

Three Tips To Write Your Children's Book

Hi! I'm Janet Fox. I'm an award-winning author with 25 years of experience in writing and publishing, and I'm a book coach. I know what it feels like to have writing questions and no one to ask.



After years of personal struggle and finally finding success, I've decided to share the things I've learned. I've developed a process to help writers imagine or re-imagine their stories. These 3 tips are your starting point.

Whether you are a brand-new children's book writer or whether you have a stack of manuscripts but don't know what to do next, I'd like to help you find your way.

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The Three Tips:

1. Understand the market

Writing for children is unusual, in that you are writing for both an age range, and for the gatekeepers who put books in the hands of children. You need to understand how the market works and for whom you are particularly writing.

2. Clarify your purpose

You may have a great idea, but can you bring it to fruition? If you understand your purpose in writing your book, you'll have a stronger determination to complete it, and the book will have a definable theme, point, and heart.

3. Build on emotion

There is one thing that engages readers and that is an emotional connection to your story. You need to know how to create that emotion on the page, and learn to build it through the arc of the story, and character agency and change.



1. Understand the market

Children's books are produced, marketed, and sold in two categories:

- age range
- genre

You need to know the age range for whom you are writing, and what genre defines your story.

In addition, you need to be aware that kids under the age of 15 or so do not buy their own books; gatekeepers like teachers and librarians put books in the hands of young readers.

Answer these questions:

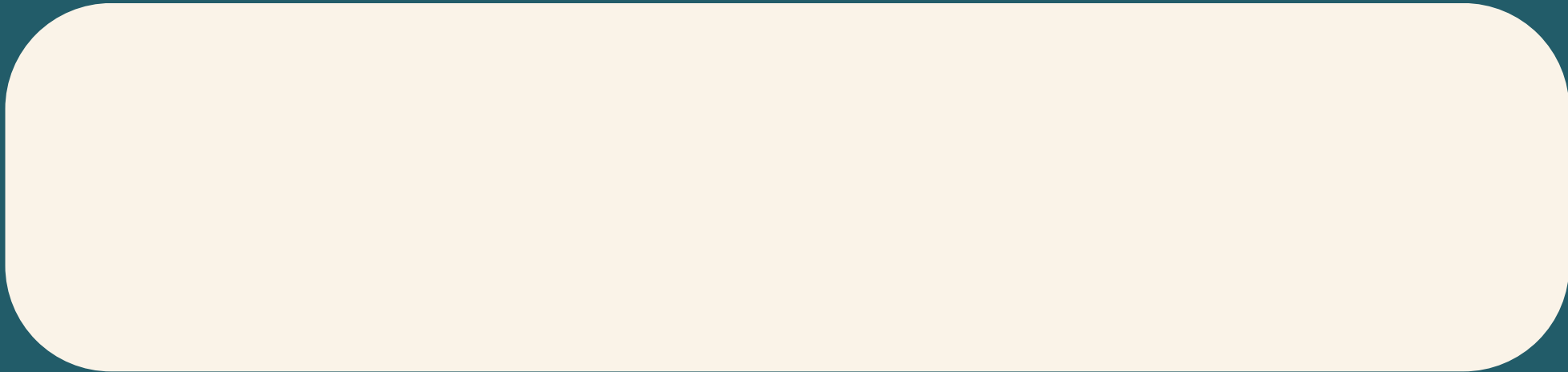
- What is the age of your target audience?

- What is the proposed title of your story?

