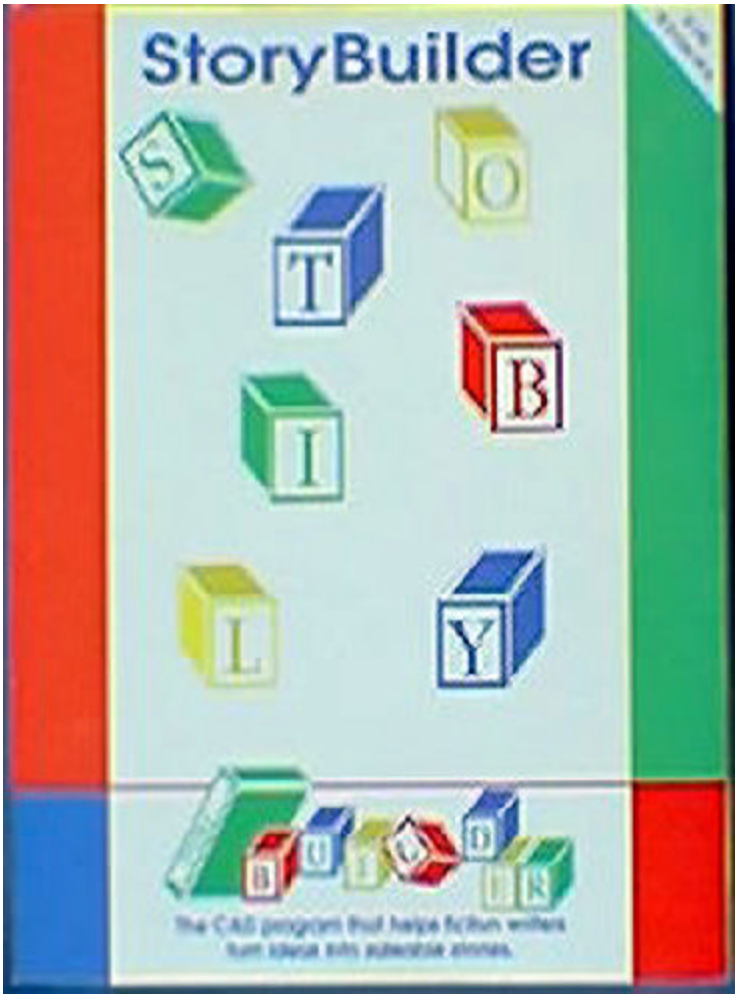
StoryBuilder User Manual



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Using This Manual

The User's Guide uses standard formatting conventions to make it easier to understand what's meant. Here's a summary of these conventions.

Displaying Menu Options

References to options listed on StoryBuilder menus are displayed as bold text:

Select **Open** from the **File** menu.

Displaying Specific Keys

References to specific keys are enclosed in brackets. A plus sign shows multiple keys which should be pressed at one time:

Enter [Ctrl+M]

(press and hold the Ctrl key while also pressing the capital M key.)

Displaying Mouse Commands

StoryBuilder uses only the left mouse button. When the manual refers to a Click operation, it means 'Click on the object with the left mouse button and then release the button':

Click on the Add control

Displaying User Input

To indicate text that should be entered directly as printed, it will be displayed in a different font:

Type `SNOWWHIT`.STB and click OK

Italics will be used for anything you type yourself:

Select **Open** from the **File** menu and type in your *filename.*

Getting Help

Before you call technical support, try the following steps. They will often lead you to a quicker solution to your problem.

1. Read this manual for answers to any questions you might have. The StoryBuilder User's Guide is your most complete source of information.

2. Read the "Read Me" file. This Notepad file is available by clicking on the "Read Me" icon in the StoryBuilder group. The document contains information that was provided too late to be printed in the manual.

3. For Help on a specific control, press F1 with the cursor on that control. The information in the manual is similar to that in the Help file, but often the links in the Help file will assist you in better understanding the problem.

If you still can't find the answer to your questions, contact Seven Valleys Software at:

Phone: (717) 235-8929
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. M-F EST

Or your can write us at:

Seven Valleys Software
P.O. Box 159
Glen Rock, PA 17327-0159

Please write us with ideas or suggestions for improvements. We want to make StoryBuilder the best possible tool to help you achieve your fiction writing goals.

Preface

Writing fiction is tough.

Today's readers and viewers are bombarded with television, movies, radio, books, magazines—entertainment in an abundance which existed in no previous age. This jaded audience demands only the best. There are also more people writing than ever before. The competition is fierce.

Your stories need to be the best they can be if you want to see them published.

Effective fiction needs more than style and imagination. Stories need a solid structural foundation. The bricks and mortar are the elements of problem, characterization, setting, and plot. The storyteller needs to learn how to build a strong and level foundation.

Writers applying story craft have only two choices.

They can write, and then revise their prose by analyzing what's right or wrong with it. This is the spirit of Laurence Sterne: "I write the first sentence and trust God for the next." For some writers, this is the only way. They may feel that the only way to discover the story they want to tell is to write it. And certainly all stories, no matter how they're hatched, need revision.

Or they can follow the advice of John Gardner: "When you write a novel, start with a plan— a careful plot outline, some notes to yourself on characters and settings, particular important events, and implications of meaning. In my experience, many young writers hate this step; they'd rather just plunge in. That's O.K., up to a point, but sooner or later the writer has to figure out what he's doing."

That's where StoryBuilder comes in. StoryBuilder is a CAD (computer-aided design) tool which helps you rapidly create outlines that can be turned into effective, saleable stories. The elements StoryBuilder works with are the pieces of good fiction: realistic, three dimensional characters who are engaged in meaningful and gripping problems; dramatic and suspenseful plots; and settings that appeal to the senses.

Some people worry that after the story is outlined there will no longer be any reason to write it, or that a story written from an outline will at best be mechanical and stereotyped.

We believe that effective outlining with StoryBuilder frees rather than stifles creativity. Outlining shouldn't be excruciating work; it should be fun. Mistakes in a StoryBuilder outline aren't costly; you don't fill your trash can with them. You're free to change and revise, to make mistakes, and to experiment.

Contents

StoryBuilder holds all the pieces of your story outline in place and in position, so you can work on any part of your story at any time. Just as a sculptor approaches his work from any direction, you can do the same: refine a character here, add a plot point there, think about a problem's resolution. You'll always know where these pieces fit into the overall story. In the words of Robert Heinlein, "An engineer doesn't stick a bathtub on the wing of his plane just because he has one laying around." You can't design a story that way, either. Structure determines what goes in, what gets left out, what's missing, and what goes where. StoryBuilder helps you to achieve your story's structure.

StoryBuilder lets you focus on each story element separately, which simplifies the outlining process. Storybuilder provides over two thousand suggestions for dozens of story elements, in the form of pull-down lists of choices. These suggestions aren't there to limit your imagination, but to encourage it; our goal is to eliminate writer's block. We believe that every story idea can be developed into a complete outline, ready for you to apply the magic of the written word.

We hope you enjoy StoryBuilder and find it useful to your craft.

Table of Contents

Installing StoryBuilder

To run StoryBuilder, you need:

An IBM compatible PC running Microsoft® Windows™ or Windows™ 95.

A minimum of 3MB of disk space.

A mouse or other pointing device.

