

DETECTIVE STORIES

AND HOW I WRITE THEM

by Simon Cheshire, author of a few books

Simon who?

Simon Cheshire was always the quiet kid at the back of the class. From a young age, he was a dedicated reader and would spend many hours absorbed in books, happily dreaming of faraway places, and completely ignoring his mother's pleas to "Go out and get some fresh air, for goodness' sake!"

His hobbies include movies, mending old computers and wishing he had more hobbies. He lives in Warwick with his wife and children, although he spends most of his time in a world of his own. His first book appeared in 1997, and since then his work has been published in many countries around the world, and in several languages.



Some things you didn't know about Simon Cheshire:

- He is allergic to cats, horses and the city of Coventry.
- His favourite food is fish. Or possibly chocolate.
- He has no dress sense, and usually goes around looking like a mobile rubbish tip.
- His favourite activity is reading late at night, when everyone else is asleep.
- He writes on a laptop computer running Linux, using LibreOffice to write his books, Weebly to maintain his website and PacMan to waste his time.
- He hates gardening, swimming and Christmas.
- He believes in the existence of extra-terrestrials.
- When he was growing up, he wanted to be a film director.
- He has travelled in China, India and Egypt and really, really wants to go to the Moon.

he wrote these detective stories



and several others!

For more information on Simon Cheshire and his books, go to www.simoncheshire.co.uk

What IS a detective story? How is it different from other stories?

A detective story can include all kinds of different events, ideas and characters. But then, so can ANY story! How do we tell a detective story from other types of story?

Detective fiction always has two things:

1

There's always a MYSTERY involved. A puzzle of some kind. Very often, the mystery revolves around a crime: "Who murdered Sir Basil in the library with the spanner?" or "Who stole my mobile from my sports bag?"

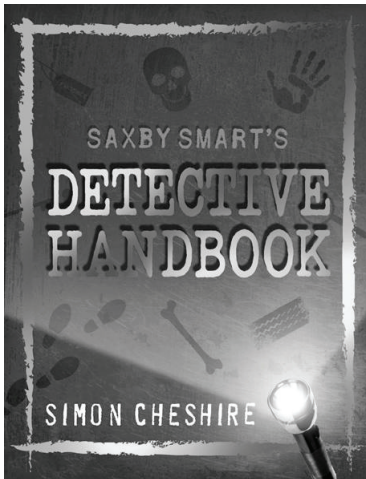
BUT the mystery need not include a crime at all: "Why did Sir Basil's library have no books about plumbing?" or "Who is that kid I keep seeing on the way to school?"

2

There's always an INVESTIGATION. There's always the gathering of clues and the solving of the puzzle. In other words, detective work! Sounds obvious, right?

BUT the detective need not be a police officer, or a private eye, or anyone like that. An ordinary person could become involved in the mystery. Any character you like could do the investigating! It's this solving of the mystery that's the most important part of the story.

for more information, see this book



QUESTIONS

Can you name some famous detectives, and the stories they appear in?

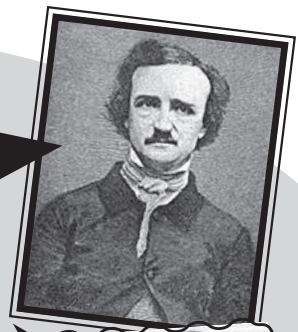
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A quick history lesson!

The first proper detective stories EVER were a handful of short stories written by an American, Edgar Allan Poe, in the 1840s. His detective was called Auguste Dupin. These stories were written before the word 'detective' was even thought of!

The first longer detective story was a novel by Wilkie Collins called "The Moonstone". This was published in 1868. Wilkie Collins was a good friend of Charles Dickens.

End of history lesson!



Wow! What a beard!

So...

How do you WRITE a detective story?

Each writer works in a slightly different way.

I find that the best way to create a detective story (in fact, the best way to create ANY story), is to plan it carefully, before you even write the first sentence.

I plan my stories by asking myself four questions. I don't always ask them in this order, but I do always answer them:

1

What is the **SETTING** for the story?

2

What **CHARACTERS** should be in the story?

3

What is the **PLOT** of the story?

4

What is the **STYLE** of the story?



What is the SETTING for the story?

In other words, WHERE and WHEN does it take place? In an ordinary house? At a school? On a spaceship? Does it take place in the past? Or today? Or in the future?

FOR EXAMPLE

Pick a 'where'...

- My school
- My best friend's house
- The park
- An airport
- A zoo
- My local supermarket
- France
- A tunnel under the ground
- An alien planet
- The beach
- A garden shed
- Up in the sky
- The Moon
- Inside a matchbox

Add a few suggestions of your own!

