



Dialogue 5: Explore

Welcome to your Dialogue for **EXPLORE**.

Directions / Best Practices:

If someone is reading this out loud to you, please give them permission to ask their own follow-up questions and press if you're being vague! The more specific you are, the better. See if you can get through each dialogue in fifteen minutes or less, so that you stay on track.

Writer: Please have a notebook to write down notes. I also highly recommend recording this session – it happens quickly and there's a lot you might miss the first time around. A recording app or recording a zoom call is sufficient.

Don't dismiss anything out of hand! And if you need to pause the recording to think a little bit to journal or write notes, that's fine.

Think rapid-fire, stream-of-consciousness.

Let's begin.

GENERATING NEW IDEAS

- When you get stuck in your story, how do you generate new ideas?
- What sorts of writing exercises, prompts or other writing-related activities are useful to you?
- Do you find yourself wanting to outline or do you find yourself wanting to do something messier?
- Perhaps you do a collage or a mind-map of some kind?
- Do you find that it's useful to go to a new place, a new environment, to generate new ideas?
- Do you ever cheat on your manuscript during this period?
- And if so, is it helpful to you?
- Are you someone who only works on one project at a time or multiple projects?
- How do you move between your projects?

- Do you find it useful to imagine your book as though it's a movie?
- Do you find yourself daydreaming about your book before you go to sleep, when you're driving or exercising or doing the dishes?
- Do you like to create playlists for your books?
- If you do create playlists, do you write notes or allow the book to play out in your mind as the playlist creates a soundtrack?
- Do you find it's most useful to come up with ideas when you're doing something not related to writing? Perhaps needlework or cooking, gardening? Cleaning?
- Do you find it useful to read and research to generate ideas?
- How do you take notes for story?
- Have you found journaling methods, such as the morning pages that Julia Cameron talks about in *The Artist's Way* useful towards solving story problems, deepening character, or writing your way into story?

DEALING WITH STORY SNARLS

- When you're untangling a plot thread or recognizing something isn't working with your work-in-progress, do you ever talk out your issues—either recording yourself on an audio app or talking and brainstorming with a friend?
- Do you check in with your characters' desires, their misbeliefs, and their character arc?
- Or do you find yourself thinking more about the plots and less about the characters?
- Is it useful to you to go back and re-read what you've written, whether you go to the beginning of the book or a few chapters back?
- Or do you have a tendency to barrel through a draft just so that you can get to the end?
- Are there any specific methods from craft books or process books you've read, or classes you've taken that have been useful to you?
- If you are somebody who outlines, do the outlines help you or stress you out?
- What kind of outlining or planning style is the most useful to you?

PROCESS CHECK-IN

- What are the things about this part of your process that you think are inefficient?
- What about parts that you don't like or have negative feelings about?
- What parts of this process bore you?
- What parts of this process scare you?
- What parts of this process excite you?
- When do you have the most fun in this stage of your writing process?

MINDSET

- How much does market get into your head, especially at this point?
- Do you find yourself reconsidering your story based on market?
- Does that help or hurt?
- At this point in the Explore stage, what sorts of pressures might be weighing on you?
- Do you find yourself worrying that you're wasting time?
- What are the things that don't help you during this process? For example, do you find yourself going on social media and comparing your woes to other writer woes?
- Or does injecting some sense of community or gallows humor help you, talk you off the ledge?
- Do you feel the need to immediately take a course or read a craft book or listen to a writing podcast when you get stuck?
- How much would you say you trust yourself to find the answers on your own?
- Would you say that you need a lot, a little, or no hand-holding? There's no wrong answer here!
- Do you find that you give the inner critic free rein during this period?
- Now think about the last time that you needed to do some exploration for your book—and you were successful. What did you do?
- How did it feel?
- Now think about another time you tried to explore your way back into story, and it didn't work. What did you do?
- And how did it feel?

Keep thinking about other places in your current work-in-progress and other stories—especially ones that you've successfully completed. Consider what you did in the Explore period that was useful and worked...and what wasn't. Also pay attention to what you enjoyed!

Oftentimes, in the Explore period, we do things that might end up working, but they're miserable. It's important that we think about what we like and do *more* of that, and what we didn't like (and what didn't feel good, even if it was successful) and do *less* of that.

Keep working until you feel like you have several strategies for EXPLORE to add to your process mind-map. Have fun!