

Creativity in Marketing (COVID-19 Edition): Creative Writing and Content Marketing Strategy

This class will teach students the value of creativity within an organization and specifically for marketing. Creativity and innovation are often evoked in company mission statements, but more often than not, companies fail at fostering either of them within their ranks. Students will learn to understand why and how creativity fails within organizations, and how to avoid these pitfalls. The focus of the course is explicitly on group and organizational creativity, particularly cross-functional creativity and its importance for functions such as new product development and marketing communications. Students in this course are encouraged to think of themselves as future change agents within organizations. They will learn the tools to build processes and spaces for creativity with tangible results. The overall purpose of this class is to increase students' appreciation for creativity and to how to foster it within the entire organization, especially for marketing operations.

For COVID-19 and Zoom teaching, the course has been retooled. The focus will be on creativity through storytelling, as this is the type of creative production easily done through virtual environments. More specifically, the course will focus on transmedia storytelling. Content is king, they say. But what makes good content? This course unpacks this mystery.

Knowledge

- Understand the antecedents and pitfalls of a creative marketing organization
- Understand how creativity is fostered and mobilized across different marketing functions
- Understand the role of consumer creativity
- Understanding content marketing and how it can be employed in marketing communication
- Elements of storytelling and especially short stories
- Transmedia storytelling in marketing

Skills

- Processes of brainstorming and inclusive group creativity that align different organizational players towards a common marketing goal
- Ability to apply creativity techniques to develop innovative marketing solutions (e.g., new product development, promotional efforts, etc.).
- Ability to develop creative spaces within the organization
- Ability to change organizational culture that embraces creativity
- Ability to create marketing strategies that take advantage of consumer creativity
- Storytelling
- Writing
- Marketing communications planning

Content

- Recognize how organizational creativity is necessary for innovation and a key organizational feature
- Understand that creativity is not an inherent ‘talent based’ function, rather a trainable skill that can and should be embedded into an organizational culture
- Recognize the role of change agents and champions of creativity
- Recognize common misconceptions of creativity, such as the ‘genius’ myth and breakthrough technologies, and appreciates the value of innovation as a key difference
- Recognize the wide ethical concerns of creativity including societal issues and consumer-marketer power struggles
- Storytelling
- Short story writing
- Critiquing
- Content strategies
- Transmedia storytelling
- Advertising and marketing communications

Evaluation criteria:

Class Participation	30 %
<i>Perusall</i>	25 %
<i>Classes</i>	10 %
Short story exercise	30 %
Group project	40 %

Passing the course requires completing assignments and obtaining at least 50%

CLASS PARTICIPATION 30%

A collection of articles and book excerpts comprise the reading material for the course. The list is preliminary and can be found along the course schedule below. To complete this module, students are expected to familiarize themselves with key readings. All readings will be available via Perusall.com. See **Appendix 1** for instructions on Perusall.

GROUP ASSIGNMENT 40%

The group assignment will consist of a transmedia marketing plan for a brand of the students’ choosing. The students will be introduced to ideas on transmedia storytelling throughout the class. This group assignment allows you to explore and employ them.

The pre-requisites for the project are the following:

1. Students must find a brand and product and find brand guidelines for it
 - a. These brand guidelines can be found online
 - b. The project will be evaluated in relation to these guidelines
 - c. All brands and their guidelines must be approved by faculty!
2. Students must pick a fairytale of their choosing
3. **Students must develop a transmedia story for the fairytale while featuring the brand in a content-relevant, interesting, and natural way in each medium**

Questions to drive your planning:

1. How will you attract your target audiences to your brand story? In other words, how do they discover the story? (A link on the manufacturer's website and tweets by the company are possibilities).
2. How will you motivate the audience to keep following the story over time and across media? (Employing a "cliffhanger" and/or a plot twist at the end of each element of the story is one idea).
3. What emotion or emotions are you going to arouse in the audience?
4. How will you incorporate the brand into the story?
5. How "faithful" are you going to be to the original fairytale? (Like, is the wolf a real wolf, or a man with wolf-like features? Are you going to stick to the main, known storyline or are you going to give us backstory, of what happened "outside the main story"?)