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Pick a 'when'...

- Yesterday
- Many years ago
- Today
- Next week
- My birthday
- The year 1972
- Ancient times
- The far future
- The day I was born
- Tudor times
- During World War II
- Right now

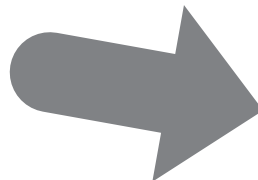
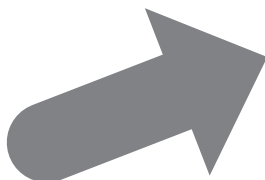
Add a few suggestions of your own!

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You've got a setting for a story!

QUESTIONS

Think about the books you have read recently. Where and when were they set?

If you wanted to write a story about a boy talking on his mobile phone, can you think of some settings which you COULDN'T use?



What CHARACTERS should be in the story?

In other words, WHO should be in the story? A boy? A girl? Lots of boys and girls? An old lady? A monkey with a ray gun? What would be a good name to give your main character?

FOR EXAMPLE

Here are some settings for stories. Think up some characters who might appear in these stories (and give them names)...

On the school playground, late at night...

Characters

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Characters

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London, in the year 1899...

A laboratory, in orbit around a distant planet...

Characters

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QUESTIONS

Choose a well-known story. Can you think of any NEW characters who might fit into that story?

What sort of things do you need to know about a character? What they wear? What they like to eat? How good they are at snakes and ladders? What do you think?

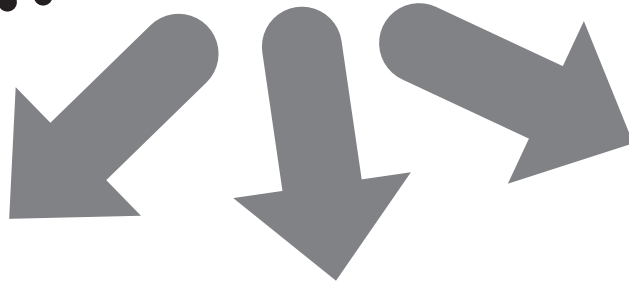


What is the PLOT of the story?

In other words, WHAT should happen in the story? And WHY? What is happening when the story starts? What happens to the characters? Don't forget, if it's a detective story, you'll need a MYSTERY!

FOR EXAMPLE

Here are some ideas for (non-detective) stories. Think of things which might happen...



A spy story!

A secret agent is trying to find messages hidden in an enemy's underground hideout!

First, THIS happens...

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Then, THIS happens...

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Finally, THIS happens...

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A fairy tale!

Prince Nice wants to marry Princess Lovely, but the princess would rather fight dragons!

First, THIS happens...

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Then, THIS happens...

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Finally, THIS happens...

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A school story!

It's Sports Day! The two best runners in 6B are both determined to win the big race!

First, THIS happens...

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Then, THIS happens...

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Finally, THIS happens...

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QUESTIONS

Choose a well-known story. Now change the plot! Can you think of some new ways to end the story? Or some new things which might happen?

Choose a story you've read recently. What happened in it? What was the PLOT of the story?

4

What is the STYLE of the story?

In other words, HOW should you tell your story? There are lots of different ways to tell a story. You could make it funny, or gloomy, or exciting...

FOR EXAMPLE

We all know the story Goldilocks And The Three Bears. But if you read this story in different books, you'll find it's a SLIGHTLY different story every time. Different writers tell the same story in different ways.

Here are three different styles. Write about Goldilocks waking up and seeing the bears, using these different styles...

Make it *Silly* 

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Make it *sad* 

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Make it **SPOOKY** 

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QUESTIONS

What sort of stories do you like to read? Scary stories? Funny stories? Romantic stories?

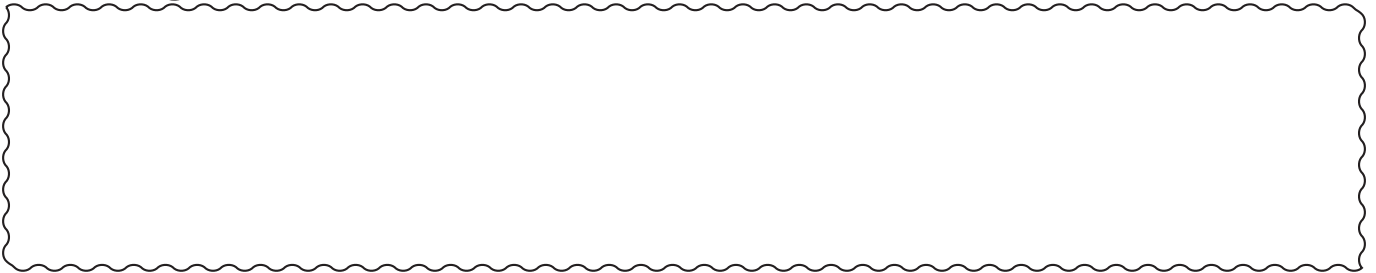
Think of a story you've read recently. What style is it written in? What might it be like in a different style?

