

Paranormal Primer: Creating Believable Characters and Settings

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Introduction

Let me clear the air quickly before we begin.

If you have been following me for any length of time, you have probably heard me say that I am a nonfiction writer only.

Which might spark some curiosity as to how I came to create a guide for writing paranormal fiction.

And the answer is actually pretty simple. When I decided to create my [Fiction Series Plots](#) membership program, I started hiring fiction authors to work for me to create the plots available in that program.

Then I wondered if I could hire someone to write guides for fiction writers that could teach both of us – you and I – to write better fiction.

The lady I have hired to develop the fiction writer training guides on my behalf is actually a college literature instructor, who teaches “*how to write fiction*” in the classroom at her day-job.

I told her what to write, she wrote it, and I did the final editing and formatting.

When I paid her to write these guides for me, she passed the ownership of the copyright to me. I own the product, and she is my ghost writer. You may also be interested to know that she is developing several fiction writing guides for me. The guides that she is writing for me will be released over the coming months.

Paranormal Primer

Paranormal fiction is one of the more unique types of fiction. Much like historical fiction, paranormal fiction takes elements of the real and blends it with things that can only come from the imagination. It is a little bit fantasy, a little bit science fiction, sometimes a good bit of horror, and a lot of the real world.

The most common (and currently most popular) types of paranormal works are about either vampires or zombies, but the genre encompasses a vast range of possibilities. From aliens and witches, to psychics and mediums, etc.

Paranormal stories have a healthy dose of the impossible. However, one of the biggest criticisms is (*ironically*) when stories aren't "*believable*" enough for readers. That is because to write a good paranormal story you have to walk a fine line between the impossible and the every day.

When it is well written, paranormal stories attract the largest audiences. This is because paranormal fiction takes the reader into a world that is just like our own, and then adds elements that make the story far more interesting, while maintaining just enough realism so that readers can put themselves in the place of the heroes and heroines. It is escapism at its finest.

The two places where writers usually go wrong with paranormal fiction is either with the setting or the characters.

Paranormal fiction is not like science fiction or fantasy where the plot happens in a world that is totally different to our own. If it doesn't happen on Earth, it is a place that might as well be the earth for all of the similarities.

Readers tend to be a little more forgiving if the setting shifts into something less realistic if the justification is strong enough.

The real problems in paranormal come with the characters. No matter how solid the story is, you have to get the characters right to keep the readers interested in the tale. Without solid, believable characters, paranormal fiction just falls apart.

Not Quite Like Other Genres

While it is considered its own genre, there are a lot of things about paranormal fiction that make it difficult to provide a single definition. It is the kind of genre in which you

can blend realism with the fantastical, or turn a romance story into something supernatural.

Because it allows you to be more creative than you could be for any story that is meant to be true to reality, paranormal fiction has become incredibly popular. It can be blended with other types of fiction, or it can stand alone. While most people seem to lump paranormal in with genres like science fiction and fantasy, they are actually the least similar genres to paranormal fiction.

Compared to Science Fiction and Fantasy

Basically, the story you write is usually a fantasy, a science fiction, or a paranormal fiction, but you will find it very difficult to mix these three, largely because of the nature of each of the types.

First, a look at fantasy.

Fantasy isn't meant to be anything like reality. You won't find elves, hobbits, or immortals roaming the Earth. Fantasy fiction is, by its very nature, meant to be anywhere but here. It happens in another realm, world, or dimension that can be similar to ours or somewhere else entirely.

When you strip away the guise of trying to make your setting like our world in our time, anything goes or can happen. These stories have a lot of elements that would be considered paranormal in our world, but they are common place in a fantasy world. Wizards, talking creatures, and the impossible are normal in these stories.

However, you can "borrow" a lot of stuff from the fantasy world and plant it in reality to turn it into a paranormal world. The story may no longer be fantasy, but that is perhaps the biggest draw. This lets you really use your imagination without having to create an entirely new world.

