



story

must

be

specific

author
accelerator

WHY MUST I CHOOSE A SINGLE TOPIC FOR MY STORY OR MEMOIR?

Here is the cold, hard truth: you simply can't set out to write a story that tackles a range of broad topics all at once. When it comes to writing a story that people will want to read, you have to focus. You have to choose. You have to get really specific. As the great E. B. White said, "Don't write about Man; write about *a* man." In the case of memoir, this could be translated into, "Don't write about your whole life; write about a key moment in it."

Think about great movies that have captured the human heart, such as: *The Theory of Everything*, *The Imitation Game*, *The King's Speech*, and (in case you prefer classics) *Gone with the Wind*. Every single one of these movies is about a Really Big Idea. Sure, they include multiple layers of meaning and multiple messages, but each one is also about just ONE person, in ONE moment of time, facing ONE major problem.

The Theory Of Everything is about the limits of the human body and the human mind, about the origins of time itself, about love and loyalty and suffering and pain—but it's really just about this one guy who was driven to prove his one big idea.

The Imitation Game is about the evil of war, the trappings of power, the concept of genius, the origins of the computer, the persecution of gay people, the power of teamwork, the oppression of women, the spark of creativity—but it's really just about this one guy who was driven to solve a puzzle.

The King's Speech —a great example of this whole concept—is a story about kings and queens and betrayal and war and lust and love and the importance of speaking the truth. But it's really just this story about a guy who was afraid to give a speech.

Even *Gone With The Wind*, the biggest epic of them all, is about a nation torn apart by war, the institution of slavery, the way land transmits power, the oppression of women, the vagaries of love, the changing norms of society—but it's really just about this one woman who didn't want the world to change.

The writers of these stories had the big ideas in their heads, of course.

All of this is to say that you really need to narrow your story down. You can absolutely touch on all the big ideas you have in mind, but your readers will need one thing to follow, one central idea or person or thing to root for.





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