



Warm up: Owning a Narrative



- Write down 3 defining things about your character:
job/hobby/defining personality trait/etc.
- Write an action they can take to demonstrate each
without telling us what it is.
- Submit in the chat if you like

~~Show, Don't Tell~~

Show and Tell

It's not about "if", but when.

*Effective techniques for showing
and when/how to tell.*



NO ONE LIKES TO BE TOLD WHAT TO DO

We may not throw tantrums as adults (most of us, anyway), but that doesn't mean we enjoy it any more



Let me figure it out.

Tell me why.

Use what/who I care about to
motivate me.



Another way to look at it...

- **Tell** when it doesn't make sense to **show**.
- **Show** to form connections with readers, **tell** once readers are connected.
- **Tell** to establish voice and POV

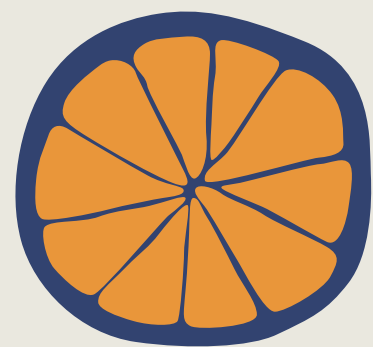


DON'T OVER SHOW!

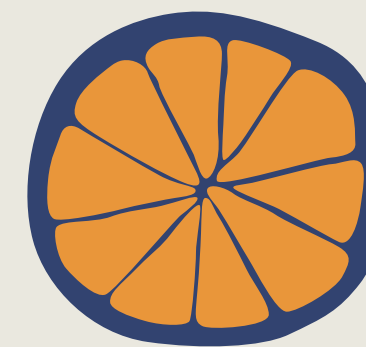
*Sometimes it's okay to tell. It's
necessary.*

If you show everything , the
reader is doing too much
work to figure things out,
especially at the beginning,
before they CARE.





FOR EXAMPLE



Mystery of the locked towers

Cursed Princesses

Letting the reader wonder, debate and
THEN be given an explanation makes
us care, draws us in, and gives us
reason to keep reading, wanting a
resolution now that we have
connected with these characters.



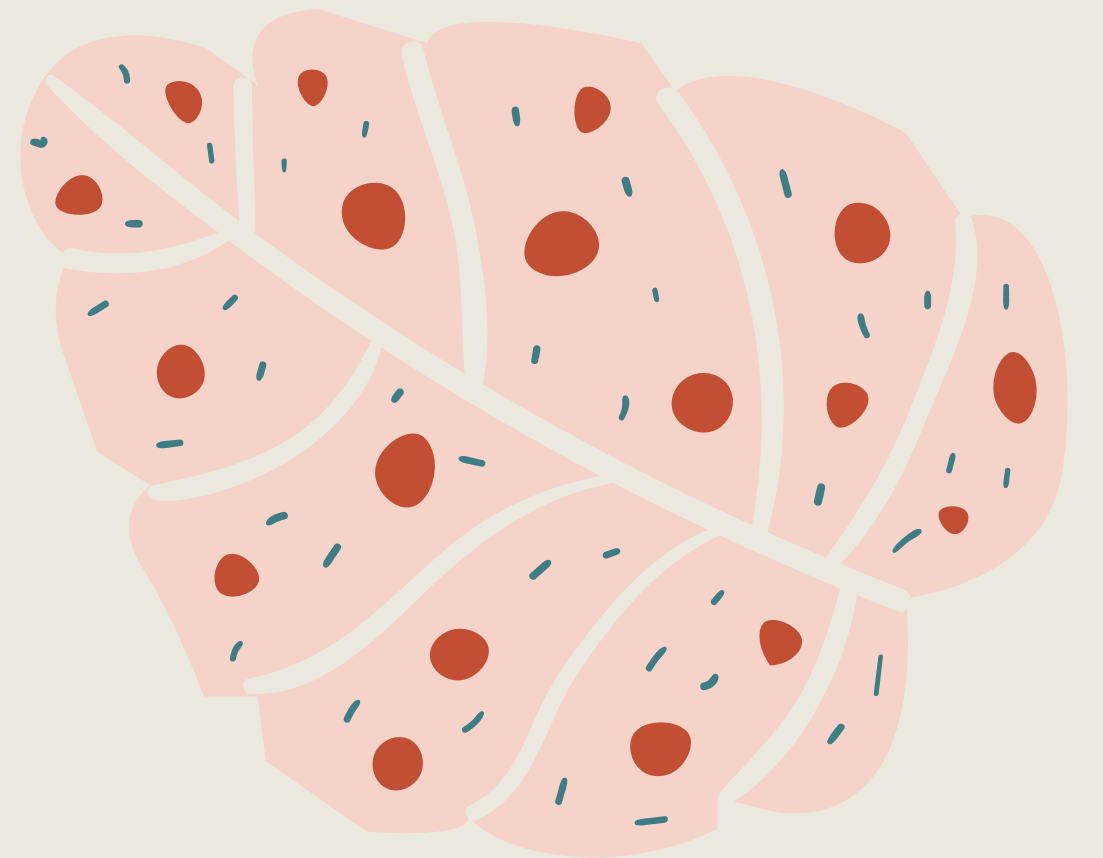
Don't tell us your character is a thief. Show them taking \$20 from someone's wallet.

