Panel Presentation Transcript:

Getting Involved With Fanfic

WFOL 2021

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<u>Welcome</u> to the Getting Involved with Fanfic Panel

We're very glad you're here!

Writing fanfic can be a hobby, a passion, a refuge, and a revelation. To help you find your way into and through this amazing world, we will provide you with lots of helpful information and resources. We hope this will give you the direction, inspiration, and confidence you might have been looking for as a new or experienced writer.

Our three presenters -- JoAnn Baca, Carole Whitehead, and Linda S Barth -- are very enthusiastic, experienced fanfic writers and editors. Our stories can be found online on several websites (which we'll mention at the end of the presentation), and some are still available in older print zines.

We want to encourage anyone interested in keeping this beautiful dream alive to write the stories carried in your heart. It's scary to put yourself out there – we all feel that, no matter how long we've been at it. Please know – please *believe* – fans really do want to read new stories. We're a very hungry bunch. So if you're worried about being welcomed into the circle, try to put that aside. I promise you'll be making a whole lot of readers happy.

Our presentation will cover a variety of topics, some specific to BatB fanfic, some that pertain to any genre of writing. We've compiled a list of some online resources for you to be found at the end of this transcript.

How To Begin Writing Fanfic

Finding Inspiration

Staring at that blinking cursor on a blank screen can be enough to intimidate even the most prolific writer! So, before you turn on your laptop, it's best to find a source of inspiration for your story.

BatB episodes typically included several literary references, and any of them might spark a story idea: Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill" from "Orphans" or Walt Whitman's "A Song of Myself" from "When the Bluebird Sings" are two of dozens of examples waiting to inspire you.

You might have a favorite poem that was never used in the show but always reminds you of a moment, a character, or a setting. Story ideas can come from song lyrics, passages from various novels or plays, even dialogue from movies or other tv shows.

One thing to remember: Try not to overuse sources that are already hallmarks of fanfic, such as "Great Expectations" and the poetry on the BatB CD. There are so many other areas to explore, so try to find something that is evocative of BatB but still fresh and original.

You can also find inspiration within an episode. It might be:

A line of dialogue that was never pursued (e.g., In "Labyrinths" William tells Bryan that he'd led a life of despair and hopelessness, but Below he is valued and appreciated. Yet, we never learned anything about William's past.);

Characters we met briefly, then rarely, if ever, saw again (e.g., Sophie and Mischa, Laura's boyfriend Jerry, Tony);

Or even one of those many "almost kisses" that were so maddening!

Ask yourself: What do I wish I had seen in that episode? Who do I want to know better? What does Vincent do when he's not teaching or doing other work Below? So many questions -- and you might have the answers that will become a wonderful story.

Inspiration can come to you when you least expect it. One of my latest stories was inspired by a casual question that was asked during a BBTV discussion.

If you are eager to write but still can't come up with an idea, you might find inspiration in the listing of "plot bunnies" which are story ideas fans have come up with and are willing to share. We'll give you a link to that listing at the end of the presentation.

Identifying the sub-genre

The sub-genre of a story alerts readers to what your story's general focus will be. This identification can help readers who are looking for their favorite specific type of fanfic (or trying to avoid fanfic they aren't interesting in), as well.

The broadest categories of B&B fanfic are the basics: Classic and 3S.

Sub-genres include:

- Alternate Beginning (a different way for Vincent & Catherine to meet) …
- AU (a story set in an "alternate universe" – some other time or place, like in medieval times or Ancient Egypt, or on another planet) …
- Continuing Classic (stories that continue beyond the end of Season 2 as if Season 3 didn't happen) …
- Crossover (our characters interact with characters from another TV show, or a movie, novel, etc.) …
- Episode Expansions ("missing" scenes between one episode and another, or within an episode, that would not change canon) …
- First Time (stories about Vincent & Catherine's first sexual encounter) …
- SND - She's Not Dead or She Never Died (a story that changes the elements of Season 3 so that Catherine lives).

As you no doubt realize, not every fanfic will fit neatly into one of these sub-genres. But as categories, they are sufficiently specific enough to serve as general guides.

