

# Khitomer Conference 2021

## Writing Posts with the Reader in Mind

Host: [Nikki \(Obsidian Fleet\)](#)

Room Two • Session 8

Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:00:31 PM

**I WRITE  
REACTION TAGS**



**I WRITE WISH  
FULFILLMENT**



**I WRITE  
COLLABORATIVELY**



**I WRITE  
WITH THE  
READER IN MIND**



**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:00:54 PM**

Hi! I'm Nikki and I'm a sim writing addict...

I've been sim writing a long time. I've been on countless games in trek and a few outside of trek (superhero, star gate, star wars) I might be remembered by old timers from OF's SB60. I took some time away from fleets by flying indie for a few years, with slower paces and fewer writing pals and some OOC internal searching and personal development processing, and now? I'm back. I made 2020 a personal comeback year for fleet sim writing for myself, in fact. If you want to find me now, I'm primarily active in OF (Obsidian Command as Calliope Zahn, Hiroshima as Briar Elin) and Theta Fleet (SB109 as Yuliette Marayan).

In simming we can build on our imaginings in cooperation with others. This is an extension of the childhood wonder of backyard off-the-cuff play-acting. It's a happy place. I often go from daily task to daily task with this happy place in my heart. I love it. I hope everyone here today has something of the same joy of sim writing. I'm going to guess you do, since you are even attending an online convention about it today.

About my format today: I have some text prepared to drop on you, but there will be breaks marks by QUESTION prompts where it will be easiest for attendees share! If I can't get through everything I've prepared, we can take it to overflow after.

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:01:26 PM**

*eats popcorn*

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:02:07 PM**

PART 1 of 4

INTRODUCTION: THE ENGINE OF DESIRE

"Wish fulfilment" in writing is often decried as bad, i.e. the most well known example being the ever discussed trouble with Mary Sues and Marty Stus. I think a lot of very wise digital ink has been spilled about trying to avoid that hazard— BUT there's also a *reason why* these types crop up. We'd god-mode the heck out of our lives if it were an option. We did in fact god-mode the heck out of our imaginary worlds when we played in our sandboxes as kids.



QUESTION: Are you guys willing, for the purpose of this panel, to set aside the fear of creating Mary Sues just long enough to explore some other aspects of Wish Fulfillment writing's pros and cons? We'll come back to our writing goals, I promise. What do you think of when we say "wish fulfillment"? Good, bad, but don't get too ugly (^;

**[Mystic Knights] James Stewart 2/20/2021, 5:03:14 PM**

yep always

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 5:03:15 PM**

I think if it's well done, and not just sheer power fantasy, wish fulfillment is very satisfying

I mean, I read a bunch of LNs, I like wish fulfillment. >\_>

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:03:56 PM**

(what's an LN?)

**[Mystic Knights] James Stewart 2/20/2021, 5:04:55 PM**

all i want to do is learn how to make funny one liners and my posts huourrous

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 5:05:07 PM**

Light Novel

it's.. hm. I'd almost call it a serialized form of writing.

**[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 5:05:41 PM**

wish fulfilment to me is basically personal fantasy writing

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:05:44 PM**

I think of someone that's socially awkward being suddenly mr. charisma IC, swooning all the ladies

**[Mystic Knights] James Stewart 2/20/2021, 5:07:37 PM**

i do still have problems with my grammer and do use grammerly but then get told that its still not right

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:07:55 PM**

@Cam 📺 yes, generally, on the money there.

It's important to remember that Wish Fulfillment actually is rooted in a more innocent intent: it's just the Engine of Desire. Please know this child-hearted desire to rule the day doesn't need to die to achieve better storytelling, *rather it should be co-opted* as the Engine of making engaging posts and telling riveting stories. What the Engine of Desire needs is not to be removed from the vehicle— because without it we lose heart, go nowhere in our stories, and engage no one.

Instead, ***what it needs is a good navigational system***. Everyone has an Engine of Desire, a bit of ego that wants to be admired, see stuff explode, and be king of the hill. I know I do.

me for example: A few of the things that I love in stories- twist endings, arguments, fisticuffs, chase scenes, oddball character team ups, monsters and creatures, weird settings, fairy tale remixes, romance wins the day, underdogs and comeback kids, sacrifice, symbolism and metaphor, wry voice, punchy dialogue, villains and anti heroes in their own words, mystery, unique systems (of magic, faith, society, or technology etc), strong conceptual work (ala twilight zone stuff) and poetic meanderings or well executed dream or nightmare sequences.

Maybe you like some of these and other elements too. Maybe you think about this a lot like I do, or maybe you've never listed them out like that before and will enjoy thinking about what your Engine desires to go after. Take stock of what you enjoy most.

QUESTION: Be honest, you don't really join writing RPGs in order to have your character file the most reports. Let your inner child out and share what kind of story

telling aspects *actually* get you to come back to your keyboard! I'll give us a few minutes to share our Hearts Delights!

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:10:07 PM**

I like to damage my characters in ways I'd never damage myself because I'm too darned pragmatic to

**[PF] Amethyst 2/20/2021, 5:10:32 PM**

I don't think there's any one particular story telling aspect that I desire... but more the thrill of the writing. You know those moments when you're so caught up in a post that you're tagging back and forth at lightening speed?

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:10:35 PM**

its fun to break characters.

