

# WRITER'S LIFE

## EXPERIENCING LIFE THROUGH YOUR WRITING

Article by: Whitney Rines

I talked with a friend about writing books and getting the story flowing, and pretty soon we came to the topic of how life experience matters with how you write. That conversation was the inspiration for this article, about how life experience changes you and the way you write. This article is going to talk about transferring that life experience into how you write your characters' actions and experiences in their own lives.

*I know I mention characters a lot and I will be doing a series on that very topic soon.*

### Experiencing Life Experience:

Really, it's just what it sounds like, the experience you gain as you go through life. This can be about several different things, ranging from school to sex, family and your own beliefs. Life experience shapes who we are and we depend on our experiences in life to direct our path. Life experience is a very important part of who and what we perceive ourselves to be, it's also what we put in our stories when we write them. For the most part, we write what you know. You write yourself, whether seen through your own eyes or the eyes of others. Our every experience is an opportunity to learn and grow as writers and authors, storytellers and creators. After all, it's much easier to write about something that you've experienced than something you haven't.

The reason for this is simple, it's the nature of the beast. Life isn't experienced with your eyes, ears, hands, words, or body alone. For you to truly experience something, you must participate in it. I'm not saying to go out and get in a car accident or anything like that. I'm saying that your senses are all involved in you experiencing what happens in life. Your eyes and ears record what the event looked and sounded like. Your body and mouth replay the event through oration or through the way you reacted or felt during the event. Did it terrify you and leave you shivering or make you flee? Was your reaction to scream in fear or to stop the event? Was the event exhilarating and leave you craving another go at it? These are more than descriptions of effects that events we participated in left behind, this is what life is when you experience it. Every part of your body remembers the experience whether it was a great or terrible one, and because of that, you earn that life experience and it contributes to the furthering of your self-evolution.

### Highlights:

- Experiencing Life Experience
- What have I experienced?
- From Your experience to your character's lives
- What does it amount to?

### Upcoming Series:

**Characters: their raison d'être**

These experiences that change us and make us grow, are what we put into our writing even without realizing it. Your characters hold the parts of your experience that you create them to hold, from profound love and loss to revenge and forgiveness. Your characters act out the play that you stage with your story from the life you've had thus far.

### **What have I experienced?**

That's the question we ask after the prerequisite conversation of life and experiencing it, before putting our characters to action with it.

Life experience has no age to experience ratio, as it should be well known by now. There are children that have lived a long and arduous or enlightening life in their short years, and adults who have gone through life without experiencing much change and evolution at all. Age doesn't matter, experience does. This is why anyone can write a story because everyone's experience with life is different and their distance on that trail is based on solely on their experiences. True enough, not everyone can write a scene involving great depth of thought, or a deeply entrancing scene of passion and romance if those aren't their experiences. That's not the point here, focusing on what you can't do limits what you can. When you look at what you've experienced, you take a look at yourself and take a moment to get reacquainted with yourself. Getting to know yourself, depending on what you plan to write, opens up the doors for you to get to know your characters as you create and evolve them.

### **From your experience to your characters' lives:**

Getting to know yourself can be as difficult as making characters in some cases, after there are things we'd rather not face or even acknowledge about ourselves. I like referring to that as my shadow, because no matter how fast you run, you'll never shake it so you may as well accept it. The part where you get reacquainted with yourself holds two parts of importance. One is the previously mentioned, and the second is where you begin the formation of your character by realizing all that makes you up will make up your character as well. Your good, bad, and in-between is no different than any character that you'll write. Flaws exist for many reasons, maybe to be fixed or maybe to test your strength, sometimes they exist just to make life more interesting. It doesn't really matter why these flaws exist, it matters what you do with them and how they affect your experience in life. Mainly because how they affect you will influence how much it affects the birth and growth of your characters.

Here they can become caricatures of you or different parts of what makes you up. Either way is a good way to go, and both can lead to deep thought or some comedic relief about more than you thought possible. We joke about things in life we can't control or change, turning it into a caricature that is less threatening when possible.

When we write a story, however, that control is completely ours and we can stretch the truth or make it up entirely as we wish.

When you make a character, you stretch the truth or make up a new form regarding your experiences because nothing interesting happens in a story without characters (unless you enjoy writing about the scenery.) Characters provide the push to start the story, the movement, to carry the story and the collision to bring it together at the end.

### **What does it amount to?**

When asked what I do for a living, as an author I tell people “I lie for a living.” It’s a funny way to describe the profession, but not far from the truth of the matter. I stretch the truth, invent stories and characters to further them, each one with some part of my own personality or destined to experience something I have in a very exaggerated way. Life experience brings life to your story and the characters that you put in it, lies make it interesting, and being the ultimate exaggeration of what you’ve experienced in life makes it your own. Considering, the journey is usually more interesting than the destination if you know where you’re going, your life can stand in the same way. You change and grow every day, your opportunities to write something new expands a little every day and bit by bit, it evolves with what you’ve learned in life.