

EMOTION & IMPACT IN FICTION: The Care and Feeding of Your Readers

The writer's goal: to achieve lasting connection through authentic storytelling.

Why? To demonstrate a truth, entertain, challenge, intrigue, teach, encourage, have a spiritual impact.

How? With honesty and authenticity.

When? Through the title, back cover copy, from the first sentence to the last.

Where? On every page (carries over from "When?") and goes deeper. It's not only what you put on the page but also what you leave out.

What? Use character arc and journey to achieve and maintain that connection. Make your stories believable, relatable, and emotionally satisfying within your genre.

Action steps:

1. Mine your emotions and history.
2. Don't make your characters the same as you, or they will all be the same. 😊
3. Give your characters a unique voice in dialogue and thought process on the page.
4. Use the filters from your character's pain, problem, or wound, not yours.
5. Show the steps of growth or change in your character. If you must skip details, you still have to validate how they got where they are.
6. Be honest about change or resistance to change.
7. Have at least one outside influence (think: outer journey, third strand) that is beyond your character's control.
8. Ask yourself tough questions. If you find you're avoiding writing a particular part or scene, figure out why? It might be the most critical part of the story, or it might be your instincts telling you it's unnecessary to the story, even though you thought it would be "cool" to include.
9. Helpful hint: if your character doesn't have a different view of their future than when the book started, something is missing.