Story Time Episode 2: Why Your Story Matters

PILAR: Hey, welcome back to Young Storytellers Story Time. Last time, you learned what a screenplay is and you came up with your own Young Storytellers' name. If you weren't able to catch that video or you want a refresher, watching this video could be a great resource.

Today, we're going to learn some of the key elements of a story -- character, setting and goal. We'll also identify some of the characters, settings and goals from your own life. Writers are often inspired by their own lives and we'd like to help you write about the things that are important to you.

In order to hear more about how professional writers incorporate their own personal experiences into their stories, we're going to hear from our friend, actress and writer, Natasha Rothwell.

NATASHA: For as long as I can remember, I've been inspired to write stories that are based on my real life because there's something magical that happens when you're able to look back at moments in your life and express how you were thinking and feeling by taking the truth and dressing it up with your imagination. When you do that, you're able to reflect on the experience and most importantly, connect with others.

This is "Three Hours Late." I wrote this very story when I was 11 years old and yes, it's based on a true story. I hope you're inspired by this story and that you're inspired to write your own. Your voice matters.

PILAR: I hope that today starts to help you think about your own personal and unique story ideas. Today, you'll need the Character, Setting and Goal worksheet. You can print those out from our website or you could also use a blank piece of paper and a pencil or speak your creative ideas out loud -- whatever works.

Now, on to Vira and Curtis in the Imaginarium who are going to teach you about some of our main story elements and how to write story ideas inspired by your own life.

CURTIS: Hi. Welcome back. Curtis here.

VIRA: I'm Vira.

TAMARA: And I'm Tamara, a young storyteller just like you.

VIRA: Tamara will be crafting stories with us in the Imaginarium. The Imaginarium is where anything and everything we imagine comes to life.

CURTIS: Are we all ready?

TAMARA: I'm kind of ready but I'm a little nervous to jump into coming up with story elements.

CURTIS: That's perfectly normal, Tamara. But no need to worry. We're going to walk you through everything you need to know.

But before that, let's loosen up a bit with the NASA Shakeout. The NASA Shakeout was developed because before astronauts would launch into space, their heads will be full of all kinds of math and science and all of that stuff. This is a way for them to get loose and creative before their journey to outer space.

VIRA: All you have to do is lift both your hands in the air like this and we're all going to count down from three. On one, bend over at the waist, shake and yell as loud as you can while we zoom up into space.

TAMARA: Seems like this could get pretty loud. If you're in a [shirt - 00:02:55] space, maybe ask if it's okay for you to do this before yelling as loud as you can.

VIRA: Good call, Tamara. Curtis, would you like to do the honors?

CURTIS: I would love to. Three, two, one. [Yells]

TAMARA: All right.

CURTIS: Do you feel more ready?

TAMARA: Yeah. I'm focused and ready to start.

CURTIS: Awesome. There are some key elements in every story. Three of them are the "Character, setting and goal."

VIRA: Let's explain those a little bit more.

CURTIS: Characters are the players in the story. The audience likes to see how characters tackle problems to get what they want. Sometimes, it's nice to see characters that are like you and other times, it's fun to see a character that's different from you. The main character in a story is called the "Protagonist."

"The main character in the story."

TAMARA: I guess, in a way, we're all the protagonists in our own real life stories.

VIRA: So true. A setting is where all the action takes place. Stories can take place anywhere -- from real life places like the room you're in to anywhere in the whole wide world.

TAMARA: They could even be other planets and made up places.

VIRA: The setting is where we see everything the characters go through and have to face whether it's good, bad or somewhere in the middle.

CURTIS: How the character goes through the setting is based on their goal. Tamara, since you're an alum and a writer, why don't you tell us a little more about the goal?

TAMARA: Happy to. It's my favorite element. Every character wants something -- maybe multiple things -- but a story usually focuses on the protagonist wanting something specific that they try to get. Their goal affects how they act and the story is what they do to get the thing they want.

"Goal" -- what the protagonist is trying to accomplish."

VIRA: Why don't we try it?

CURTIS: Of course. Pull up the Character, Setting and Goal worksheet or find it on our website. You can also use a piece of paper and a pencil to write your ideas down.

It can be helpful to write things down so we can remember what we thought up. Sometimes, we come up with a bunch of ideas

and pick one we're really excited about or sometimes, we save them all and then work on them one at a time.

For any ideas you don't write about now, you can always come back to them at another time. Writing down your ideas is helpful for building on them later.

VIRA: Let's start with coming up with a protagonist or main character for a story. Since writers are often inspired by their real lives, you can use real life characters in your story, too. Who are some people or even animals in your life that would make a cool story character? What are you thinking of, Tamara?

TAMARA: Well my dog, Inyo, is fun but I wonder what her life was like before we met, back when she was lost and looking for a forever home.

CURTIS: Hmm, that sounds really creative. As long as your story is original and you want to write about it, you can use any character for your story.

VIRA: Once you have your main character, you can think up a setting for that character to go on a journey in. Where does this character live? Where do they often go? Tamara, do you have any ideas?

TAMARA: Inyo was originally lost in the streets of a big city where I live but I've always wanted to go to outer space and it would be cool if she came from outer space, traveling the galaxy to get here to earth.

CURTIS: Nice. Even if some parts of your story are based in real life, you can get creative and adjust certain things to make them

different or more enjoyable for you to write. It can be really fun to imagine things that we don't experience in our everyday life.

VIRA: Lastly, let's come up with a goal for the protagonist or main character to try and achieve.

CURTIS: Think about what your protagonist wants and why. How would things be different if they got this? Are they in the setting because they are chasing after what they want? Maybe there's something you want that you want to tell a story about getting. What are you thinking, Tamara?

TAMARA: Hmm, I'm always looking for good food and I like cooking. Maybe in my story, Inyo could be searching the galaxy for the best dog food recipe.

CURTIS: All right. That sounds like a story you're super excited to write about. What about you all? Why don't we take a moment to pause and write down some character, setting and goal ideas so we remember them and can build on our stories later. Come up with a few ideas for each element and we'll come back to them later on.

[Pause]

VIRA: Look at that. We just started brainstorming a story. We don't know exactly what happens from beginning to end but we have some key elements and we'll continue building on them until we have a full story and then a script. But for now, let's wrap things up with Pilar.

PILAR: Today, we learned what characters, settings and goals are and brainstormed a few from your own life.

Please, try to keep the list that you created today because when it's time to write your story, you may want to write about the things that are important to you. You'll probably end up picking one of the ideas from your lists and that's what you'll write your full script about.

Please, share your list with us because we really want to read all your creative ideas. You can have an adult email them to us or ask them to post it on social media and tag us. And our actor and designer friends may do some creative things with your ideas that we'll share with you later.

Thanks for joining us. Hope to see you next time when we'll be talking about lessons, themes and stories. Bye.

English Transcription provided by: Translation Services.