Choosing the Main Character/POV

The Main Character is the central figure of your story - the one who confronts the issues or the choices your story presents. When you're plotting out your story, ask yourself a few questions:

Whose journey is this? Who has the most at stake - the most to win or lose? Who wrestles the biggest demons?

(Keep in mind, "wrestling demons" doesn't always mean deep despair and emotional angst. Kipper could wrestle the demon of his algebra homework - his story could be one in which he learns he can do hard things.)

Your main character should begin one way and, through the events of your story, end up another way. This could be *change for good* or *change for worse*, depending on your story goal.

Point of View (POV)

Point of View is a big subject with layers of nuance. Today, I'll hit the higher points.

The Main Character is usually the Point of View (or Perspective) Character - the one who tells your story. Through that character's thoughts and words, actions, reactions, or inactions, through what he sees and hears and what he interprets (rightly or wrongly) the reader experiences your story. He is its narrator.

Your story can be written in <u>First Person</u>, using the pronouns I, me, we …

Or in <u>Third Person</u>, using the pronouns he, she, they, plus the characters' names **…**

Most fanfic is written in Third Person, as are many published novels, but First Person works as well. Most fan fic is written in the past tense, but that's not a rule. (There is also Second Person, using the pronoun **you**, but it is uncommon in fanfic and in published works. Let's not talk about that today.)

Here's an example of First Person, Vincent's POV:

I never expected my life to change that night. I only knew I needed to be in the park under the stars. That I had to hurry.

Here's that same example in Third Person, Vincent's POV:

Vincent never expected his life to change that night. He only knew he needed to be in the park under the stars, that he had to hurry.

You can see the same sentences are somewhat different in emotional tone, depending on the Person employed.

The cardinal rule of Point of View

It's best to limit yourself to one Perspective Character POV … ideally, to one per story.

If that seems impossible, limit yourself to one Perspective Character per chapter.

If *that* seems impossible, limit yourself to one Perspective Character per scene. That means no switching POV characters within the same paragraph or in dialogue exchanges.

If you change Perspective Character POV scene to scene, you need to insert a visual break - like three centered asterisks *** - to denote a scene break. That way your reader knows something different is about to happen.

This is called <u>Multiple POV</u> and is not the same as <u>Omniscient POV</u>.

With an <u>Omniscient POV</u>**,** the narrator knows all, meaning the narrator is outside the story looking in. The narrator in this POV is not a featured character, but more an observer or reporter, and knows everything every character thinks, feels, and does.

The Omniscient narrator can even skip through time. As example, an Omniscient Narrator might interject, "His declaration would come back to haunt him years in the future."

Omniscient is the most distanced, least intimate, form of storytelling. It requires some study to make best use of it; it can be useful when delivering history or world-building. But misused, it leads *head-hopping*, meaning to jump from one character's perspective to another's in the same scene or paragraph. It's something fanfic writers have to be on watch for - it's easy to slip up!

When writing about Vincent and Catherine, we know - and *want* - to share what they're both thinking and feeling; we want to talk about the unseen things lurking off-stage that will affect the story. But doing so muddles the drama. If there's no mystery, no tension, no room for misunderstanding and revelation, there's not as much reason to keep reading.

Here's an example of head-hopping with some misplaced Omniscient narration thrown in:

Vincent's imagination was in full force. Catherine stood on the balcony in the filmiest of gowns. The night breeze swirled the silk around her ankles. He willed himself to step from the shadows that held him, to take her in his arms. Catherine, though, was thinking about having her scar removed after all. The cool air made it kind of itchy. Meanwhile, Joe was getting out of a cab half a block away. He had something important to tell Cathy.

Muddled, right? You can't focus on anything. You can't closely identify with the main character's journey because you can't really tell who the main character is. You already know what all the characters are thinking and doing. There's nothing to "find out".

The example rewritten in Vincent's 3rd Person POV:

Vincent's imagination was in full force. Catherine stood on the balcony in the filmiest of gowns. The night breeze swirled the silk around her ankles. He willed himself to step from the shadows that held him, to take her in his arms.

Surely, she knew he was there? She didn't startle or turn when he closed the distance between them, only settled back into his embrace.

"Where are you?" he murmured. "You seem very far away."