Some considerations:

- The brand story must be presented in or across at least four media.
- The expression of the brand story in each medium must be unique, not merely the same content repurposed from a different media.
- The plan for the story must elaborate its use of:
 - **Migratory cues**
 - **Negative capability**
 - These will be explained in one of the course readings, Long (2007)
- Each new element added as the story progresses should provide new information which forces the audience to reconsider what is happening, raising new questions.
- The campaign must make use of emotion.
- It must involve the readers, i.e. be interactive, and encourage participation through social media through likes, comments, etc.
- It must permit audience members to enter the story through any of the media used. In other words, some audience members may encounter the story by coming across a tweet, or reading a blog, etc., and, regardless, still feel like they are entering the story at a beginning.
- Each story element must have a "hook" or "cliffhanger", to drive the audience to seek more. Details which hint at more yet to be revealed can motivate the audience to seek out the next element and in some instances generate their own story element to resolve the unknown.

- The way the success of the effort will be measured has to be considered. Consider what analytical elements or metrics would convey the success of the brand story. Also consider how metrics describe how different media produce audience involvement, versus which result in “closing the book”
- See Turnitin link to check the rubric to better understand the grading criteria

Deliverables:

- 1) **Max 10-minute video presentation of transmedia plan** (30% of the grade)
 - a. The video focuses on the plan itself and explains how the story unfolds across different media, how it hooks the audience, and how the brand is presented.
 - b. The focus is on creating intrigue and selling your idea to the audience.
 - c. You can record the 10-minute video via Zoom, like recording a PowerPoint with voiceovers
- 2) **Written report of transmedia plan** (60% of the grade)
 - a. The written report describes your novel creation, but more importantly, elaborate on the creative process of how your creation evolved using the course’s readings and key insights. The deliverable is 1.5-spaced, 1” margins, 12-point font, Times New Roman. Max length 4.000 words! Concise writing is necessary.
 - b. The written plan will focus more on how the concept was created as a creative process!
 - c. How did the transmedia story come to be? How did it evolve? What creative techniques did you use to develop your work? What were the struggles?

Group Project Grading Rubric:

***Divergence* 20%**

- The group can show that it used creative techniques to produce a wide berth of original, “out-of-the-box” ideas and novel viewpoints
- The fairytale should meaningfully differ from the “traditional” plot, enhancing it and bringing new perspectives to it
- Researching and benchmarking for inspiration and ideas to be “borrowed”
 - Showing that your campaign is different to how brands / products / services are usually positioned or sold in the context (goes against the “cultural orthodoxy” of branding, will discuss this in an upcoming lecture)

***Convergence* 20%**

- Correct application of course concepts, literature, themes, and tools in showing how the group explored, improved, and changed the final plan by combining ideas, critique, rejection and curation
 - How the solution evolved and came together, showing a critical, integrative, and iterative mindset

- Using creative techniques to develop, curating, rejecting, and combining divergent ideas into solutions or insights
- Encouraged to use appendices and showing the different iterations of ideation

*Minimum requirement for full points: **The group must have completed at least two rounds of IdeaGen brainstorming and used it for convergence and divergence***

Solution **45%**

- Originality of overarching transmedia plan
 - Convincingly showing that the solution aligns with the brand and serves brand-building aims
 - The fairytale is competently “employed” into a novel transmedia story
- Comprehensiveness, viability, and detailed richness of solution
 - Showing that the idea carries through to different levels of implementation, like through different media channels
 - The solution is holistic; the parts work well together
 - The campaign is interactive and credibly gets people to engage
 - Pitfalls and dangers of the solution are acknowledged and credibly addressed → bad if instructor can ask obvious “did you consider this?” questions

Writing quality and argumentation **15%**

- Quality, clarity, and conciseness of writing
 - Creative idea needs to be communicable clearly and concisely
 - Repetitiveness in text results in grade reduction
 - Redundancies and ‘empty gestures’ that merely mention course concepts without sufficient application reduce grade
 - Remember: “Writing Well”!

10-Minute Video Guidelines

Grading of Presentation:

- **“Selling” the solution to the audience** **40%**
 - Brief introduction of the brand/product
 - First laying out the overarching idea
 - Brief description of the creative process that led to the transmedia plan
 - Exemplifying the story through examples and how the story unfolds
 - Showing the details of the implementation, how the creative idea would work

- **General presentation considerations** **30%**
 - Logical order, easy to follow
 - The video is engaging and captivating
 - Visual aids (slides, examples, other artifacts) are of high quality and enhance the presentation experience
 - Transitions between topics are fluid, good tempo, the presentation spends just the right amount of time with each topic
 - Time management! (strict 10-minute deadline)
 - Possible extra points for innovative presentation “gimmicks” that work in your favor

- **Peer rankings from other groups** **30%**
 - The team with the average highest rating gets the full 30%, everybody else in relation to that score

SHORT STORY ASSIGNMENT 30%

“Short stories are tiny windows into other worlds and other minds and other dreams. They’re journeys you can make to the far side of the universe and still be back in time for dinner.”