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 5:10:50 PM**

I like to do what I should have done in real life, fix issues I let linger. Have conversations I ignored. Be an ass

**[PF] Amethyst 2/20/2021, 5:11:04 PM**

That's what @[PF]S'iraa says... only he likes to break characters that belong to his crew, not his own.

**[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 5:11:27 PM**

most writers at heart are sadists 😏

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:11:29 PM**

hahaha, isn't it more fun to break your own.

**aio 2/20/2021, 5:11:37 PM**

I used to write characters based on me, but I stopped that after a while. But I do bring in some things that I would have experienced in real life.

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:11:45 PM**

pampered more like it 😊

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:12:18 PM**

We can't all be trust fund babies

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:12:24 PM**

lol

**[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 5:12:33 PM**

I do like torturing my players.

**[Mystic Knights] James Stewart 2/20/2021, 5:12:42 PM**

I have crashed one of mine be4

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:12:57 PM**

it's that damage that makes the writing great innit

**[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 5:12:58 PM**

But really, I enjoy most getting to write in one of my favorite franchises. Just the act itself is a nice escape.

**[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 5:13:02 PM**

I write Star Trek to seek out new worlds and civilizations - explore - things I can't do but dreamed of as a kid

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 5:14:20 PM**

I write to do things I'm generally unable or unwilling to do for whatever reason. Also, because it's fun sometimes to just be someone else

**[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 5:14:24 PM**

and I admit I write a lot of medical characters b/c that was the road not taken in college

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:14:25 PM**

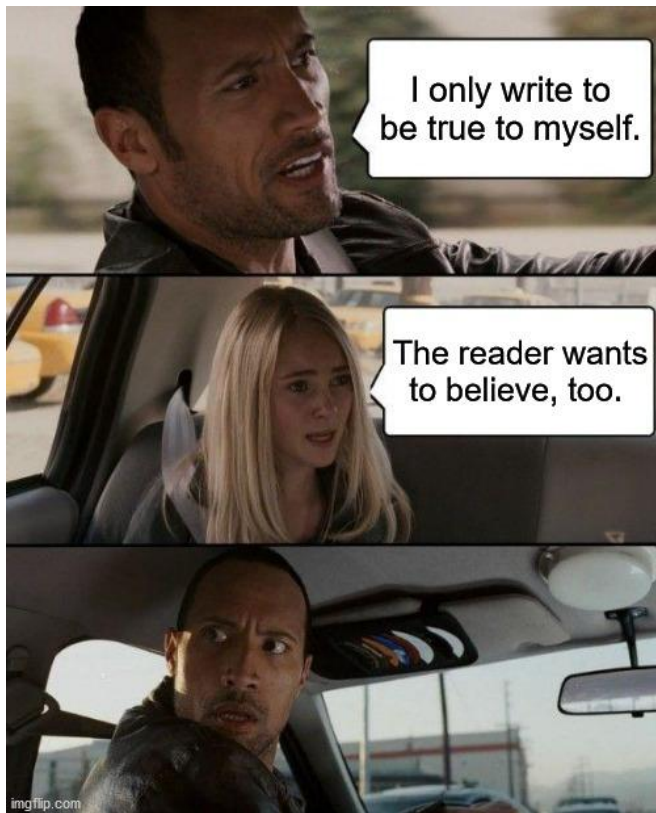
but we take that damage with us when we explore. The first folks on Mars aren't going to suddenly be perfect idealists

**[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 5:15:23 PM**

in RL I try to be a good person, but deep down I know I'm at best chaotic neutral. I can be that as a character



**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:15:28 PM**



**[Mystic Knights] James Stewart 2/20/2021, 5:17:20 PM**

I like to try different things and not be stuck in one department

**[PF] Navy\_Vet 2/20/2021, 5:17:59 PM**

It's nice to explore other avenues

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:18:15 PM**

Okay, so things we probably all know. I'll state the obvious anyway!

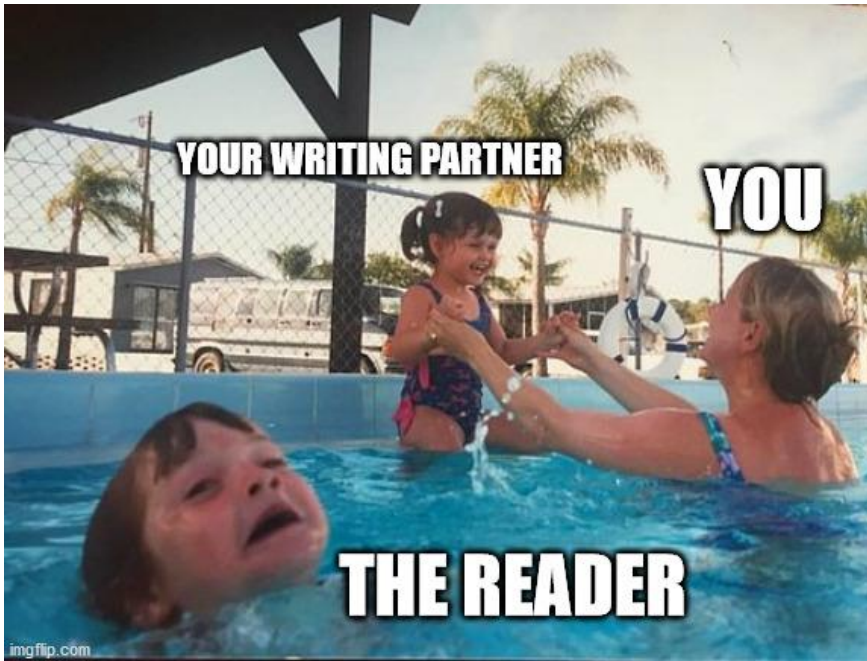
Wish Fulfillment's big con:

The downside of wish fulfillment writing is that it doesn't care who else is in the sandbox. I have kids and when they are little the only thing that keeps them from god-moding all their interactive play is that they offend others when they do so. (sound familiar?) Just like the child at play, left to his or her own devices the only real audience is the self.

