



## Lesson 4 | Brainstorming

By S. D. Howard.

Brainstorming is something every author should take the time to do because it will help you decide whether your story idea is worth pursuing. Don't get me wrong, you may love the idea now, but will you later on when it gets tough? Wouldn't you rather know if it's something you're truly passionate about now?

In this lesson, we're going to do some constructive exercises to help you *focus your ideas* and narrow them down. This will help you solidify your story idea or change it to something else that is even more exciting!

Let's dive in.

### Exercise #1

**Brainstorming Session:** Write every story idea that comes to mind, throwing nothing out no matter how ridiculous it seems (don't worry about naming characters just yet, focus on the **story**) Write it down below or in your notepad and set a timer for 5 minutes. Ready? Go!

Okay, how much did you get out? A little or a lot? Either way, you got something out, so we're going to move onto the next thing.

### **Break it down!**

Depending on how much you got down, order those ideas from your least favorite to what you feel are the best ones. It is important that you don't start with your top three; you need to funnel them down. It is okay if you don't have ten things to put down; the point is you have something to work with.

10) \_\_\_\_\_

9) \_\_\_\_\_

8) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Top Three:**

3) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

1) \_\_\_\_\_

The reason we boil things down like this is it forces our brains to add importance to the ideas as we get closer to #1. Distilling down our ideas in this way helps give our brain boundaries within which to become more creative because it isn't getting overwhelmed by everything. The more you practice this, the faster you will do this.

## Dig Deeper

### Exercise #2

Take those top three ideas and brainstorm again. This time, I want you to take those ideas and write **TWO** plot concepts for each of those using only a single sentence. Set a timer for 5 minutes per idea. Once you have completed that, rank them below as you did above. Go!

*Example: I want to have dragons that rule the world, and humans must overcome them.*

### Rank'em

3) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

1) \_\_\_\_\_

Odds are, you've got a few good options to choose from, but there can be only one you decide to pursue and continue to work on (although you can come back to the other ideas later). Take a hard look at the three options you have above and think about where you can see each of them going. What intrigues you about each of them?

Once you have thought about it, write the story you're going to continue to build out and work on below. This will be your reference as you continue through the other lessons.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

## **What's in a Name?**

Honestly, I hate coming up with names. If there is one thing that can derail a brainstorming session, it's coming up with a name for all the amazing characters in your story. That's why when you are brainstorming the story, leave out the names until **after** you've got the main ideas out.

Now you're ready for *Namestorming*. This is where you look at your idea and come up with as many names (both male and female) as you can. It doesn't matter if it's fantasy, cyberpunk, mystery, or anything in between. Get the names out.

### **Exercise #3**

Namestorming session: 5 minutes on the clock. Start writing!

Once you are finished with this, rank them.

### Rank'em

10) \_\_\_\_\_

9) \_\_\_\_\_

8) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

### Top Three:

3) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

1) \_\_\_\_\_

Now, if you're like me, you may have a harder time coming up with a name off the top of your head, in which case I highly recommend looking at name generators. There are a ton of these things on the web, so you won't have any issues finding one. We're going to be addressing characters in a different lesson more fully, and we'll discuss being more purposeful about choosing names, so you can mark down some names as a placeholder for now.

### Takeaways

You may have noticed we didn't brainstorm settings, worlds, magic, or some of the other elements that go into a story. This is because we're getting the basics down first. If you don't have a firm foundation upon which to build your story, no amount of the things listed above will help you when you hit the wall.

Be okay with starting things out slow. Writing a book isn't a sprint, it's a marathon. We'll get to deeper levels of storytelling as we go, but we'll work our way up to it.

In this lesson, I hope you saw how to create some constructive boundaries to help your brain when you sit down to brainstorm your story ideas. Not only that, but you also get create your

own boundaries for world-building, magic, creatures, sub-plots, and more. Simply follow the idea and layout of this lesson.