

Vampires, Werewolves, and Wizards, Oh My! Sink Your Fangs Into Fantasy

Presenter: Mario Acevedo

August Write Brain

By Constance McKenzie

What do tornadoes, juicy girls, demons, Sioux City, and ex-cops have in common? All of them were part of a story developed by the attendees of the August Write Brain. Mario Acevedo, author of the Felix Gomez Vampire Detective series, gave the presentation entitled Vampires, Werewolves, and Wizards, Oh My! Sink Your Fangs Into Fantasy.

Mario began the evening discussing the genres of fantasy and the elements that are hallmarks of each. He gave examples of high fantasy, magical realism, urban fantasy, paranormal, horror, steampunk, science fiction, and young adult fantasy.

Next, Mario discussed the market for fantasy. Fantasy, along with romance and young adult, is a growing genre in a shrinking book market. In fact, 16% of all books sold in the first quarter of 2009 were from the same fantasy series. He reminded us, however, that most books take an average of 16 months to two years from acceptance to the shelves, so writing to the market is a tricky proposition at best. By the time your specially-crafted, perfect-for-the latest-fad, just-what-everybody-is-looking-for novel comes out, the book reading public will have moved on to the next exciting idea. Mario counseled the attendees to write what they like to write and avoid writing to satisfy the current market.

Mario, who started out writing men's adventure stories, talked about the freedom of creating your own world and ideas. Fantasy gives the writer the flexibility to decide if the domain will have magic, if the rules of physics apply, the monetary and governmental systems, and the character of the denizens. Writing fantasy encourages imagination and experimentation. Any idea the writer has, from disheveled vampires to iPhone tornado apps, can be woven into a story, although there are rules to making a story believable.

Later, Mario guided us through the three acts of a story. Act one sets the stage. This is where the writer introduces the elements that will make the resolution possible. Act two, which is also called the swamp because it is so easy to get bogged down, includes rising stakes, plot twists, and the climax. Act three is the resolution and ending, where everything comes together.

This last part of the evening was spent creating a story using ideas from the audience. That's where Juicy Girl comes in. The attendees decided on an urban fantasy with an ex-cop who could see ghosts. Suggestions included demon-driven tornado attacks, a dead mother whose soul needed to be saved from going to hell, a love interest (Juicy Girl) and a chorus of cacophonous cats. (Okay, things may have gotten a bit out of hand with that last part.)

Mario's presentation on the Fantasy genre was interesting, informative, and entertaining. Attendees left the evening ready to delve into the fantastic and create new worlds.

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