



The Ark

The Ark presents

# Recipes for Stories

By Dave Rudden

as part of

## The Beautiful Beasts

### @ Home

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7-12

AGES

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A WRITER?

I don't blame you. There aren't many jobs that let you spend all day in your PJs Googling swords. As a kid, I thought that to be a writer you had to have professor parents, or be bitten by a radioactive author, or go through some kind of [SECRET PROCESS] that made you into the kind of person who could write a book, possibly involving tweed.

I was wrong.

Anybody can be a writer, as long as they write.

## IDEAS ARE EVERYWHERE

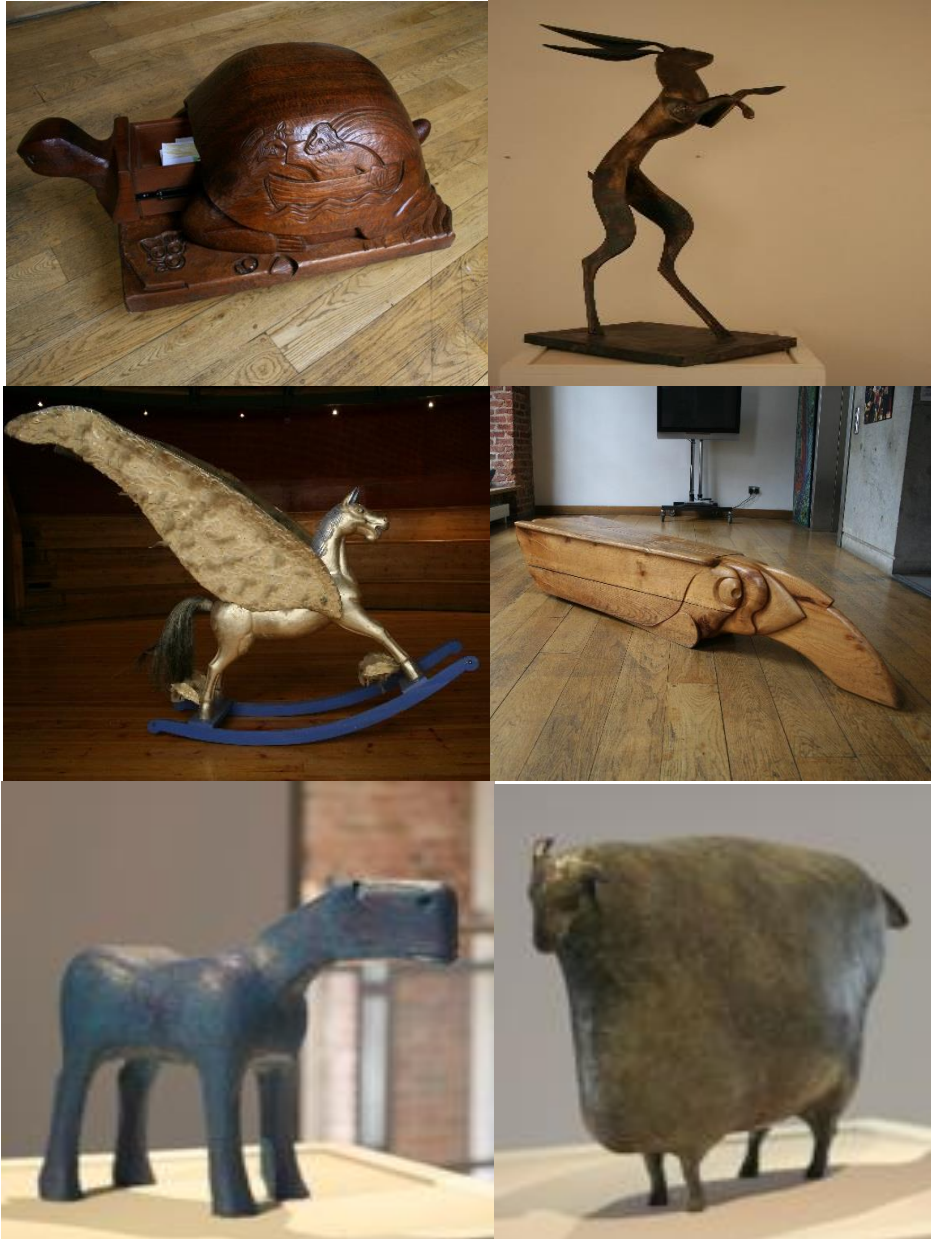
People think that ideas are these magical, rare things that only a few people get. I get asked 'where do I get my ideas' a lot, and I find that question really interesting because ideas are everywhere, *if* you know where to look.

## FINDING YOUR IDEA

- Look at the type of stories you LOVE – movies, books, TV, comics, games – and try and write your own version of a scene. Maybe you write a battle from the villain's point of view. Maybe you write about a background character and what they think about what's happening. But remember that what you love as a reader is what you should be writing as a writer.
- Look at the type of stories you HATE. What bores you? What annoys you? What makes you sad? Maybe you're sick of seeing princesses get rescued and you want to write a princess that picks locks and backflips through traps and doesn't take any nonsense. Maybe you're terrified of horror stories – I know I am – and this is your chance to see what writing one feels like, and whether you can have fun scaring other people.
- ART. There are millions of cool pieces out there that could be fuel for a story. The Ark has a collection of sculptures called [\*The Beautiful Beasts\*](#) which is chock full of strange creatures like a flying horse and a huge wooden tortoise with stories on her back. Each of these weird and wonderful creatures could be the start of a poem or the hero of a saga or even a villain. It's totally up to you!