There are many stories that do this, but they tend to focus on things like witches, sorcerers, and ghosts than the other fantastical creatures. You will be hard pressed to find a paranormal fiction that includes elves and orcs, probably because these kinds of creatures seem a little bit too far removed from reality. That doesn't mean you can't use them in a paranormal story though. After all, if people can believe that a vampire seems natural, an elf isn't too far removed.

Science fiction is a bit trickier.

Science fiction is almost always based on reality, just a long way into the future. And,

let's face it, the story is usually set in space.

Isaac Asimov wrote some of the best science fiction, setting up so many situations that you could imagine actually happening. For example, the first stories in *iRobot* included two men who were human and still identified with their nations. Asimov was able to use these characters to make the reader feel connected, but the stories were pure science fiction.

The reason you will have a difficult time blending paranormal and science fiction is because they are both based in reality, but at different time frames. Also, sci-fi plots rely very heavily on science and technology, something that is generally avoided in paranormal fiction.

Since there is no way for us to know what the world will be like in 100 years (*without a time machine, an idea that is pure science fiction right now*), it is difficult to say that anything is supernatural in the future.

There are many stories about characters traveling in time and how those worlds are mesmerized by the technology of today. Think of the book *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Even though the world of Mark Twain was considerably less advanced than ours, it was worlds beyond where the main character ended up in the story.

If someone from 200 years ago were dropped into a major city today, it would be very easy for that person to believe magic had taken over the world. Essentially, science fiction by nature is far removed from reality where, like fantasy, anything goes.

Also like fantasy, you can pull elements of science fiction into your paranormal world. You can have a character who is a time traveler, who knows more and has gadgets far more advanced than what we have today. Perhaps this makes it easier for the character to eradicate a ghost infestation. With a few twists, you can add a little sci-fi to your paranormal fiction.

Even BBC's science-fiction legend, *Doctor Who*, has taken on the issue of ghosts in many of its stories. For example, in the *Army of Ghosts* episode, the ghosts were actually misidentified cybermen – a human transformed into a robot. In another episode called *Hide*, the “ghost” was a time traveler stuck in a “pocket universe”. As these two examples demonstrate, most of *Doctor Who's* ghosts are simply misidentified aliens.

As a general guideline, it is much more difficult to merge the paranormal with these two genres because they are so fantastical already. Your imagination is already off the leash in fantasy and science fiction, making paranormal fiction an unnecessary addition to your storyline.

These are perhaps the only two genres where it is really difficult to blend paranormal into the stories, however you can often blend a little bit of fantasy and sci-fi into your paranormal story to spare yourself the time and energy necessary to create whole worlds for your characters to inhabit.

Compared to Romance and Historical Fiction

Romance and historical fiction are two of the three best genres for blending paranormal fiction. You already have your world; you just need your characters and a supernatural problem for them to overcome.

Paranormal romance is probably the most common and popular type of a paranormal story because of the emotions it evokes.

Having a human and a vampire fall in love is something that so many people fantasize about that it really isn't too much of a stretch. Focusing on a character who is just developing magical powers and the significant other who supports those abilities despite the risks is equally heartwarming.

Then there are werewolves. With werewolves you can take a story in nearly any direction, creating so many twists and turns that the romance is ultimately rewarding when it works out.

People want to feel special, and paranormal romance combines many of the elements that people most frequently wish *could happen*. Finding that mythical “*One*” is so much more rewarding when an ordinary person is cherished by someone who is more than human, according to the feelings of the reader. The 1980s movie *Ghost* is a great example of a paranormal romance. The main character is dead and spends the entire movie trying to communicate with the woman he loved before he died.

A mixture of historical and paranormal fiction can make an extremely entertaining story, and pretty much always include romance. The world is already established, there are numerous pivotal moments to choose from, and you have at least potential character sketches so that you don't have to start from scratch.

There are so many stories that could easily be tweaked to add paranormal elements to explain the unexplainable.

If you are willing to do the research, you will find that you can get a very rewarding experience out of a story based in history with a bit of the supernatural sprinkled in.