What are they doing?

Why are they doing it?

For a reader to truly engage, they must make the text their own.

Text becomes
a mirror

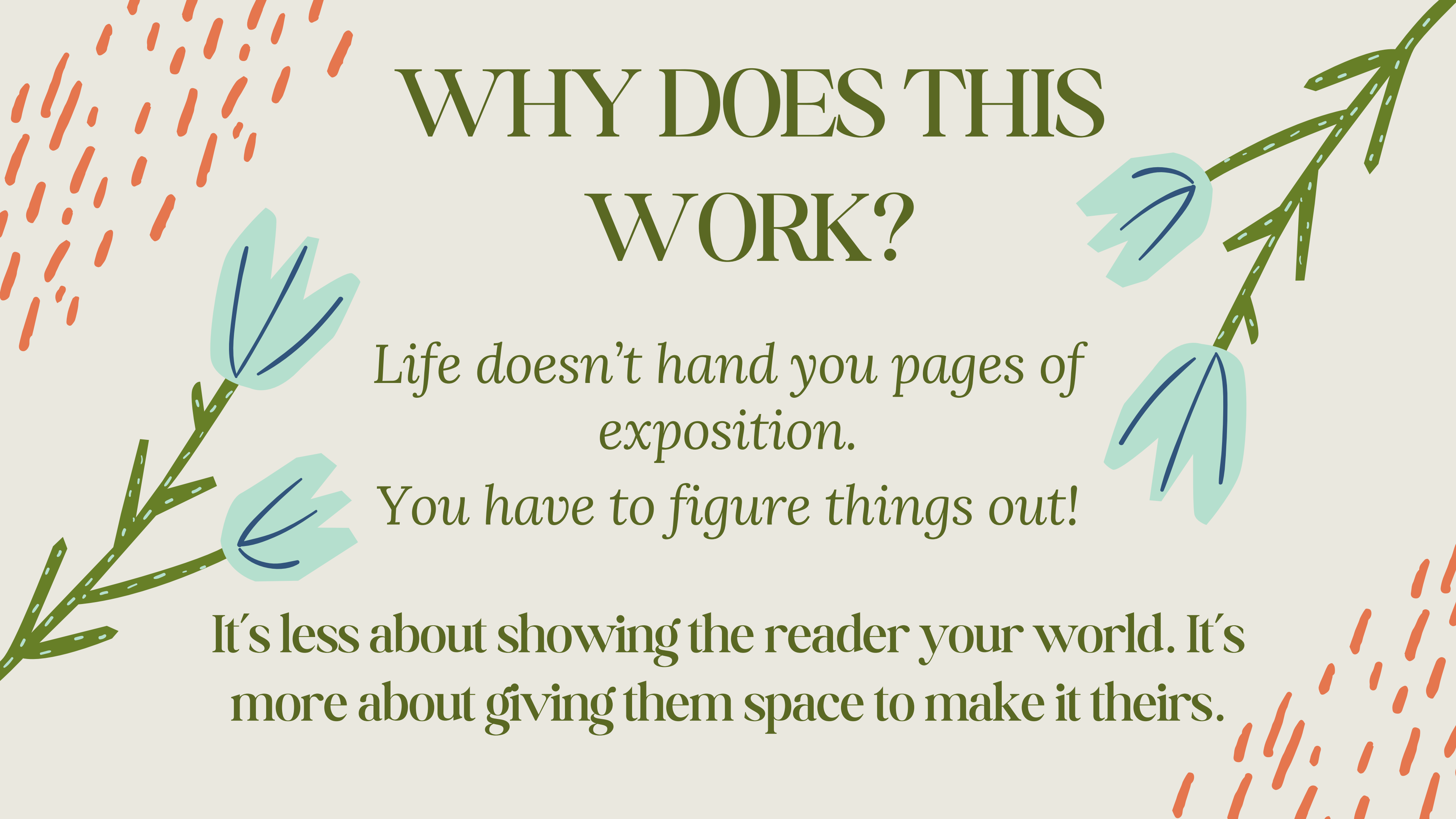


WHY DOES THIS WORK?

