

How to Induce the Fictive Dream

Adapted from
*How to Write Damn Good Fiction:
Advanced Techniques for Dramatic Storytelling,*
by James N. Frey

1. Use *vivid, sensual details* to begin the dream state. Let your reader experience the world of the character first-hand, through the character's senses.
2. Gain the reader's *sympathy* for your character by making the reader *feel sorry* for the character. Loneliness, lovelessness, repression, embarrassment, humiliation, privation, danger—any situation that brings physical, mental, or spiritual suffering will make your reader sympathize with your character.
3. Engender reader *identification* with your character. Give your character a *noble goal* that the reader can support, and the reader will take his side, no matter how much of a slime he is or has been.
4. Create *sympathy* for your character by providing *sensuous details* in the character's environment—the sights, sounds, pains, smells, etc., that the character is feeling—that will trigger the reader's emotions.
5. *Inner conflict*—misgivings, guilt, doubts, remorse, indecision—will lead the reader to side with your character in the decisions he is forced to make—decisions of a moral nature that have grave consequences for the character (such as putting their honor or self-worth at stake).

Inner conflict can be thought of as a battle between two voices within the character: one of reason, the other of passion—or of two conflicting passions. One of a protagonist, the other of a protagonist. (The little devil and angel on the character's shoulder.) These voices engage in rising conflict that comes to some kind of climax, where a decision is made that leads to action. This debate produces tension and suspense about what the character will decide to do.

This participation in the decision-making process is what transports the reader into the fictive dream state.