Nearly all of the King Arthur stories include paranormal fiction. There is no “*historical*” wizard more famous than Merlin, making this a very rich area for paranormal work. Any period of time in history that had a strong belief in magic can be used in the same way. The peak of Egypt, Attila the Hun, or even the Salem witch trials are all easily adaptable to paranormal fiction.

Compared to Horror

If paranormal romance is the most popular type of paranormal fiction, horror is a very, very close second.

Nearly all of the stories, movies, games, and shows that can be classified as horror have paranormal elements in them. From Freddy Kruger and Jason to *Resident Evil* and *Walking Dead* to *Fatal Frame* and *Slender Man*, horror stories work because there is an element that is totally unpredictable, something that is nearly impossible to overcome.

You will actually be hard pressed to come up with horror stories that don't involve an element of the paranormal (*Dexter* doesn't quite qualify since the show wasn't quite horror, although the *Scream* series and *Hitcher* were horror stories without anything supernatural about them).

Although not quite horror, Sherlock Holmes is actually one of the few examples of a mystery/suspense character who was successful without any element of the supernatural.

Like romance, there is something very satisfying in seeing a character overcome the impossible, and when you toss in a little bit of the unexplainable, it makes the situation so much more dangerous.

This is, perhaps, because we instinctively feel that when faced with a regular person, we should be able to overcome if we try. Anyone who dies simply wasn't trying hard enough. It is extremely flawed logic, but that is why it is less interesting to watch someone overcome reality than to watch a character beat extraordinary odds.

Setting the Scene

The environment your characters inhabit should be considered like a character all on its own.

While there are some stories in which the environment is negligible, the vast majority of paranormal fiction uses the environment to maximum advantage. Without the graveyard scene at the beginning, the *Thriller* video would have been far less tense because it would have lacked the buildup of tension. Then the two characters are surrounded by zombies on a deserted street. If they had been on a crowded street, you would have had an entirely different video.

When it comes to setting the scene, you have to choose wisely to keep the audience engaged.

Establishing the Right Place and Time

Consider *Ghostbusters*. The march of the Stay Puff Marshmallow man would have been far less impressive through a small city, and of course the Empire State Building was essential for the last battle.

The movie *Cabin in the Woods* even puts the initial setting in the title. Scary movies really require darkness, deserted areas, and plenty of places for the bad guys to hide.

A romance tends to need a more thriving environment where there is tension and a constant question of whether or not the characters will end up together.

Historical fiction is about a specific time and location.

Thrillers and mysteries tend to be in cities where you can find more suspects and better chases.

If you aren't sure where to begin a story, think about what kind of story you want to tell. Usually the setting and characters will develop from your story type.

Typically it is easy to get an idea of what kind of story you want and where you want it to go. If you have even a vague idea of your story, think about the best time and place for the story to occur. What kind of environment will be the best one to build tension and foster complications?

You can also think outside of the typical story type if you want something different.

However, if you do this, you must consider how to transform the environment into something that works with your plot.

If you have a horror story that happens in the middle of the city in broad day light, you are going to have a much greater challenge ahead of you, but you can also use elements that most writers don't have. For example, you can use the crowds to build the tension.

The Matrix (which is 100% sci-fi, but has elements that can be used in paranormal fiction) did a great job of this by allowing the bad guys to morph into anyone in the crowd. It is not impossible to use a setting that is typically unfit for your chosen paranormal story type, and if you are really creative, you can actually give the situation more tension because it isn't what your readers are expecting.

Romances can actually be the most difficult genre to write because they can happen anytime, or anyplace. If you want to do a paranormal romance, consider what your supernatural elements are to help narrow your setting to a likely time and place.

For example, *The Lake House* had several different settings, but the most important place was in the title. The entire romance unfolds in letters exchanged at the lake house, crossing years both forward and backward to bring the two romantic leads together.

When it comes to paranormal fiction, your setting can either enhance or detract from the story. Use the environment and time to your advantage to make the story more realistic.