*Life doesn't hand you pages of
exposition.*

You have to figure things out!

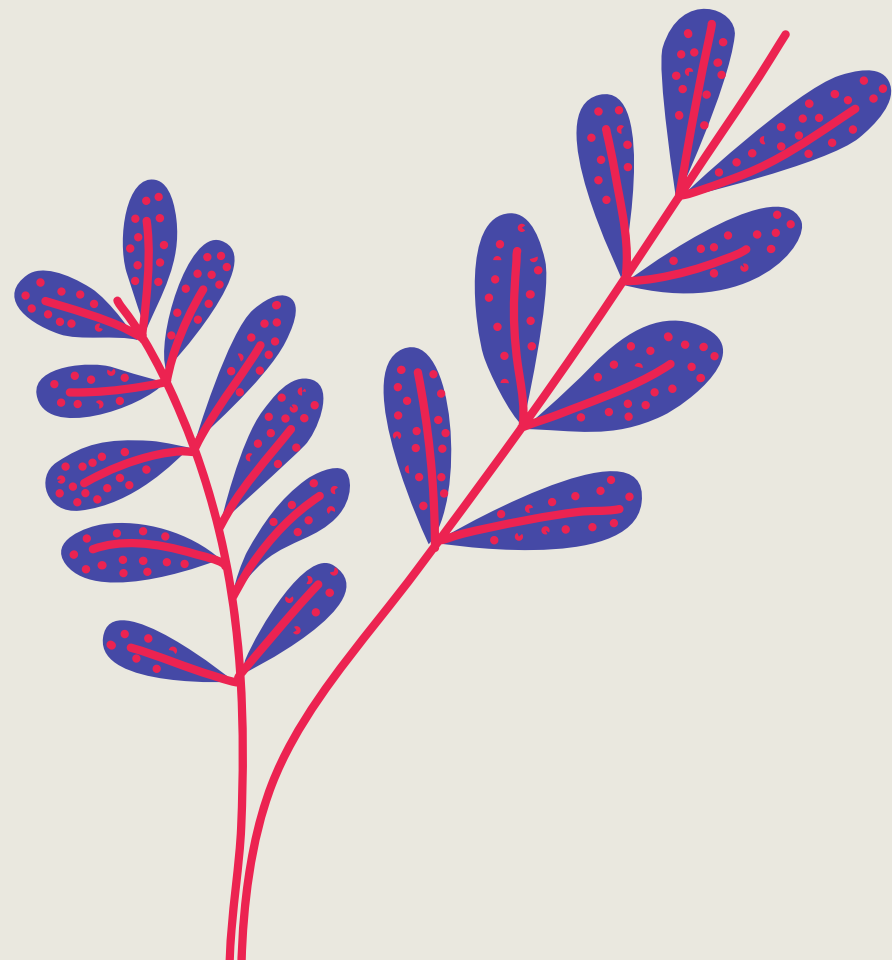
*It's less about showing the reader your world. It's
more about giving them space to make it theirs.*



Timing is important when it comes to telling, but it isn't the only factor to keep in mind.



TELL WITH MORE THAN ONE PURPOSE!



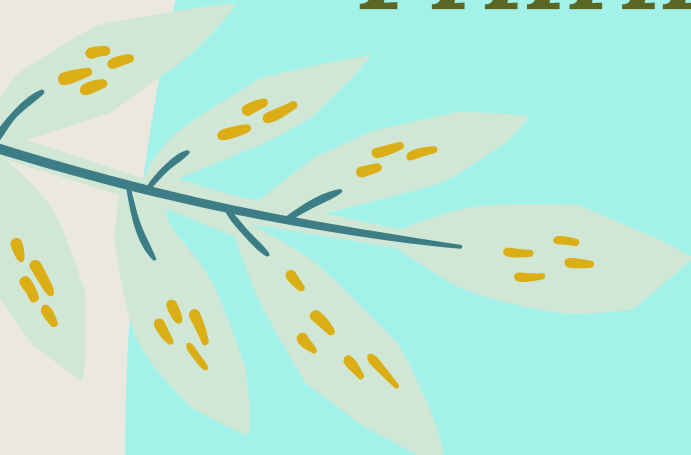
Voice is powerful and multi-faceted. As writers, we can use it in ways that film makers can't.