Often we can share this delight in simming and invite other writers in by engaging with their Engines of Desire as well, setting the scene to share story goals or set up elements for someone else's goals and giving the other player the spotlight. This is a fantastic feature of collaborative play and highly encouraged no matter what your writing goals are personally!

But it still can lack readability for 3rd parties outside of the post.

Writing from our own Wish Fulfillment and that of the other writers can be endlessly engaging for the writer(s) but has limited appeal for readers. Although this can be in any kind of post at all, the easiest example I can point to is: the dinner date post. Most of us have JP'd one or many of these, and all of us have sometimes just skimmed these when we aren't one of the authors.



QUESTION: Let's explore.... Why? It might have been exciting to write it, but why isn't it as exciting to read?

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 5:19:35 PM**

Sometimes, I think it's because it's too incircly or too much directed at you, or your writer

\*writing partner

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:20:08 PM**

because there;s no drama, just two people having a banal conversation.

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:20:14 PM**

Sometimes for me it's about time. If it's a really long post (especially a dinner date one) I won't always read as it likely won't impact me or my characters

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 5:20:37 PM**

It's fulfilling for those characters, it maybe doesn't move the story on for everyone

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:20:39 PM**

I guess the question would be, is the writing supposed to be directed to the readers out there, or the enjoyment of the writers?



**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:20:44 PM**

or no reflection. just reading back and forth dialogue doesn't help me

**[PF] Amethyst 2/20/2021, 5:20:50 PM**

Why can't it be both?

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:21:02 PM**

*as it likely won't impact me or my characters <--this*

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:21:04 PM**

if it's not directed at everyone, why you publishing it

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:21:56 PM**

Also, somewhat guilty of falling into the mental trap sometimes of thinking that some writers I play with are better than others... 😊

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:23:10 PM**

Not saying it can't, but when we all start writing, are we truly saying that we all write for the readers? because its let's be honest, we aren't always reminded of writing for the readers as well. I'd have to say, this is truly something that I hadn't thought about much

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 5:23:37 PM**

Weirdly the readers of sims is something I've been thinking about deeply recently

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:23:42 PM**

Im afraid it depends on the characters. If its well written inlike it. If it feature a character i know is shit, i skim as fast as possible to get it over with

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 5:23:54 PM**

We don't optimise for that, we optimise for players and GM's enjoyment

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:24:02 PM**

and that's totally fine! Writing for the reader is more intentional and not necessary- it's another level to take your work to, IF you want to.

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:24:24 PM**

Well said @Nikki

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:24:56 PM**

which takes me to my next point

[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 5:24:57 PM

So, to kinda segue off @Hawkins above... why should we as writers be motivated to write for the reader in mind?

Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:25:24 PM

If you don't care if anyone will read your posts or not (if you're NOT writing for the reader) that's no problem. You had fun writing it!

BUT if you'd like to invite more reader buy-in to your posts, stick with me. We can even turn our "dinner date" posts around and make them engaging if we are always remembering:

***\*There is a Reader in the room with us.\****

[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:25:47 PM

*adjusts tie*

Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:26:10 PM

So in part 1, we learned about the Engine of Desire, its pros and cons, and we are remembering to include the Desires of other writers too. But it still needs a little something more for the Reader to buy-in! Before we get to the key points (in part 3), I have one more thought before we come to the big reveal.....

PART 2 of 4

A SIDE NOTE: MELDING CRAFT AND ROLEPLAY

What's a roleplayer/writer to do? Maybe you can identify with this feeling: "I write because I enjoy sharing my daydreams on the page, but what point is there in writing and sharing it if no one *e/se* feels engaged with what I'm producing?"

Many role players are content to role play only. And there's no harm in that; it's perfectly legitimate to literally "Role Play" on an RPG, just like the name says! Plenty of fun to be had there. But if you're still in this session with me, what you're seeking out is adding another layer of awareness to your posts- not just for yourself and the immediately affected other player, but for the entire sim, for the fleet and maybe even a passer by— the Reader-At-Large. You realize at this stage in your personal development that it may be possible to intentionally craft a post, or a series of them, which stands on its own and engages the imagination of the reader who isn't necessarily already invested by virtue of being a writer in the post or even a player in your Sim.

[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:26:46 PM

Its a clip on...