To install StoryBuilder on your hard drive, follow these steps:

1. Insert the installation diskette in your 3.5" diskette drive (normally drive A.). If you require 5.25" diskettes for installation, please contact Seven Valleys Software.

2. From the Program Manager, pull down the **File** menu on the menu bar and choose **Run**.

3. Type `a:install` (if you're installing from drive A) and click on **OK**. The system will display an installation form and will prompt you for several pieces of information:

   A. **Please enter your name:**

   Enter your first and last name, for example:

   ```
   John Doe
   ```

   B. **Enter the serial number from your registration card:**

   Locate the registration card in your shipping material and enter the six-digit license serial number from it, for example:

   ```
   000001
   ```

   This number is saved in StoryBuilder's STORYB.PRF Preferences file and is displayed whenever you start StoryBuilder, or from the **About StoryBuilder** option on the **Help** menu.

   C. **Please enter the drive and directory where you wish StoryBuilder to be installed:**

The default directory **C:\STORYB** is displayed. You can change this to any directory you wish.

4. When the installation is complete, a "Read Me" document will be displayed. Please read it carefully. It may contain last minute changes which are not included in this manual. The installation will then exit and leave back at the Program Manager.

The Program Manager now contains a StoryBuilder group of icons. There are three icons in the group, one for StoryBuilder, one for the 'Read Me' file you just browsed, and one for StoryBuilder's Help. If you are re-installing StoryBuilder, you may see two of each of these
icons.

5. Double click on the StoryBuilder program icon. The StoryBuilder program will be launched and a **Loading StoryBuilder** form will be displayed.

6. To exit StoryBuilder, you can either select **Exit** from the **File** menu on the Story form's menu bar, or you can select **Close** from the form's Control Button.

If you have any difficulties or need different density diskettes for installation, please contact Seven Valleys Software (see the topic "Getting Help" in this manual.)

Navigating in StoryBuilder

This chapter explains how to:

- Start and stop StoryBuilder
- Use StoryBuilder's menus, forms, and tabs
- Read and write StoryBuilder story outline files
- Get online help
- Print your story outlines
- Use shortcuts to speed your story development

We recommend reading this chapter first. It will save you time and confusion when you begin using StoryBuilder.

Starting and Stopping StoryBuilder

To start StoryBuilder, click on the StoryBuilder icon in the StoryBuilder group on your Windows desk top. A **Loading StoryBuilder** form will be displayed and StoryBuilder will load; this takes a few seconds so please be patient.

You can leave StoryBuilder at any time by either selecting **Exit** from the **File** menu on any form's menu bar, or **Close** from the form's Control Button.

StoryBuilder follows regular Windows conventions. The major forms (Story, Problem Definition, Character, Setting and Plot Points) can be re-sized, maximized or minimized to icons.

Menu Bar

The Menu bar is located just below the title bar on each StoryBuilder form.

Use the entries on the Menu bar to switch between different forms (**Story**, **Problem**, **Character**, **Setting**, and **Plot**.)

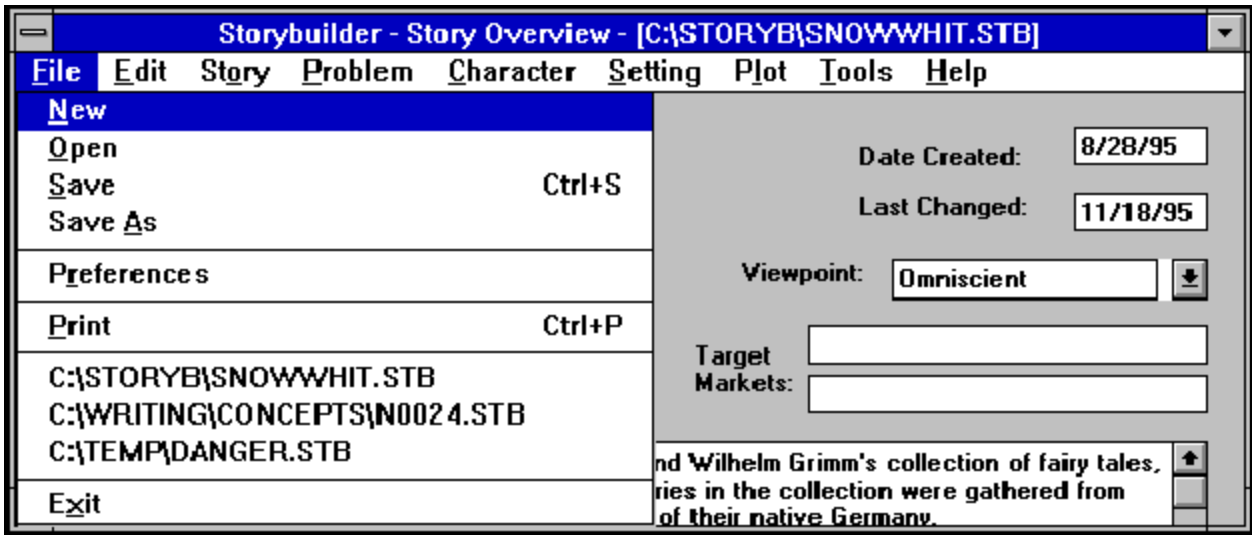
The **File**, **Edit**, **Tools** and **Help** Menu bar entries provide pull-down menus of commands and forms which provide aids in building and maintaining outlines.

All of these options are discussed in separate sections of this manual. The **File**, **Edit** and **Help** menus are discussed in this chapter, "Navigating in StoryBuilder." The **Story**, **Problem**, **Character**, **Setting** and **Plot** forms each have their own chapter, as does the **Tools** menu.

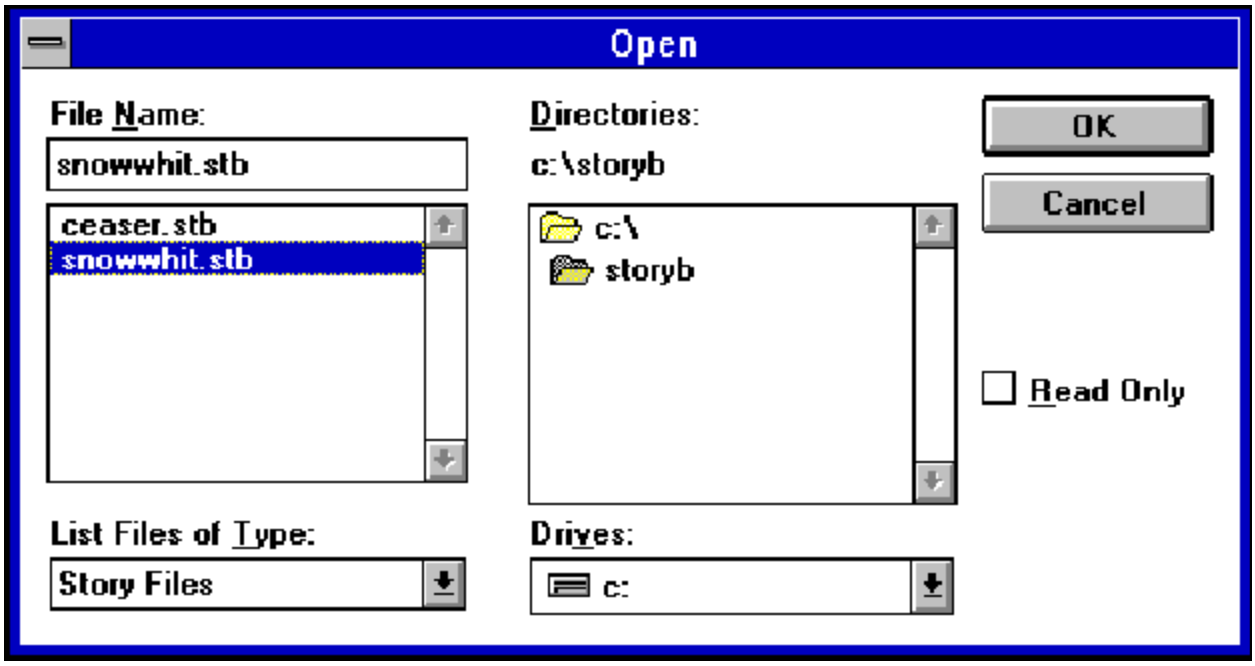
File Menu

Use the **File** menu to:

New	Create a new and empty file.
Open	Open an existing file.
Save	Save the current file.
Save As	Save a file under a new name.
Preferences	Set StoryBuilder defaults and options.
Print	Print or export an outline.
...	Re-open any of the last three files you accessed.
Exit	Leave StoryBuilder.



Reading and Writing Outlines



StoryBuilder keeps each story outline in a disk file when it is not open.

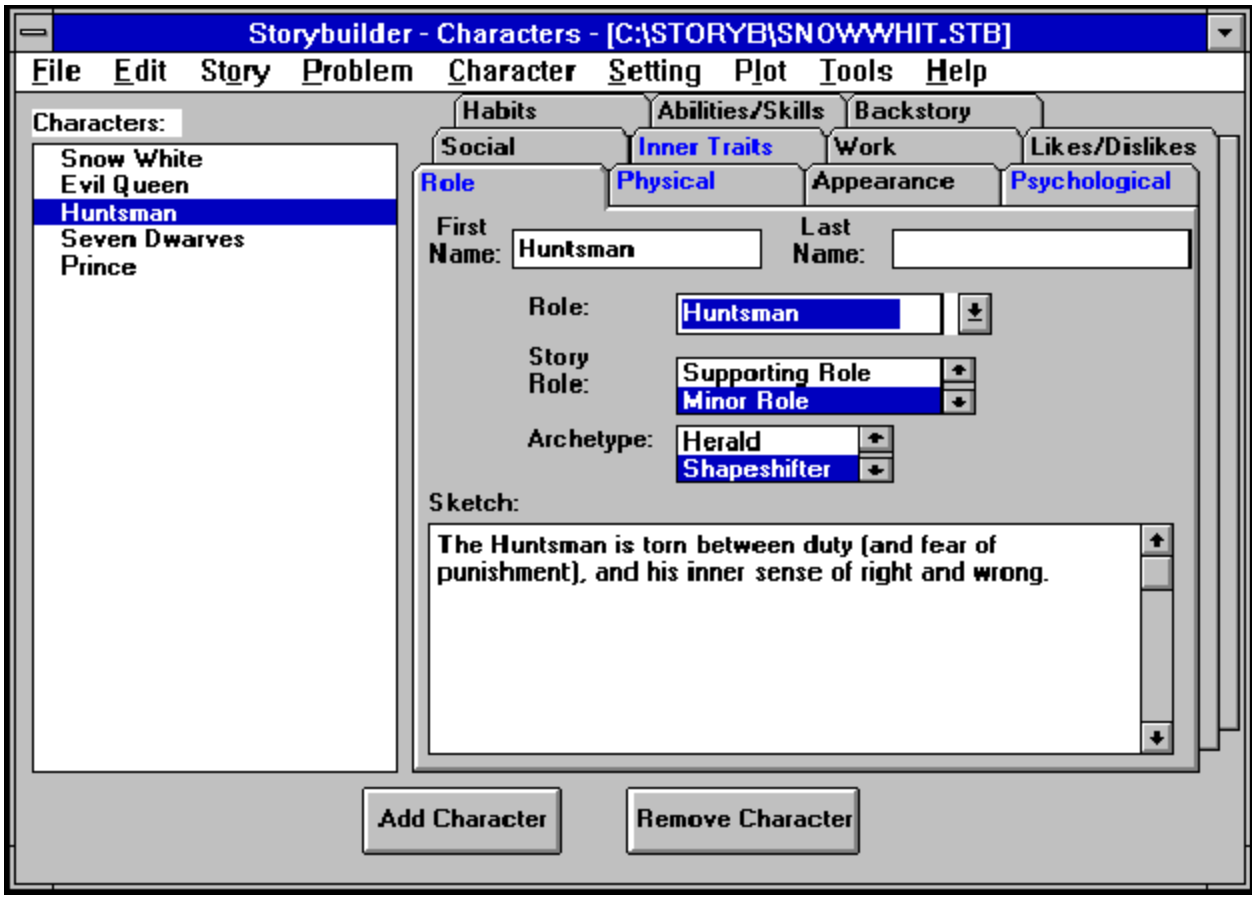
These are regular DOS filenames, not the new longer Windows 95® filenames. The filename can contain from one to eight characters, and is followed by an optional three character file extension, with a period (.) between the filename and extension. The filename can consist of letters, numbers, or any of the following special characters: (!@#$%()-{}~). It cannot contain spaces. A StoryBuilder outline always uses a filename extension of .STB. If you don't key in the .STB extension, StoryBuilder will add it for you. These are regular DOS files and can be copied, moved, etc.

Use the **Open** command on the **File** menu to identify which outline you wish to work on, and the **Save As** command to identify what to call a new outline when you're done with it. The **Save** command will save the file with the same name it with which it was opened or previously saved.

Only one story outline can be open at a time. If you open a new file with the **New** command on the **File** menu, or use the **Open** command to open an existing file, you'll be prompted to save the current file, and the new file will replace it in memory.

If you've already installed StoryBuilder, you may wish to load the `SNOWWHIT.STB` story outline (found in the directory you specified during StoryBuilder's installation) at this time and try some of the commands discussed in the rest of this chapter.

Tabs and Lists



To switch to a particular form or to pull down a sub-menu, click on the entry on the Menu bar, or key [Alt+key] where [key] is the underscored letter on the menu bar. For example, keying [Alt+C] would take you to the **Character** form (see example.)

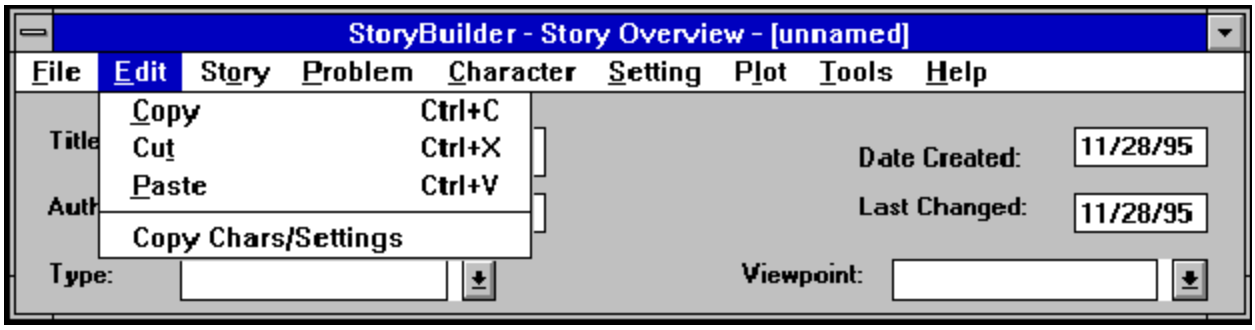
The **Problem**, **Character**, **Setting**, and **Plot** forms all have a similar layout. On the left-hand side of the form is a list of problems, characters (as in this example), settings, or plot points. You can select a particular item from the list by clicking on it with the mouse, or by using the up and down arrow keys from the Problem Summary, character's First Name or Last Name, Setting Summary or Plot Point Summary. For example, clicking on `Huntsman` on the Characters list caused this character's folder to be displayed on the right hand side of the form.

