

Where Do Stories Come From?

I have heard writers complain about having writer's block. They want to know where to get ideas for stories to write. There are several places to find inspiration.

Writing prompts are helpful. You can get prompts from many places. There are lots of published books of prompts like "The Writer's Book of Days" and "A Writer's Book of Matches". There are also many websites. Just google writing prompts. You can subscribe to newsletters from writing websites which provide prompts daily, weekly or monthly. Take a prompt, start writing and see where the pen takes you.

Music. Listen to the lyrics of songs. Those words tell a story. You can take a five-minute song and turn it into a 500-page novel.

Television. Obviously television shows are stories in and of themselves. They can give you a jolt of inspiration. One tidbit of a program can be written into a whole story of your own. Writers for television shows take their ideas from real life stories in the headlines. I find guests on talk shows like Dr. Phil have great stories that can be used as a starting point for your writing.

The news. Watch the news, read newspapers and magazines, look at the pictures. If you don't see a story of your own right away, cut the story out and keep it. Ponder on it for awhile. Inspiration may hit you when you least expect it.

Observe the world around you. Sitting in a coffee shop or standing in line at the grocery store check-out can be a great source of fodder for your stories. Listen to people's conversations or, if their discussions don't speak to you, perhaps the people themselves can. A lone individual sitting in the corner of the coffee shop can become a character for you to create and develop. Pay attention. There are stories all around you.

Read. That's right, read other authors' works. I'm not suggesting you steal their stories, but their stories can help you conceive your own. If you want to write mysteries, read

mysteries. If you want to write romance, read romance. Reading will also help you hone your writing skills.

Pay attention to your dreams. Keep a notepad and pen next to your bed. As soon as you awake write down your dreams while they are fresh in your mind. There could be stories there. When I was first writing my current novel I dreamed a scene from the novel, not just an idea but an actual scene to write into it. Sometimes dreams convey hidden messages. Decipher the message and weave it into a story.

Write about your own personal experiences, or those of someone close to you. I am sure there has been occasion for you to say, "I wish I was a fly on the wall in that car." Be the fly, create the story.

If you think your own personal story is boring, make it interesting. You are writing fiction after all. Just take your own experience and develop it into a bigger story. We all put a piece of ourselves in our writing.

Do research. Just start googling on the internet. Look up a place or a time in history. Find something that interests you and take notes. Stories from the past can become newer, fresher stories of the future.

Keep a journal. Write down your thoughts. Write about your day. Write about what makes you mad, what makes you sad, what makes you happy. What are you afraid of? What is your secret fantasy? The best way to come up with something to write about is to just write.

Good luck.