"I'm here, just … thinking." She turned in his arms, met his gaze. "Tell me. What do you see when you look at me, when you see this scar?"

He hardly had time to construct an answer, lost again in thrill of her nearness. Her doorbell shrilled; someone started hammering at the door. *Curses, foiled again!*

One last point about 1st or 3rd POV: Remember the example I gave earlier?

Vincent never expected his life to change that night. He only knew he needed to be in the park under the stars, that he had to hurry.

NOTE: If Vincent went on to describe the events of that fateful night, he would not know how Catherine was feeling when she hit the ground or what the men who dumped her were thinking. He might surmise, but he'd only *know* what **he** saw and what **he** felt.

ALSO NOTE: 1st person Vincent would not say, "I shook my mane of red-gold hair." 3rd person Vincent would not say, His blue eyes narrowed. He would not make these kinds of descriptive observations about himself (unless he was looking in a mirror and probably not even then!)

The easiest way to stay in POV is to imagine your Perspective Character as your video camera. You write only what that lens delivers to you.

Thinking Beyond the Basics

A good story is not just a he said/she said conversation. Create atmosphere, mood, place with narrative

Dialogue is necessary, of course, but you need to create atmosphere around that dialogue. Your reader should be able to "step in" to your story. Give them the tools (your words) to see, sense, feel, smell, hear the story's surroundings and to interpret the situation. Transport them!

For example:

Mouse skidded to a stop outside Vincent's chamber, his hands behind his back full with what he'd found. *Not supposed to barge in anymore! No matter what!* From the corridor, he peeked around the chiseled arch. The desk was cluttered, stacked with books. A lot of paper crumpled up. On the floor too. Chair knocked over on its back. Candles almost burned away. *Vincent not here! Where?*

This short example has elements of:

Setting (Vincent's strangely empty chamber)
Tone (Mouse goes from lighter-hearted to worried)
Word Choice (using Mouse's personality to color the description of the room)
Theme (mystery: what did Mouse find, why did he bring it, and what's happened to Vincent?)

Use those elements to create atmospheres of romance, danger, foreboding, despair, joy. Make sure your scene leaves an emotional and a visual image lingering with your reader.

About *Place*

The Tunnels are large! They contain multitudes! It's fun to create new places below, places we never got to see in the episodes. Luckily, the Tunnels are already Real - we've loved them into existence, right? - so just go down a different passageway and take us with you as you go.

Find an Editor

Finding an editor is highly recommended, no matter how good you are at writing.

When you've revised your story until you're happy with it, have done your own best job of finding punctuation and grammar errors, typos, continuity goofs, etc., asking someone else to look at it with fresh eyes truly helps.

An easy way to find an editor is to ask a writer whose work you admire if she can provide a recommendation. Another way is to contact a B&B website or blogsite runner for advice.

It's important that you find someone with skills, not just a cheerleader for your fanfic. It's nice to hear "It's great!" but that's not the most helpful thing when you want someone to really check over your story. And if you're stuck on an element in a half-written story, having an editor you can discuss your dilemma with can help you break the logjam and see pathways forward.

Don't take it personally if an editor has suggestions or points out unresolved issues in your story. Good editing is done to help your story work better. BUT…if you find that your editor and you aren't a good fit, it's perfectly fine to move on to another editor.

Writing Rules

Some rules are applicable to any type of writing, and some are specific to fanfic. All are important!

Although this may seem obvious, it needs to be said. Using correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, subject/verb agreement, etc. is of absolute importance to good writing. When you take the time to make sure you're following all those rules -- you know, the ones you found so boring back in school -- it shows respect not only for your reader, but also for yourself as a writer and for the craft of writing itself.

Of course, there are always exceptions to any rule, and you will find variations that have been used very effectively in areas such as dialogue (where some characters have

unique speech patterns), various novels, and poetry. Think of James Joyce and ee cummings. But please remember, if you're going to break the rules, you first must be comfortable about using them correctly.

We will be posting some articles full of guidelines on this topic and will provide the links at the end of our presentation. Please take the time to read them. Everyone will thank you for it!