Avoiding Overly Complex Settings

This one cannot be overemphasized. The more complex your setting, and the harder it is to imagine, the less believable the story. If it takes you five pages just to set the environment, you will have lost your reader before the story begins.

Complicated settings are really part of sci-fi and fantasy, not paranormal fiction. Your readers want to work with a world they know, at least in passing. Even if they haven't been to a cabin or Atlanta, they can easily get the details they need to get the setting quickly.

The Walking Dead would not have made it through a single season if it had focused on the setting or tried to give you a tour of the city. Instead it started with a police shoot out, and then when the main character awoke he was in an eerily quiet hospital.

Without beating the viewer over the head, the subtle shift in setting told you everything you needed to know about the world that Rick was waking up to. Atlanta was also used in a way that was incredibly powerful without making a huge deal of Rick now being in

a city. From the moment he gets there everything goes wrong for the main character. And it made for the perfect introduction of a whole new set of characters.

It is also one of the most memorable introductions to a character when Glenn makes his debut as the critical voice that also provides comic relief to an extremely tense situation. The setting is extremely important in all of this, but that's because it is used to build the plot and characters, not to detract from them.

Getting Started

One of the best things about paranormal fiction is that you are welcome to start the story nearly any way you want. The caveat is that it *has* to be something that looks and feels real.

If you start with ghosts flooding into a building, you had better have some build up to the flood so that the readers don't feel lost in the beginning.

You also need to consider how you want to introduce the supernatural into the mundane reality. The longer a reader has to wait for the supernatural to happen, the less likely they are to find it believable.

Then again, if you introduce too much too quickly, you are likely to lose the readers who think it is too much like sci-fi or fantasy. **It's a balancing act**, but with some practice you can figure out what works best for your story.

How to Open a Paranormal Story

Going back to one of the most classic paranormal stories, *Ghostbusters* starts with the paranormal. This lets the viewer know exactly what to expect from this slightly altered version of reality. From there, the movie introduces you to the characters and their daily lives, which are nearly indistinguishable from those of a regular person. They have jobs, problems, and situations that are just like yours or your friends and coworkers.

It is best to at least have hints pointing to the twists in reality early in the story. You don't have to introduce the full spectrum of the paranormal aspects, but you need to at least hint toward it early in your story.

People are much more likely to accept the twists and turns if they have seen evidence that things aren't what they seem, than if you get a quarter of the way through the story and start introducing werewolves and ghosts without any indication that the story is going in that direction.

For example, if you have read *Jane Eyre* (which is really an early version of paranormal fiction, also called *Gothic*), you are almost half way through the book before finding anything remotely supernatural. The only hint that there is something beyond reality in the story happens in the early part when Jane is still a girl, and her emotions can be easily chalked up to her being a child.

When the real supernatural stuff starts to happen, it is entirely shocking, and there are a

lot of readers who quit reading because it was not the book they were expecting. Until the supernatural event happens, it is very similar to a Jane Austin story, but the turn for the weird comes across as bizarre and unbelievable because it was not established prior to the first event.

Finding the Right Time to Introduce the Paranormal Elements

This is entirely up to you, but you have to keep several things in mind (*besides don't wait too long*).

If you want something that is a thriller, the less they know the better. Use the hints of the supernatural to build your tension and story. Having the characters argue over the possibility of the supernatural adds another layer of interest.

However, if you are writing a romance or historical fiction, you probably need to bring the paranormal elements in a little sooner. The classic way to introduce a supernatural being who is a romantic interest is by having him or her save your main character in a spectacular yet impossible way. This lets your readers know that there is a lot more to the heroic character than what the main character knows.

One of the primary benefits of historical flashbacks that you will want to eventually blend into a paranormal story is that they give you everything you need, as a writer.

All you have to do is figure out when you want to confirm that the rumors and stories are true. The old woman in the woods is, in fact, a witch as suspected, but she is keeping demons at bay, not plaguing the town. This is only realized after the town's people give way to fear and kill her. Then the world around them begins to crumble and a new hero is needed to get them out of the terrible situation they created.