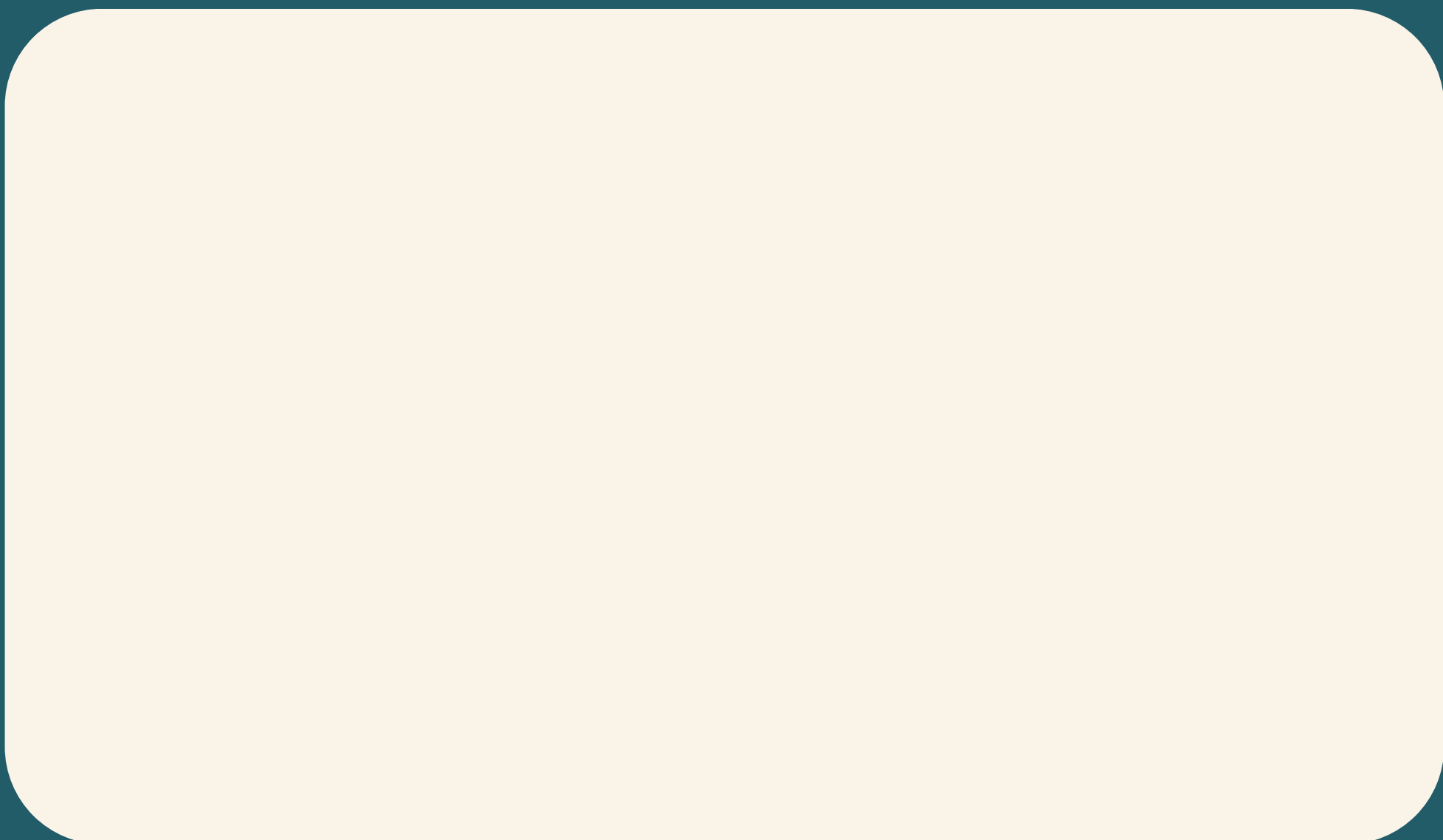
- What is the genre of your story? (For example: historical, contemporary, fantasy, mystery, science fiction, etc.)

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- If you walk into a library, where do you find your book shelved – in which section?



- Can you name at least 3 "comp titles" – books like yours – written in the past 5 years?



"I've worked with Janet throughout the process of writing of my first novel (which is now completed!), and I can't speak highly enough about the value of her coaching. I now have a draft I feel good about revising, and I highly doubt I could have done it without her help!"

Laurie T.

"Janet is generous with her time, intellectual property, and expertise. She is warm and supportive. Her wide experience as an author has given her the background to work with authors of picture books through young adult novels."

Rosemary M.

