

The Busy Writer's Book of Checklists

Checklist 1 – Story Ideas

Aspect of Story Ideas	Your Assessment		
	Works Well	Needs Work	Poor
Does your idea excite you and make you keen to start writing the story?			
Have you given the idea enough time to 'jell'? (Sometimes it takes a while before that 'first flash' develops into a viable idea.)			
Can you imagine a character onstage when you think about your idea?			
Can you see where the story is going? (Even if you don't know all the specifics when you sit down to write, you should be able to imagine the overall 'shape' of the story.)			
Can you see where you can build conflict in your story idea? (Remember: no conflict, no story!)			
Can you use your thoughts about conflict in the story to create a series of challenges for your character to overcome?			
Do you have a clear idea of who your supporting characters will be? (Secondary characters, antagonist, minor characters etc.)			
Is your story 'big enough' for a book or should it be a short story? Conversely, is your short story too complex?			
If your idea is a 'big' one (i.e. suitable for a story with several strands and twists) can you visualize several subplots?			
Can you imagine ways in which your main character will grow and/or change during the course of the story?			
Is your idea more than just single episodes loosely linked by a character? (Beware of writing the 'episodic' story. Writers of children's stories and/or fantasies often fall into this trap - for example, they show characters visiting a magic land and having a lovely time meeting all sorts of strange creatures and seeing amazing sights, and then... they return home. This is not a story: there's no conflict, no goal, no resolution.)			
Is your idea more than a 'slice of life'? (A 'slice of life' is more like an essay: it shows a scene from everyday life and is usually heavy on emotion, imagery and meaning but light on plot, conflict and pacing.)			
If your idea is for a short story or a short children's book, can you imagine a special twist or added humour that will 'lift' the ending and surprise the reader?			
Can you categorize your story idea as a specific genre? (e.g. romance, adventure, fantasy, sci fi, paranormal, mystery, western... this makes it easier for an editor to 'sell' the idea to a publisher.)			
Will this idea lead to the kind of story YOU like to read?			
Is this idea suitable for today's reader, or is it reminiscent of stories that would now seem out-dated? (For example, light romances have changed a great deal in the past 10-20 years, and children's stories have also evolved.)			
<i>Other Aspects of Getting Ideas:</i>			