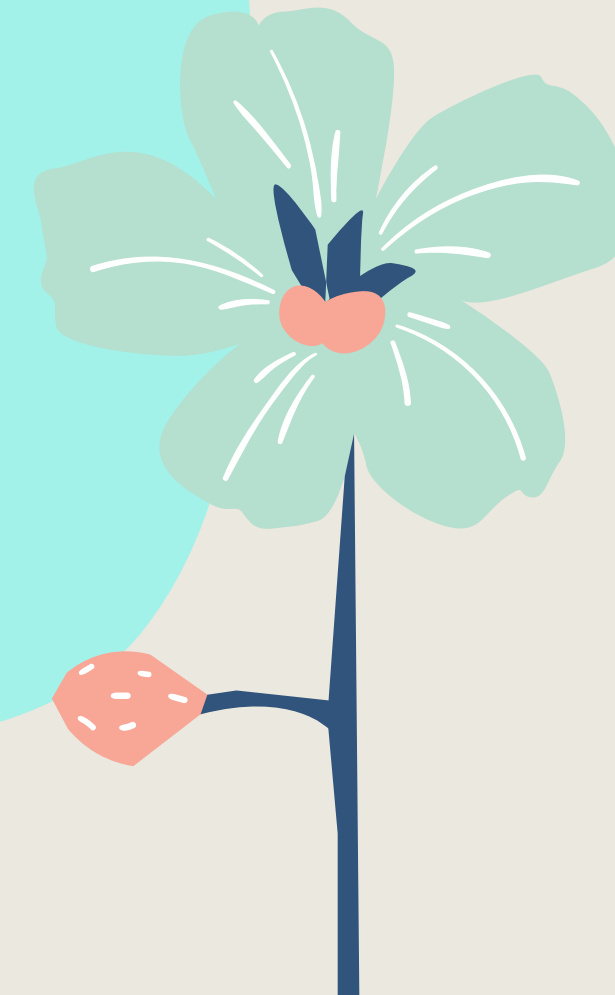
Application Exercise: Part One



Think of a place of significance to your main character.



Describe it. Use sensory details. Write down whatever comes to mind.





Was that in your character's voice?
Or yours?

Application Exercise: Part Two



How would they describe it differently?

What would they notice that you didn't?

What's something that matters to them in a way it can't matter to you?

Application Exercise: Part Three

How would someone ELSE view the same place?
How might they describe it differently? Would
they notice different things? Use different types
of metaphors/analogies?



Why does with work?

Everyone is unreliable!

Telling should show your character's
perspective.

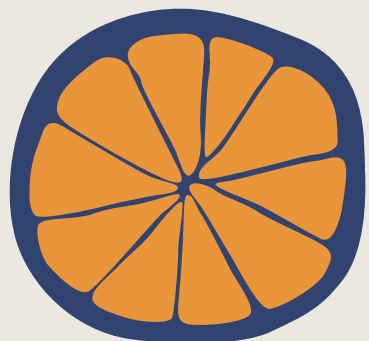
Contrast is particularly effective.

"Story is as much (if not more) about characters as about plot. They are your plot--their needs, wishes, developments." -Lukeman

If you have a strong character--a character readers connect to--telling becomes a breeze.



Show your character and they can TELL pretty much anything and the readers will gobble it up.



When telling, look at what is NOT said, not just what is said.

"Why John, I would love nothing more than
to go out with you tonight," Kelley said,
twisting the rings on her fingers.

Is that sarcasm? Is she hiding something?

Is she serious but nervous?

Something isn't being told to me.

I need to find out what it is!



Show by NOT Telling

- Think of something another character doesn't accept, wants to hide, or in some other way is unwilling to share with your POV character.
- Put them in a scenario where they have to make the CHOICE not to tell the POV (and thereby the reader) what it is.
- Use body language, metaphors/analogies, as well as the words they choose to say out loud.
- How does your character react? Do they pick up on it? Are they oblivious/distracted/suspicious?