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2. Clarify your purpose

You may have a fine idea for a story – a killer premise – and an initial plot. So why, then, have you run out of steam on page 35?

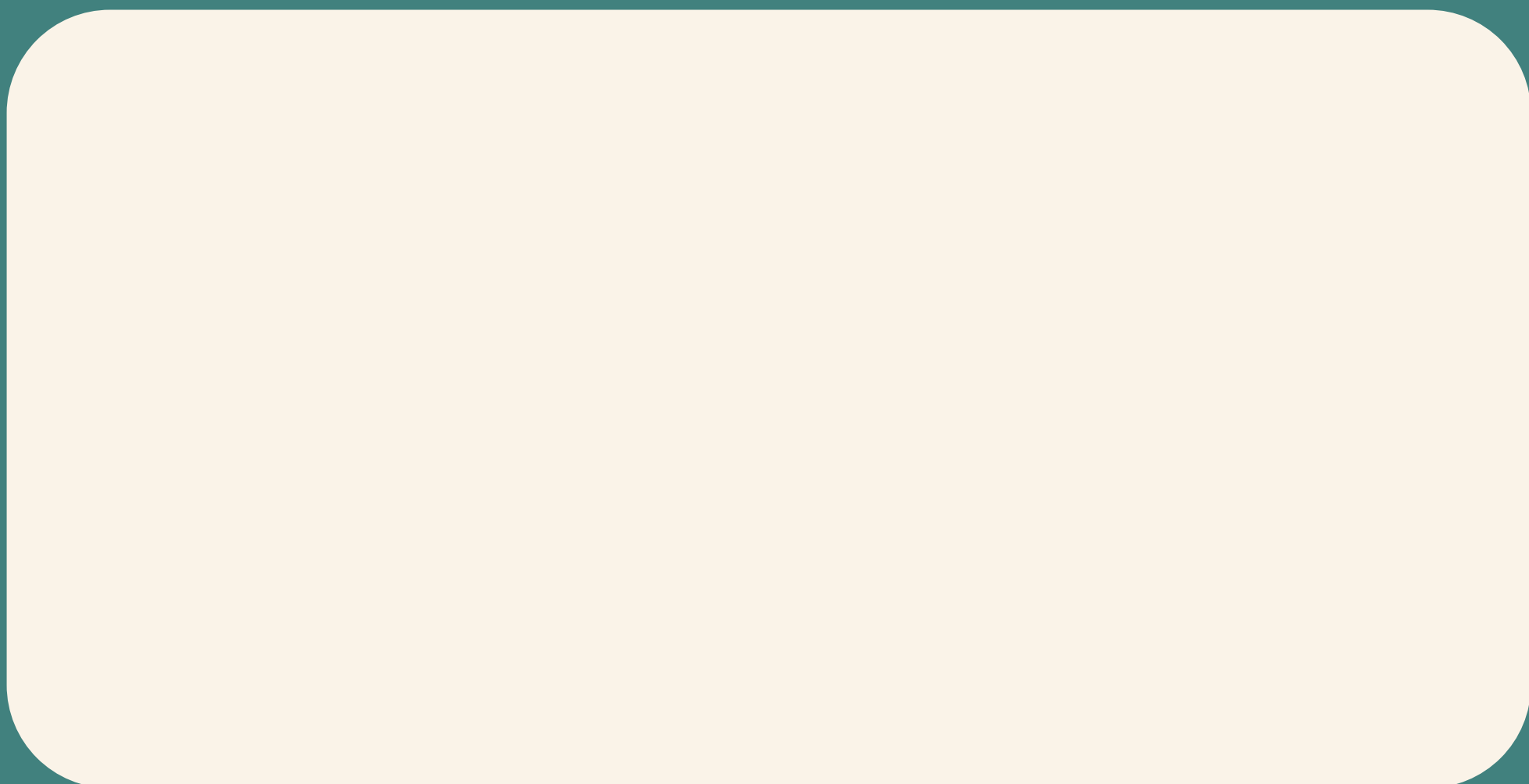
This is not uncommon.

