

# Amelinda Bérubé

*The Dark Beneath the Ice*

*Here There Are Monsters*



Twitter and Instagram:

@metuiteme

# What do we look for in a short story?

- Plot (something happens/changes)
- Characters (people that feel real)
- Some literary devices (what you say without saying it)

But **why**?

I want to FEEL something.

I want to be affected by what I read.

I want to be moved.

## So how do you move your reader?



# Let's talk mood and atmosphere!

The FEELING or FLAVOUR of a story

- broody
- creepy
- whimsical
- romantic
- wistful
- apocalyptic
- mystical

...or whatever!

# What makes a mood?

Kind of everything???

- \* What happens in a story
- \* The people in the story and the kinds of problems they face

But especially:

Setting → Description

VOICE

## *The Haunting of Hill House*

No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against the hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone.

# “The Lottery”

The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 26th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, the whole lottery took only about two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.



## “From Elfland to Poughkeepsie”

what I read. The persons talking are a duke of the blood royal of a mythical Keltic kingdom, and a warrior-magician – great Lords of Elfland, both of them.

‘Whether or not they succeed in the end will depend largely on Kelson’s personal ability to manipulate the voting.’

‘Can he?’ Morgan asked, as the two clattered down a half-flight of stairs and into the garden.

‘I don’t know, Alaric,’ Nigel replied. ‘He’s good – damned good – but I just don’t know. Besides, you saw the key council lords. With Ralson dead and Bran Coris practically making open accusations – well, it doesn’t look good.’

‘I could have told you that at Cardoso.’<sup>1</sup>

At this point I was interrupted (perhaps by a person from Porlock I don’t remember), and the next time I sat down I happened to pick up a different kind of novel, a real Now novel, naturalistic, political, conscious, relevant, set in Washington, D.C. Here is a sample of conversation from it, between a senator and a lobbyist for pollution control.

‘Whether or not they succeed in the end will depend largely on Kelson’s personal ability to manipulate the voting.’

‘Can he?’ Morgan asked, as the two clattered down a half-flight of stairs and into the White House garden.

‘I don’t know, Alaric,’ Nigel replied. ‘He’s good – damned good – but I just don’t know. Besides, you saw the key committee chairmen. With Ralson dead and Brian Corliss practically making open accusations – well, it doesn’t look good.’

‘I could have told you that at Poughkeepsie.’

Now, I submit that something has gone wrong. The book from which I first quoted is not fantasy, for all its equipment of heroes and wizards. If it was fantasy, I couldn’t have pulled that dirty trick off by changing four words. You can’t clip Pegasus’ wings that easily not if he has wings.





**Adderall Kablammo** 🦋 @acekatana · Dec 30, 2021



“I had six shots in me. Two were bourbon. Three were Pfizer. One was a .38 slug that the doc never bothered to fish out of my shoulder. And on a night like this I was feeling all of em.”

# So how do you want YOUR story to feel?

What's the mood you want to set?

Some ways to help you pinpoint it:

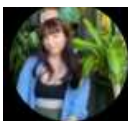
Pick an image, a metaphor, a movie, a song, a dream you had...





**Alison McKenzie** @amckenziewrites · Feb 6

the feeling of clarity you get when you've been crying your eyes out and someone manages to get a wet, sniffly laugh out of you.



**libraries +a bit of hocus pocus** @Nina\_Nouwens · Feb 6

Your first trip to the coffee shop with your friends after getting your driver's license.



**Jordan Quiverns** 📖 @JordanQuiverns · Feb 6

The moment I was waiting for the bus at my college and realized it was okay, even beautiful, to be an ordinary person



**Nicole M. Wolverton** @nicolewolverton · Feb 6

Mine is "the way I felt that one time I was on a candlelight tour of a notoriously haunted prison and knocked over by an unseen force."

Another option: make a “mood board” or “aesthetic” with Pinterest, Unsplash, or a Google image search – I made this one with images from shutterstock and a free tool at [photocollage.com](https://www.photocollage.com)

**\*\*Be careful of  
copyright!\*\***



Another option: make a soundtrack / pick a theme song

Movie soundtracks are great for writing to!

Spotify playlists – search by mood or genre (e.g. “urban fantasy”)

For the manuscript previously mentioned:

Theme song: “Bury A Friend” by Billie Eilish

Soundtrack: The Leftovers

# Got a mood in mind?

Set a timer for 5, 10, 15 minutes.

Take your inspiration – mood board, soundtrack, setting, whatever – and ramble about it.

Throw down some description, some dialogue, whatever comes to mind, trying to capture that feeling. It can even be a list of words or images. Just try not to pause or even lift your pen from the paper until the timer goes.

When the timer goes, take a look at what you've got. Anything strike you as particularly good? Anything sparking ideas?

# A fun exercise

Pick a **setting** at random:

shopping mall

campground

forest

abandoned cabin

classroom

library

coffee shop

bus stop

hospital room

Pick a **mood** at random:

creepy

funny

romantic

sad

suspenseful

mysterious

Now put them together – describe your setting according to your mood!



# Some tips

Be as concrete as possible (vs. abstract) – use all five senses

Look for interesting and expressive verbs, they're more powerful than adjectives or adverbs

Read (and write!) poetry – ALL mood ALL the time

If you're bored, whip out a notebook or phone and describe what's around you. How does it FEEL?