The Add command button at the bottom of the form will add a new item to the list, and the Delete command button will remove the selected item.

The right hand side of the **Problem**, **Character**, **Setting** and **Plot** forms is a tabbed multiple-page

collection of information for the currently selected problem, character, location or plot point. The pages are labelled on the tabs. For example, on the **Character** form the tab labels are **Role**, **Physical**, **Appearance**, **Psychological**, etc. Clicking on a particular tab label will bring that tab to the front. You can also navigate between the tabs with the right and left or up and down arrow keys. The tab labels of tabs that are empty are in black type; tabs that have been keyed into are in light blue (on a color display).

Edit Menu



Use the **Edit** menu to:

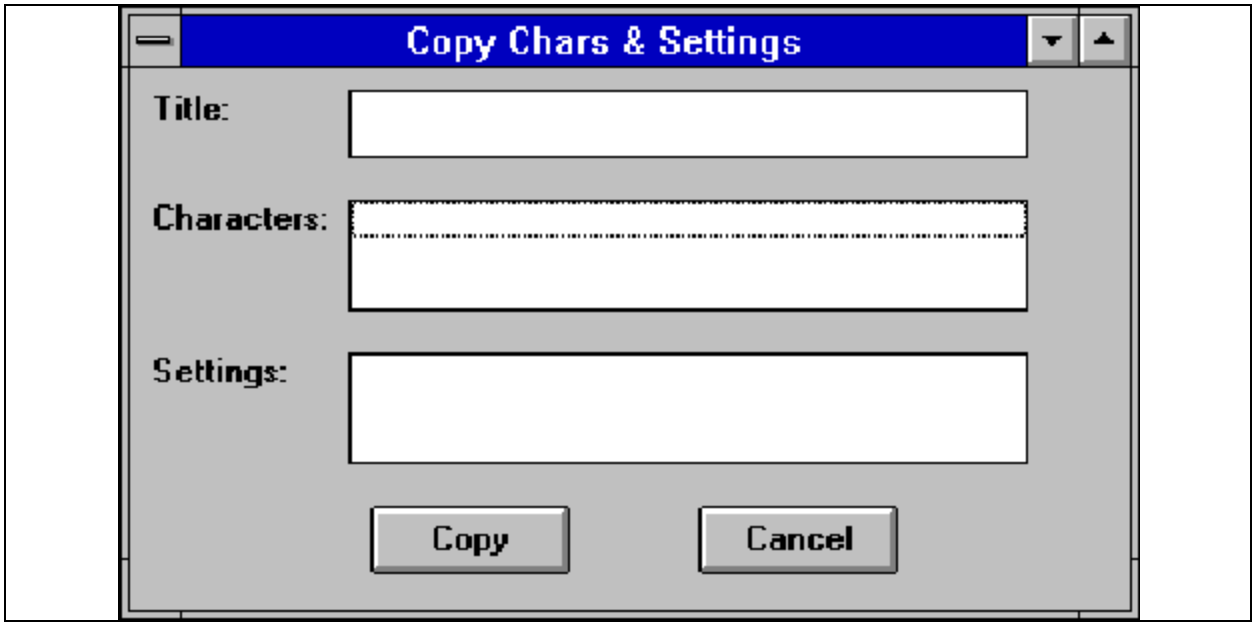
Cut	Move text you have selected to the clipboard and delete it.
Copy	Move selected text to the clipboard but leave it intact.
Paste	Copy the contents of the clipboard into your document.
Copy Chars & Settings	Copy characters and/or settings from other outlines into the one you're currently editing (see "Copy Chars & Settings" for details.)

Select text for **Cut** or **Copy** by positioning to the beginning of the text you're interested in, pressing and holding down the left mouse button, and dragging the mouse to the end of the desired text. When you release the mouse button the selected area will remain highlighted.

Text may be cut or copied from other places in your StoryBuilder file, and from or to any other Windows program which supports cut and paste.

There are shortcut keys for the cut and paste entries, as shown in the example. See "Shortcut Keys" for more information.

Copy Chars & Settings

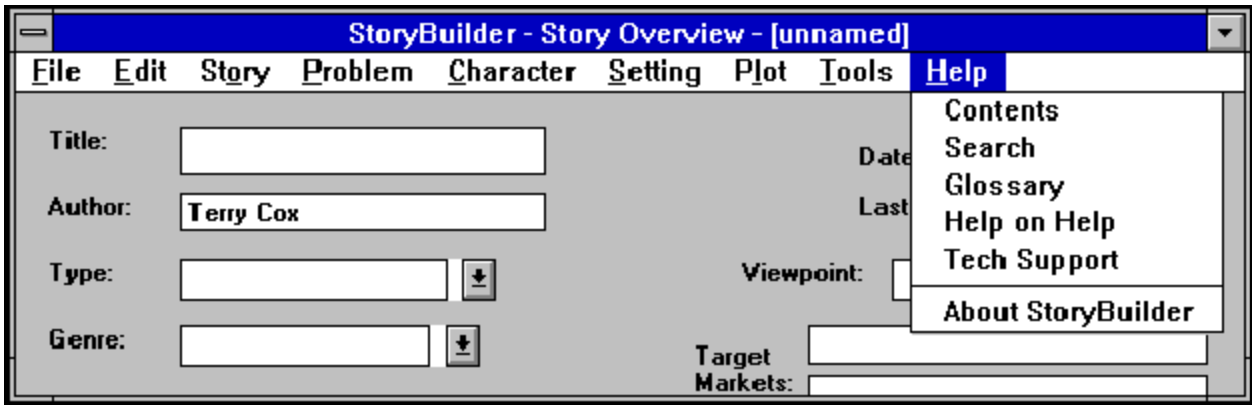


Copy Chars & Settings allows you to copy character and/or setting outline entries from another story outline into the outline you're currently editing. This is useful for sequels and projects involving series characters.

Copy Chars & Settings is invoked from the **Edit** menu on any form. An **Open** dialog box is first displayed which prompts you for the name of the .STB outline file that you wish to copy from. After you enter the filename, StoryBuilder will read the story's outline file and display the title and two lists on the **Copy Chars & Settings** form. One list contains the names of all the characters in the outline you selected, and the other contains all of the settings.

From these two lists, select any characters and settings you wish to copy by clicking on them. You can select as many characters and/or settings as you wish. Once you've entered your selections, click on the **COPY** button. If you don't wish to merge any of the characters or settings into your current outline, click on the **CANCEL** button.