Verbs and Adverbs

The best writing is dramatic and dynamic. Use strong verbs to super-charge your writing. Choose a verb that is descriptive and nuanced, one that clearly illustrates what's happening. Choose active, actioned verbs.

For example:

(Passive/Bland) Father <u>walked</u> into the Dining Chamber.

(Strong/Descriptive) Father <u>hobbled</u> into the Dining Chamber.

As you can see, choosing the right verb conveys a lot of attitude!

Powerful verbs can stand on their own. Avoid verbs that rely on adverbs.

Instead of saying "she said loudly", say "she shouted."

Further, avoid adverbs that describe action that should be made evident in your narrative.

Instead of "I'm sorry, Devin," he said tearfully", say:

"I'm sorry, Devin." Tears blurred his vision and choked his voice. He couldn't look up, just … couldn't.

Dialogue

Dialogue is very important, but so are "dialogue tags" – words that let the reader know who is speaking and how, like "she said" or "Father grumbled" or "Vincent murmured" – and they add color to a story. They don't need to be fancy, they are basically there to let the reader know who is speaking (he, they, Catherine, Father, etc.).

Dialogue tags shouldn't distract from the dialogue. In a two-person conversation, you don't need as many dialogue tags as in a scene with multiple characters.

The only verbs you usually need in a dialogue tag are the basic ones: "asked" or "said" cover most things. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with using ONLY those verbs in a story's dialogue tags.

Going overboard with distracting verbs can detract from your story, however.

If you select descriptive verbs that fit your character and plot, it can help to make your story more interesting.

For instance, Vincent can "murmur" and William can "shout" and Father can "demand" in a conversation without it being distracting, because the verbs signal the depth of action or emotion without pulling the reader out of the moment, and those verbs fit the characters. But if Vincent "mewled" or Catherine "babbled" those verbs might pull a reader out of a story, as they don't seem to fit with the character's canon profile.

Just make sure that the verb you are using is something that can actually be spoken. A person cannot "laugh" or "nod" or "sigh" a word, so be careful in the verbs you select. You can always add that action before or after a dialogue tag, such as: "I will," Jamie said, nodding. Or: Jamie sighed. "I can't," she said. Or: "Stop tickling me!" Jamie said, laughing.

Using proper names in dialogue

As thrilling as it is to hear Vincent say Catherine's name, he doesn't use her name in every sentence he speaks to her. And while they do regularly greet each other by name (in voices that convey a lot more than 'hello'), neither of them repeats the other's name unless it's necessary.

When writing BatB fanfic, imagine yourself in the speaking character's place. If you're having a conversation with someone, how many times do you use their name?

Writing Dialogue

Characters have distinctive speech and language patterns. To develop an "ear" for them, focus on the dialogue in several different episodes. Try closing your eyes and just listening. Notice key factors in the way an individual speaks such as the type of words and phrases he typically uses, how fast/slow he speaks, if he uses slang, etc.

When writing fanfic, it's important to adhere to these characteristics, or it can be very jarring to your readers. You want your reader to be immersed in your story, not distracted by mistakes you needn't have made.

For instance, Father often sounds more formal than most of the other characters, tends to make observations, often asks questions that provoke reflection from his listener, and frequently gives directions or strongly suggests them.

Father would say: "Vincent, I've given your problem a great deal of thought. There are no easy answers for what you wish to do, but perhaps you should consider enlarging your chamber rather than moving elsewhere in the tunnels. Have you spoken with Kanin about it?"

Father would not say: "Vincent, I've wasted hours on your housing problem, but I don't have a clue. Go talk to somebody else."

Mouse has very distinct speech and language patterns.

Mouse would say: "Needed some wire. Found some wire. Took it."

Mouse would not say: "I needed some wire for my latest project. I was Above by that construction site over on West 78th Street, and there were all these spools of it just sitting there. No one was around, so I took some and brought it back Below."

Catherine uses more contemporary language, but she doesn't use slang the way Joe does. Narcissa's speech and language reflect her background; however, fanfic writers must be careful not to exaggerate her recognizable style.

And this is so important: Vincent is not a Victorian gentleman in a historical romance novel. He uses contractions. He uses verbs and nouns that were common in the mid to late 20th century.

