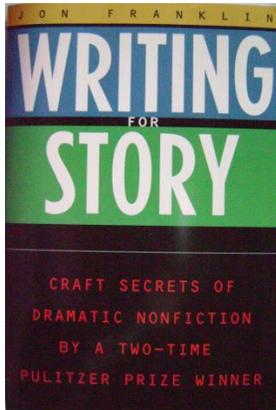


Writing for Story

By Jon Franklin



Writing for story is a good book for those who write nonfiction. If you're a fiction writer, you can still learn how to make your story more dramatic.

The first three chapters are original articles that have been published, and the rest of the book teaches principles from those articles. To make nonfiction more compelling, Mr. Franklin points out that every story needs some kind of complication that people think is significant. The most basic of these are love, hate, death, and pain. The reader must be able to identify with the human condition, and they want insight into how choices are made and problems are resolved by the main character's personal efforts. When writing nonfiction, it is wise to remember that your main character really does exist, and his or her story is unique in some way. Otherwise, you wouldn't be writing about it.

Often there isn't just one complication, and Mr. Franklin develops an outline with those complications in mind. His outline consists of simple statements of what the end result is—what did the main character do or what happened to the main character? The focus is on how the main character learned, grew, and changed. Those statements also shouldn't be written in the negative, otherwise your story will end up being negative. The outline is prepared to make the theme and story threads readily available and to keep the story flowing. If you move away from your outline, re-evaluate and re-outline if necessary. In doing this, you may find that you're actually telling the wrong story because there is something deeper or more interesting underneath.

Mr. Franklin points out that the human mind orients itself through time, place, character, subject, and mood. Because nonfiction is made up of a lot of narrative, it is important to keep the reader oriented when switching scenes, when preparing the reader for what's to come, and when releasing the climax. You'll have the greatest impact if your narrative keeps the emotion high and places your reader in the right place with the right frame of mind.

When editing nonfiction, Mr. Franklin suggests that active imagery, action verbs, and specific events and details will keep your audience enthralled. If you let the reader stray, her or she may not come back into the story and get the full experience you intended.

Writing for Story is a bare bones, how-to book for nonfiction writers. The re-publication of the articles in the beginning chapters and allusions back to it when explaining nonfiction principles is effective. I think this book is good for fiction writers as well because we can make our fictional characters real in our minds, and tell an effective story through Mr. Franklin's techniques.