

THE BUFFY EFFECT

~ A WRITING EXERCISE ~

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WHAT IS THE BUFFY EFFECT?

THE BUFFY EFFECT IS PROCESS OF USING SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS TO TELL A HUMAN STORY. MUCH LIKE IN EARLY SEASONS OF 'BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER' AND OTHER SHOWS LIKE 'SMALLVILLE' AND 'MISFITS'

USING THIS APPROACH CREATES METAPHORICAL NARRATIVES WITH MULTIPLE LAYERS OF MEANING.

E.G A STORY ABOUT DEMON POSSESSION IS SIMULTANEOUS ABOUT FRIENDS HAVING A FALLING OUT

HOW TO USE IT

You can use this activity in many ways for different kinds of writing.

SHORT STORIES + FLASH

This exercise is ideal for short stories and flash fiction. The instructions assume that's what you're writing, but that doesn't mean you can't adapt it for other purposes, such as those below.

NOVELS + NOVELLAS

Also great for novels and novellas. When writing longer fiction however, think of this activity as more of a starting point or brainstorming activity for aspects of your narrative.

NONFICTION

This exercise could also be a great essay writing tool. For instance, you could use it to analyse the themes in supernatural films, TV and novels

EDITING

You can also use this activity to critique a supernatural story you've already written. Is it all just vampires and telekinesis or is there a relatable human narrative beneath it all?

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METHOD 1

1. Choose a real world issue
2. Pick a supernatural element that aligns with that issue
3. Use the theme to tell a story about the issue

METHOD 2

1. Choose a supernatural trope
2. Pick a real world situation that the trope could represent
3. Use the trope to tell a story about the situation

METHOD 1

CHOOSE A REAL WORLD ISSUE

The real world issue could be anything from world war to an unhappy divorce to a bad hair day. The world is your oyster.

PICK A SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT

Now brainstorm what supernatural creatures or phenomenons might be used to explore the real world issue. How can you explore the issue through a supernatural lens?

USE THE THEME TO TELL A STORY ABOUT THE ISSUE

Once you've rolled these two things around in your head while you're ready to write. Perhaps take a leaf out of Ray Bradbury's book and write the two things at the top of the page and just go for it!

METHOD 2

CHOOSE A SUPERNATURAL TROPE

Yes this is basically Method 1 reversed. But it doesn't hurt to flip things on their head and look at them from another angle. This time, choose a supernatural trope first. Anything from werewolves to superpowers to time travel. What have you always wanted to write about?

PICK A REAL WORLD SITUATION

What sort of real world could your supernatural trope reflect or heighten the stakes of? Would something like a break up be even more exciting if robots were involved?

USE THE TROPE TO TELL A STORY ABOUT THE SITUATION

Do as you did in the first Method. Mull it over first or just hit the page writing! You'll have a story in no time

IDEAS

TO GET YOU STARTED

SUPERNATURAL

1. Apocalypse
2. Monsters
3. Possession
4. Witchcraft
5. Robots
6. Superpowers
7. Ghosts
8. Voodoo dolls
9. A portal
10. Transformation

REAL WORLD

1. A break up
2. Death of a parent
3. Moving
4. Pregnancy
5. Falling in love
6. Job hunting
7. A horrible job
8. Gardening
9. Camping
10. A dinner party

HAPPY
WRITING!

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