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Writer's Memo

I decided to write this piece because I have a long hidden desire to be a children's author and thought this assignment was an excellent opportunity for me to write. The intended audience of this book would be middle grade readers. I would classify the novel as fantasy, but there are elements that should make the reader feel like it could be historical fiction. It begins in a mostly rural and agrarian society. Men and women have traditional roles and the main character is set up as someone who is different from the norm.

The opening passage of the chapter was actually written several years and put aside. I am a lover of fantasy books and wanted to write something where I could explore my creativity. I also thought about the axiom of writing about what you know. I am a long-time knitter and began thinking about how knitting could be a metaphor for creating other things. That is where I began to construct the idea of the Spinners, talented people who could weave elements and had great power.

As I began to look over the piece to make revisions, I noticed that in several places the language seemed awkward. As I mentioned, I wanted the setting to seem like a place from long ago and my characters spoke a bit archaically at first. After rereading it, I realized that I wanted the reader to connect to the characters more and needed to modernize the language a bit. I am still working on this aspect. I also played with the idea of the characters having different names for things, like the hare Leandra saw being called a "meadow hare" at first. I began to feel that was confusing and took those passages out.

I had several criteria that I felt were important in writing this chapter. One was action. I liked starting the chapter with a dramatic scene in the middle of the action. We learn it is a flashback, but the first sentence also foreshadows that something horrific is about to happen. I also wanted to establish the characters and their relationships. The chapter introduces Leandra, her brother Darian, and their mother Nalia. We know Leandra and her brother have a close relationship and their father is dead. We also learn by the end of the chapter that something serious is happening regarding their livelihood and the visit to town is extremely important.

I'm not sure how writing this chapter will impact my teaching quite yet. I am motivated to continue the story and if I am fortunate enough to complete a manuscript and submit it somewhere, I certainly believe that would be something I would share with my students. I know many famous authors started their careers as teachers, such as Rick Riordan, so who knows!

I will say that in the reverse, some of the work we have done with our students has impacted me as a writer. We recently had author Alison Hart speak to our students about suspense. In the mini-workshop she shared many strategies writers use to infuse suspense, including time constraints, flawed heroes, dilemmas, and more. Listening to this professional writer was great since I gave me ideas and tools to consider as I move forward in this story. It was neat to be on the other side of the desk, in this case as the learner instead of just the teacher.