

Off-Site Instruction -- (10 pts)

## Day 9

### Analyzing Instructional Writing

Reread the following excerpt and answer the following questions in the space provided below.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>BECOMING A BETTER WRITER</p>   | <p>BECOMING A BETTER WRITER</p>   |
| <p><b>CHAPTER ONE</b><br/><b>Write What You Know</b></p> <p>Is this the most misunderstood piece of advice in the history of creative writing?</p> <p>How many time have you heard that <i>the first rule of writing</i> is 'write what you know'?</p> <p>On the surface, this sounds like good advice, especially if you're not yet a confident writer. World building can be intimidating and research is time consuming. Getting the smallest of details wrong can result in your readers turning against your characters or losing faith in your plot.</p> <p>Writing a book is a difficult and perilous enough journey as it is; surely it makes sense to choose the shortest and easiest path? But, if this were really true, fiction wouldn't exist. The closest we would ever get to made up stories would be autobiographies: stories written from one person's perspective; one person's truth, what one person 'knows'.</p> <p>Obviously, this piece of advice was never meant to be taken literally. In fact, many writers have interpreted it as 'base your story on what you know'. In other words, take a character, or a situation, or an event that you know very well and make that the central focus of your story. You can then bend reality around this very real, very solid, very reliable pillar.</p> | <p>But what if you want to write about dragons? In space? In a future ruled by magic? What do you already know that could possibly be of any use to you?</p> <p>What if you want to write about Fantasy, or SciFi, or the life of an assassin, or ruling a country, or any number of other scenarios you couldn't possibly know anything about? (I'm taking a leap of faith here and assuming you aren't an assassin.)</p> <p>How does the first rule of writing apply to you?</p> <p>It applies to all of us because 'write what you know' is not about events, or people, or places, or even situations. It is about emotions.</p> <p>Don't make the mistake of trying to apply this rule to your plot; think instead about your characters. Find the emotions you have in common. Same fears? Same traumas? Same desires?</p> <p>'Write what you know' is, at its core, good advice. As long as you forget what your brain knows and focus on what your heart knows.</p> |
| <p>15</p>   | <p>14</p>   |

The following extract comes from a book about how to become a better writer. Read it, and then answer the questions in the space provided below.

**Language & Tone**

- 1) What type of question is this?
- 2) Name and explain the figurative language technique used here.
- 3) Why the use of italics?
- 4) Why has the writer used quotation marks here?
- 5) Provide a synonym for the word 'intimidating'.
- 6) Identify a superlative used in this paragraph.
- 7) How does the word 'surely' here affect the writer's tone?
- 8) Explain the use of the colon in this line.
- 9) Identify and explain the repetition used in this paragraph.
- 10) Identify and explain the figurative language technique used in the very final line of this paragraph.
- 11) Do you think that the repetition of the word 'very' is effective here? Explain why or why not.

BECOMING A BETTER WRITER

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**Write What You Know**

Is this the most misunderstood piece of advice in the history of creative writing?

How many time have you heard that *the first rule of writing is 'write what you know'?*

On the surface, this sounds like good advice, especially if you're not yet a confident writer. World building can be intimidating and research is time consuming. Getting the smallest of details wrong can result in your readers turning against your characters or losing faith in your plot.

Writing a book is a difficult and perilous enough journey as it is; surely it makes sense to choose the shortest and easiest path? But, if this were really true, fiction wouldn't exist. The closest we would ever get to made up stories would be autobiographies: stories written from one person's perspective, one person's truth, what one person 'knows'.

Obviously, this piece of advice was never meant to be taken literally. In fact, many writers have interpreted it as 'base your story on what you know'. In other words, take a character, or a situation, or an event that you know very well and make that the central focus of your story. You can then bend reality around this very real, very solid, very reliable pillar.