Of course, Vincent would not say, "Hey, babe! Let's hang out under the bandshell tonight and catch a few tunes!"

But he also would not say: "My dearest lady, perhaps we might adjourn to our divine refuge beneath yonder Central Park and partake of the delightful airs and graces the musicians shall tonight offer to us for our pleasure."

So, what would he say? He'd say, "Catherine, there's another concert in the park tonight. I hope we can enjoy it together."

The important concept of "show, don't tell"

"Show, don't tell" means exactly what it sounds like. Find a way to let your readers picture or see something for themselves, instead of explicitly stating it to them. That "something" can be an emotion, details of a setting, a color, a sound, almost anything.

When **showing**, the writer uses action, emotion, description, dialogue, and the five senses to help the reader *experience* the story.

When **telling**, the writer *summarizes and directly tells* the reader what is happening in the story.

Here's an example of a scene that might appear somewhere in a BatB story. It's the same scene written two different ways. In the first selection, the writer is **showing** the reader. See if you can picture where the character is, what he's doing, how he is feeling both physically and emotionally, and what time of day and year it is.

The screwdriver slipped from Cullen's grip. He heard it clatter against the ceramic tile floor and watched it roll past boxes still filled with cooking utensils, dishes, and pots and pans. Cursing under his breath, he smeared a damp coating of sawdust from his hands onto his jeans and winced when he bent to retrieve the tool. As he straightened, he stretched the kinks in his spine, then sniffed at an odor rising from the streaks of sweat that had plastered his shirt to his back. Even his trusty old work boots seemed to have quit for the day.

His eyes narrowed as he glared at stacks of backsplash tiles and piles of crown molding. *If they want me to do anymore work up here, Catherine better have Mouse take a look at the a/c first!*

He ran his hands along the edges of the door, then fit it back into place and tightened the hinges before opening and closing it several times. As he stowed the screwdriver in his belt, he squinted and stared at the door. An irresistible grin curved his mouth. *Perfect fit. You still got it, Cullen!*

The setting sun transformed the windows over the sink to a blazing sheet of molten amber. He grabbed his toolbox, reopened the door on its silent hinges, and locked it behind him before trudging down the steps to the basement. He hoped he'd have time for a bath before William served dinner. Otherwise, he knew he'd be eating alone.

This is the same scene, but the writer is **telling** it to the reader.

Cullen was in the kitchen of Catherine and Vincent's brownstone. They hadn't moved in yet. Cullen was doing repairs. He was fixing a door. He was hot, dirty, and sweaty. He dropped a screwdriver which made him feel irritated and annoyed. He picked it up. His back hurt. His shirt was wet and sticky. He smelled bad and his feet hurt, too. They were probably going to ask him to install backsplash tile and molding, too, but he decided he wasn't going to do it unless Catherine asked Mouse to fix the air conditioning first.

He checked the door to see that there were no rough spots. He put the door back. He tightened and oiled the hinges. He was still sweating, but he was happy with the job he'd done.

It was summer. It was late in the afternoon and the sun was setting. He could tell that the kitchen windows faced west because he could see the sunset. It was still hot out.

He picked up his toolbox. He would go down to the basement to return Below. He locked the door behind him. It was almost dinner time. He needed to take a bath or else no one would sit with him at dinner.

As you can see, it is much more enjoyable for your readers to picture this scene for themselves than to have it written out for them word for word. It's also so much more enjoyable for you as a writer, to find ways of *showing instead of telling.*

Tips for using *show, don't tell*:

1. <u>Reveal the character's emotions and reactions through his actions</u>.

     a. Cullen cursed, smeared, winced, felt drops of sweat, narrowed his eyes, stretched kinks, smelled odor, glared, trudged.

You know he's annoyed, dirty, sore, sweaty, smelly, wary, and tired.

b. Cullen ran his hands along the door, opened and closed it several times, noted the hinges moved silently, locked it behind himself.

You know he is a skilled and conscientious worker.

c. Cullen grinned and commented approvingly to himself.

You know he's proud of what he has accomplished.

d. Cullen hoped he'd have time to bathe. Cullen helped Vincent and Catherine. Cullen considered helping them again.

You know he is considerate of others.