One reason that so many writers abandon their stories early in the process, just about when they reach the beginning of Act 2 – the beginning of the middle – is because they don't have a deep, articulated need to write it.

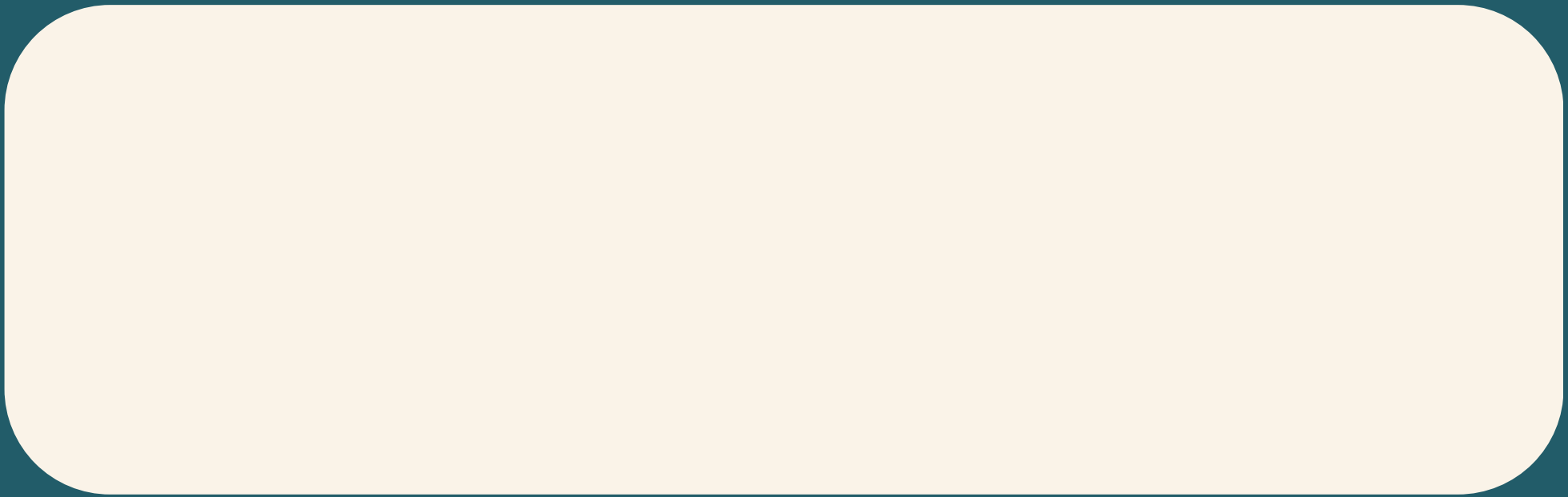
Knowing your "why" is crucial to being able to finish your story.

Answer these questions:

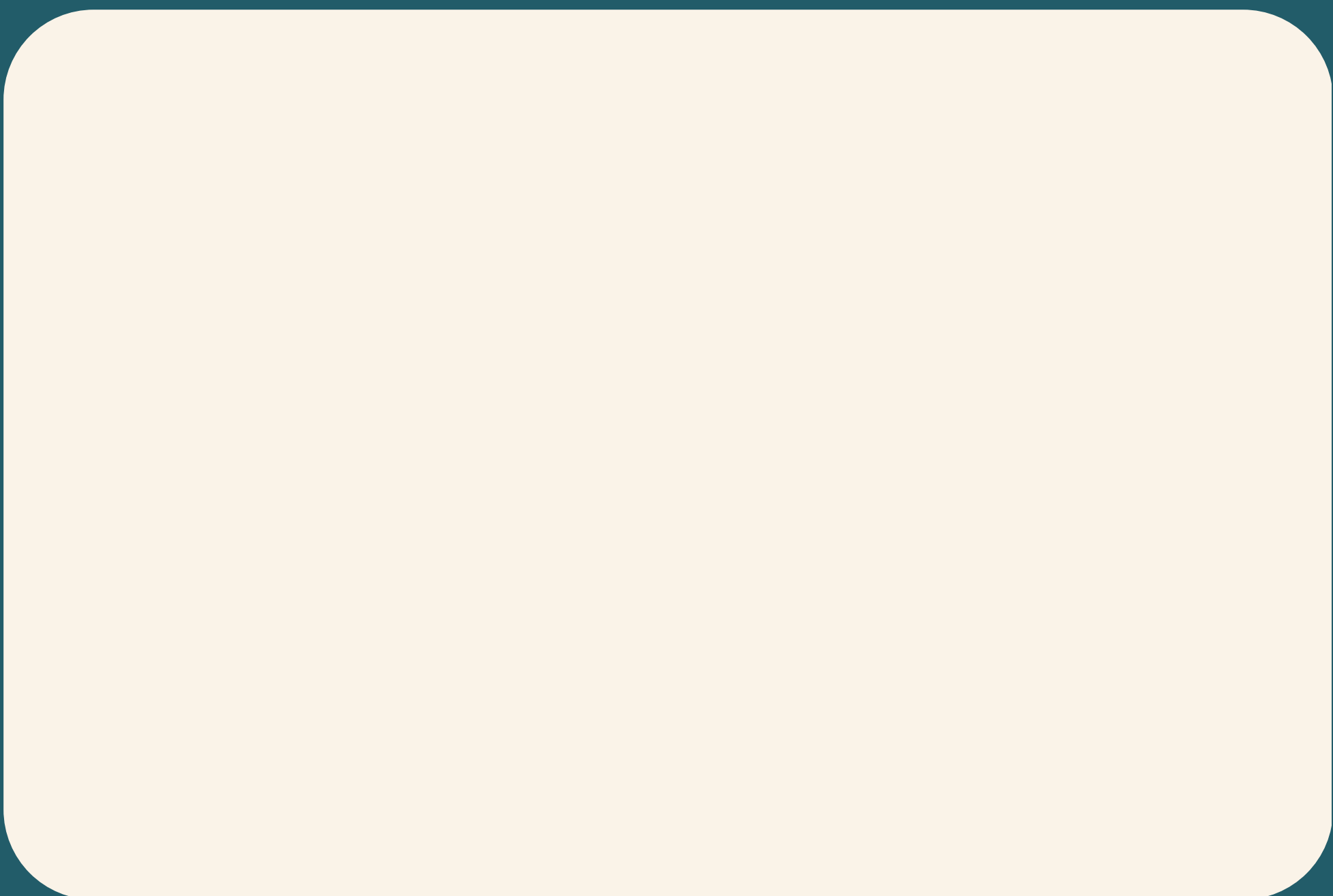
- Why do you want to write this particular book?



- Is there something you want to say about the world? What is it?



- Can you define this as a theme or point to your story?



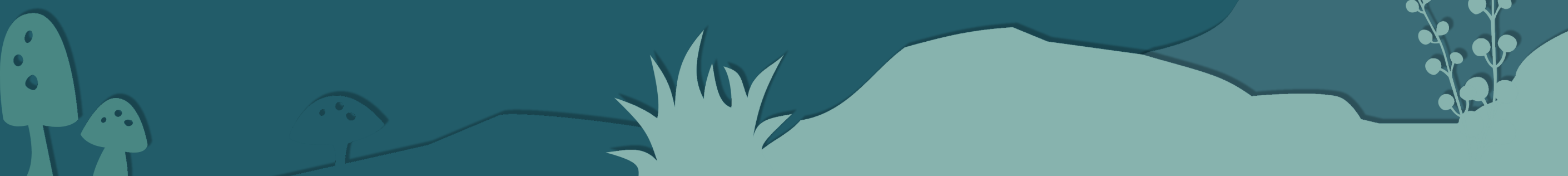
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"Janet whipped me into shape with constructive criticism and a ton of encouragement! She can analyze a piece of writing and, with her considerable experience, recommend exactly what to do to make it engaging and marketable. Overall, working with Janet was, in a word, inspiring!"

Brook M.