Everything comes back to character

It flows directly from the protagonist

This struggle isn't general. It's specific, born out of an impossible goal: 'to achieve their desire while remaining true to the fear that keeps them from it.' -Cron

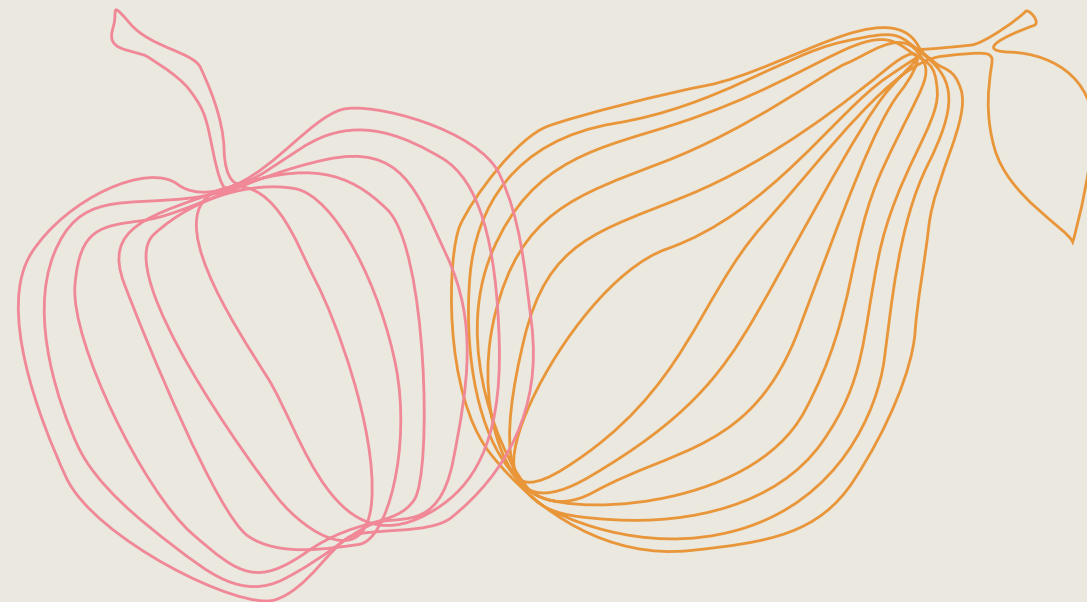
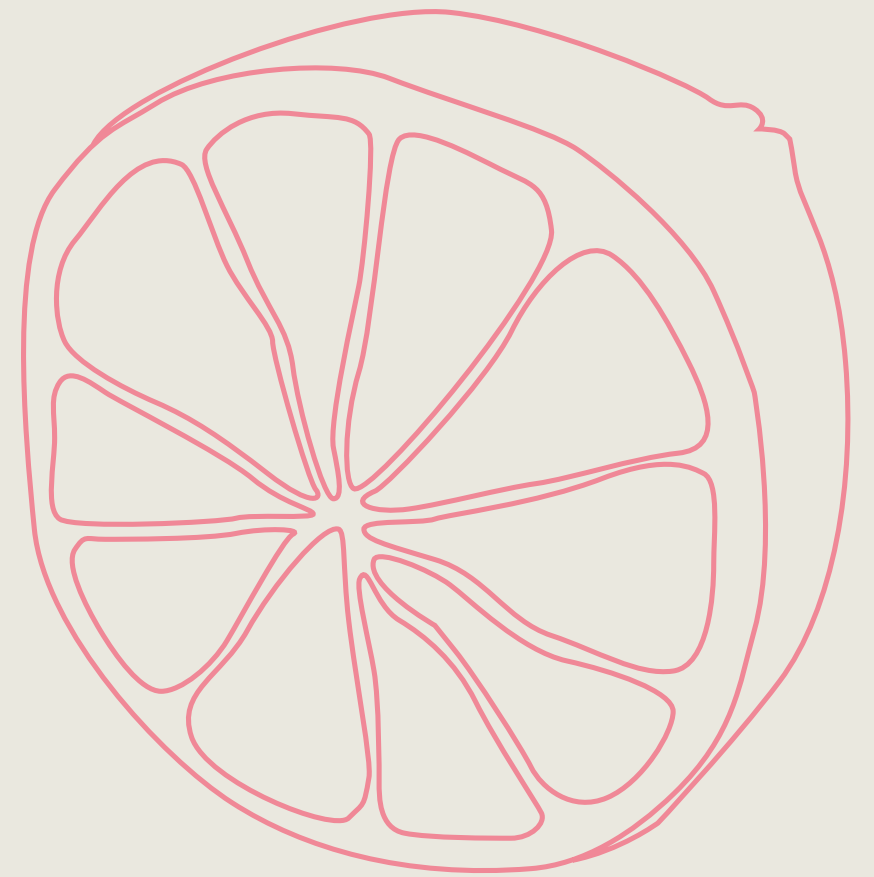


Bringing Your Characters to Life

3 principles of character connection

Create authentic characters that feel real

What you must know before the first page



References

The First Five Pages - Noah Lukeman

Build Better Characters - Eileen Cook

Story Genius - Lisa Cron