

Writing Prompts Utilizing the Narrative Consciousness

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These prompts are designed to force writers to confront the remove that exists between the author and the narrative consciousness, and the protagonist and the narrative consciousness. The narrative consciousness can hold views, biases, theories, assumptions, and insights that are not yours. They can come from a background that isn't yours and possess abilities or limitations that you do not. What can happen when you exploit those possibilities? Likewise, the narrative consciousness is sly and subversive enough to orchestrate story events and reveal things to the reader even through the voice of a first-person protagonist who imagines that she or he is doing the telling.

A. Your piece will be written in third person, with a narrative consciousness that is completely transparent, meaning, invisible to the reader. They won't step forward as a character, nor even as a chatty voice, per se.

Your narrative consciousness is distrustful of others, and understands pain. Remember: third person.

Write a scene in which two people take their leave of one another. Don't be heavy handed.

B. Your piece will be written in the first person.

Your protagonist will be someone who is high on the bliss of having found The One.

Your narrative consciousness sees what the protagonist does not see: this is not The One.

Write an interaction where the protagonist either engages with their beloved, or tells someone about their beloved. Remember, first person from the protagonist's point of view.

Allow this tension to be felt, but subtly. Don't be heavy handed. Your narrative consciousness has the entire novel to make its case; not all the proof must be shown here.

C. Write a piece where the narrator is translucent. We feel their storytelling presence – they're not hiding themselves as narrators, but they are not donning the mask of a character in the story. This demands of you the third person.

This story has a protagonist who is seen by others as heroic, and indeed, they successfully complete heroic deeds. They strive to live by heroic ideals.

But the narrator is cynical about heroes, and judges the protagonist to be pompous, even though those around him or her do not.

Show us what follows immediately after the performance of the heroic deed. (Dragon is slain, princess is rescued, village saved, kitten brought down from tree, alien army vaporized, etc.)

D. This narrative consciousness is deeply concerned about the plight of the poor and downtrodden.

They also have a biting wit and a flair for snappy dialogue and banter.

This narrative consciousness assumes its reading audience is complicit in the deeds that cause the poor to suffer.

With either a translucent or transparent narrative consciousness (ie, they're not a character in the story), present to us a do-gooder in action.

E. The narrative consciousness is either observing or inhabiting a character in a scene. Meaning, either closely limited third person, or first person point of view. Up to you. We'll call that Character One.

Three people must share a meal. One of them is Character One, ie, the character inhabited by the narrative consciousness. (Whether they are a protagonist or secondary character is also up to you.)

The other two detest each other, but they do not discuss their grievances over the meal. Character One, the focal point character, doesn't realize or understand that their two meal companions hate each other. They miss the clues, but the NC makes sure that an astute reader does not.

F. Your piece is in third person. Your narrative consciousness is Machiavellian. That's their worldview. Might makes right. It doesn't need to be physical might; it could be economic, verbal, technological, social, etc.

Your protagonist is basically a weakling. They need not be a physical weakling, but can be, if you like.

Your narrative consciousness views the protagonist as a work in progress. A weakling on its way to strength, according to their yardstick.

Write the scene where the protagonist tells someone who trusts them a lie.

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