

Collaging - A story in Pictures

My first venture into collage was during Georgia Romance Writers' Moonlight and Magnolia Conference. After being asked to help with a workshop, I put together my first collage and was amazed at how my story came alive.

In the process of putting a story on paper about a hot air balloon race from the west to the east coast, I was astonished at how easy it was to use my collage to keep track of where my characters were moving next. It also gave me a visual on how to describe the balloons taking off, the balloon's shape and color and the general appearance of the race. I was impressed by how beneficial collaging was to my writing. In addition to a synopsis, notes and research; my collage gave me another avenue in which to immerse myself in my story.

Collaging was one way I used to organize my hero and heroine's personality traits by adding active pictures and using 3-D items that brought them to life. I could have grouped by characteristics of my hero or heroine, or have followed a



plotline or mix elements. There was no right or wrong way to do it.

Collaging is a wonderful tool to use to turn a story into a visual one. Without checking my notes I know where a scene starts and stops by glancing at the collage. By adding key words or phrases, I can focus the story direction. I can always add items to the collage as my writing progress.

Just as some writers plot, use a story board, flash cards, or scribble on anything in sight, collaging is a method to move a story out of your head and on to paper.

If you think you might want to give collaging a try, all that is needed to begin is different types of magazines or even sale catalogs, some glue, and scissors. Start by looking for pictures that relate to your story or that strike a cord within you. Sometimes you don't know where the plot is leading until you begin collaging. It can generate ideas, plot points and character traits; inspiring a scene not originally in the story line.

Backboards can consist of poster board, foam core board, a file folder or any sturdy material. Some authors even use a shoe box. If poster board is your choice, it can be cut into a shape that fits your story. For example, if your setting is in a castle you might want to cut the poster board into the shape of a castle. A file folder is another useful backboard because notes can be placed inside it for safe keeping, making it

portable and easy to file. If you are planning a series, a different folder can be use for each book, and then clipped together to keep the storyline clear.

Placing items like buttons, small pine cones, moss, ribbon, sequins or anything related to the story can add depth to the collage, making it 3-D. Another method of achieving a 3-D effect is by folding paper so that accented areas stand up like children's "pop-up" books. Miniatures that represent people or things can also be useful.

Good places to look for items to use in collaging are the Goodwill Store, dollar bins, fabric stores, craft stores or even things of nature in your own backyard. Keep in mind, collaging can be as expensive or as cheap as you want it to be; but remember, it is about the book and not about art.

I encourage you to try collaging your next story. It is easy to get carried away. You might find yourself hooked.

Copyright 2007