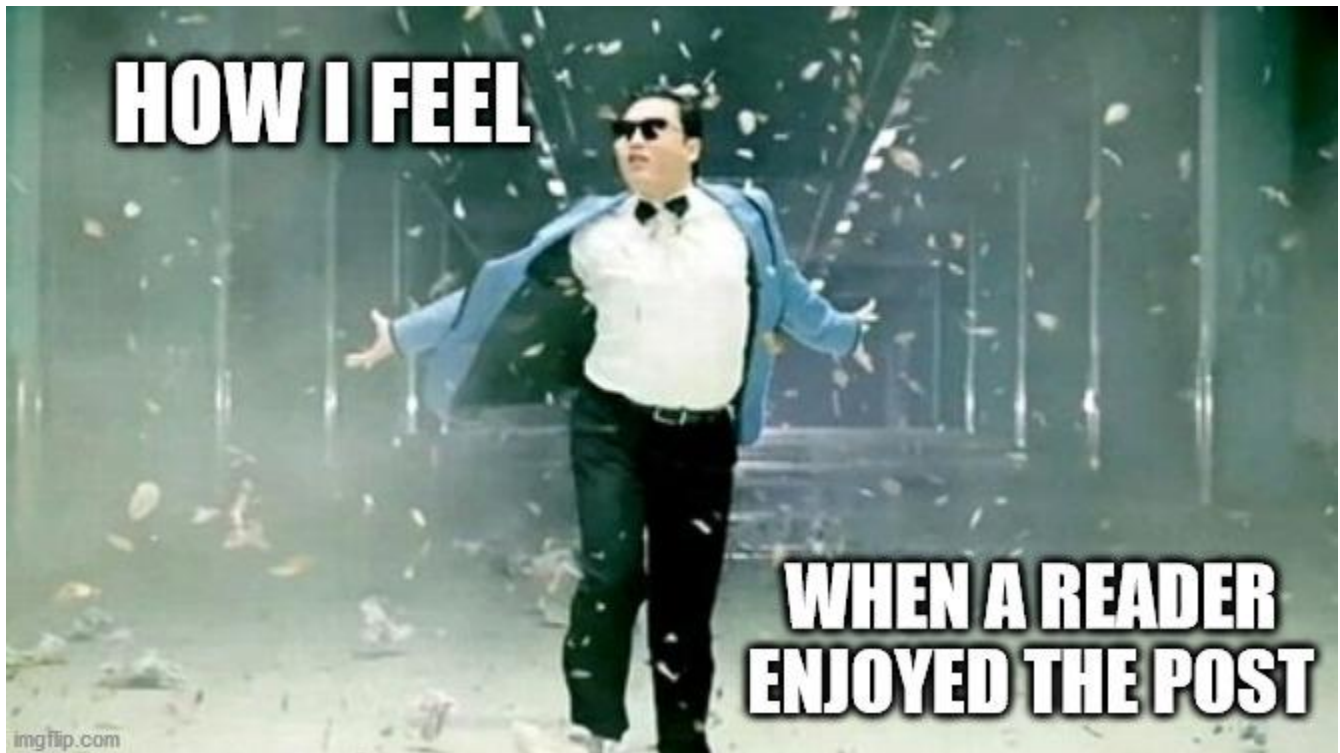
**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:27:23 PM**

It's also perfectly legitimate to switch between or blend these two modes of roleplay (purely action/reaction tagging) and writing (with awareness of the reader) in cooperative writing sims. In fact, as fond as I am of pursuing more reader-aware post-crafting, I still find I need to fall back on simple action/ reaction role play in order to collect more context with which to build on and respond to in the more crafted format. I just have to accept that when I switch to role play, it may have the effect of making the post a little less reader friendly. And that's okay for some purposes. Don't think that by learning to improve your craft of writing that a little action/ reaction is beneath you. You can do both.

**[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 5:27:42 PM**

I think that's a valid point. For sims looking to add players or replace lost ones, having posts that the reader enjoys is a valid hook for those potential players.

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:28:11 PM**



**aio 2/20/2021, 5:28:31 PM**

I've experimented with putting them in a wiki, but haven't really done much with it. It was mainly getting the templates right setting it up in a format that someone *could* read if they wanted to.

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:28:32 PM**

If I'm scouting a sim, I look at the last 2-3 posts. That's the measure, for me, of what sort of sim it is.

[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 5:29:07 PM

Quality of writers and writing is a definite factor in whether or not I decide to apply to a sim.

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:29:09 PM

You can have a flashy super-cool website, but if the JPs are 3000-word romance novels between two people, I'm out.

Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:29:22 PM

Maybe you've dismissed it as a poor character trait in yourself like being a prima donna or an attention hog. But maybe there's something else to it: since writing is communication and that implies sharing it with others, there's not necessarily anything wrong with wanting eyes on your work and people following you— if you're going to the effort to earn it!

Which brings me to the meat of our topic: How to Write Posts with the Reader in Mind

QUESTION: Ready?

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 5:29:49 PM

yes

[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:29:56 PM

ready!

Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:30:01 PM



**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:30:14 PM**

lol

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:30:40 PM**

PART 3 of 4)

WRITING POSTS WITH THE READER IN MIND

THE DEALIO: How to Write Posts with the Reader in Mind

PAY YOUR READER: Your reader is not watching a movie, or catching up on bills, or playing with his kids, or loading up a video game. He's spending his time tuning into your post. PAY HIM FOR IT.

SO WHAT DO ALL READERS WANT IN A POST?

The most basic answer?

You probably already know this.

It's fairly simple. ....

HERE IT IS, THE BIG SECRET TO KICK-ASS POSTING:

Readers want a beginning, a middle, and an end

(and a few prizes at the bottom of the cereal box)

Shocking, I know. But no less true for being obvious.

