets the ball rolling – what is the initiating incident? What has changed or needs to change? How is the story resolved?

Characters

Who are the other leading characters? How do they interact with each other? How do they contribute to the story?

Setting

What is the setting? What are the sensory cues and environmental factors? Filling your story with rich detail including what the experience feels, tastes, sounds and smells like make it real and enticing to create.

Title

What is the title? Was it apparent from the outset or did it emerge as a result of developing your story? How does the title represent the organizing idea within the story?

Plot Twist

How will your protagonist handle “the surprising developments”?

How does the overriding message determine your response to unexpected events? What happens when things happen “off the page” – how does the story adapt?

“Life is what happens when you’re making plans”

John Lennon

Resolution

How will things play out? What does the protagonist learn? How does the protagonist grow or change? What is most satisfying? What is most illuminating?

EPILOGUE

The epilogue allows the work to flow into the future. It foreshadows what may be to come, what is unwritten and still to be defined. The epilogue allows for more creative elements and collaboration:

Collaborators

Share your story with others. Ask for input and support.

Who will function as your mentor, editor, peer writer? Family? Friends? Colleagues?

Sharing your story gives it life and opens up creative possibilities, accountability and encouragement.

Illustrations

Make it visual, as well as verbal.

Surround yourself with your story. Develop a visual storyboard- a series of pictures, photos, collages or perhaps a cartoon depicting the narrative. Here is a link to download a storyboard template.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/3778216/Storyboard-Your-Life>

Action

Put your story in action.

What is on the first page? Take action on what inspires you –What will the protagonist (you) do this week? What is planned for the next few months?

THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Dedications

Authors dedicate their books to others.

To whom would you want to dedicate your story? Who counts most in your life? Who has supported you or inspired you to write this story?

Footnotes

Who and what have made a difference? Who do you reference in your life and in your work? What ideas, philosophies and frameworks have helped you to forge your story? What contributing factors differentiate it or make it unique?