

Empathy Writing Recipe

@jionsheibani

You will need...

- **Eyes** for spotting tiny details and big emotions
- **Ears** for catching real-life dialogue to inspire your characters
- **Hands** for doodling characters, even if you can't draw! It'll help you notice small details and expressions
- **A quiet mind** for tuning into what your characters feel, not just what they do



PROBLEM



Ingredients

- **A character** – someone (or something!) you care about
- **A problem** – a worry or event that's grown too big to ignore
- **Feelings** – the emotional flavour of the story
- **Struggle** – attempts, failures, obstacles, misunderstandings
- **Change** – how empathy (or the lack of it) transforms your character
- **Decoration** – delicious description



Tip!

Read aloud as you write ("taste" as you go along!) Stories are meant to be heard!

Method



1. Measure your ingredients

Get to know your character inside-out. Draw or write notes about what they love, are scared of, what makes them laugh, the people or pets they care about. Do they have languages or traditions particular to their family, how do they feel about these? Start with their inner world before their appearance. These details are your baking powder – they make the story rise.

2. Add the problem

Why does this problem really hurt? Is it embarrassing? Lonely? Unfair? Mind-map the reasons until you uncover the emotions.



3. Stir in feelings

Is your character angry-sad? Nervous-excited? Show feelings through actions, body language, and choices. Do they understand what they're feeling, or is it a messy mix?



4. Knead in the struggle

What gets in their way? Do they try and fail? Is there a moment when empathy cracks things open and someone finally gets someone else?

5. Mix well

Let the story shift as characters understand each other's perspectives. Try writing two or three versions: same character, same problem, different emotional journeys.



6. Bake your ending

Echo the beginning with a twist: same place, new feeling. Show how empathy (or its absence) changes relationships, identity, or choices.



7. Decorate

Let the story cool. Re-read. Add sprinkles: sharper images, stronger feelings, clearer moments of empathy.

Timings



0–50 words: meet your character

50–200: the problem appears

200–400: struggle, big feelings, rising tension

400–500: a choice or shift

500–550: resolution and a final image that lingers

Empathy
Lab

Calibre audio