Help Menu

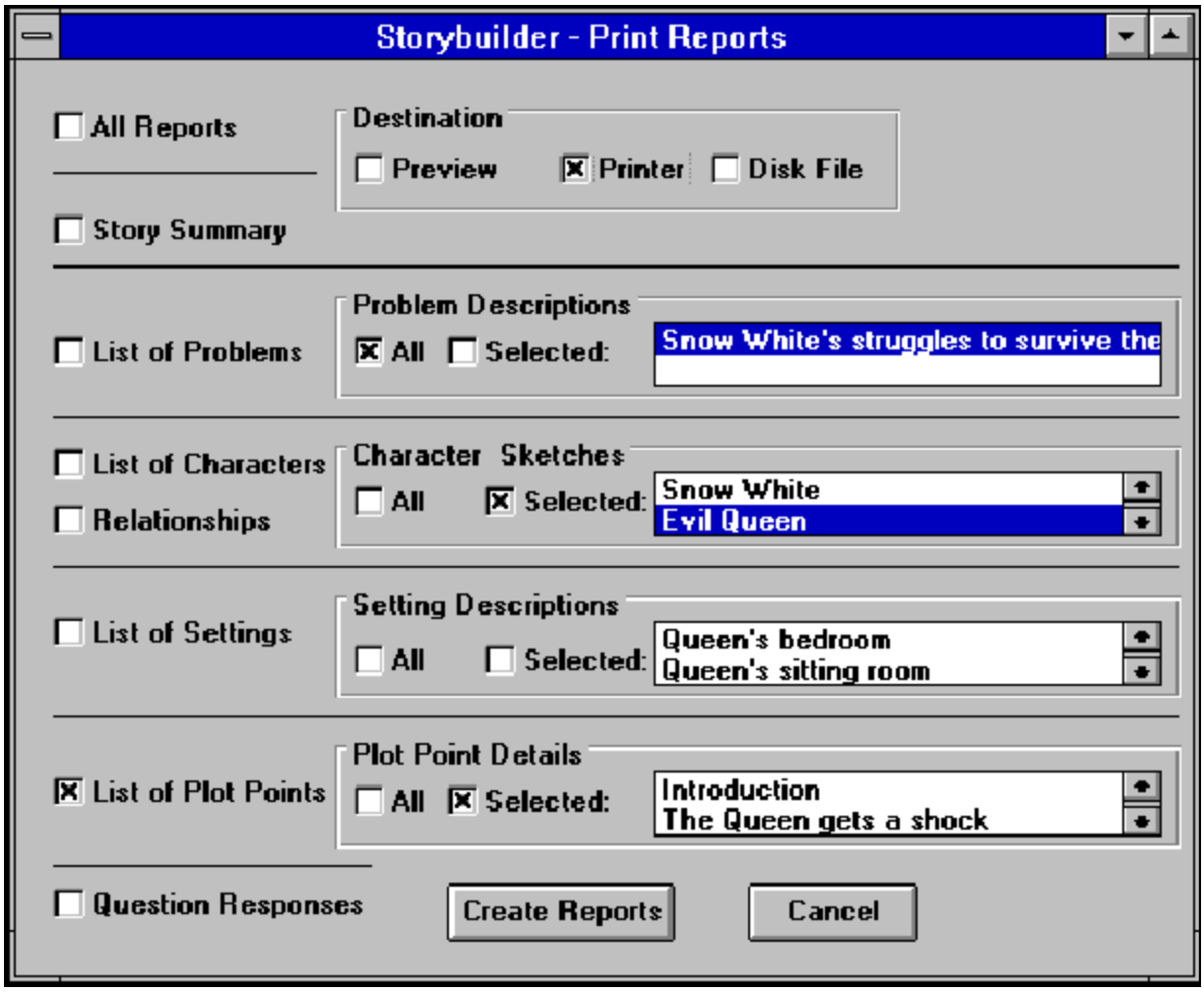


The **Help** menu can be reached from any major form. It displays the following items:

Contents	Browse StoryBuilder Help in an orderly, hierarchical fashion.
Search	Search for a particular Help topic when you know what it's called.
Glossary	Provide a list of terms relating to the structural aspects of story telling.
Help on Help	Obtain Windows Help about how to use the Help facility.
Tech Support	Find out how to obtain technical assistance for StoryBuilder.
About StoryBuilder	Display release and license number information for StoryBuilder.

Help is also available for the controls on StoryBuilder's forms by pressing F1 at any time. The currently selected control's help topic will be displayed. For example, to obtain help on Problem Type on the **Problem** tab of the **Problem Definition** form, click somewhere on the Problem Type control and then press F1.

Printing and Exporting Reports



Use the **Print** option on the **File** menu to change print options, specify which reports you wish to print, and to print the reports.

Destination — Use this option to select where to route the reports you print.. Preview will display the reports on your screen where you can scroll and browse through them. Print will direct your reports to your default printer. Disk file will write the reports to the disk file of your choice where you can import them into your word processor..

All Reports — Select all of the reports StoryBuilder offers.

Story Summary — This option will cause the information from the **Story** form to be printed.

Problems, Characters, Settings, and Plot Points	Horizontal lines separate available reports for each of these forms based. The report formats are similar for each type and are described below.
List of	Produce a summary report of the problems, characters, etc.
All	Generates a detailed report for all of the outline elements of that type. For example, clicking All under Problems will print a detailed report for each problem you've defined on the **Problem** form. This is the same as clicking the Selected button and then clicking on all of the items on the list to the right of Selected.
Selected	Use this option in conjunction with the list of elements immediately to its right. Select one or more elements on the list by clicking on the ones you want. Clicking the **Selected** button will print a detailed report for each of the elements you've selected.
Character Relationships	Print a report from any information you've entered on the **Character Relationships** form (from the **Character** menu.)
Question Responses	Print any responses you've typed to **Key Questions**.

Select **Print** to print the selected reports, or **Cancel** to quit the reports without printing.

The example shown, from the sample story SNOWWHIT.STB, will print the problem descriptions for all story problems, the character profiles for the Evil Queen character, a list of settings, and both a list of the plot points and the details for all plot points. The output will be directed to your printer.

Protecting Your Work

Experienced computer users never underestimate the importance of a backup. A power failure or computer crash, or a slip of the hand, can cost you the changes you've made since you last backed up your work.

The easiest and best backup is to save your work frequently at places where you're satisfied with your progress— milestones such as adding a plot point for an important scene, describing the physical appearance of a character, or figuring out how you plan to resolve a story problem. Use the **File** menu **Save** option to save your story outline at these points.

However, other problems can occur which require additional precautions. StoryBuilder provides two kinds of backups for these situations.

StoryBuilder can safeguard against power failures and computer crashes by creating a Timed Backup, every so often, of the story outline that's currently being edited. You can change the time interval or even turn off this feature, by using the **Preferences** form which is invoked from the **File** menu. If you're using Timed Backup and your system crashes, the next time you start StoryBuilder the backup will be automatically loaded, and you'll be prompted to save the work under the filename of your choice. Use the **Save As** command on the **File** menu to rename the `{STORYB}.BAK` file to your filename.

Another problem can occur when you edit a story outline and save it using the same file name. The new version of the .STB file replaces the previous version. This is normally exactly what you want, but as an additional precaution, you can choose to have the previous file renamed when you save the edited file. This feature can also be turned on or off from the **Preferences** form, and is called Original Outline Backup.