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:31:13 PM**

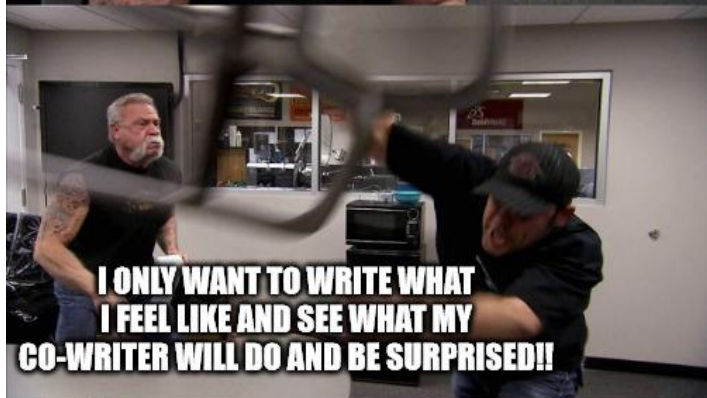
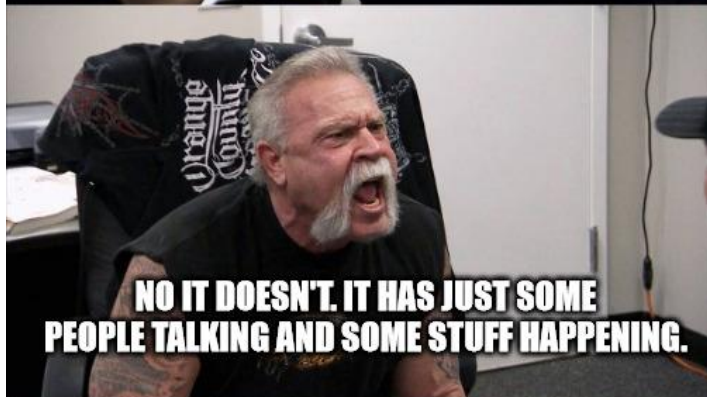
That's a lot to ask

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:31:21 PM**

Hang on, there's more to this, I swear!!!

lol







You already know that all plots (stories) have beginnings, middles, and ends, but it's also the case that every satisfying scene nestled within a story contains it's own pattern of beginning, middle, and end. And posts generally function as scenes in sims.

Sometimes when Role Playing and feeling our way through a post, we mistake the starting of the post for a beginning, the words in the physical center as a middle, and the last part as an end. But there's more to the "beginning-middle-end" anatomy than just where the words are located in the scene chronologically. I'll tell you what I mean.

Let's explore what beginnings middles and ends generally are ***to all of us as Readers***

**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:33:30 PM**

Man, I read one post lately that I was so impressed by. It had great dialogue, cool characters, a coherent story, and a cliffhanger ending. It was amazing.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:33:41 PM**

Did you write it lol

**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:33:50 PM**

No.

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:33:53 PM**

lol

**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:33:58 PM**

It wasn't on my site even.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:34:04 PM**

(had to ask :P)

**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:34:08 PM**

That part about posts having an ending is a great point.

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:34:13 PM**

1) A BEGINNING

A hook into the post. A story proposition- something that poses a question or an absurdity or a conflict or an incongruence that piques the attention. This could be achieved in the captivating or curious presentation of character or setting, the voice or style of narration, or in a remarkable plot element. You could even start in the middle of action (in media res). But you have to lead them in with something that whets the imagination or hooks the curiosity. Although there are innumerable ways to do this, the

most essential way is to present a character with a challenge, a flaw, an enemy, a danger, or an unmet need or longing. This is relatable to all Readers because it's our human condition. It can be done in big and in small ways and be just as captivating.

But whatever you do for the beginning, it should have content you can draw on for the rest of the post- either a theme or actual elements or references that will carry on or be relevant. Your opening is your foundation for your middle and your end. Give yourself something to work with here, not just meandering fluff.

Readers will often allow themselves to work harder at paying attention in the introduction because they want to become engaged and enter into the scene you're giving them (Readers want to believe!) but if it remains work or if they don't start seeing how what they are reading is meaningful or applicable to the scene, you may start losing them no matter how cool your character or writing style is.....

QUESTION: A strong opening gives you material to move into the rest of the post. It takes a little bit of imagination and forethought, but can you envision how this differs from just having a character enter a room or two characters sit down?

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:34:30 PM**

not just, the post is over. A legit 'finish'

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:34:31 PM**

She won't mind me saying as it adds a bit of integrity here, but @Nikki did write an amazing solo post recently that I adored. All one character, one setting, but captivating.

**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:34:59 PM**

Heck, even for something like a news story, reporters are taught to have a "zing" at the end.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:35:54 PM**

I think that 'hook' at the beginning's important.

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:36:00 PM**

See! you are a reader, picking up a story that was *written with you in mind* it's a whole new level!

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:36:28 PM**

I had a friend critique some work recently and between two versions, one was just the 'sit down and let me explain this to you' and the second had a hook to pull the reader in, before the same 'let me explain this to you'. Its a huge difference

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:37:07 PM**

Also, readers like irony. If the post starts "it was going to be a great date" what they really want is for the post to show the date was a trainwreck

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:37:43 PM**

ironic foreshadowing. pro.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:38:12 PM**

tbh, haven't been on too many that weren't train wrecks

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:38:34 PM**

2) A MIDDLE BUILD using the story material supplied from the beginning, things get more tense, complicated, or insurmountable and we (the Reader) may even have some uncertainty that it can be concluded well.