1

**Content & Meaning**

- 1) How is this a leading question?
- 2) What do you think is the expected answer to this question?
- 3) By saying 'on the surface' what is the writer implying?
- 4) In your own words, explain the challenges which face an amateur writer.
- 5) Explain how the writer answers his/her own question here.
- 6) In your own words, explain the main point that is being made in this paragraph.
- 7) How does the first word of this paragraph give away the writer's opinion.
- 8) What would it mean to take this piece of advice literally?
- 9) Give an example of what the writer is explaining here.

*Language & Tone*

*Content & Meaning*

**12)** Explain the effectiveness of the list of questions used here.

**13)** Explain how the repetition of the word "or" is effective in this paragraph.

**14)** Explain how the tone of this paragraph could be described as conversational.

**15)** Explain the effectiveness of the very short simple sentence at the end of this paragraph.

**16)** What is it called when two words are joined together (with an apostrophe to indicate the omission of letters) like this?

**17)** Explain the use of commas in this first sentence.

BECOMING A BETTER WRITER

But what if you want to write about dragons? In space?  
In a future ruled by magic? What do you already know that could possibly be of any use to you?

What if you want to write about Fantasy, or SciFi, or the life of an assassin, or ruling a country, or any number of other scenarios you couldn't possibly know anything about? (I'm taking a leap of faith here and assuming you aren't an assassin.)

How does the first rule of writing apply to you?

It applies to all of us because 'write what you know' is not about events, or people, or places, or even situations. It is about emotions.

Don't make the mistake of trying to apply this rule to your plot; think instead about your characters. Find the emotions you have in common. Same fears? Same traumas? Same desires?

'Write what you know' is, at its core, good advice. As long as you forget what your brain knows and focus on what your heart knows.

**10)** Why has the writer listed these scenarios here? How do they relate to his/her previous point?

**11)** Explain the humor present in this paragraph.

**12)** What is this first rule being referred to?

**13)** Why does the author constantly address the reader (refer to "you")?

**14)** Fully explain what is meant here, when the writer says that you shouldn't apply the rule to plot.

**15)** Why does the writer repeat the word 'same' multiple times here?

**16)** Why does the writer state 'at its core' here?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What type of question is this?
  
- 2) Name and explain the figurative language technique used here.
  
- 3) Why the use of italics?
  
- 4) Why has the writer used quotation marks here?
  
- 5) Provide a synonym for the word 'intimidating'.
  
- 6) Identify a superlative used in this paragraph.
  
- 7) How does the word 'surely' here affect the writer's tone?
  
- 8) Explain the use of the colon in this line.
  
- 9) Identify and explain the repetition used in this paragraph.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

10) Identify and explain the figurative language technique used in the very final line of this paragraph.

11) Do you think that the repetition of the word 'very' is effective here? Explain why or why not.

12) Explain the effectiveness of the list of questions used here.

13) Explain how the repetition of the word "or" is effective in this paragraph.

14) Explain how the tone of this paragraph could be described as conversational.

15) Explain the effectiveness of the very short simple sentence at the end of this paragraph.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

16) What is it called when two words are joined together (with an apostrophe to indicate the omission of letters) like this?

17) Explain the use of commas in this first sentence.

### **Content & Meaning**

1) How is this a leading question?

2) What do you think is the expected answer to this question?

3) By saying 'on the surface' what is the writer implying?

4) In your own words, explain the challenges which face an amateur writer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

5) Explain how the writer answers his/her own question here.

6) In your own words, explain the main point that is being made in this paragraph.

7) How does the first word of this paragraph give away the writer's opinion.

8) What would it mean to take this piece of advice literally?

9) Give an example of what the writer is explaining here.

10) Why has the writer listed these scenarios here? How do they relate to his/her previous point?

11) Explain the humor present in this paragraph.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

12) What is this first rule being referred to?

13) Why does the author constantly address the reader (refer to “you”)?

14) Fully explain what is meant here, when the writer says that you shouldn’t apply the rule to plot.

15) Why does the writer repeat the word ‘same’ multiple times here?

16) Why does the writer state ‘at its core’ here?