-Neil Gaiman

Copywriting is an essential skill for those wanting to work in marketing communications. I have found that short story writing is probably the best possible medium for teaching good copy. In this exercise, you will pick a brand, and pretend that this brand was a real person. You will then write a short story for this brand-character.

Short stories often unfold through a small unit of time or center on a single event that provides the story its natural shape. See the examples provided by the instructors. Your task is to write a similar story within the confines of a particular time unit. The aim of this exercise is to teach students economy of words, getting into the story quickly without too much exposition, thinking about character and plot, and carrying the story into a satisfying close. You need to recognize what a story “needs” before it can be told. Might be that you have to give some information to set the scene, but often you’ll find this is unnecessary.

The key issue is that your story needs to take place in a meaningful sequence of events. Kurt Vonnegut once said that it is the writer’s task to “stage confrontations.” Your story should do this; it should stage confrontations between two or more characters, involving some kind of choice and recognition that leads to change.

The story exercise will consist of four deliverables:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| (1) Character outline | 10% |
| (2) First draft | 25% |
| (3) Anonymous Peer review | 20% |
| (4) Final draft | 35% |

Character outline

The first deliverable is a character outline. Pick a brand that you feel you know quite well. Your brand character must feel like a real person and give them a something of a backstory that gives context to their personality and behavior. See **Appendix 2** for example for character outline for “Marl Borough,” which represents the MarlBoro brand as if he were a real person. The character outline should feature the following:

1. What is their personality like? (Brash and confident? Calm and calculative? Strong temper? Introverted or extroverted? Etc.)
2. What was their past like? What were their important formative moments? What are their biggest regrets? How have these things shaped who they have become now?
3. Where did they grow up? Surrounded by whom? With whom do they socialize now?
4. What are (or were) they good at? What are they bad at?
5. The essential question for your character is this: What do they want, and what do they need? And how are these two either the same, or different? **What your character wants drives their actions in the story; what they need drives the story towards its conclusion.**
6. Note that you need not “show” everything of your character in the actual short story. This character outline merely informs your understanding of how your character is.

Consider the following advice when planning and writing your story:

1. It is encouraged to follow Aristotle’s famous principles of “unity of drama”: 1) unity of place, 2) unity of time, and 3) unity of action. In simpler terms, this means that the short story should aim at one unified plot over, say, one day, within one location, and focusing one particular and important activity. This is a not strict set of principles, and authors break this unity principle all the time. But for novices, it definitely helps.
2. **Conflict drives story.** Remember: what does the character want, and what do they need? What is standing in the way of our character?
3. Consider Edgar Allan Poe’s equally influential principle that short stories should aim at conveying one singular emotion or mood to their reader.
4. Consider Robert A. Heinlein’s (somewhat controversial) claim that there are only three main types of fiction stories:
 - a. “Boy meets girl” (or girl meet, boy, girl meets girl etc.)
 - i. boy-fails-to-meet-girl
 - ii. boy-meets-girl-too-late
 - iii. boy-meets-too-many-girls
 - iv. boy-loses-girl
 - v. boy-and-girl-renounce-love-for-higher-purpose.
 - vi. Etc.
 - b. “The little Tailor”

- i. “Rags to riches”
 - ii. Fall from grace
 - iii. Rise and fall
 - c. “Man learns a lesson”
 - i. Man has opinion or worldview at the beginning of story, faces some “harsh truths” and is transformed as a result.
 - ii. This is third form is particularly useful for short stories!
- 5. Ponder on Robert A. Heinlein’s principles that he used in his short stories:
 - a. The protagonist finds themselves in circumstances that create a problem for them.
 - b. The protagonist’s new circumstances must be essential to the story.
 - c. “The problem itself—the “plot”—must be a human problem. The human problem must be one that is created by, or indispensably affected by, the new conditions.”
 - d. In coping with the problem, the protagonist is somehow transformed, and the story concludes when the transformation is complete.
- 6. We strongly encourage you to collaborate outside of class with one or more of your peers: bounce ideas off one another, share drafts, make editing suggestions, offer encouragement.
- 7. See Neil Gaiman’s 5 essential tips for short story writing in **Appendix 3**.
- 8. See David Sedaris’s suggestions for how to plot a short story in **Appendix 4**.
- 9. See David Sedaris’s suggestions for how to start a short story in **Appendix 5**.

