

Name \_\_\_\_\_

While writing can be a very satisfying thing to do for its own sake, the act of writing implies that there will also be a reader. Sometimes it's hard to tell whether or not what you have gotten on the page is what you intended to convey. It can be also hard to tell whether or not all the relevant details are on the page, or whether some are still in your mind and you are filling them in when you read in a way that your reader may not be capable of, since they aren't the ones who imagined the story.

One way that professional writers make sure that their stories are working is to use beta readers. A beta reader is someone who reads an early draft of a book or story and provides meaningful, constructive feedback. A comment like, "I liked it" or "this is great" is nice to hear, but is not really helpful in making your story better. Comments like, "I got that the character of Marcie is very insecure, but in this particular scene she seemed really confident, which was inconsistent with her overall character" can help the writer see where something in the story is not working properly or in such a way as to contribute to the writer's desired overall effect.

Choose a story that you have written. For this exercise you will be paired up with another student to be beta readers for each other. Read your classmate's story. Then fill out the questionnaire below and return it to the story's author. When you get back the questionnaire from your beta reader about your own story, carefully consider his or her comments. Do you agree with them? Why or why not? Remember, ultimately your story needs to realize your own vision. It is not necessary to continue altering your story to suit the tastes of one beta reader after another. But if your beta reader does not get something out of your story that is close to what you are hoping that a reader will get out of it, then you may need to reconsider your approach, carefully examining your characters, setting, plot and theme to see how you can make adjustments so that your story has the effect you are working towards.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. What kind of story is this? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is its theme? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What about this story (characters, setting, plot, or the interaction between several elements) best helps to develop the theme in the story?

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4. What is the setting? Is it appropriate to the story? Why or why not?

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5. What is the central problem of the story? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Do you sympathize with the character(s) as they try to solve this problem? Why or why not?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

7. Who is the narrator? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Is this the best point of view from which to tell this story? Why or why not?

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9. Do the major events of the story unfold in a logical progression from the beginning?

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10. Did you lost interest at any point in the story? If so, at what point? If not, what kept you interested?

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11. How does the story end? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Is the ending satisfying? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. What thoughts does the story leave you with? \_\_\_\_\_

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