See "Preferences" in this manual for further information on both types of backup.

Keyboard Shortcuts

You can use the [Alt] key as a fast way to navigate among StoryBuilder menus. Simultaneously pressing [Alt] and one of the underlined letters on the menu bar will take you directly to that particular form or menu. For example, pressing [Alt+S] will take you to the Setting form.

If you press and then release the [Alt] key, the cursor will move to the menu bar, and you can use the left and right arrow keys to move between the menu items; the current item will show in reverse video. Move to any menu and press [Enter] to select a menu item.

Some common StoryBuilder commands have default "Shortcut" keys. Shortcut keys are always the Ctrl key plus a letter. The defined shortcuts are:

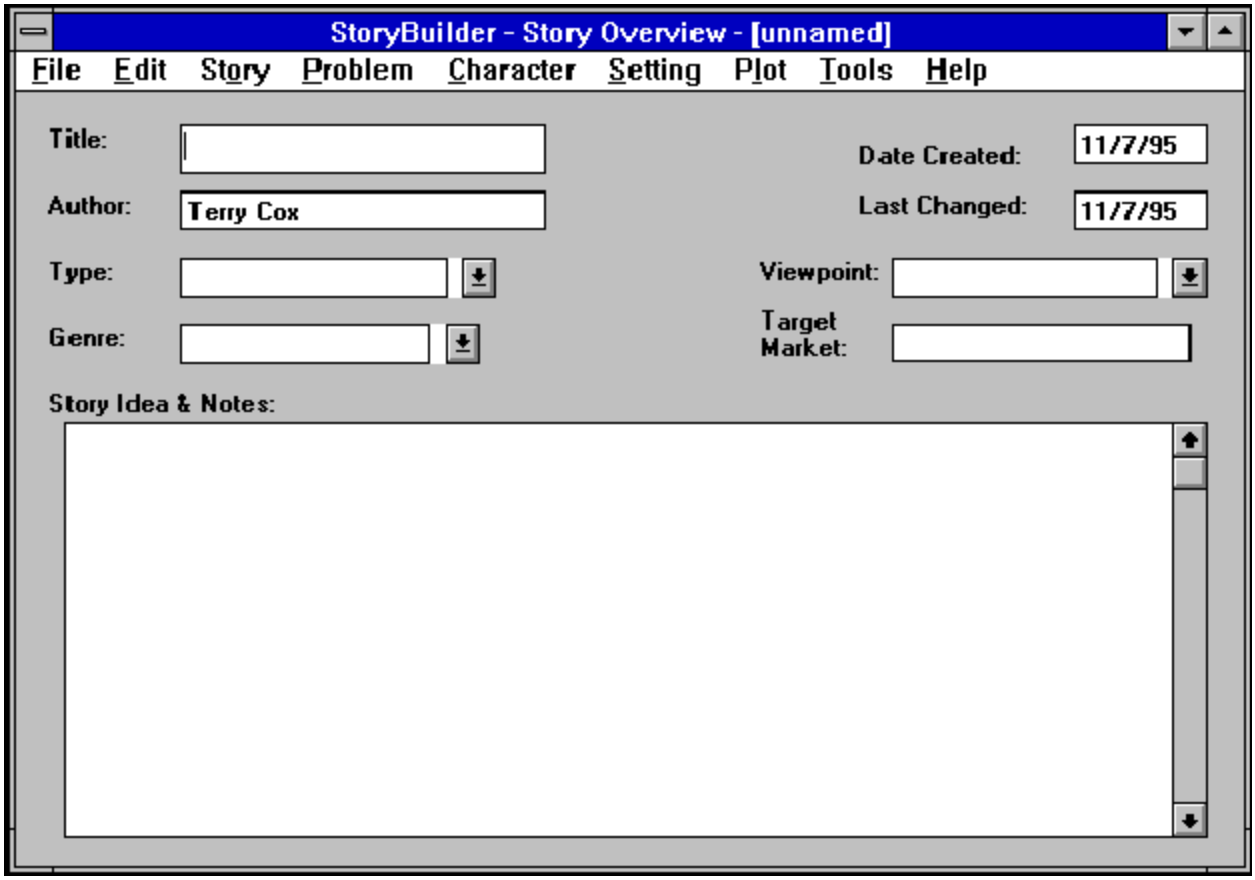
Save	[Ctrl+S]
Print	[Ctrl+P]
Copy	[Ctrl+C]
Cut	[Ctrl+X]
Paste	[Ctrl+V]
Character Relationships	[Ctrl+R]
Master Plots	[Ctrl+M]
Dramatic Situations	[Ctrl+D]

Creating a Story

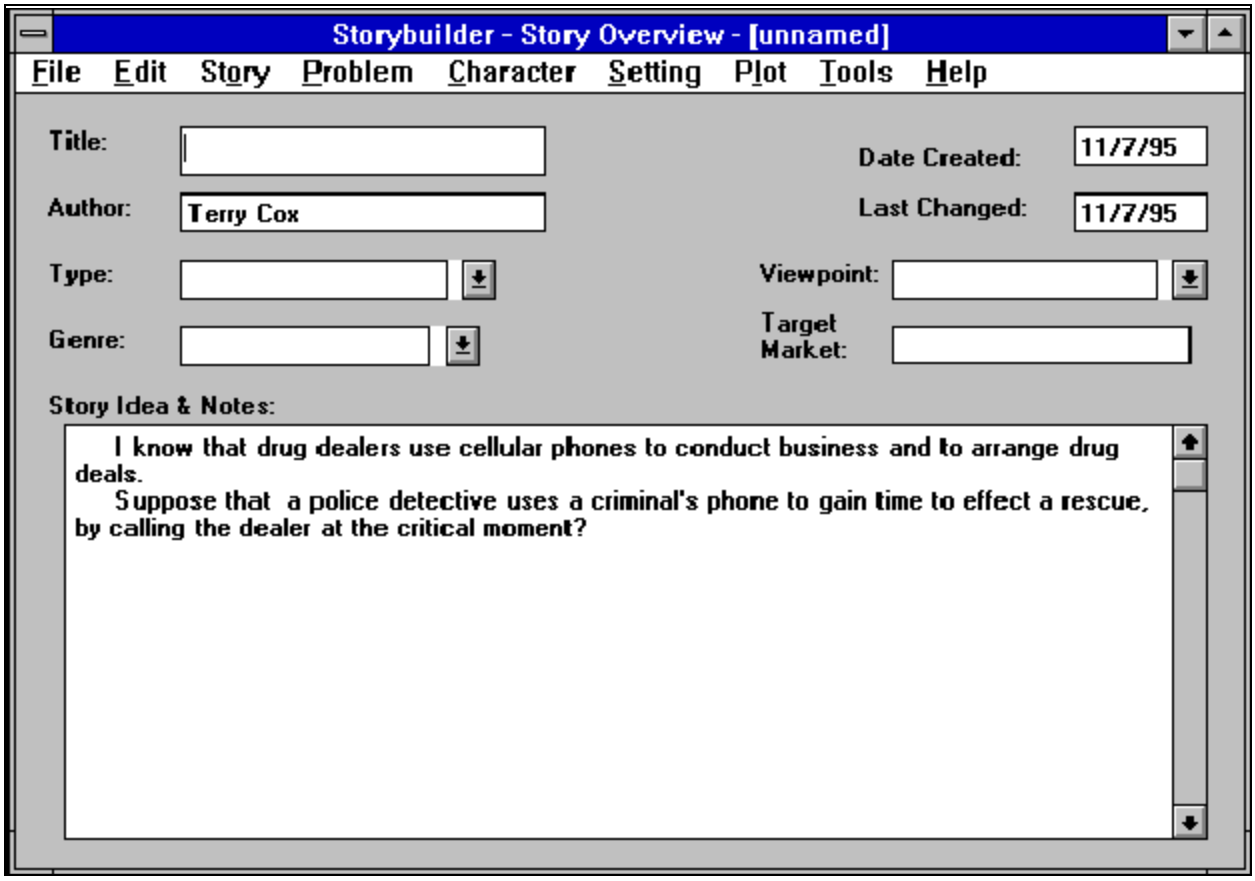
The best way to learn about StoryBuilder is to actually create a story with it. That's what this tutorial is for. We'll create a story outline with StoryBuilder and show you exactly what we did at each step along the way.