Do you ever feel like you have sort of sagging middles in your posts? Have you read other writers' posts where you start skimming in the middle? Contrast this feeling with posts where you were riveted in the middle! Imagine how you might improve on sagging middles. The primary way to keep things interesting in the middle is to have a good scenario established from the beginning. Some additional methods involve raising the stakes, adding a time pressure element, or introducing a disruption.

QUESTION: Can you suggest some other ways you can achieve a stronger middle build and keep your reader's attention?

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:38:56 PM**

"The building was on fire and it wasn't my fault" is a great starting line. What building? Why is it on fire, and why wasn't it your fault? Should it be your fault?

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:39:06 PM**

sounds like middle to me!

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:39:13 PM**

Lots of questions at start can fill the middle

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 2/20/2021, 5:39:37 PM**

Something for the overflow chat later: everyone post the first line of your last JP. 😊

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:39:56 PM**

lol

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:40:16 PM**

If the start is the status quo, and the end is the success/failure point, the middle should be the event that changes the status quo into the end

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:40:34 PM**

what if you don't know the end?

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 5:40:43 PM**

Edit the post once you do

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:40:44 PM**

Best part is you don't need to start with status quo - you can start halfway through it and recap it later 😊

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:40:47 PM**

middle builds deffo include any turning points.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:40:55 PM**

a lot of folks go into 'hey wanna jp?' and there's no real goal there.

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:41:17 PM**

And that drives me nuts

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:41:22 PM**

makes it hard to do the middle bits, because there no end bit

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:41:23 PM**

I do ot encourage it

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:41:31 PM**

3) AN END using the given details of the situation so far, things either get better or worse for our characters than where we were at the beginning of the post, or if we return to the same state as at the beginning of the post, we want to do so ironically or in a twisted fashion (otherwise it's too static to enjoy). Think of it as a journey. If the character(s) are moving (whether through internal personal journeys and/ or external actions) they will either get somewhere else or possibly end up back where they began, but they had to have taken us somewhere else along the way. A fitting end will resolve the middle or highlight a failed resolution (if a negative end) and if it's strongest, it will recall somethings from the beginning of the post for reader symmetry.

You may have experienced the end of a post without it really *ending* This is usually the only way out of a post that doesn't have a beginning or a middle either, but has just been

an account of some characters talking or some characters carrying out action/ reaction. It's not a "scene" in the perspective of the reader.

Have you read posts that just seem to end because the writers ran out of steam or the character just said "dismissed" and left, but you weren't really left with any clear sense of theme or narrative? Have you been in posts like this? It could be it was a fantastic post that just got orphaned and wrapped up to send to the list BUT

There usually is one reason for it: There's nothing to be ended.

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:41:46 PM**

You should still say i want my JP to show x about my character

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:41:57 PM**

Oh yeah, I HATE when you try to end a JP and the other person keeps going. 😂

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:42:03 PM**

And work out the how before you start writing

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:42:17 PM**

awk-ward

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:42:27 PM**

like...I'm out the door already. Stop trying to keep the conversation going...

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:42:29 PM**

I feel sorry for the ppl simming with you

*snort*

oh.

**Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 5:43:00 PM**

There are a number of people out there who couldn't recognise a good finish line if it was engraved in marble and dropped on their foot

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:43:07 PM**

Oh the horror...

**[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 5:43:12 PM**

I know I greatly prefer having a plan going into posts. I personally have a hard time writing posts without an end goal in mind. Partly for this reason. I like to write to tell stories.

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:43:29 PM**

*looks at the Moderator rule book to see if I can strike @Paul*

Nope, complaining about success is still allowed... hmm...

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:44:02 PM**

I am so with you! I do try to riff with others, but I have to switch writing modes for them sometimes. loved your panel on this at Fall Fest btw



posting  
rambling  
on tags that  
go no where



providing  
context in the  
beginning, using that  
context in the  
middle, and having  
a pay-off in the end

**Reminder 2/20/2021, 5:45:04 PM**

*This is your 15-minute warning*

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:45:12 PM**

There's more to be said in this panel, but let's review so far:

I) Write from your inner desires and the inner desires of co-authors.

II) Understand the difference between action/ reaction tagging vs post crafting and when you are opting one way or another or blending methods. Adjust your expectations accordingly.



III) Write posts with intentional beginnings, middles, and ends. (and bonuses prizes)

- 1) Beginnings are Foundations that supply material and themes for the rest of the post.
- 2) Middles use material from beginnings to add tension or complexity
- 3) Ends resolve based on the scenario of the middle and reference the themes and issues from the beginning.

What about the remainder of this panel?

4) PRIZES

5) PRIZES

6) PRIZES

IV) Conclusion and Samples...

Oh Yes! THERE'S MORE!

You want to include the free bonuses for your Reader!

Here are the "Prizes at the bottom of the cereal box" that Readers search for. If you have a reasonably sound beginning, middle and end, then the Reader will stick their arm in up to the elbow for these!

4) A REWARD FOR READING

-Put details into the post that make *the reader* feel they are uncovering or exploring the scene.

-Connect items, ideas, or themes in the beginning of the post to the end of the post.