Grading Criteria for the Short Story (both first draft and final):

- 1) All story drafts must be complete. Endings are difficult, but they are absolutely necessary. Find a way to finish your draft before you turn it in. We may require a student to resubmit.
- 2) Story drafts should be proofread carefully. Basic proofreading mistakes jolt the reader out of the dream you are creating.
- 3) The story focuses and dramatizes, using scene and summary, a central event in a small unit of time. The story should thus reflect class learnings on story theory.
- 4) The story supplies the reader with the basic, orienting facts of the ground situation that they need to understand the story. (But it need not do so at the beginning; this information can and probably should be given as the story unfolds.)
- 5) Tension and conflict are developed. The story has a protagonist who wants something, and there are obstacles to what they want, and those obstacles are relevant, maybe even formidable. (In our story triangle, this is called "rising action.") These needs and wants must be articulated in the character outline.
- 6) The protagonist has a "problem rooted in character" and not in the situation. Again, connect to character outline.
- 7) The story has a clear turning point, signaling change.
- 8) Details are concrete and significant (NOT ABSTRACT) and alive to the five senses. See “Writing Well” supplement.
- 9) The writer pays heightened attention to the theories and ideas provided in class readings.
- 10) The writer pays heightened attention to language: to active verbs, to sentence economy (OMIT NEEDLESS WORDS!) to diction, to sentence variety. See “Writing Well” supplement

- 11) **Length: No less than 1.000 words but no more than 2.500 words. This applies to all drafts.**
- 12) **For grading of, please check Turnitin in advance to check out the rubric.**

ETHICAL RULES

Please refer to Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity:

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/ensaannot/Aalto+University+Code+of+Academic+Integrity+and+Handling+Violations+Thereof>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Monday, 1 November, 11:15 » 13:00

Introduction & Practicalities

Wednesday, 3 November, 11:15 » 13:00

IdeaGen

Monday, 8 November, 11:15 » 13:00

Creativity and Storytelling, I

Wednesday, 10 November, 11:15 » 13:00

Creativity and Storytelling, II

Monday, 15 November, 11:15 » 13:00

Ethnography & Creative Insights

Wednesday, 17 November, 11:15 » 13:00

Understanding Innovations

Monday, 22 November, 11:15 » 13:00

Creativity and Value Proposals

Wednesday, 24 November, 11:15 » 13:00

Consumer Creativity

Monday, 29 November, 11:15 » 13:00

What's killing marketing creativity

Wednesday, 1 December, 11:15 » 13:00

Recap and Leading Creativity

Monday, 13 December, 11:15 » 14:15

SHOWCASE SESSION

Appendix 1: How Perusall Works

Perusall helps you master readings faster, understand the material better, and get more out of your classes. To achieve this goal, you will be collaboratively annotating the textbook with others in your class. The help you'll get and provide your classmates (even if you don't know anyone personally) will get you past confusions quickly and will make the process more fun. While you read, you'll receive rapid answers to your questions, help others resolve their questions (which also helps you learn), and advise the instructor how to make class time most productive. You can start a new annotation thread in *Perusall* by highlighting text, asking a question, or posting a comment; you can also add a reply or comment to an existing thread. Each thread is like a chat with one or more members of your class, and it happens in real time. Your **goals** in annotating each reading assignment are *to stimulate discussion by posting good questions or comments* and *to help others by answering their questions*.

Research shows that by annotating thoughtfully, you'll learn more and get better grades, so here's what "annotating thoughtfully" means: Effective annotations *deeply engage points in the readings, stimulate discussion, offer informative questions or comments, and help others by addressing their questions or confusions*. To help you connect with classmates, you can "mention" a classmate in a comment or question to have them notified by email (they'll also see a notification immediately if online), and you'll also be notified when your classmates respond to your questions.

For each assignment we will evaluate the annotations you submit on time (see below). Based on the overall body of your annotations, you will receive a score for each assignment as follows

- 5 = demonstrates exceptionally thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire assignment
- 3 = demonstrates thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire assignment
- 1 = demonstrates superficial reading of the entire assignment OR thoughtful reading of only part of the assignment
- 0 = demonstrates superficial reading of only part of the assignment

How many annotations do I need to enter?

