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Try telling your love story for this Valentine's Day

DAPHNE LARKIN
FOR THE TIMES

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, consider ditching the store-bought card and box of chocolates and give your sweetheart something far more memorable — your love story.

Of course, you have to write it — but don't groan because it's easy, it's fun and it will be treasured. It might even find its way into the hands of your grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Imagine that. All of us are enthralled with love stories, especially true ones. Think of the late country singers Johnny Cash and June Carter who celebrated their love with spirited and soulful duets. Their love story was so passionate and poignant that Hollywood made the movie "Walk the Line" about it. Or think of well-known authors who've written their own love stories.

Amy Bloom wrote about preparing to lose her beloved husband in "In Love: A Memoir of Love and Loss" (2022). Kathryn Schulz told of finding the love of her life at the same



Courtesy photo

With their memoir writing instructor, Daphne Larkin (middle), Brevard writers Angie Hathaway (left) and Wendy H. Gill (right) toast everyone who wants to write their love story for Valentine's Day.

time she lost her father in "Lost and Found" (2022). And, in "Eat, Pray, Love" (2006), Elizabeth Gilbert took us on a journey through Italy, India and finally Indonesia, where she met the man she would marry.

Now that love is in the air, it's time to write your love story.

Grab pen and paper or get to a computer! Here are some ideas about how to

create the best Valentine's Day gift ever.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR LOVE STORY

Write a "Tiny" Love Story: Since you're not writing "Anna Karenina," Leo Tolstoy's sprawling 800-page epic tale of love, you'll want to compress your story. All you need to write is 500 to 1,000 words. That's one to two single-spaced pages. If you get carried away, go for it,

but remember the clock is ticking and giving your valentine a "tiny" love story is better than not giving him or her one at all.

Write Down the Major Turning Points in Your Love Story

The simplest way to tell your love story is to write down the important things that happened: how you met, the moment you knew you were in love, the proposal, your engagement, wedding and honeymoon (if you had them), and your life together. Then, write a short paragraph about each event. Finally, write an opening and closing paragraph to "bookend" your story. Be sure to express your feelings.

Write About a Defining Moment

Another way to tell your love story is to focus on one moment. Perhaps it was your first impression of your sweetheart, or when you realized you'd fallen in love, or even reflecting back on a long life spent together. Whatever you choose to write about, be a movie camera showing the scene. How to do that? Describe the setting of the pivotal moment: were you

hiking, cooking a meal, enjoying the beach? What did you say to each other? Write the words! Were you overcome with emotion? Write how you felt! Writing about how you felt breathes life into your story, keeps its heart beating, and transforms a dull draft into an extraordinary one.

Write Your Sweetheart A Love Letter

In this letter, tell her or him whatever you want to say.

You could write about any of the ideas above or you could just let your emotions run wild and express them.

Be passionate!

Be emotional!

Be poetic!

Express your intense love like the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning did for her husband Robert Browning in her love sonnet "How Do I Love Thee?" ("Let me count the ways..."). Of course, you sign your love letter, with "Love," or "Love Always," or "Forever Yours" (and your name).

Polishing Your Love Story

Once you've got the first draft, which memoirist Anne Lamott describes

with a six-letter-word this newspaper won't print — it's time to edit it. Editing is simply rewriting and revising your story until it's polished and shines like a sparkling jewel. Even professional writers, rewrite and rewrite and rewrite, as I have with the story you are reading.

Now that you've written, rewritten and edited your tiny love story to perfection, type or write it in long-hand on beautiful paper.

Then, put it in a decorative folder, wrap a red ribbon around it and slide a red rose under the bow. Voila! A beautiful gift for your sweetheart! Since you've already gone over-the-top, why not present your love story to your lover — of one year or 50 — over a candle-lit dinner with a bottle of French champagne? More love will follow. Guaranteed.

Daphne Larkin's next memoir writing class will be held at the Transylvania County Library on Mondays from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. beginning March 25 through May 13. On May 24, the class will have a public reading. For more information, contact Daphne Larkin at daphne@daphnelarkin.com.