Keep in mind, you don't have to explicitly show the paranormal aspects, but you must at least provide hints of what they are before you get too far into the story. Besides, building up the supernatural is half of the fun of writing a paranormal story.

Creating Believable Characters

When it comes to paranormal stories, believable characters are the most important aspect. For all of the action and supernatural parts of the story, it is ultimately about the characters and their development.

A horror story is greatly diminished if the reader isn't rooting for any of the characters to survive. There is no payoff for a romance where the romantic interests are too dull or over-the-top to be relatable. And a historical fiction that doesn't enhance the image or reputation of the figures is less interesting than a biography of the actual people.

You don't have to start with the characters when you develop your story, but once you have your environment, time, and paranormal aspects set, you need to spend most of the rest of your time creating and developing your characters.

Human Enough to Wonder If It's Real

For your nonhuman characters, you need to make them seem human. Usually this is done by introducing the character or characters and revealing later that they are vampires, werewolves, ghosts, or whatever else you decide to drop into the story.

One of the best examples of this is *The Sixth Sense*. You spend the whole movie following the main character. You see everything from his perspective. You watch as he realizes that the problem with his patient isn't in the kid's head, and that it is a reality that most humans refuse to accept.

The story prepares you to accept the impossibilities of a world plagued by ghosts who don't realize they are dead. At the same time, everything about the doctor and patient is so real that you blindly believe that they are working together toward the same goal. It is only at the end that movie goers are forced to face the reality that the doctor has been ignoring the whole time.

Movie goers were on his side and were so accepting of the reality as he saw it that most of them did not realize what the actions of the patient should have revealed about the doctor right from the beginning. It showed viewers how much the patient had grown since the beginning, making the movie extremely satisfying as both characters finally resolved their problems.

While it is extremely difficult to pull off the kind of switch made in this movie and make it believable enough for the audience to accept it, you don't have to try to force a story into such a narrow view of the world. Many paranormal stories follow multiple

characters, giving readers and viewers several different perspectives. This means the endings are more predictable, but many readers want predictable.

They want to see good winning out over ridiculous odds, or love conquering all. That isn't to say that paranormal fiction has to have a happy ending, but it does make a more satisfying experience given that the characters typically start as average people who are thrown into a surreal situation. After all, they are looking for reality with a twist; not reality as they can experience it.

If your characters are engaging and believable, your audience will be rooting for them to win at the end of the story, even if all of the characters don't all make it to the end.

Awesome, But Flawed

Almost everyone loves a character who is almost unstoppable, whether it is Superman, Daryl Dixon, or Tyrion Lannister. However, all of your characters have to be flawed.

No one is perfect, and no one can know everything. If you have a character who is undefeatable, you make the story impossible to believe and pretty annoying.

Even Tyrion Lannister (*of Game of Thrones fame – an archetypal fantasy story*), the remarkably intelligent, self-serving, conniving, and (*ironically*) extremely likable character, is flawed. Very obviously so. He was born different, and it forced him to live a certain way among a family of vicious but otherwise beautiful people.

Superman has his kryptonite (*and you could argue Lois Lane*) to keep him from being invincible.

Usually the main character has obvious flaws and encounters someone who is wiser, stronger, and more capable. That wiser character must also have a flaw. If you create a character who is flawless, you will get numerous complaints asking why that character didn't just fix everything.

One great example of an amazing but flawed character is the Marquis de Carabas from *Neverwhere*. Everything about the character radiates power and intelligence. Most of the beginning of the story is spent with him being extremely condescending and insulting to the main character.

If handled the wrong way, it would be unrealistic to expect the condescending character to stay with the main character, after all who would want to stay with someone who is weak, whiny, and won't listen. However, there is adequate insight into the Marquis to understand that he is going along with it because he has a vested interest, even if it isn't

entirely obvious what it is at first. It also becomes clear why he cannot resolve the problem, despite all of his abilities and charm. He has his limits, and better yet, he understands his limits and works within them.