When we look at your annotations we want them to reflect the effort you put in your study of the text. It is unlikely that that effort will be reflected by just a few thoughtful annotations per assignment. On the other extreme, 30 per assignment is probably too many, unless a number of them are superficial or short comments or questions (which is fine, because it is OK to engage in chat with your peers). Somewhere in between these two extremes is about right and, thoughtful questions or comments that stimulate discussion or thoughtful and helpful answers to other students' questions will earn you a higher score for the assignment. Note, also, that to lay the foundation for understanding the in-class activities, you must familiarize yourself with each assignment *in its entirety*. Failing to annotate the entire assignment will result in a lower score.

Appendix 2: Marl Borough (MarlBoro brand as if he were a real person)

Marl Borough hails from the deep south of the US. His father was a Texan self-made millionaire, a true Southern gentleman. His mother was once the prettiest debutante in all of Georgia. Marl admired his father, despite his continued absence and fondness of physical disciplining. Marl adored his mother even more, who returned the adoration with unhealthy maternal worship. The family cherished traditional Christian values, never missing a Sunday mass.

Marl was captain of the football team, and he was the obvious choice for homecoming king. He took the head of the cheerleading team—who was also the homecoming queen, of course—to prom, and eventually married her. He went on to study at a prestigious state university in Texas, where he spent a socially spectacular and academically unspectacular four years. After his studies, and much to the delight to his parents, he joined the thriving family business that sold incense products originally used in Native American rituals. In truth, Marl probably had no other choice.

Marl grew up to be a man's man, a real charmer, much like his father. When he entered a room, heads turned, either due to his commanding presence or the unmistakable clink of his cowboy boots. He was a social butterfly and a mysterious stranger, all in one. He spoke his mind, and, in his mind, was never wrong. You rarely saw him without a Scotch in hand, even at work.

Other men admired and even feared Marl. Women were intrigued by him, especially the types who were drawn to danger. Marl, for his part, loved women, and lavished them with his trademark winks, “ma’ams,” and firmly held gazes. If his wife was out of sight, as she often was, he’d grant women the special courtesy—in his mind, at least—of a double entendre, indecent proposal, or firm grab of derriere.

The changing times did not treat Marl kindly, a fact he first ignored, then rebelled against. The family business suffered under his watch, leading to his ouster. His wife, long tolerant of his obvious adultery, walked out on him with their two sons, with whom Marl already had a strained relationship. Marl’s fall from grace left him a sad caricature of today’s Caucasian, elderly, heterosexual man, and his sliding social status only accentuated his negative habits. He became loudly opinionated and lost whatever remained from his patience for tempered social interaction. His social circles started to diminish, with only the roguish types welcoming his presence. The rest merely tolerated him, if that.

His masculinity, once so brash and intoxicating, was now decidedly toxic.

His life was now consumed by nostalgia, a yearning for a lost past that was partly real but mostly imagined. He desperately wants to regain his relevance, to be the coolest cat on the block again. What he needs was to move on, to find dignity in his twilight years.

Appendix 3: Neil Gaiman: How to Write a Short Story in 5 Steps

Source: <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-great-short-story-writing-tips-and-exercises-for-story-ideas#a-short-history-of-the-short-story>

Follow this step-by-step guide to writing a great short story.

1. **Pick the mood you want to evoke.** This is the feeling or emotion you want to give to your readers, and what all the elements in your short story will work together to achieve. What kind of story do you want to tell—and why?
2. **Start with a strong opening.** Because of the restrictions of the short story format, you won't have a lot of room for exposition. To get around this, consider starting your story *in medias res*—a writerly practice that means opening in the middle of the action and filling in details later. This takes you straight to your important scene.
3. **Build your story, remembering that you only have a certain number of words.** Don't waste time and space. Everything in the short story needs to be vital. Read and re-read every sentence and ask yourself: does it really need to be there? Does it serve the higher purpose of illuminating your story's mood? As Edgar Allan Poe once said: "A short story must have a single mood and every sentence must build toward it."
4. **Land the ending.** Everything has been building up to this key moment. When writing the ending of your short story, focus on the mood you're trying to create and ask yourself: what would be the most satisfying way for the ending to capture this mood? Remember, a short story is still a story, which means the plot has to make sense, and nothing should be too obvious. Does the ending follow naturally from where the story began? Does it make sense?
5. **Edit, edit, edit.** Spend some time away from your story, and go back later with a pair of fresh eyes. Once again, keep in mind the key mood you're trying to express. Read your short story back at least three times, paying attention to how plot, characters, dialogue, scenes and settings all work together toward one common goal. Note any inconsistencies and fix them—or get rid of them. Strike anything which feels superfluous or slows down the pace.

