



REAL WORLD INSPIRATION FOR CONTENT-MAKERS & STORYTELLERS

Every edition we bring you news & insight from outside the world of TV & the mainstream media, delivered in the same easy-to-digest package to inspire the conversations that lead to great ideas and maximise your creative output. And for that bit extra, we also explore a typical & enduring narrative type, and include some off-the-shelf 5 minute brainstorm techniques.

[culture & society]

Japanese people can hire actors to be their friends.

There are at least 10 companies who offer services to those who can't find companions or choose to avoid the responsibility of real relationships.

see more at worldcrunch.com



What does this mean for content & stories?

Loneliness is increasingly being referred to as an epidemic. Our stories need to reflect that not everybody has a secure network and a sense of social wellbeing; not that it always drives the story, but should often provide a backdrop if we want to achieve authenticity for the characters we create.

For brainstorm discussion....

- Who would use this kind of service? What occasion or circumstances might prompt them to hire a friend?
- What might be the consequences of renting a companion? If that's where the relationship starts, how might it end?
- In what other areas of life do we buy in experiences that most people tend to get for free? Why is this on the rise?

Already in this space:

rentafriend.com: friends from around the world available for hire



TASK

List the things you've done to meet people & build relationships when you've moved or started somewhere new. Take them to their extreme, and build a narrative around the possible consequences.

#03 Coming of age.

A typology of stories



narratives that delight & endure

This is the story of maturity and self-realisation. Typically, it's a transition for the protagonist from uncertainty or even crisis, to confidence and a strong sense of identity - usually through the catalyst of a disaster, dilemma or fish-out-of-water scenario. Often there is a companion or guru involved, to guide our hero through. But typically, a sign of their progress is marked by a move away from them, to independence.

extreme examples

[Rumspringa: when 16 year old Amish are given free choice](#)

[Evan Young banned from coming out in valedictorian speech](#)

[Tigger Windwalker: full time world traveller from the age of 9](#)

Looking for these stories? Think:

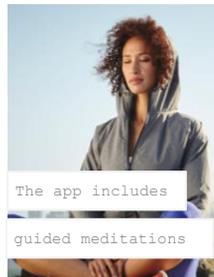
- different reasons for people's personal insecurity & lack of identity
- types and expressions of independence and self-understanding
- secrets people keep and how & why they might decide to 'out' themselves
- mentor or guru figures
- situations and statuses that people want to be free **from** or free **to** do/be

[health & wellbeing]

A fitbit for your breathing

Spire is a mindfulness tracker that clips to your belt and monitors your breathing and activity levels, to help you keep calm and avoid stress.

see more at spire.io



What does this mean for content & stories?

Pace is just as important as narrative and character, if we think about how we want our audience to be left feeling, energy-wise. Stories that offer people escape don't always need to do so through being super-charged; relaxation and calmness is highly prized in our society today.

For brainstorm discussion....

- Why is mindfulness so popular at the moment? Does it really work, and in what ways?
- How does meditation boost compassion? How can it help our relationships with ourselves?
- Is technology the solution or part of the problem? What if all our moods were mediated by tech?

Already in this space:

Sound Walk



TASK

Download a mindfulness app like Headspace. What does regular use of it make you think, feel and do? What kind of story might do the same?

5 min brainstorm



1 generate ideas

Genre clashes

Each write down the titles of 3 movies, books or classic TV formats and put them in a hat. Now list as many genres of movies, books or TV shows as you can in 3 minutes on a board. Pull a title out of the hat and match it with the most unlikely genre. Then create a tagline for each of the new stories you have generated.

For example:

ET: The Gameshow
Compete to go to Mars to discover alien lifeforms.

Wife Swap: The Musical
Sing & dance with the swingers of Swindon

Oliver Twist: The Horror
What happens when Victorian orphans turn bad

need stimulus?
use this [list of genres](#)

2 develop ideas

S.T.A.R. technique

Write your story or format in 4 sentences. Now re-write them according to the STAR model. What needs to change, to get that clear narrative arc and structure? What do you need to dial up? What seems less important?

Situation – what's the context and why?
Task – what needs to happen or change and why?
Action – how does it pan out and why?
Result – how does it conclude and why?

Older fathers have 'geekier sons'
They were brighter, more focused and less bothered about fitting in, according to the "Geek Index" devised by King's College London.
see more at [BBC News](#)



What does this mean for content & stories?

Whilst there is a move towards gender neutrality, it still remains that there are tangible differences between male and female. Our stories need to be aware of the influence of sex (which is biologically determined) and gender (socially determined) on people's perspectives and experiences.

[Family Life]

For brainstorm discussion....

- What if other social traits & tribes were genetic? Could different genes mix to create new hybrid types?
- Who gets to decide what determines 'geek' or any other characteristic? How do they chose the criteria?
- Could we create a truly gender neutral society? What would we miss, as well as gain?

Already in this space:

Goodnight stories for Rebel Girls

TASK

Look at some of the reasons explored for these findings in the [BBC News article](#). What sort of a world would that lead to if any of them were true of all of us? How could we test this in a social experiment?

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strategy for creativity

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