If you are working on a story with a psychic character who comes into contact with the villain, there clearly has to be a flaw, blind spot, or some other element that makes it so that character doesn't do something about the problem. For example, if you have a detective who can read minds, there is no reason why that character wouldn't drag the suspect to prison on the first encounter. Not unless there is something seriously wrong.

Typically paranormal stories explore the strengths and weaknesses of characters, meaning that the flaws become apparent over time. This is something to keep in mind as you develop your characters. Make sure to build room in the story to show all of the flaws and limitations because that will make it much easier for readers to relate to your imaginary world.

Just Like Me, But Better

Ultimately, you need your audience to identify with your characters. You want to make characters who are like a normal people put into extraordinary, impossible situations. The more like a regular person a character is, the more your audience will be drawn into the story.

Often times authors add things like "I'm just one person" "How can I make a difference?" and "I'm not special. I'm just me." Voicing exactly the kinds of things a regular person is likely to feel in these supernatural situations. The difference is that there is something special about that character that makes an impossible situation work out in the end.

Harry Potter is perhaps the most famous example of this. At the beginning he says he can't possibly be a wizard. The reader has seen him be put down at school, treated horribly by his adopted family, and seen the main character still be a decent human despite everything. We are rooting for him, wanting him to believe that he is a wizard so that he can prove the worth we have already seen in him. And he does not often disappoint his audience. It is so easy to imagine being in his place because it is so similar to reality, but he has that little advantage of being able to do magic.

What to Avoid with Characters

No Character Can Do It All

You need to have at least a few characters who make the endeavor a success. Even in a romantic situation, you don't want a character who knows where the relationship is going. Ultimately that just seems like the character is manipulating the situation, and who wants to see anyone fall in love with a person like that? There has to be tension, all of the characters have to have flaws, and there has to be give and take.

No matter what your characters' abilities are, if you make one character strong or smart enough to do it all, you don't have much of a story. Masters, mentors, and teachers are not invulnerable, and using that to your advantage can make a situation more dangerous or show your main character that no one is invincible.

All Talk and No Action

Dialogue is an extremely important part of any story because it lets the audience see how a character reacts, and it is (*of course*) the way characters express themselves to each other.

The problem comes when writers turn a story into mostly dialogue. Witty banter is great, but when it goes on for two or three pages it's just painful. There has to be something going on to create the tension and problem. It could be that the characters are sitting at a computer terminal working through problems.

You can have a lot of dialogue, but you have to add details about what they are doing. This is easier to accomplish in a show or movie, but even then it is easy to get caught up in words instead of actions.

Keep the story progressing instead of getting hung up on who says what when. The more characters talk, the less interesting a scene becomes.

Show Them, Don't Tell Them

This one is perhaps the most difficult part of writing paranormal stories because you have to explain what is going on when the events aren't something people can see in reality.

It is too easy to get caught up in trying to explain the mechanics or the reason for the

paranormal activities. You will have to provide enough details to explain what is going on, but you need to find a way to work that into the characters' understanding and actions; not provide a dry explanation to the audience.

If you are working on a paranormal romance and one of the main leads is a vampire, writing two pages describing what that character can do is really dry, nor is it much better to have that character talk about it in detail. You can show the audience what that character can do by creating situation where the strengths and weaknesses are demonstrated.

Remember the supernatural and surreal material should be built into the story, and not be treated as something that requires heavy or extensive explanation.

You wouldn't spend three pages explaining how a plane taxis on the runway and takes off if you are writing a romance novel and one of the characters leaves. If that part is pertinent to the story, like the departing character is a pilot, you would demonstrate the difficulties through the character's actions and dialogue with the control tower.

It is the same thing when you are explaining the paranormal. You do have to provide information that makes it believable, but do it in a way that moves the story forward instead of as a lengthy aside.

Indistinguishable Characters

The more characters you have, the more careful you need to be about making them too similar, particularly if you are working on a series.

Make sure that everyone in your story has a unique set of abilities and traits that make them easier to distinguish from the others. It helps to avoid using the same first few letters in names. One of the hardest things to follow in books like *War and Peace* is the numerous character names that begin with the same couple of letters.