2. <u>Focus mostly on one person's point of view</u>. (Cullen)

3. <u>Try to avoid overuse of "telling" words, such as is, are, was, were</u>.

4. <u>Use dialogue</u>. (In this example, it's Cullen's interior dialogue, which is in italics.)

5. <u>Be specific</u>. In the example, we learn a lot about the setting through the technique of **showing**.

In the example, you'll notice that the writer never used the words kitchen, Catherine and Vincent's brownstone, repairs, hard work, summer, or late afternoon. Yet, you knew where Cullen was, what he was doing, and what time of year and day the scene took place.

The writer chose words that *showed* all those things to you.

a. Showed that the location is the kitchen of Catherine and Vincent's brownstone: boxes of pots and pans, dishes, and cooking utensils; ceramic floor

tile; backsplash tiles; windows over the sink; door to the basement; "they" want him to do additional work; Catherine needs to get a/c fixed.

b. Showed that Cullen is doing repairs: screwdriver, tool belt, toolbox, sawdust, work boots, fitting door back into its place, checking and admiring his work.

c. Showed Cullen is working hard: sweating, sore, smelly, hot, worn out, cranky.

d. Showed the time of day: setting sun, William serving dinner soon, hoping there's time for a bath first.

e. Showed time of year: it's only this hot in NYC in the summer.

A wonderful quotation from Anton Chekov will help you remember the definition and importance of show, don't tell:

"Don't tell me the moon is shining. Show me the glint of light on broken glass."

Research is your friend!

Don't rely on your memory when quoting dialogue from the series – check to ensure you have the words exactly right. Too many readers will notice if you don't get it exact, and often it takes a reader out of a story when that happens.

If you are using a specific location in a story, Google it to ensure you have the particulars correct (address, part of town, whether it existed during the timeframe of your story, etc.).

And if you have characters traveling between known locations, try to get the distance right (could Catherine really walk from the Empire State Building to Central Park in five minutes? It's easy to check.).

Quoting a poem or a song? There are many sites that can refresh your memory so your readers aren't jolted out of your story when a line isn't correctly quoted.

And especially, since our series is set in a specific timeframe, if you are writing a story that is contemporaneous with the show's timeline, be careful to keep your references

time-appropriate. Think about the technology you have the characters use (for example, everyone did not carry a cell phone in 1989!).

Take care that the songs, books, movies, television series, etc. you are referencing actually existed in the series' timeframe. Ensure that any news events you mention did not occur after the timeframe of your story.

And, to the extent necessary and possible, keep to the chronology of events in the series when writing a true Classic or 3S story.

For example, Kristopher's painting of Vincent and Catherine should not be in Vincent's chamber during a story set in Season 1, and Lena's baby daughter Catherine can't be old enough to stand with other children watching Sebastian do magic tricks in Dead of Winter.

Finally, if someone picks up a teacup, ensure the teacup is put down or handed to another person before that character engages in another action – continuity is important! For instance, if Father comes into a chamber and sits down, he should not be taking a seat again a few sentences later – not unless you've had him get up for some reason in between.

Rules specific to fanfic

There are rules of writing that are specific to fanfic, and you should follow them.

Your readers know and love the world in which your story is set. It is unfair and disrespectful to them if you make extreme changes to it, especially without providing an explanatory note from the author before the story begins. However, there's still plenty of opportunity for creativity and originality.

Specify Season and Rating

This is fairly self-explanatory: readers have preferences and writers should respect them by making it clear whether a story is Classic or 3S, or how much violence/sexual content there is in the story via a rating. If you are unsure of which rating to ascribe to a story, your editor can help.

Knowing a season or a rating beforehand can steer a reader away from (or right to, with anticipation!) a particular story. Trigger warnings may also be useful, so fans who, for

instance, may be disturbed or upset by depictions of family violence or other traumas, can avoid a story that includes such scenes.

Don't overstate and explain what's already known to readers

Fanfic is different from an original story with characters no one knows yet. In a standard story, you would need to name, describe, or locate your characters fairly early in the narrative, but in fanfic, all that is already known by your reader. You can skip the introductions!