Appendix 4: David Sedaris and How to Plot a Short Story

Source: <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-plot-a-short-story>

A great short story drops the reader into its world swiftly and holds their attention all the way through. Plotting a short story doesn't have to involve an exhaustive list of plot points: It can be as simple as knowing a few key moments you want to work your way toward, or sketching out a sequence of events you may scramble around later in the revision process. You will inevitably make changes to your original plan along the way, and this is a good thing. You'll always wind up with things you never imagined at the start, so if you're a plotter—plot. The rest of the story will fall into place how it likes. Follow these steps to plot your next story:

1. **Brainstorm.** You don't need to have multiple short story ideas ready to go at a moment's notice. All you need is one solid concept. When an idea comes to you, sit down and flesh it out. Use writing prompts to spark an idea. Make note of any characters, settings, or bits of dialogue that you see.
2. **Write out the central conflict.** The foundations of your main conflict or theme often form a short story's rising action. To create tension and movement, you must know exactly what your character wants and what would prevent them from getting it. Conflicts can be internal or external, so imagine at what stage the reader will be meeting your character. Are they already in the throes of defeat? Or do their obstacles provide the action for the story?
3. **Create a brief outline.** Sketch out the flow of events your short story will contain, including interactions between characters and key moments. Jot down identifying characteristics and traits—but when it comes to drafting, pick your moments of backstory carefully: In order to make the cut, a piece of information must contribute to the story's central events in some way.
4. **Pick a point of view.** Many short stories work well in first-person because of their vignette-style brevity, but there's no hard and fast rule saying yours must: If your story needs to be told in second-person or third-person, that works, too. Regardless of which POV you choose, it's usually best to center that narrative around one main character to ensure a consistent read on the situation at hand and a clear understanding of the stakes for the reader.
5. **Select the right story structure.** Short stories are an excellent place to release your hold on the rules of structure. You can in a linear fashion or embrace nonlinear narrative. Your story may feature a full narrative arc, or just one pivotal moment within it. You can try beginning your story *in media res*—which means opening the story in the middle of the action—or leading with the inciting incident. Short stories allow the freedom to experiment because of their brevity.

Appendix 5: David Sedaris and 5 Ways to Start a Short Story

Source: <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-begin-a-short-story>

You have far fewer pages to write a short story than you do regular fiction and non-fiction, which means you need to cover a lot more ground in a lot less time. There are so many different ways to start a short story that can immediately draw your audience in from the first chapter, and keep them there until the end:

1. **Hook readers with excitement.** Start off with something that immediately engages the reader from the opening sentence, like an action scene or an unexpected event (you won't have a lot of room for exposition due to the restrictions of short story format). The inciting incident is the moment your protagonist is pushed into the central conflict of your story, which can be an enticing scene to start with, and clues your viewers in on what kind of story this is going to be.
2. **Introduce the lead character.** Starting your short story by introducing your main character can be an effective way to draw the audience in emotionally—especially if this character is written in first person, thereby establishing their worldview. Try giving your main character a unique voice or quirk that makes them interesting and intriguing to your readers. When readers care about someone, they want to know what's going to happen to them and will keep reading—establish this feeling with your readers quickly within your short story to have an effective beginning.
3. **Start with dialogue.** A powerful line of dialogue from one of your characters as your first sentence can quickly establish who they are and what their point of view is. Readers will want to read on to discover who is saying this first line and why, and what the circumstances surrounding it is.
4. **Use memories.** Recalling the memories of a character via the narrator or by use of a flashback is a quick way to show (rather than tell) a little backstory about the inhabitants of your world. It can show us how a character feels about a particular person, place, or event—it provides a setup for your characters' trajectory by showing their history. Showing a memory through a character's eyes creates an emotional attachment, stirring empathy and sparking connection, which are all important qualities for an impactful short story.
5. **Begin with a mystery.** Present a mystery to your audience on the first page to create a compelling beginning that keeps them interested until it's solved. That doesn't mean you're automatically writing a mystery genre. Sometimes, a mystery in the opening is for the sole purpose of keeping your reader's attention. A mystery can also mean opening with a question, an unsolvable problem, or an ambiguous event, which will pique the curiosity of your reader, and they'll be excited to know what happens next.