Similarly, if you make characters who have the same reactions and similar dialogue, you are going to make it difficult for your reader to distinguish who is who. Three chapters down the road it may become impossible to tell who did what because your characters handle things in exactly the same way, think exactly the same way, and have nothing to mark them as different from each other.

Of course you don't want to beat your readers and viewers over the head with the differences either. Make sure to create situations that help to showcase your characters' different talents, thought patterns, and reactions.

Finding the Balance...

Finding the Balance Between a Familiar Setting, Believable Characters, and Impossible Circumstances...

As a writer, one of the most annoying things to hear from the audience is that a paranormal story “*isn't believable*” in the way that people did things.

Your initial reaction will be “*because a zombie infested world is completely rational,*” a reaction you will have to fight. Instead of being defensive, listen to the criticism and learn from it.

As much fun as a paranormal world can be, and as popular as the genre is, it is probably one of the most difficult to create because it is supposed to be realistically unreal. Audiences go into sci-fi and fantasy stories expecting to be find a world where anything is possible. Audiences of paranormal stories go in wanting an enhanced version of reality.

One way to help you walk the line between believable fiction and the absurd is to go through historical accounts of different events. You will find a wealth of inspirations by looking over current or past events and how events unfolded and were resolved.

It will give you insight into how to make realistic characters and settings, and then give them a twist that takes them out of reality and into the supernatural. Most of the time the work will already be done for you, all you have to do is find a paranormal explanation for why things happened the way they did. It can be a current news story, a biography, or a documentary.

You don't have to create your own stories from these, but do try to create wild explanations for what caused the end results (*even if reality presents actual explanations*).

The plane crash that resulted in only a few injuries could be embellished to be a clash between warring factions of super humans and monsters, or maybe it was a kid finding her magical abilities at the worst possible time. A short blurb about a strong earthquake in the middle of the ocean that would have been unnoticed except for the equipment that registered it can be an indication of the awakening of a character's worst nightmare. It can be the end results of an epic battle, or it may even be bridging the gap between your romantic interests. Reality is the best beginning for an epic story.

What Makes a Paranormal “Unrealistic”

People read paranormal fiction because it goes beyond reality, but they still want it to be realistic. There are so many ways to turn a great story into something completely unbelievable.

You can have too many strong characters and no obvious reason for them to be having trouble resolving a problem. After all, if you have a group of super humans, you have to have an outstanding explanation for why it takes them a week to take out one human bad guy. If characters go from being in the dark to suddenly knowing exactly what is going on, that’s unbelievable.

You have to build the tension while keeping in mind that the problem can’t be insurmountable by your characters. If they are running around in a zombie-infested world, it is ok to have them argue with each other, but keep in mind that you have to show that they have reached breaking points.

Realistically, if people are desensitized to something, they do tend to forget what’s important. As an outside observer, though, we know what our priorities would be, so it is difficult to understand what appears to be bad prioritization. It is bad prioritization, but there is a good reason for it (*namely people are people, and we make bad decisions*).

If you have been building up an issue over the course of a book, you will likely need more than one chapter to resolve it. Typically, there will be a lot of problems overcome by the end, and those experiences have given the characters the information they need to be successful in the end.

If you force your characters through a steady stream of failures, there is no way the audience will believe that your characters finally found the right answer at the last minute.

This is true of any story, even one that focuses on romance. If your leads have been at odds the whole time, expressing hatred, annoyance, or disgust, there is no way that it will suddenly be better. You have to build the foundation and plan for the resolution.

The last thing to keep in mind is that you can’t take the story too far away from reality. You can have all kinds of creatures roaming your story, but keep in mind that they have to be something you can explain, and they have to be sewn into the story in a way that makes sense. Everything needs to have some kind of grounding in reality to make your story believable.

Conclusion

While this guide was presented as a way for you to learn how to create believable characters and settings in your paranormal storytelling, the fact is that most of this information can be applied to any kind of fiction story.