OK, you've heard what I do, now it's time for you to do your own

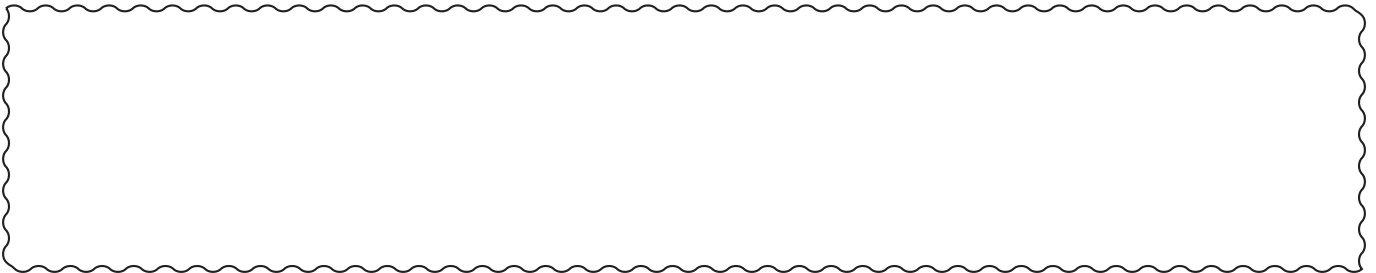
STORY PLANNER

Name

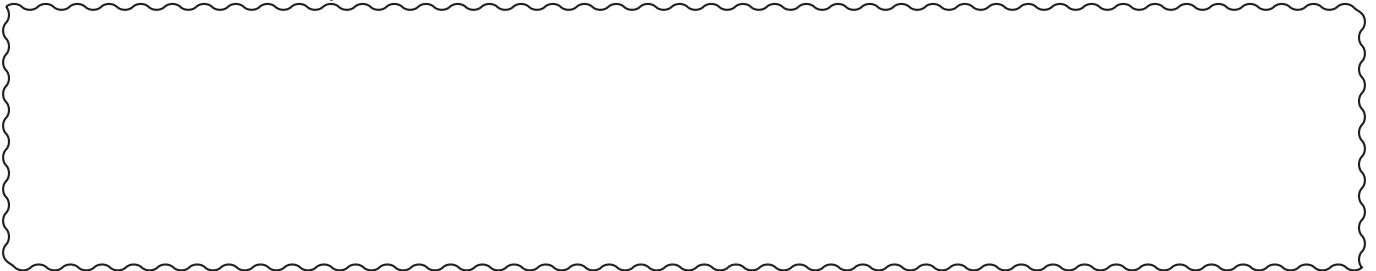
Setting? (where and when)



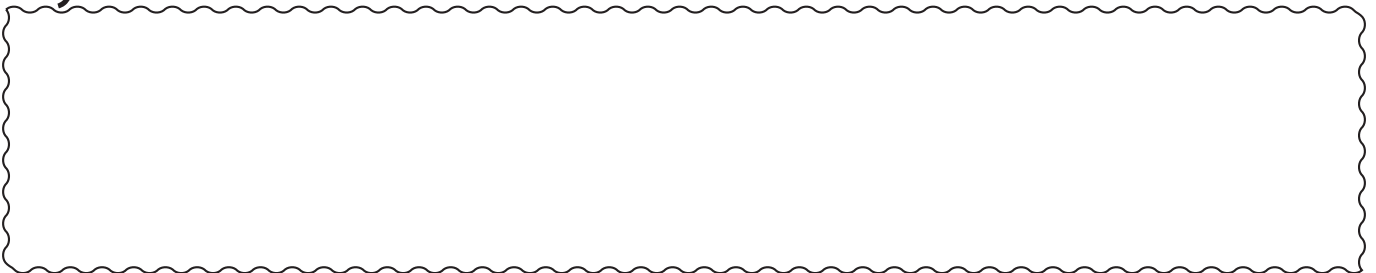
Characters? (who)



Plot? (what and why)



Style? (how)



Title?

Now... Get writing!