

Finding Your Life Story



WORLD SO
BRIGHT
Writing Stories of Culture

lori@worldsobright.org www.WorldSoBright.org



21 PROMPTS

by Lori Younker illustrations by Mary Younker

Table of Contents

Finding your Life Story	1
Why use a prompt?	2
Your BACKSTORY	2
MOTIVATION for ACTIONS.....	3
DEEP UNDERSTANDING	3
Do I have a story?	4
Finding consistency	5

Finding consistency

Find a place to write that frees you.



Find a place free of distractions, a place with no hint of the work you really need to get done. Write by candlelight or dedicate a corner of a room dedicated as a sanctuary for creativity.

Find some new friends that “get you.”



As you begin, write to please yourself. At some point, however, you will switch your focus to your reader. Find trusted individuals who write similar material. A group of three who meet monthly is ideal. This gives you two ‘reader opinions’ and built-in deadlines.

Invest in your writing by learning craft.



Take opportunities to learn the craft of writing good sentences, scenes, and stories. Venture into writing fiction. Elements of fiction will season your nonfiction works with the flavor of the novel: exterior and interior conflict, dialogue, and narrative arc. All of which will give your reader a satisfying experience.

Do I have a story?

You are situated in a place and time that is uniquely yours. Perhaps you are the **only** one who can tell the story. For example, you “came of age” as your country went to war. You found love on the other side of the earth. You lost your life’s compass and found it again in an unusual place.

“There is titanic meaning to each individual’s afflictions.”

*---Edith Schaeffer in **The Art of Life***

Sharing your story

Our stories can be shared in a myriad of ways: in poetry, essays, short stories, novels, novellas, flash fiction, magazine articles, personal letters, journal entries, blog posts, and emails.

Don’t hide your story. Let it have a voice and vitality.

Finding your Life Story

The Setting



The setting of your life is very important. This would include both the time and place of a particular period of your life. *Where* were you? What was the context of that season of your life? Choose ONE setting for the 21 writing prompts to get the most focused result.

The Characters



Next, think about *who* was around you at the time. Make a list of the people most important to you in those days. With whom did you spend most of your time? Whose voice do you hear clearly in your head?

The Emotions



Strong emotions of anger, sadness, and disappointment are the easiest to recall, making it a great place to start. However, these emotions can be painful, so gravitate to the happiest emotions and work back in time to find the backstory. Seek to find the contrast between both types of memories.

Why use a prompt?

Okay, now that you've chosen a particular section of time of your life with its unique setting, complete the following prompts in a paragraph or more for each.

If the spirit moves, write until you can't write any more. Don't **read** it today. Don't **change** anything. Don't **evaluate** it. Just keep going from prompt to prompt as you are able to do so.

When you've completed the prompts, you will have a wide range of material to draw from. These can become **scenes** that flesh out your story from beginning to end.

Using a prompt is a great way to uncover details that are buried under a huge heap of living.

Prompts for your BACKSTORY

1. My first clear memory of ...
2. I had always been a ...
3. Those were the days when...
4. It was my duty to...
5. From an early age I sensed...
6. As destiny would have it, my family (parents)...
7. My mind still holds the image of...

Prompts for MOTIVATIONS for ACTIONS

1. Little did I know that I would choose...
2. I found out later that...
3. I remember asking myself...
4. My heart was full of mixed emotion...
5. If I wasn't ____, I was...
6. How strange how quickly emotions can shift...
7. I made a vow to...

Prompts for DEEP UNDERSTANDING

1. It would be wonderful to say that ...
2. My mother later told me that...
3. I had not fully comprehended at that point...
4. I remember asking my _____ about...
5. To use a metaphor, those years...
6. One of the first things I had to do was...
7. My heart was full of mixed emotion...