"With her extensive background in story writing and publishing, and her gift for seeing a writer's vision for their story, Janet is skilled at both finding a manuscript's weakness and giving suggestions for improvement. There's no doubt working with Janet has turned my YA novel into a stronger story."

Dave W.



3. Build on emotion

Readers connect with what they read through the main character. It's your job as a writer to create a character that is real and compelling.

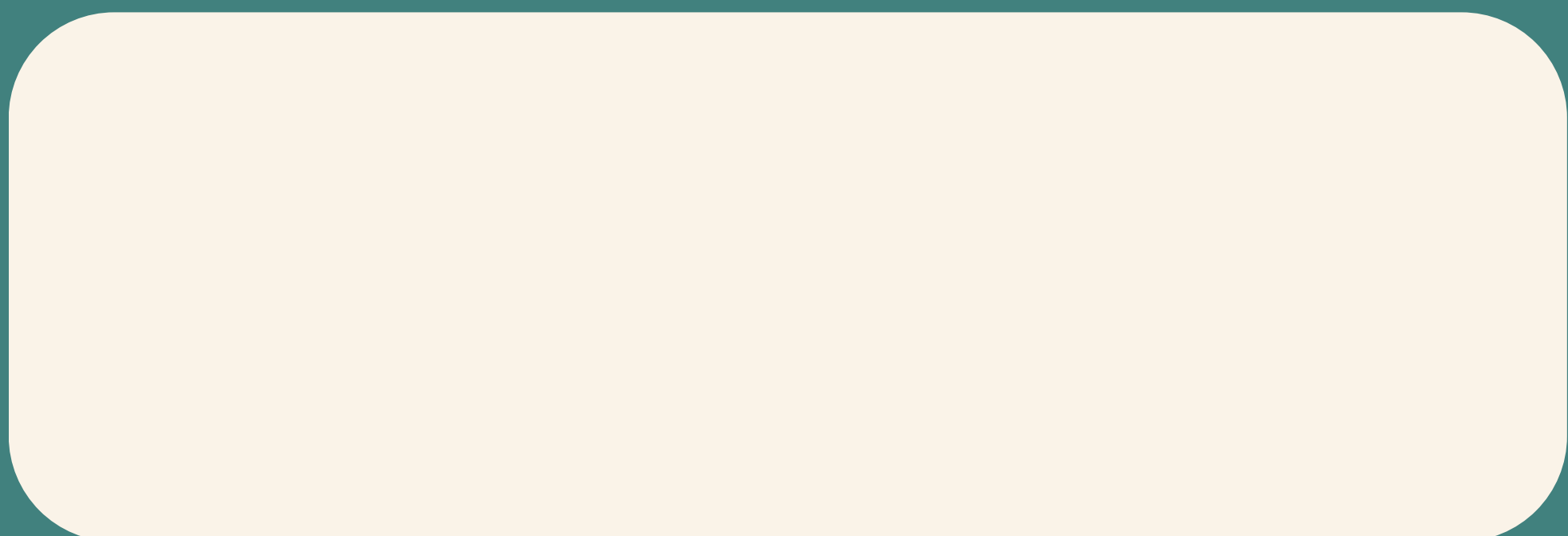
And then to take them on a journey, during which they face serious obstacles, make poor choices, learn as they go, and end up in a different state from the one they were in at the beginning of your story.

This is called giving your character "agency", so that they are active and not bystanders in the story.

