**Writing a Short Story – A Guide and Assignment**

Since we are coming to the end of our short story unit, it’s perfect timing to have you begin the planning to write another of your own short stories! You are welcome to brainstorm in whatever way makes the most sense to you – webbing, listing, a graphic organizer etc. I will ask that your brainstorm/planning sheet is finished by the end of the class so I can check to see if you’re accounting for the necessary steps to make your story as solid and fluid as possible.

1. **Step One: Make a Plan**

- fiction writing relies on someone or something in your story struggling (the conflict)

- your protagonist (main character) needs to have a problem they struggle to solve or something that they are struggling to get/achieve

1. **Step Two: Creating Character Sketches**

- consider your character(s) motive(s); motive will propel your conflict, so you need to have a clear idea of (each of) your character’s traits

- plan their backstory/history: their motives will naturally be impacted by their backgrounds/histories, so this is essential information for YOU to know, even if it doesn’t make it into your final product

**IN FOCUS CHARACTER PLANNING**: to discover your character’s personality and its relevance to your story’s conflict, consider the following three questions:

1. Why does your character have the problem (conflict) they do?
2. What do you know about your protagonist that will determine how they will react to the conflict?
3. Will facing the conflict change your main character in any way? How?

- name your characters

- plan your character’s physical appearance from head to toe; offer detail but also choose something that is unique and sets them apart from other characters

- consider the environment your character resides in/works in/studies in; this should naturally lead to your planning for the setting of your short story

1. **Step Three: Focusing Your Story**

- **THEME**: what does your story mean? Every story needs a theme. Once you know the solution to the conflict of your story, you will also know the theme or point of your piece.

- discovering the beginning in the end: knowing how your story will end will help you to create the beginning of your story! Your conclusion helps you to decide on what’s important for the rest of your story.

**Please write your responses/planning on a separate piece of paper and keep this handout in your creative writing portfolio for future reference.**

#1 Using the information from the “Creating Character Sketches” section above, tell me *all* about your protagonist (main character).

#2 Now tell me who or what will be the antagonist (person or force who opposes your protagonist) in your story. Offer lots of details like you’ve done for the protagonist in #1.

#3 Outline what will be the **CONFLICT** in your short story; what will the protagonist face that they will need to solve/resolve before the end of your story?

Once you have completed #1,2 and 3, you may begin the *rough draft* of your short story. Your finished story should be **400-750 words** in length. *Make sure you reference your notes from earlier in the semester on how to properly space/punctuate dialogue to help you in your writing process.*