-use voice, narration or style to set a mood or a tone

These clever descriptions, surprising flourishes, and musing narrations are not structurally necessary but are like the icing you want to lick off the cupcake first. The spices in your bouillabaisse. The sparkles on your hippogriff. Pinstripes on your race car. The skull and crossbones on your pirate flag.

REMEMBER As long as the details are relevant to the scene and fit the voice and context, these are lovenotes to the reader. Readers eat this up.

**[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 5:45:46 PM**

Oh, thank you 😊

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:46:12 PM**

5) A REASON TO COME BACK

Leave an item or a secret or an unresolved story thread AND pay it off in a future post- this will keep them clicking on your post when it comes in the reader's email because you're telling a serial of stories. It also gives you more material to work with. If you are not sure what you will write in the future, you can still leave things laying around in your posts that you can inventory later when you're deciding what to write your next post about. While you do want to leave an ending note on your posts, you can also pepper in and tease out other ideas and stories as you go and leave them open for future exploration. Definitely pay some things off for the reader, but also leave some deposits in the bank of curiosity. Don't explain and give away all your brilliance in one post. Keep the reader coming back.

6) PAY COMPLIMENTS

Reference the work of others. As simmers we share a setting so where ever possible incorporate items, effects, events, and character references to things established by other writers as long as it's done in the spirit of their posts and without assuming ownership or control of their stories without permission. Even just small references will validate them as writers and connect you to the audience that is built into simming. When you are a good audience they will return the favor and read you back. These are embedded compliments. Be a Reader to your Readers and share some love.

QUESTION: Any questions about the Reader prizes? Are there any others you would hide in the box?

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:46:31 PM**

not sure I follow, but sure

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:46:41 PM**

most can't follow him

just move on 😊

Prizes, like the thing that makes you watch the next episode?

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:47:41 PM**

(i don't mean to rush, it's just the bot timer! pressure!)

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:47:53 PM**

I'm not even following myself 😊

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:50:53 PM**

Just to respond to the discussion, the compliments thing is so important. As a writer and as a player, if someone says something I did was awesome, that's fuel to keep going. 😊

**[OF] B 2/20/2021, 5:51:47 PM**

I try and leave comments on ships that use them for that reason.

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 5:51:50 PM**

Also when I see someone refer to something I've written before, that tells me that they really did read it 😊

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:51:50 PM**

It can be easy to enjoy a post and never give that feedback to the writer. As a reader, if you liked something, say so. people need that as writers.

**[PF] Amethyst 2/20/2021, 5:52:04 PM**

I had one sim I was on and the XO actually went through and left comments on posts about what he loved about them. It was awesome having that feedback. That praise and the warm fuzzies from it.

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:52:53 PM**

Can't remember who used to do it, but there was a way to make notes on posts which allowed readers to express their thoughts and excitement in what they read. I would love to see that a mod for Nova. I think it would highly encourage people in this area for sure.

**[OF] B 2/20/2021, 5:53:11 PM**

Can still do it.

**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:53:37 PM**

If nothing else, you could do it in an OOC thread that accompanies the IC.

**[Mystic Knights] James Stewart 2/20/2021, 5:53:51 PM**

i'd like someone to give me feedback on my posts

**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:53:59 PM**

Or leave a message on their profile 😊

**[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:53:59 PM**

Over in OF we do a post spotlight people can nominate for, too. Another good way of getting more eyes on good posts.

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 5:53:59 PM**

Nova has a comment option available out of the box

**[PF] Amethyst 2/20/2021, 5:54:09 PM**

in Nova, you use the comment option at the bottom of each post

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:54:20 PM**

I've found very few use that

**[OF] B 2/20/2021, 5:54:28 PM**

It's fallen out of practice

Maybe can be the start of bringing it back

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:54:53 PM**

whether you use nova, email, smoke signals or IC references, it's all great ways to give appreciation!

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 5:54:53 PM**

course my most favorite comment was "you three did awesome! Loved this post"

it was a solo

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 5:54:56 PM**

Yeah, I almost always get startled when I see a notification pop up saying: "someone commented on your post" I'm always like: "Whut? I didn't know that was an option"



**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:55:01 PM**

A little praise can go a long way. Everyone wants to know their creative work appreciated.

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 5:55:06 PM**

Maybe it should be something that is brought back and encouraged in light of [@Nikki](#)'s panel here. It may uplift people and further advance story archs

**Reminder 2/20/2021, 5:55:07 PM**

*This is your 5-minute warning. Consider moving the conversation to the appropriate overflow room.*

**[SA] Wes of Star Army 2/20/2021, 5:55:15 PM**

Thanks for hosting this panel, it was a good one that was fun and informative! I am glad I was here for it!

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:55:22 PM**

ack!

5 min, i have more

(Part 4 of 4) CONCLUSION & SAMPLES

So if you find yourself writing the dinner date between your knock-out characters, (or swooping in to the rescue, or becoming the grand poobah of the party...) what the reader wants is for there to be a *reason* he's invited to your scene. Don't make your reader the uncomfortable third wheel. Ask yourself, "If I were a reader, what do I get as a payoff for reading this post?" and don't leave us the same as when we came into the scene. Take us on a journey. Every scene needs to have either an action or a revelation that matters to the reader!

