

## “IMPROV YOUR WRITING” Workshop

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### Principles of Improv

- Starting in the middle – “in media res”
- Accept and heighten (“yes-and”)
  - Characters always respond to their last “scene offer”
- Conflict always builds (until climax) – don’t “solve the problem”
- Character-building: POVA
  - Physicality
  - Obsession
  - Voice
  - Attitude (Point of View)

### Starting (and ending) in the Middle

- Cut the “junk” – “grunt” dialog, excessive environmental description
- Start as late in the scene as possible
- End as early as possible – leave the reader hanging (until the end)
- Readers don’t have to read about every moment of your characters’ lives

### Character “Voices”

- Every character in your story should have:
  - A message or purpose in the story
  - A secret (motivation)
  - A unique voice... often derived from the above
- What gives a character “voice”?
  - Attitude (Point of view, Emotion)
  - Age, gender
  - Backstory/history
  - Vocal tics (Accent, lisp, pronunciation habits, slang, figures of speech)
- Try varying character voices
  - Read all dialog aloud. Make each character’s voice sound as different from the others as possible.
  - Give them verbal “tics”
  - Read thru several times – deliberately changing the characters’ voices each time. Which one sounds best for each character?
  - Have a friend read your story’s dialog aloud with you – each taking certain characters.

### Resources

- “Creative Whack Pack”
- [Improv for StoryTellers](#) by Keith Johnstone

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**Clustering Diagram Example** (shaded indicates “original” items , black = extrapolations)

“Moist Lake” (Exquisite Corpse exercise)

The lake, or what used to be a lake... what’s left of it, that is. That’s where I left the body. I tied it with rope to cement blocks, so I thought it’d never be discovered. But one short winter with no snow, followed by a hot summer, and my life was in crisis.

