

Storytelling Tips from John McGivern

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John, who is known for his comedy and acting, emphasized these things for storytellers:

- * Own your story. Claim your street names, names of people in your life, etc. Use exact details.

- * Pinpoint a moment that stays in your mind, something that has jolted your heart, for story ideas.

- * Focus on your ending to shape your story. Set up the ending through repetition of an idea. Then your punch line packs more wallop.

- * Come full circle; “bookend” the story.

- * Leave a beat. Pauses are more powerful than anything else. (For writing rather than oral storytelling, I interpret that as using a tiny paragraph between two longer ones.)

Cherish the pauses. But be VERY careful in using them.

- * Don’t summarize. Name each moment.

- * Don’t tell the reader how to feel. Let the reader conclude.

- * If you want to emphasize something, say it twice or more. If you have a theme, keep repeating it.

- * Use alliteration for humor (“hitch-hiking housewives”) and use funny sounds to add to humor (“p” and “k” are funny sounds — “naked” is funnier than “nude”).

- * If you have part of the story that is more personal, change your tone and temper. Give it a different color to show different mood.

- * In the midst of all of anything, show the heart and humanity of all involved. We all share the same stories.

- * With extra funny stuff, “serve it” to the reader - serve it slowly, delectably.

- * Don’t put yourself down in a story.

- * Avoid cliches such as “at any rate.” Don’t use jargon like “virtual tour.”

- * No one can tell your story better than you can.