If your post is jointly written, don't be afraid to talk to your co-writer and decide on a couple of reader aimed themes, goals, or plot objects going into the scene even if you keep it loose enough to change direction during the dialogue. If you enjoy roleplaying, then you're already having fun, but trust me— you'll *love* writing an engaging post for the reader even more. And all of your simming friends will be the more glad for it.

The Reader is in the scene with you. And that fact can be used to guide the Engine of Desire so you can keep the playful passion navigating in the direction of an engaging story.

The Reader wants to make-believe, too. Make room for him in the sandbox.

SAMPLE POSTS: Cautionary vs Exemplary + teaching comments

It's really challenging in these limited sessions to give meaningful samples; I've seen some really good attempts to do so at panels in the past that just fall short due to the space and time constraints, so I'm not going to try to put little snippets and do a writing workshop in process in the chat. BUT I've got something a lot more functional for you to take home! We've prepared writing examples for those who are still asking "But how? Show me!"

As a parting gift for those hungry for some solid guidance, I'm going to link to some example texts here, one of a JP that over dramatizes common pitfalls of a post for the purposes of illustration, and another where we re-write it "With the Reader in Mind", even though we keep the "Engines of Desire" running. It's a balancing act but it pays off!

(read all the directions on the top of the documents and be careful not to edit the docs! Edit permission is open so you can read the teaching comments provided, but do not edit please!)

Hal and Mya, Take One:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ibT\\_nanwffGeSnLwP8NgQ-22I0bqhBB08m11QvfKImY/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ibT_nanwffGeSnLwP8NgQ-22I0bqhBB08m11QvfKImY/edit)

Hal and Mya, Take Two

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GjUMT4\\_FxrLcNxWDNH52GIO5CoAt7As2jNpy6U5gTCg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GjUMT4_FxrLcNxWDNH52GIO5CoAt7As2jNpy6U5gTCg/edit)

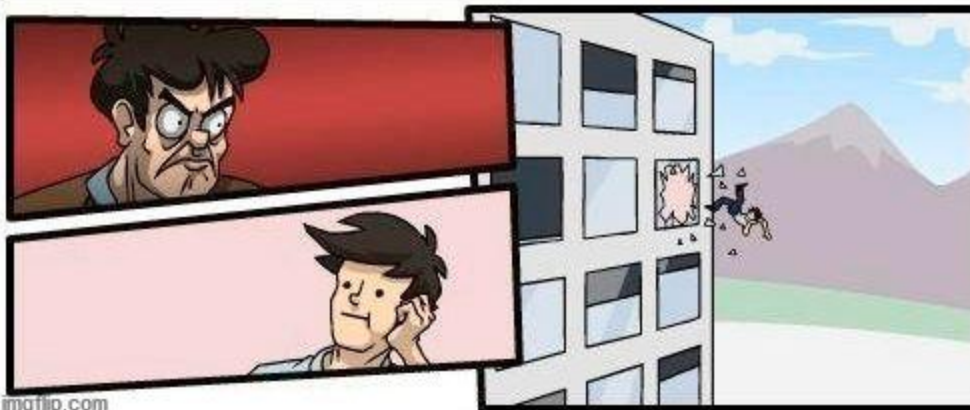


In the first link— Hal and Mya Take One— the writers just decide to JP. We didn't discuss anything ahead of time. We literally just said "Wanna JP?" "Yeah sure okay" and went entirely with the flow (while imagining the worst things to do for Reader buy-in, for your amusement and information, of course.) By contrast, in the second link above we, the writers, briefly discussed what we wanted to do with the reworked post. Don't be afraid that "planning will kill my creativity" or that "I just don't like it". It's not like we had a roman numeral outline. We just shared some ideas.





When we wrote we still left enough room for the synergistic discovery that happens via JP. We made an effort to share the stage, both writers recognizing the Wish Fulfillment fancies of the other (or more kindly: remembering the fun aspects we each wanted in our characterizations). And we made an effort to write in such a way as to prompt, or leave hooks or lead-ins on the end of each tag to cue up the other writer and not leave them hanging. When I got stuck in at one point, I told my JP partner OOC that I was unable to leave him a tag with a prompting hook and we made up the difference.



As you read through the writing samples linked above, consider this: with attention to grammar, legibility, details, and most importantly the awareness of the structure of beginnings, middles, and ends, can you see the contrast in readability between the two posts? Would you want to go back and see past posts about these characters in the first or second versions? Would you open your email if you saw their names on the top next time? Which approach made you care?

Finally,

Thanks for attending Writing Posts with the Reader in Mind! I hope you enjoyed the panel and will give all of this writing advice some time to simmer. As with any advice, take what works for you and leave the rest. I'm glad you stuck with me until the end! That's true commitment and proof you care about your Readers!

I'll see you all in future awards announcements!

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 5:59:41 PM

These memes are really making my day

Nikki 2/20/2021, 5:59:44 PM



[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena 20/2021, 5:59:51 PM



Nikki 2/20/2021, 6:00:21 PM

(Credit where it's due: Special thanks to [@Sepandiyar](#) for co-writing the samples with me and to [@Sepandiyar](#), [@AgentPhoenix](#), [@Paul](#) for reviewing my drafts. You guys da bomb.)

[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 6:00:42 PM

Thanks [@Nikki](#) You were great!!!

[OF] B 2/20/2021, 6:00:49 PM

Awesome

**[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 6:03:07 PM**

thanks! this was great!