Notes for *Histories and Stories*; creative writing workshop led by Kate Cleaver on Thursday April 22

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| Slide: |  |
| 1 | Stories and Histories title slide |
| 2 | Fictionalising history: There are two ways to look at it. Through the eyes of a character and about a situation. We will look and have a go at writing both. The character can be in first person and means you can give a personal aspect to the writing. The situation is more like reporting. You are still telling a story and including emotions, but the characters are a vehicle to get the story across, they are not the story itself. |
| 3 | Marie Curie – background.  She known for creating the first xray in the WWII but I want to concentrate on an earlier time.  Marie Curie is remembered for her discovery of radium and polonium, and the implications for cancer treatments.  Born Maria Skłodowska on 7 November 1867 in Warsaw, Poland, she was the youngest of five children of poor school teachers.  After her mother died and her father could no longer support her, she became a governess.  Her sister offered her lodgings in Paris with a view to going to university, she grasped the opportunity and moved to France in 1891. |
| 4 | She went to Sorbonne University in Paris where she read physics and mathematics.  It was in Paris, in 1894, that she met Pierre Curie – a scientist working in the city – and who she married a year later. It was also around this time that she adopted the French spelling of her name – Marie.  The Curies became research workers at the School of Chemistry and Physics in Paris and there they began their pioneering work into invisible rays given off by uranium – a new phenomenon which had recently been discovered by Professor Henri Becquerel.  He had shown that the rays were able to pass through solid matter, fog and photographic film and caused air to conduct electricity.  TASK:  Why change her name’s spelling? What where her motivations?  What does her background say about her?  How determined would she have been to go to university?  TIME: 5 minutes |
| 5 | TASK:  Create a character outline:   * What is their role in the story? Hero/Villain/Guardian/Side-kick? * What do they do/ their occupation? * Physical description, although as Marie Curie is a real person you can use a photo. * Personality – what do you think they are like? * Habits? Do they have any superstitions or repetitive behaviours? * Internal conflicts. What are they worried/angered by? * External conflicts. What are the pressures they are under? * Motivation – what does the character want? * What is the characters epiphany? How will the character be changed by the story?   TIME: 15 minutes |
| 6 | THE STORY  The story – What would Marie tell her dead husband about the deaths involved with their miracle cure?   * In 1906 Marie’s husband and fellow researcher, Pierre, died after being knocked down by a horse and carriage. * She took over his chair as Professor and lectured. * The radium that they created is put into many products including face creams and teas. * In the movie ‘Radioactive’, Marie is seen sleeping with a vial of radium. This increases her exposure but also gives her a link to her dead partner.   TIME: 20 minutes |
| 7 | A situation:  The Rebecca Riots: Background   * During the late 1830s and early 1840s the rural communities of West Wales were in poverty. Poor harvests and rains forced farmers to buy corn at inflated prices to feed their families and their animals. * There was a fall in cattle prices in 1842 with the imports of European meat. * 1842 saw a recovery in harvests, with a large crop but that made the price of corn slump. * Glamorgan’s Ironworks were downsizing meaning that demand for butter, cheese, horses, cows and sheep slumped as well. |
| 8 | The Reasons:  Farmers had a massive reduction in income.  BUT  Although farming rents remained static others did not. Tithe, country rates, poor rates and turnpike tolls rose. In particular they hated the toll-gates.  Each toll gate was operated by a trust who were supposed to maintain a road with the money they took. But most trusts spent the money on other things. |
| 9 | Why Rebecca?  Why Rebecca?  Because the group would chant a line from the Bible:  'And they blessed Rebekah and said unto her, Thou *art* our sister, be thou *the mother* of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them’  Genisis 24:60  The rioters would wear womens clothes and black their faces, or wear a mask.  The accepted leader of the first protest, Thomas Rees, wore women’s clothing, which may have been borrowed from a woman called Rebecca.  However the female clothing may be linked to *Ceffyl Pren* where mock trials were created in order to frighten and punish members of the community. Womens clothing had become linked with justice. |
| 10 | THE TASK  The Story:  Tom Bulin met after a three-year gap, in c.1842, to restart the Rebecca Riots in order to destroy the toll gate by the Mermaid Tavern in St Clears.  What if he had a conversation a few nights before trying to persuade a farmer who was losing everything to join him? A farmer who had to use the gate every day to move his cattle and was watching what little money he made go into the hands of a trust that didn’t maintain the road.  TIME: 30 minutes |
| 11 | What to think about…   * What were the roads like? * How poor where the farmers? * If the female clothing were seen as justice, how would that make the wearer feel? * Two Welsh men talking over pints, what kind of language would be used? * What would the pub look like and what would it smell like? * What would the tollgate look like? |
| 12 | Conclusion/final slide   * How close should we stick to the historical record? * When is it okay to change something for dramatic effect? * Fictionalising history automatically changes it. * What is the essence of the story? Is that something that can be seen? |