

# The 3 Things You Must Learn to Write Killer Stories

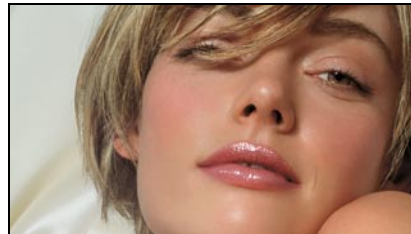
## #1 What Successful Stories Do

What is lipstick?

This?

- Waxes
- Oils
- Pigments
- Emollients

Or This?



"Gorgeous lips often need a little tender loving care - especially when the temperature takes a dive!" (Max Factor website)

A story is **WHAT IT DOES!**

What do successful stories do?

Successful stories **ENTERTAIN** and **MOVE** the reader—they generate reader **EMOTIONS**

- **Sympathy**, rooting, the justice equation
- **Suspense**, hope, worry, anxiety, stress dread, horror
- **Curiosity**, surprise, puzzlement, mystery, intrigue
- **Wonder**, wow, spectacle, awe
- **Wanna**, wish-fulfillment, envy, attraction
- **Humor**, smile, chuckle, laugh
- **Insight**, aha! factoids, new ideas, how to do something, the right way to act

## #2 Story Parts & Principles

What are the elements you have to work with?

How do they work to create the desired emotional effects?

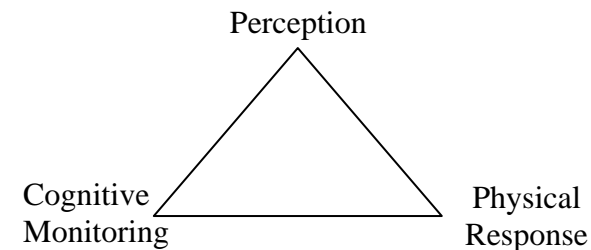
### THE 5 PARTS

**Setting**      **Character**      **Problem**      **Plot**      **Text**

**PROBLEM:** The story **begins when** the problem is raised; it **ends when** it's solved. Problem factors:

- Type:
  - **Happiness** = THREAT TO or OPPORTUNITY FOR some aspect of happiness
  - **Mystery** = PUZZLING QUESTIONS the reader and character want to find answers to
- Source: External and/or Internal
- Initiation: Who starts the problem?
- Intensifiers: Significant, specific, immediate, probable threats

**EMOTION:** works the same way as in real life--through a PROCESS



The moment you have a certain perception OR thought and believe it, you will experience an immediate emotional response. **Emotion:** *Feeling Good* -David Burns, *The Science of Emotion*-Randolph Cornelius, *Deeper Than Reason*-Jenefer Robinson. **Story:** works by Dolf Zillman, Peter Vorderer, Jennings Bryant, successful authors & editors

**TEXT:** Uses strategies to make the story VIVID & CLEAR, allowing the reader to have the necessary perceptions and thoughts

## #3 The Creative Process

### 1. CAPTURE THE ZING

Nothing in, nothing out

You must **FEED** your **IMAGINATION**

Eat up life and other stories, **stay on the lookout**, and **write down** the things that carry current

#### 5 Types of Zing

1. Intriguing **SETTINGS**: cool, dangerous, wondrous, new etc.
2. Interesting **CHARACTERS**: delightful, scary, larger-than-life etc.
3. Compelling **PROBLEMS**: situations, threats, dilemmas, mysteries
4. Interesting **PLOTS**: structures, obstacles, turns, arcs
5. Vivid & clear **TEXT** strategies and techniques

Zings are **almost always small**. Don't look for the ONE killer idea. The killer story is usually made up of a bunch of smaller zings.

### 2. ASK CREATIVE QUESTIONS

Focus on the 5 parts & your yearnings for certain effects as you work.

--What if? What's cool?

--What kind of problem is it? What could go wrong? What's a potential danger? How can I increase suspense?

--What would make this character larger-than-life, particular, fun? Likeable? Despicable? Interesting? What's his dominant impression?

--Why can't or won't the main character escape? What would she do next? What's her goal? What motivates her? What's the result or her attempt? How can things get worse?

There are many more power questions based on YOUR model and yearnings for certain effects you want to experience

### 3. ANSWER WITH LISTS, TAKES, SKETCHES, & DRAFTS

Sketches; Bullets; Mind maps; Interviews; Snippets; Scenes; Outlines of all varieties; Summaries; Drawings; Exploratory, Partial, or Final drafts; false starts; half-bakes; etc.--**original OR borrowed**

## 7 Creative Guidelines

Creativity = Asking Questions & Coming up with Answers

1. Always follow **YOUR zing**--what you care about and believe in
  - a. Make goals to capture ideas, specify methods you'll use
  - b. Capture: write down, hardcopy, softcopy--document
2. Practice **FARMER'S FAITH**
  - a. Use the miracle of manure
  - b. Cherish the dummies--a long list of stupids is what you need
3. Search for the **2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> RIGHT ANSWERS**
4. **EXPECT** the writer's trance to COME and GO
5. Remember **writer's block is a GIFT**--embrace it!
  - a. At the end of your invention → Capture Zing, Creative Q&A
  - b. 3 grunt issue: unclear, unbelievable, boring → Zing, Q&A
  - c. Perfection stress → Produce piles of manure
  - d. Overwhelmed → Break your work into baby-steps
6. **IMPROVE** your
  - a. Model of
    - i. What stories do and how they do it
    - ii. What's interesting and why
    - iii. How you develop a story
  - b. Ability to get ideas and develop them into story by
    - i. Doing it
    - ii. Observation: borrow and apply at will
    - iii. Reflection: on Own, with Partner, with Pros (Dwight V. Swain's *Techniques of the Selling Writer*; William C. Martell's *The Secrets of Action Screenwriting*; Orson Card's *Characters & Viewpoints*; <http://www.bernardcornwell.net/chapters/writingadvice.htm>; <http://www.ken-follett.com/masterclass/index.html>); Elizabeth George's *Write Away*.
7. Make enough **TIME**
  - a. Keep your furnace **HOT** with focused, consistent hours!
  - b. Realize stories build by accretion