## WRITING CHALLENGE 1: FINDING A CHARACTER

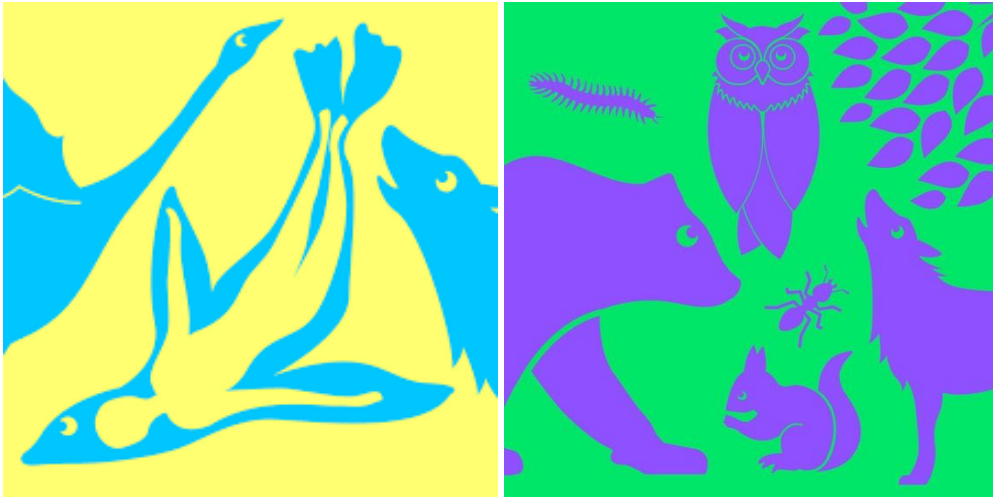
Pick a creature that you want to write about. You could pick a familiar magical creature, like a phoenix or a fairy or a goblin, or you could pick a creature from our *Beautiful Beasts* collection:



(Clockwise from left: Wilhelma the Tortoise by Imogen Stuart, The Hare by Conor Fallon, Every Cloud has a Silver Lining by Orla Kaminska, Toucan Bench by Owen Crawford, Horse by Anthony Scott, Sheep by Oliva Musgrave.)

Think about the creature you selected. What do you like about this particular creature?

## WRITING CHALLENGE 2: BUILDING A STORY



Grab a pen and paper. Keeping the same character, answer the questions below:

- What's your character's name?
- Where does it live?
- What does it eat?
- What is it good at?
- Does it have any unusual or magical powers?
- What does it look like?

## YOU ALREADY KNOW TONS ABOUT WRITING

You might think that you're new to writing, but you've actually been training your whole life. Every book you've read, every TV show you've watched; they've all been teaching you how stories are put together.

When I started writing, I used to have no idea how to end a story. I'd start strong, and then fizzle out. So, with that in mind, I want you to take a look at this recipe – it's something you see everywhere, from every comic book movie to every episode of TV to every novel.

### RECIPE FOR A STORY:

**INTRO** – How things stand, where all the players are, what the characters' lives are like. And then, to make things interesting...

**COMPLICATION** – Bam! Something (or things) shakes things up. Suddenly the character has to deal with this challenge. The excitement builds until...

**CLIMACTIC MOMENT** – The big fight. The night of the dance. The Ultimate Sandwich-Off. This is when the complication comes to a head.

**RESOLUTION** – The dust settles. We look at how different everything is now, how everyone has changed, who has won and who has lost.

## WRITING CHALLENGE 3

Now that you've chosen your character, try and follow the recipe above.



### DON'T WORRY ABOUT GETTING IT RIGHT FIRST TRY

My first book went through ten drafts. The first was just me telling the story to myself, the second was me polishing and cutting and plugging plot holes and making sure it was readable for other people.

The third was after other people read it and poked every hole they could in it, and the fourth, fifth, sixth were going over every line, every comma, every word.

No book starts off perfect. They're huge projects, and it takes multiple drafts to make sure it all hangs together. Sometimes you have to put the wrong word down to find the right one.

You never, ever stop learning as a writer. Read interviews. Read books and watch videos on writing. Read writing tips, try them all, and only keep the ones that work (even these ones!)

## WRITING CHALLENGE 4

Pick an author you really love and look for an interview with them in a newspaper, online or on YouTube. Listen to them talk about getting started and remember, every one of your favourite writers was once in the exact same position you are now.

Best of luck! I look forward to seeing your book on the shelf.

### About Dave Rudden

Dave Rudden's first novel, *Knights of the Borrowed Dark*, was the 2016 Children's Book of the Year at the Irish Book Awards and the UNESCO Dublin City of Literature Citywide Read in 2017. He has been shortlisted for the Hennessey New Writing Prize, the Northern Irish Book Award and was the 2011 winner of the Fantasy Book Review Short Story Prize. His first *Doctor Who* anthology, *Twelve Angels Weeping*, was released in October 2018.

In the last two years, he has performed in over five hundred schools, libraries, workshops, conferences, literary death matches and one pumpkin festival. Dave enjoys cats, adventure and being cruel to fictional children.



We would love to read some of the stories that you write at home. If you would like to share them with us, please ask a grown-up to send them to us by email at [thearkdublin@gmail.com](mailto:thearkdublin@gmail.com).

For more simple writing exercises from Dave Rudden, check out The Ark's Recipes for Stories Video Workshop online [here](#).

*The Beautiful Beasts at Home* is part of  
The Ark's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday season,  
sponsored by BDO.



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