

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Writing Prompt: Flashback

Charity Hume · Wednesday, March 12th, 2014

Another prompt from Charity Hume to help you through your week of writing. This week: flashback.

In *Casablanca*, Bogart's suave veneer of indifference to human suffering – “I stick my head out for nobody,” — is suddenly drawn aside, when he gets drunk and the film shows his flashback to Paris. We see an earlier Rick, one who believed in love, hopeful, thinking about the future. His past self explains his present bitterness and gives a glimpse of his true character. In *Silence of the Lambs*, we see a darker version of this technique. Clarice Starling's flashbacks to her childhood form the emotional heart of her character's motivations, and the audience experiences an exquisite tension between the urgent needs of the present and the series of powerful and compelling scenes that draw us into the secrets of her past.

In this exercise, tell a story of a character dealing with a situation in the present, but use flashbacks to a second storyline from the past. Find ways to tell the two stories simultaneously, giving us little tidbits along the way. Daily reality can awaken images, sights, sounds and smells from the past. Showing a multifaceted dimension of your character can be a deep way to more fully understand his or her motivations.



Corner of the Apartment, (1875) by Claude Monet, courtesy of Wikipaintings

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