Writing Literary Fiction: An Introduction

In writing fiction, there are always exceptions to the rules, both in writing it and in discussing it. While experts may have varying opinions on what makes a good story, it is up to you, the author, to understand what norms or rules exist in the writing world. From there, you must decide which rules you use and which you ignore (or resist) to write your story. Just like paintings or any other art form, there are a wide variety of ways to write a story, and no single set of rules to follow.

Conflict and crisis are important to fiction. If characters do not have internal or external conflict to meet, deal with, and overcome (or fail to overcome), then readers may find the story uninteresting. Another way to think of this is “what does this character want?” Maybe they want some coffee and a nap right now, but on a larger scale, they would like to not feel so alone. Maybe they are on their way to grab a coffee and relax at the shop when their worst enemy from high school shows up and needs their help but then….

You get the picture. Deciding what your characters want/need and then creating situations and scenes that put pressure on these characters or place obstacles in front of what your characters want will help you create well-rounded characters and well-rounded scenes.