



DEVELOPING A PREMISE

AUDIO NOTES OUTLINE

The aim of this session is to help you come up with a premise for your story that has sufficient depth and dramatic possibility for a full-length novel.

YOUR STORY MUST HAVE THREE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- Characters
- Conflict
- Context

An example of this would be in the film 'Titanic'.

1. CHARACTER

Your characters have a unique relationship to the story. Who are they?

2. CONFLICT

What is the problem; what do your characters stand to lose or gain?

How do your characters respond to the problem and what are the consequences?



3. CONTEXT

This is the whole set of circumstances around the characters and the conflict.

How does the setting provide a particular context for your conflict?

YOUR STORY

Does it have a clear set of characters with a unique relationship to the story?

Does it have a clear conflict which has potential for dramatic possibility?

Does it have a context that will function more than just a background?

EXERCISE: WRITING YOUR BACK COVER BLURB

The blurb is there to entice your reader into the pages and to buy the book. It should encapsulate the key elements, or the premise, of the story.

This is the blurb that appeared on the back of Kim's novel "The Resurrectionists":

On the wild Yorkshire coast, Maisie hopes to uncover the secret of the long-running feud between her mother and her recently deceased grandmother, Sybill. But the locals in the tiny village of Solgreve are hardly welcoming.



It seems the only person interested in talking to her is the dark-eyed gypsy, Sacha.

In one of Sybill's old trunks Maisie finds a diary written by a young woman in the eighteenth century. Georgette eloped with her poet lover from London to Solgreve – and entered a gothic world of grave robbing and diabolical science. Then Maisie starts seeing an unearthly figure outside her tiny cottage. Gradually she uncovers the terrifying dark secrets of Solgreve, secrets that contain an evil that threatens to claim her...

We see in this blurb the following elements:

- The **character** Maisie, a young woman who is curious about her family history;
- The **conflict** arising from mysteries and ghostly figures, and;
- The **context** of a hostile village in wild-weathered coastal England.

WHAT TO DO:

1. **Write a back cover blurb for your novel**, making sure that it reveals the elements of what the character/s, conflict and context are. This is a great place to unveil your novel's title. Why not add a few mock review quotes to inspire you? Note the length of the example. Keep your blurb to no more than 300 words. Briefer is better.
2. **Cut and paste and poste your blurb to the *Blurb Forum*** for your fellow YOTN participants to read.
3. **Read the other blurbs** posted in the forum, and comment on 4 or 5 of them. Please note, the tutor will read your blurbs but not comment upon individual work.
4. **Rate the blurbs** based on how clear you find their character, conflict and context on a scale from 1—10. Please add a few words explaining why you rated as you did, especially if it is a low rating.

Remember that participating in the course is the best way to develop your writing ability, your ability to consider the elements of writing, and to learn about the others working on their novels.