# Storytelling Brands

A good story stirs the heart and the mind, both inside and outside the classroom. Crafting a good story is also a creative activity par excellence. In this exercise, we will channel our inner Ernest Hemingway or Virginia Woolf to create an unforgettable story.

Learning goals:

1. Giving, taking, and using criticism for improving creative output
2. Appreciating the importance of editing and iteration in creative work
3. Improving writing, communication, and storytelling skills, especially for copywriting
4. Understanding the cultural meanings of brands

Altogether 40 points out of 100. I have divided these 40 points into four deliverables (10 points each), which are the following:

1. Writing a brand character outline
2. Writing a short story for your character
3. Commenting on other people's short stories
4. Revising short story

## First step: Brand Character Outline
**PASS/FAIL**

Your group must pick a brand that you want to write about. Post your pick as a comment on MyCourses in the discussion forum, I will open the discussion. There's only one brand per person, and it's first come, first serve.

After picking your brand, develop a character outline. Make your brand into a real person and give them a "real name" resembling the brand name (see Marlboro ➔ Marl Borough example on MyCourses). Your character background should, of course, be based on the "brand personality" of that brand. Think about the cultural meanings, associations, history, and maybe typical users of that brand. How would a real person "embody" these traits? The 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: <u>What do they want, and what do they need? And how are these two either the same, or different?</u> **What your character wants drives their actions in the story; what they need drives the story towards its conclusion.**

Please submit your character outline as a Word document (not PDF!) and submit it via MyCourses. Note that failing the assignment means that you will have to revise the work, and resubmit, until it is accepted, if you want the points.

## Step Two: Write a first draft for your short story
**GRADED ASSIGNMENT**

In this part of the exercise, you will write a short story that puts your character into a particularly interesting, sinister, funny, or dramatic situation. Use what you have learned in class!

Instructions:
1. Please only put your character name as the title of your short story (Game of Thrones style, for those who read the saga), regardless of content or story form
2. Please assume a third-person point of view
3. Please use the template provided via MyCourses.
4. **As for length, I would suggest that you aim at approximately 1.500 to 2.500 words.** Good writing is more about quality than quantity of words.
5. <u>Note that failing the assignment means that you will have to revise the work, and resubmit, until it is accepted, if you want the points.</u> That said, remember that the stories will be revised, so do not aim for absolute perfection, yet.

## Step Three: Commenting on the short stories
**GRADED ASSIGNMENT**

You will receive a short story from somebody else to give feedback on. You job is to provide suggestions on how to improve the story based on what you have learned in class about good storytelling. <u>Provide a minimum of 10 suggestions across the whole story.</u> These suggestions should be clear, actionable, and not merely short remarks on grammar etc.; focus on improving the story, not "just" the text.

## Step Four: Revise your story
**GRADED ASSIGNMENT**

Use the feedback you have received from others (and the instructor) to write a final version of the story. <u>Note that failing the assignment means that you will have to revise the work, and resubmit, until it is accepted, if you want the points.</u> It is not okay to "decide to ignore" the suggestions for improvement and submit a minimally revised work.

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

1) All story drafts must be complete. Endings are difficult, but they are necessary. Find a way to finish your story before you turn it in even as a first draft. 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. 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.**