

Writing Memoir

IS IT FOR YOU?

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- ▶ Creates change in the subject of the story.

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3. The story describes an organization's processes or development (Point of View must remain consistent.)

Writing Memoir

▶ Terms

- ▶ Linear Memoir - A storyline that follows a single theme along a chronological path.
- ▶ Non-Linear Narrative Memoir - A storyline that does not proceed chronologically, but advances in a manner that supports the journey of learning/change through which the subject is progressing.
- ▶ Braided Memoir - A storyline in which several themes interweave.
- ▶ Flashbacks - A look back at a prior period that informs the current story line.

Writing Memoir

WHEN WE ARE AWAY
DURING THE DAY, WE
OFTEN WONDER WHAT
MARTIN THE DOG IS
UP TO.

I LIKE TO IMAGINE
HE IS WRITING HIS
MEMOIR.



Writing Memoir

- ▶ “If you are a writer, you will either write a memoir or you will see a psychotherapist.”

Linda Joy Meyers

- ▶ Writers all have stories in their minds or seeking/creating them.
- ▶ Writers have all lived life – they experience it and observe it – it doesn’t just pass them by.
- ▶ Writers need to understand their circumstances and how they became who they are.
- ▶ Writers know there is one more deeper layer of understanding to discover and show the reader.

Writing Memoir

- ▶ Types of Memoirs:
 - ▶ Coming of Age – Childhood, Adulthood.
 - ▶ Life Experiences – Career, Imprisonment, Disease, Motherhood.
 - ▶ Relationships – Pets, Love, Divorce.
 - ▶ Cultural/Ethnic – Societal Norms, Moving to a new country, Being a Refugee, Assimilation.
 - ▶ Food – Cooking, Eating, Food Movements.
 - ▶ Travel – Multiple Destinations, Single Destination, Specific Adventures.
 - ▶ Survivor – Harrowing Tales, War, Abuse.
 - ▶ Addiction – Smoking/Alcohol/Drugs. Children of Alcoholics. Recovery.
 - ▶ Spiritual – Relationship with the Almighty. Monastic Life.

Writing Memoir

- ▶ The Road to Writing a Memoir – Expectations
 - ▶ Discovering Truths about Oneself/Subject.
 - ▶ Exposing Yourself to a Wider Audience.
 - ▶ Risky but Rewarding.
 - ▶ Emotional Journey.
 - ▶ Inner and Outer Critics.
 - ▶ Finding Material
 - ▶ Truth of your Memories and Doubts.

Writing Memoir

- ▶ Structure (Story Arc)

- ▶ Turning Points

- ▶ Define 15 or 18 points along the trajectory of your story where significant changes or events occurred. These normally will be points in time (events), or they can be people, places, or lessons.
 - ▶ Create a “timeline” with these points – it’s okay to have gaps along the “timeline.”
 - ▶ Research the time period(s) in question.
 - ▶ Journals/diaries.
 - ▶ Photographs.
 - ▶ Music.
 - ▶ Friends and Relatives.

Writing Memoir

- ▶ Framework (assuming a Linear Structure)
 - ▶ Determine the chapters (roughly one turning point per chapter.)
 - ▶ For each chapter, define the necessary scenes to transmit the message surrounding the turning point. Ensure each chapter starts and ends with scenes that help the transition from one chapter to the next.
 - ▶ Flashbacks should be contained in their own scenes – but should not be in the same timeframe as the “Now” of the main story line.
 - ▶ Emotion engages the reader – describe what should be included in each scene:
 - ▶ Dialogue (*mostly fictional*), Feelings, Inner Thoughts, and Sensory Details.
 - ▶ Add color with Takeaways (pay-offs or universal truths that have a lesson.)
 - ▶ Add intimacy with Reflections that demonstrate your deeper feelings about circumstances.

Writing Memoir

- ▶ Tough Emotional Content
 - ▶ Write it in small increments to stop being emotionally overwhelmed or stifled.
 - ▶ Write the emotional content in the third person, initially. Then when it feels workable, transition it to the first person.
 - ▶ Write a letter to the other party expressing your feelings - not that you intend sending it. Seeing the feelings in word form can reduce their power over you.
 - ▶ Talk with your therapist about the hurt and your feelings. Work with them to find an tolerable way to express that painful experience.

Writing Memoir

▶ Critics

▶ Inner Critic and Outer Critics

- ▶ Who would want to read this? You're going to publish this? Who's going to believe you? You're not that good at writing. Who cares? Is that really true?
- ▶ There is only one person who knows the truth of your story – You. Believe in your own truth and accept that others may have their own version of the past. They are all equally valid and equally invalid. Others may project their inability to recall details on to you.
- ▶ If the storyline demonstrates a change in you, then your story can inspire another person to make a similar change – that is all the justification necessary for you writing your memoir.
- ▶ Writers Block. Return to your Framework and reground yourself. Carve out a time of day to simply sit and write. No excuses – it needs to be a part of your routine. Ask family to respect this boundary.
- ▶ If necessary, take a break, take a vacation, find a new place to write, join a writing group, listen to other authors read their work – but make no comparisons, know they were stuck too, at times.

Writing Memoir

- ▶ References:

- ▶ Breaking Ground on Your Memoir. Craft, Inspiration, and Motivation for Memoir Writers.

- ▶ Linda Joy Meyers, PhD and Brooke Warner.

- ▶ The Art of Memoir.

- ▶ Mary Karr.

- ▶ The Magic of Memoir. Inspiration for the Writing Journey.

- ▶ Linda Joy Meyers, PhD and Brooke Warner.

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Questions??

Phew!! The End.....