(from Carole) I'll use an example (of what not to do) from my first submission to Tunnel Tales: I started Chapter One with this sentence: "Catherine Chandler left her father's corporate law firm for a position in the Manhattan District Attorney's office after she was attacked and left for dead in Central Park." After that, I went on to give a short history of Vincent finding her, of her ten days below, of her new responsibilities, and I think even a description of her apartment. I might have mentioned she had green eyes too!

My editor red-penciled my first two pages, every word! I was pretty freaked out. But she was right. She suggested I **start the story with action**. That I start **where the actual story begins**, and leave all the familiar background completely out.

My first sentence then became this one: "She felt the softest touch to her lips, a breath, warm and sweet, at her ear."

(An aside: after all the cutting, I still started the story with a dream, which is a no-no in the professional writers world, but this is BatB! We're all dreamers!!)

That same advice holds true for any other character. There's no need to introduce Father or Mary or Paracelsus or Joe as if your reader had never heard of them. Non-fans, meaning those with no prior knowledge of our show, are not likely to read BatB fanfic. We know what Father looks like, what his position below is. We know Jenny is an old friend of Catherine's and that Joe is Catherine's boss. You can jump right into your story without having to spend time on any of that!

How to follow the rules and still be creative/original

There are many ways this can be done. Fanfic writers can expand, elaborate upon, and invent, but they cannot make fundamental changes to canon (i.e., things that we actually saw in the episodes; factors that fans of the show consider to be true.)

Just a few examples of canon are: Vincent lives Below. Catherine lives Above. Father is a doctor. Pascal is in charge of the Pipes. Vincent and Catherine have a special Bond.

Writers can -- and often should -- be imaginative and original. No one wants to read the same old story over and over again, no matter how beloved the characters and settings may be. It's fun for both readers and writers when a known universe is expanded and enhanced, but it must be done appropriately.

If you start writing and find that your story takes place in a penthouse in Paris where several twenty-somethings are developing a cyber security start-up company, while spending their free time singing karaoke, skydiving, and rescuing abandoned puppies, then even naming your main characters Vincent and Catherine won't make it a batb fanfic!

Okay, that's a huge exaggeration, but you know what we mean. And here are some specific guidelines and examples.

Characters

We writers have to keep two things in mind about characters: representing the characters we all know based on canon, and being careful with creating characters that fit into the canon. In the case of the characters in the series, writers should respect the fundamental aspects of the known characters, even as they flesh out and delve deeper into their motivations and actions.

Vincent, we know from canon, has wondered about his origins and worries about his less-than-human aspects (e.g., feeling that his hands aren't meant to give love). To present him in a story as totally unconcerned about his looks or his genetics would be uncharacteristic based on canon. Unless there's a really good reason for this attitude in your story, it's hard for a reader to accept a Vincent who is totally unlike the character they "know."

When it comes to creating new characters, the ones that work best in fanfic are those that can blend seamlessly into the canon world. "Mary Sue" characters are those who seem to represent who the writer would love to be, such as a character who swoops in

and fixes everyone's problems and is beloved by all the characters. Readers can spot a "Mary Sue" a mile away, and it usually deters from a fan's enjoyment of a story.

On the other hand, realistic non-canon characters who fit into the action without dominating it can be intriguing. But remember, readers come to B&B fanfic mostly to read about the characters they already know from canon. So give extra thought to new characters and how they are placed and interact with the known characters.

Settings

In canon, we're given quite the range of settings. There's Above: Central Park, Catherine's apartment, Mr. Smythe's bookshop in Greenwich Village, the docks where Vincent found Dmitri. Do your research when describing places in Manhattan. Remember to take "time" into consideration. If you're describing NYC when Father met Margaret, look for photographs taken back in the 40's and early 50's to help you create atmosphere. Devin would have left the tunnels in the late 60's. What was going on then?

Below, we know Vincent's chamber, Father's library, the hospital chamber, the Great Hall, The Chambers of the Winds and the Falls … It's easy to inspect those places for details to use in your settings. But there had to be many other common chambers in the central area. The Dining Hall and Kitchen, for two. And we never actually saw the Bathing Chambers, but we can sure imagine them, right?

