

Crafting Stories That Captivate

5 Tips from YA Author Katie Bayerl



1. Eat great stories. Read books that light up your synapses. (Do the same with movies, music, poetry, etc.) Go for the stuff that speaks to you. Swallow as much of it as you can. Linger over great details. Take time to digest the parts that make you gasp.

2. Weird it up. You know that strange topic that fascinates you? Those little facts that send you down rabbit holes? Writers call this “research.” Indulge your weird fascinations. You never know what type of stories they’ll inspire.

3. Break your own heart. When you find that emotional tug in your own writing, go for it. Explore. Find its edge. You may learn some things about yourself in the process. You’ll definitely create more powerful characters.

5. Take notes. Story ideas are all around you, so keep a notebook or voice recorder handy. You never know when you’ll trip across a perfect detail for your story or when a great line of dialogue will whisper in your ear.

6. Forget about perfect. Nothing will ever seem good enough in the first draft... or, ok, the eighth... so send your inner critic on a nice long vacation. Your job is to get words on the page and then—deep breath—to try again, and again, until your words come closer to what you intend.

7. Find community. Other writers make excellent friends. First, because they recommend great books (see #1), and second, because they can help you see the best qualities in your own work. Take classes with other writers. Join an online community. When you find people whose stories you enjoy and who get what you’re trying to do, keep in touch.

4. Be YOU. You don’t have to sound a certain way to write a great story. Your voice and your truth are more compelling than anything you could imitate. So forget about everyone else, and just... be you.