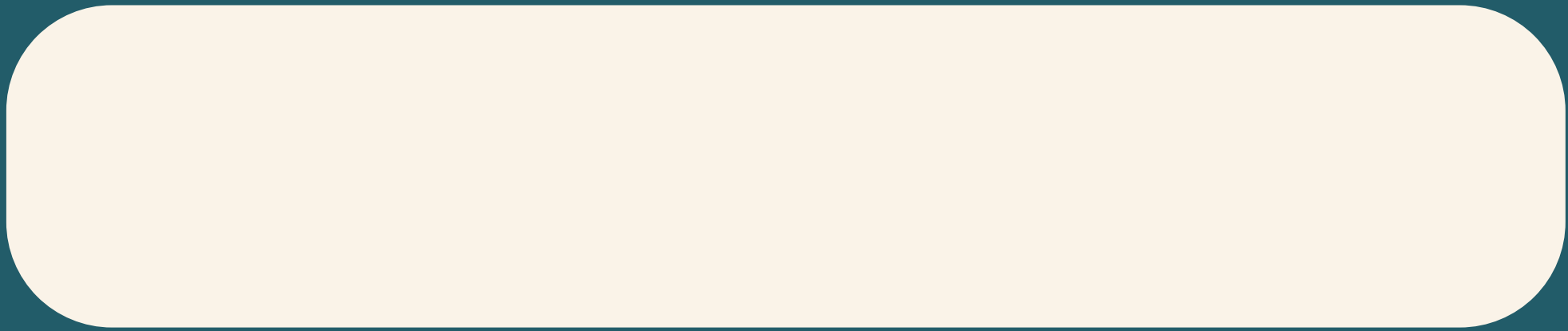
This emotional journey experienced by both your character and your reader is the heart of great storytelling.

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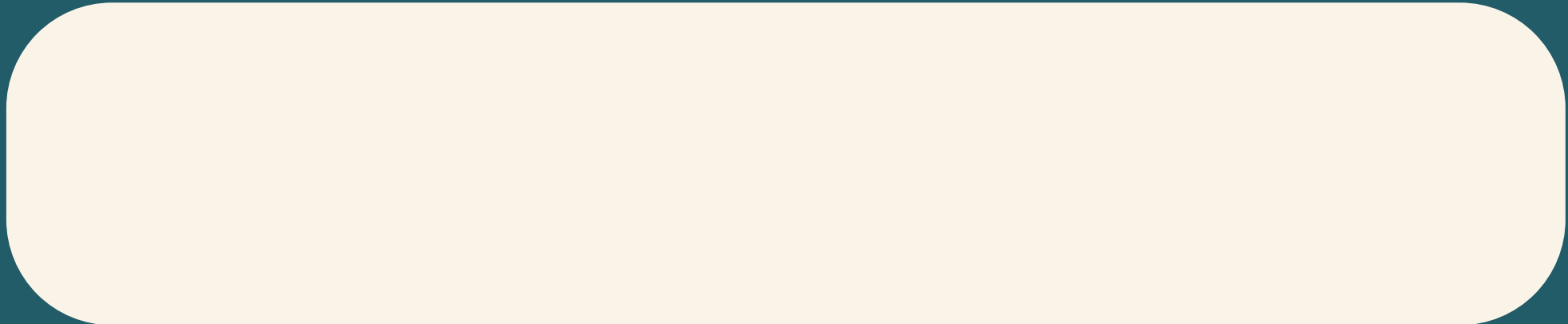
- Who is your main character – age, name, superficial details?



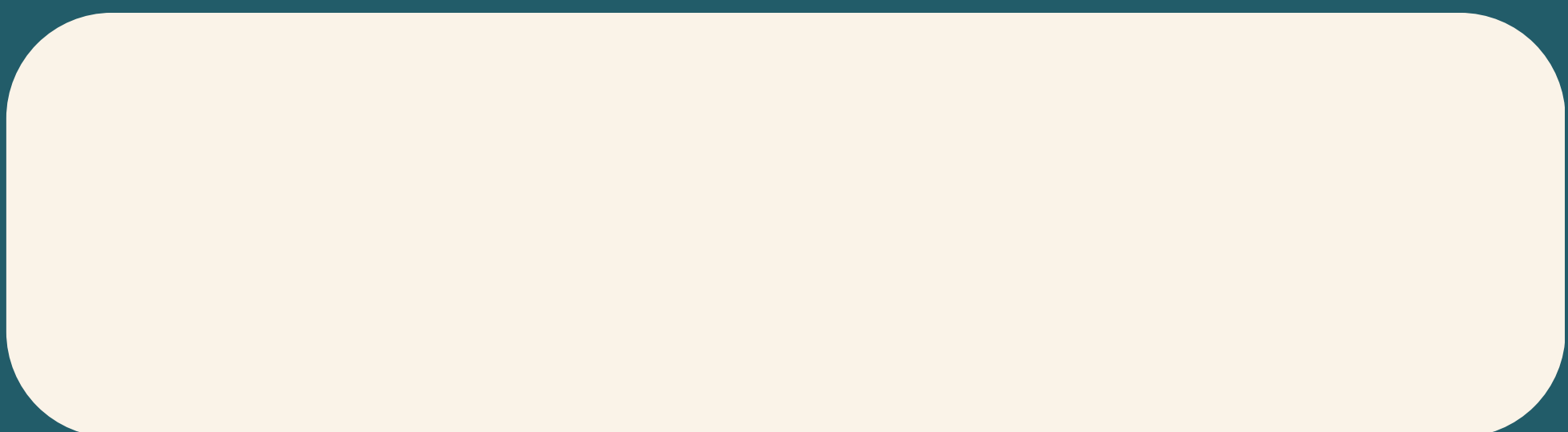
- What do they desire – a longing or lack?