When you venture outside canon, make your settings seem natural adjuncts to what we all know and already believe. Research things like the temperature of New York State caves (50 degrees, year-round). Check out the real subway maps - where might Vincent jump aboard? Study the neighborhoods and boroughs of Manhattan. Could Vincent walk (relatively) freely there, even in the dark? Work as much realism as possible into your story of the magical Tunnels.

If you want to write the Lake in Connecticut story, figure out how to (relatively) realistically get Vincent there. If you want to set your story in a new section of the tunnels, populated with original characters, spend some time world-building. Why are those dwellers living outside the common perimeter? Do they come to Winterfest? Do philosophical conflicts keep them apart? Does Vincent visit there regularly? Does Father? Construct their school rooms, kitchens, libraries. Create their secret doors and sentry systems. Locate realistic entrances in protected parts of the city we didn't see in canon. Take what they would have learned from life in the main community into their farther-flung one.

Just be careful to tie any new setting, Above or Below, to those we already know, and your readers will be willing to accept your new world.

Chronology

While you have some flexibility with characters and setting, chronology is much more restrictive. In canon, Father's tragedy Above took place in the McCarthy Era of the late 1940s/early 1950s. The world Below was created, and a few years later Vincent was found. That would place Vincent's birth in the mid-1950s and his age at about 33 when the series begins in 1987. Catherine appears to be a year or two younger.

Your story can take place at any time, but it must logically follow that canon-established chronology, unless you are writing an AU story.

Resources

We've given you a lot to think about, and we hope that information will help inspire you to start or continue writing. When you have a story ready to share, you'll need somewhere to post it. So, here's how and where you might publish your work.

Where to publish

CABB (Classic Alliance of Beauty and the Beast): http://www.classicalliance.net

WFOL (see past celebrations): http://batbwfol.com/wfolpast.asp *and* http://batbtv.com (WFOL submissions accepted seasonally – watch for the yearly announcement!)

AO3 (Archive of our Own): https://archiveofourown.org

Treasure Chambers: https://treasurechambers.com

Fanfiction.net   https://www.fanfiction.net

Resources for writers

We also have lots of sources to support our topics, including inspiration, mechanics, style, and so on.

1. Inspiration:
   a. Plot Bunny listing: http://okgoodokfine.com/bunnies/bunnies.php
   b. BatB scripts: http://www.batbforever.com/scripts/index.html

2. Grammar, spelling, punctuation
   a. https://www.thepunctuationguide.com
   b. https://www.grammarbook.com/english_rules.asp
   c. Most word processing programs have an "editor" function built in

3. Adverbs/Verbs:
   a. https://prowritingaid.com/grammar/1000014/Why-should-I-avoid-adverbs-in-my-writing
   b. https://www.writersdigest.com/improve-my-writing/nobles-writing-blunders-excerpt

4. Show, don't tell:
   https://jerryjenkins.com/show-dont-tell/

5. Fact checking:

   Google for information on relevant details for almost any topic, time period, place, etc.

6. Starting your own fan site:
   Blogger: https://www.blogger.com
   WordPress https://www.wordpress.com

Where to find the presenters' work

If you would like to read samples of the presenters' fanfic, you can find our stories at the following places.

CABB: Go to http://www.classicalliance.net and look in Tunnel Tales and the Steam Tunnels. Most of JoAnn's stories are in Tunnel Tales (and under the name Jo Fredericks in The Steam Tunnels), some of Carole's earlier work is found there, and most of Linda's stories and two novels are there.

Imagine That!: Go to https://www.imaginethatbatb.com   This is Carole's website and all her work is available there. Linda and JoAnn have stories there, too, in the Collaborations section.

WFOL archives: Go to http://www.batbtv.com and look for the WFOL past celebrations for work by all three presenters.

The Beauty and the Beast Reading Chamber: Go to http://www.batbland.com and click on Reading Chamber to find stories by JoAnn.

BatBLand: http://www.batbland.com : Exploring B&Bland; click on Stories to find fanfic by JoAnn and Carole.

Everything (a blog site): Go to http://www.onethursdaynight.blogspot.com and you'll find stories by Carole and JoAnn.

Thanks very much for joining us today! We hope the experience was helpful, and we look forward to reading your BatB fanfic!