If you think back to some of the classic fiction stories you have read or watched, you will recognize many of the key points discussed in this guide.

And maybe for the first time, you will have recognized them only after reading this guide.

With believable characters and settings in your stories, you have the very real potential of winning a large audience and creating a lot of sales and royalties from your books.

However, if readers have a hard time identifying with your characters or your story, your book is pretty much doomed, before it even goes on sale.

Rare in this industry, this is perhaps one of those guides you will want to read more than once, and maybe every month. It will keep you grounded in the basics of how to tell a great story that your readers will love. And in the end, that is exactly the kind of book you need to produce if you want to make your living as a fiction writer – books that readers love.

About FictionPlots.com

If you have ever struggled with ideas that you could work into a book, or you have found yourself struggling with writer's block, then you should take a few minutes to check out the program available at FictionPlots.com.

I currently have several plot writers in my employment – most of whom have published their own books, who develop the series fiction plots that I make available to my members.

Most plots available on the website are laid out in such a way that you can easily turn those stories into a book series. And as a member of the website, you will be able to get your hands on several series plot sets each month, in a variety of genres, for a very attractive price.

Most series are delivered in sets of ten plots, with a few series delivered in sets of five plots.

All of our plots are about 2500-3000 words in length and are written in the following format:

- Overview
- Short Summary (*not always short, depending on the writer*)
- Character List
- Core Conflict
- Stakes
- Ten Chapter Outline

We are delivering more than 50 plots per month in a number of series. As each individual plot is finished, it is uploaded to the website.

We also take requests from our members. If there is a specific style of plot series that you would like to see created, drop us a note, and we will assign your plot request to a writer.

It should be noted that the plots we deliver will not be available only to you; they will be posted inside the website to help everyone with their story ideas. At less than \$20 per month for the membership, we cannot afford to make those plots only available to you, since our plot development costs are **a lot more** than \$20 per plot series.

However, just because other people see the same plots you do does not mean that they will derive the same story from the plot as you will.

Typically, fiction writers take individual plot ideas and customize those ideas to tell their own story. They change the names of characters, create different worlds (*or place the characters in a different city*), and they will sometimes change the genre in which they will use the story plot.

A pre-written plot is simply a loose outline that you can use to create your own stories. It is a story idea that will spark your creativity. Once you have outlined your story, your imagination will fill in the details that will make your telling of the story truly unique.

Within the FictionPlots.com membership site, we already have a number of series in the paranormal, fantasy and science-fiction genres, with most of those being in the paranormal genre. The site also contains a fair number of romance plot series.

Although not restricted to the genres mentioned in the previous paragraph, the site was originally launched on November 2nd, 2014 – one month ago, so its content base is still smaller than it will be in the near future.

When you look at the sales page for the FictionPlots.com membership site, you will be able to see a sample plot right there on the page. Instead of making you purchase your membership blindly, I always provide at least one sample that you can see in the public area of the website.

As a member of the FictionPlots.com program, you will – in effect – have my plot writers working for you, and your cost will be less than \$20 per month. To my knowledge, this is the first website of its kind on the Internet. And the program is so inexpensive that my competitors might have to struggle to figure out how to match my offer.

[Click Here to Learn More...](#)

About Bill Platt



Bill Platt is a single father, raising his three boys in Stillwater Oklahoma – the home of Oklahoma State University.

Born in Enid and raised in Ponca City Oklahoma, Bill has lived most of his life in Oklahoma, and he self-identifies as an “Okie”.

He started writing professionally in the mid-1990's, then he stepped up his game in 2001. By March of 2005, he was able to quit his job and take up writing as a full-time enterprise.

Since 2001, Bill has worked with other writers, first as a service provider and later as someone who teaches writers “*how to be the very best they can be.*”

Learn about some of Bill's other projects, by visiting the following websites:

<http://ProfessionalBookMarketing.com/>

<http://WritingPuzzle.com/>

<http://KDresearcher.com/>

<http://NFbullets.com/>

<http://FictionPlots.com/>

<http://PlattPublishing.com/>