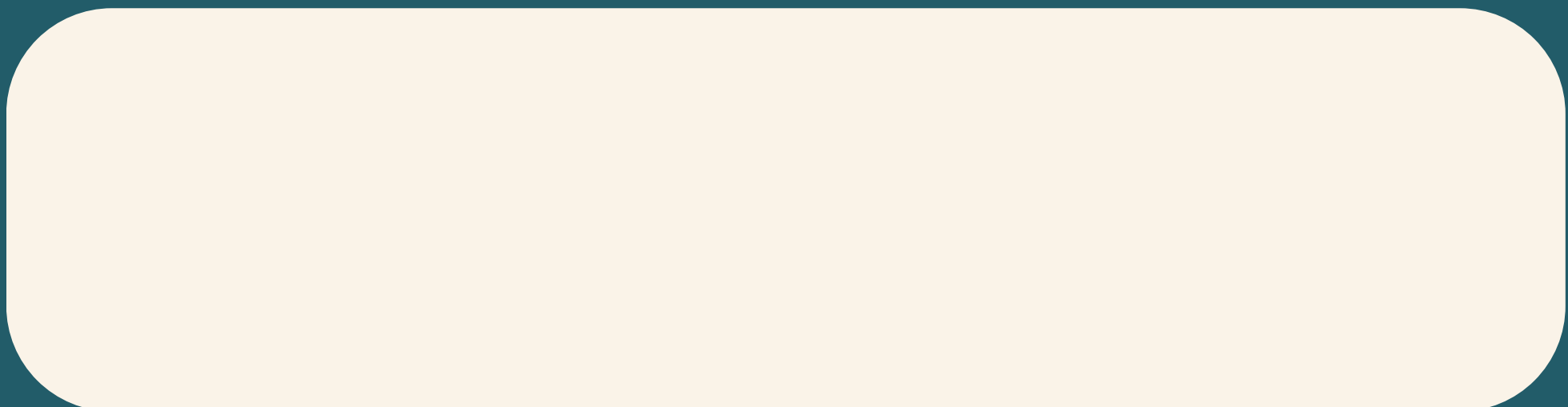
- What do they "want" – the external goal?



- What stands in their way?



- Where do they end up?



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"Janet changed the way I feel about my writing, giving me a whole new level of confidence, enjoyment, and hope for my work in progress. I can't say enough good things about her encouragement, caring, and writing expertise which translated into much better writing in my story."

Susan G.

"Janet is a seasoned, knowledgeable, kind, and supportive coach. As a memoirist transitioning to fiction, the transition was not an easy one. With Janet's guidance I learned the valuable inside/outside outline, provided wonderful guidance and training, and crafted a first draft and look forward to continue to work together to complete a beautiful manuscript."

Judy L.



Need more? Here's what's next:

I offer a growing library of courses to help you improve your writing, navigate today's publishing world, and finally finish your children's book! You can check out all my courses here:

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Fox Tales Courses

Happy Writing!