Every story starts with an idea. The idea might come from anywhere. A conversation might lead to a bit of dialog; someone you see in a crowd could suggest an interesting character; a newspaper article or story you're read or movie you've seen might spark an idea for a conflict. But regardless of where the idea comes from or how complete it is, at the moment of conception it's all you have, so a good place to start is to capture the idea.

Click on the StoryBuilder icon. A **Loading** form will appear and StoryBuilder will load and initialize itself. After a delay of a few seconds, you'll see a blank form like this:



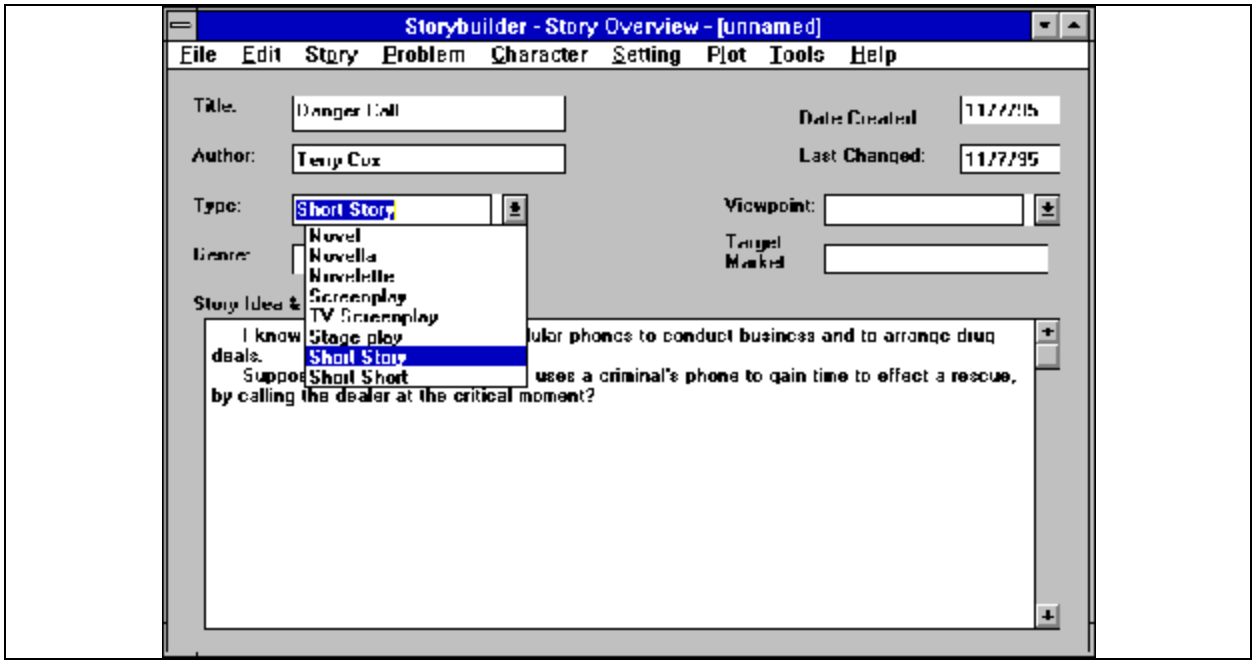
Our idea started with a television news piece which showed young gang members, boys as young as fourteen, selling drugs on the street. We were stricken by the image of these young criminals using advanced technology such as cellular phones and pagers, and thought there was a story in there someplace. The Story Idea and Notes section on the Story Overview is a good place to record the idea it led to:



You'll notice that the Author, Date Created and Last Changed fields are already filled in. The author's name is taken from your name as entered when you installed StoryBuilder. For a new outline, Date Created is today's date, and for a new or old outline, and Last Changed is the computer date on which a change to the outline was last made.

While we're here, we might as well fill out a few other items. Let's assign a Title to the not-yet-story. `"Danger Calls"` isn't much of a title, but we can always change it later.

Type is the dramatic form we'll use. Click on the down arrow to the right of this control, and a list of possibilities appears:

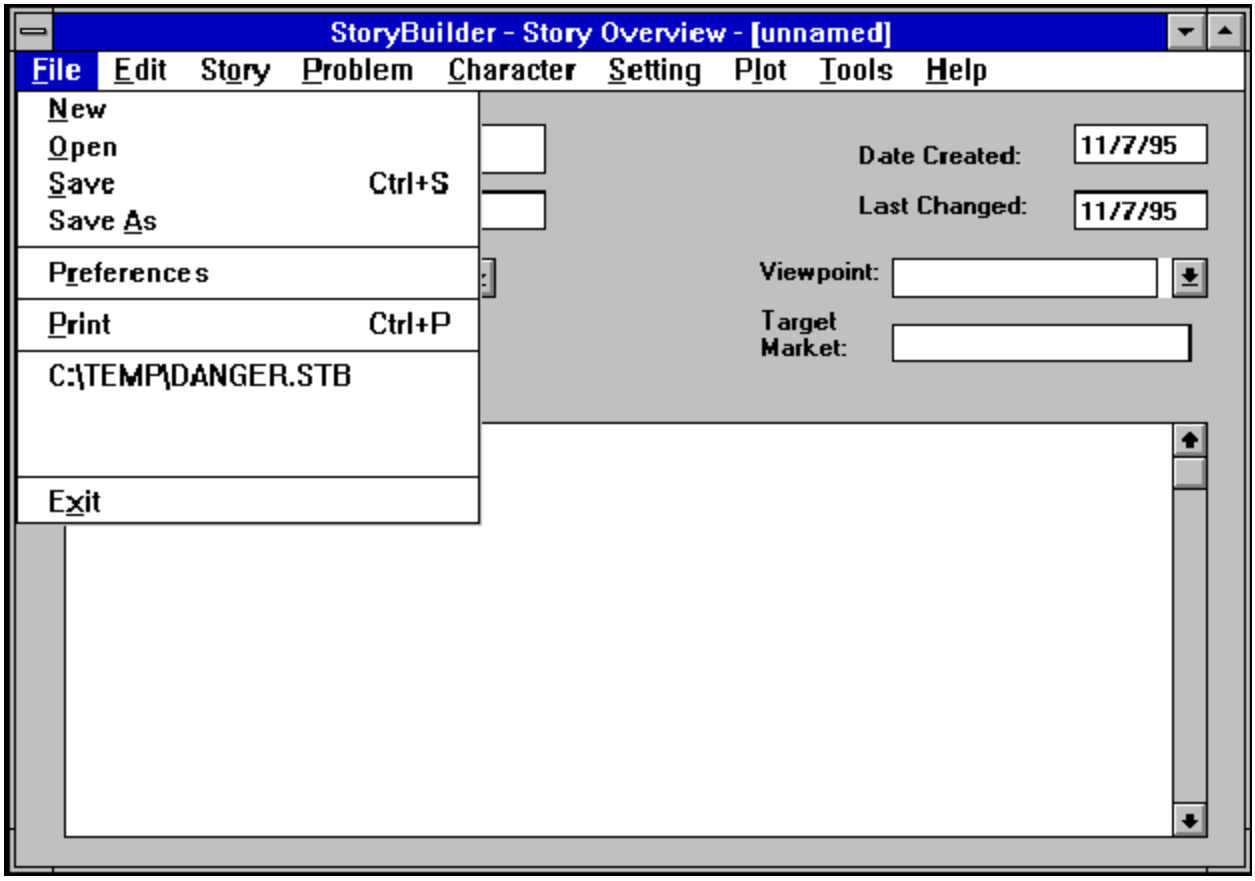


You can select one of these choices by clicking on it (`Short Story`, in this case), or you can key your own type in, if perhaps you want to tell this story as an epic poem. Likewise, we'll select `Suspense` for the Genre. We'll leave the other controls blank for now.

At the moment, the story outline for "Danger Call" is in the computer's RAM memory, but not saved to disk. Let's save what we've done so far. From the **File** menu, select **Save As**. The **Save As** dialog is displaying your hard drive's root directory as the current directory. This is the initial specification for the default directory to keep StoryBuilder outlines in. You can change the default from the **Preferences** form, which is invoked from the **File** menu. The dialog also shows '*.STB' as a pattern for the filename. The '.STB' file suffix is the default for StoryBuilder outlines. We'll save our story idea as `DANGER.STB` in the `C:\TEMP` directory (the directory could be different on your system.)

Every story outline is a separate file. This is a regular DOS file, and can be copied, backed up, etc. The file is a folder of records which contain the different elements in our story outline. Our file folder is relatively empty at this point, but let's quit anyway. We'll come back after a break to work on our story idea some more. From the **File** menu, select **Exit** to leave StoryBuilder and return to Windows.

After a break, we decide to continue refining our story idea. Launch StoryBuilder again. From the empty **Story Overview** form, you need to reload the "Danger Calls" outline. Select the **File** menu:



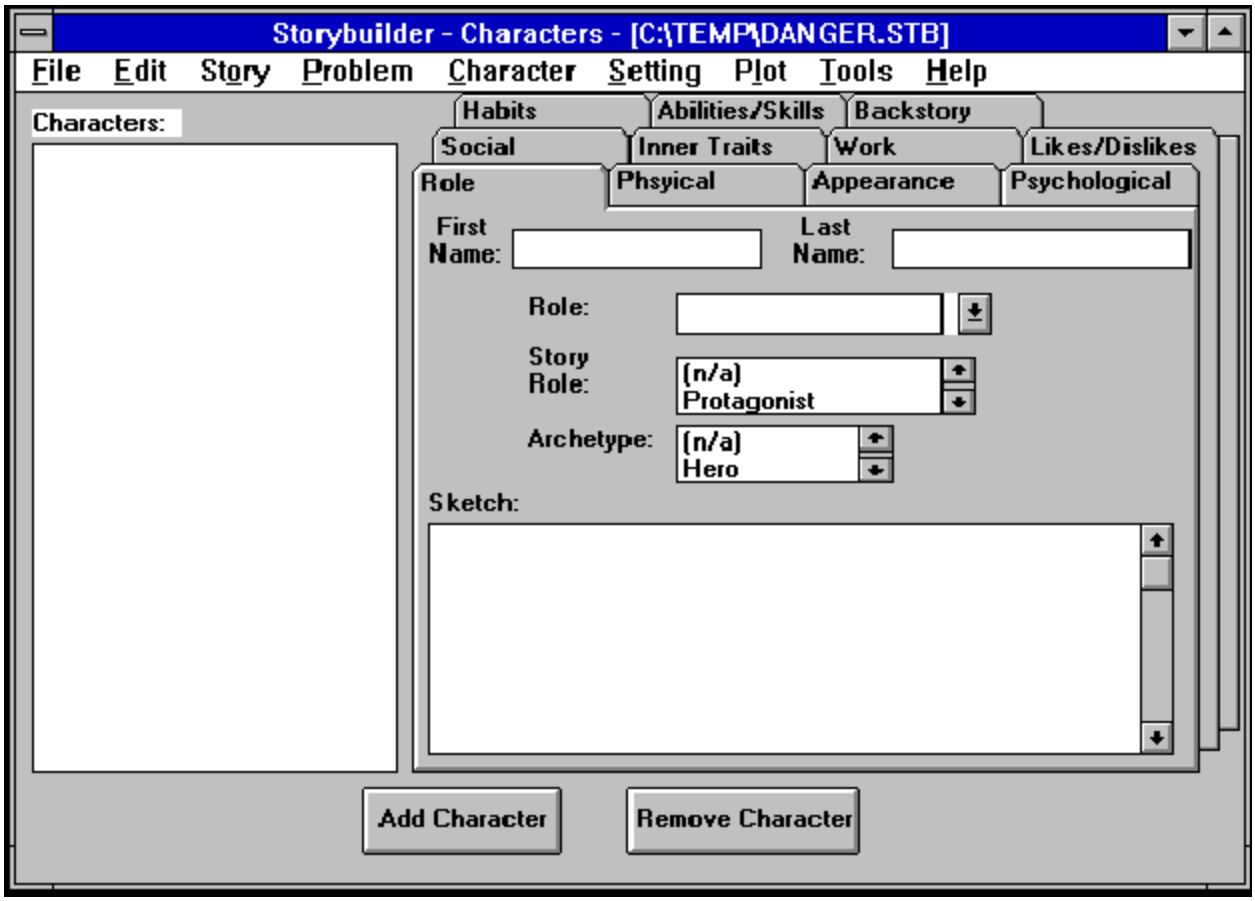
You could select the **Open** sub-menu entry, which would open a dialog box similar to what we used to save our file. However, there's also a shortcut: StoryBuilder keeps the last three files you worked on in a list towards the bottom of the menu. Click on the `DANGER.STB` file as a fast way of saying you want to load this file.

You can work on multiple story outlines in one StoryBuilder session, but StoryBuilder can only work with one story outline at a time. This is either the outline you've most recently opened, or a new outline which hasn't yet been saved as a file and given a filename. The **New** option on the **File** menu will clear the story outline that's been loaded (prompting you to save first, of course), in order to create a new file.

At this point we've recorded the initial story idea. However, there's a great gulf between a story idea and a finished story. At rare intervals, a story idea may spring forth so complete and well formed that it practically writes itself. Most ideas, though, are fragments— a scene, a character, a situation (like this one), an ending, or something else. What we need to do now is to convert this fragment, this idea, into a *concept*.

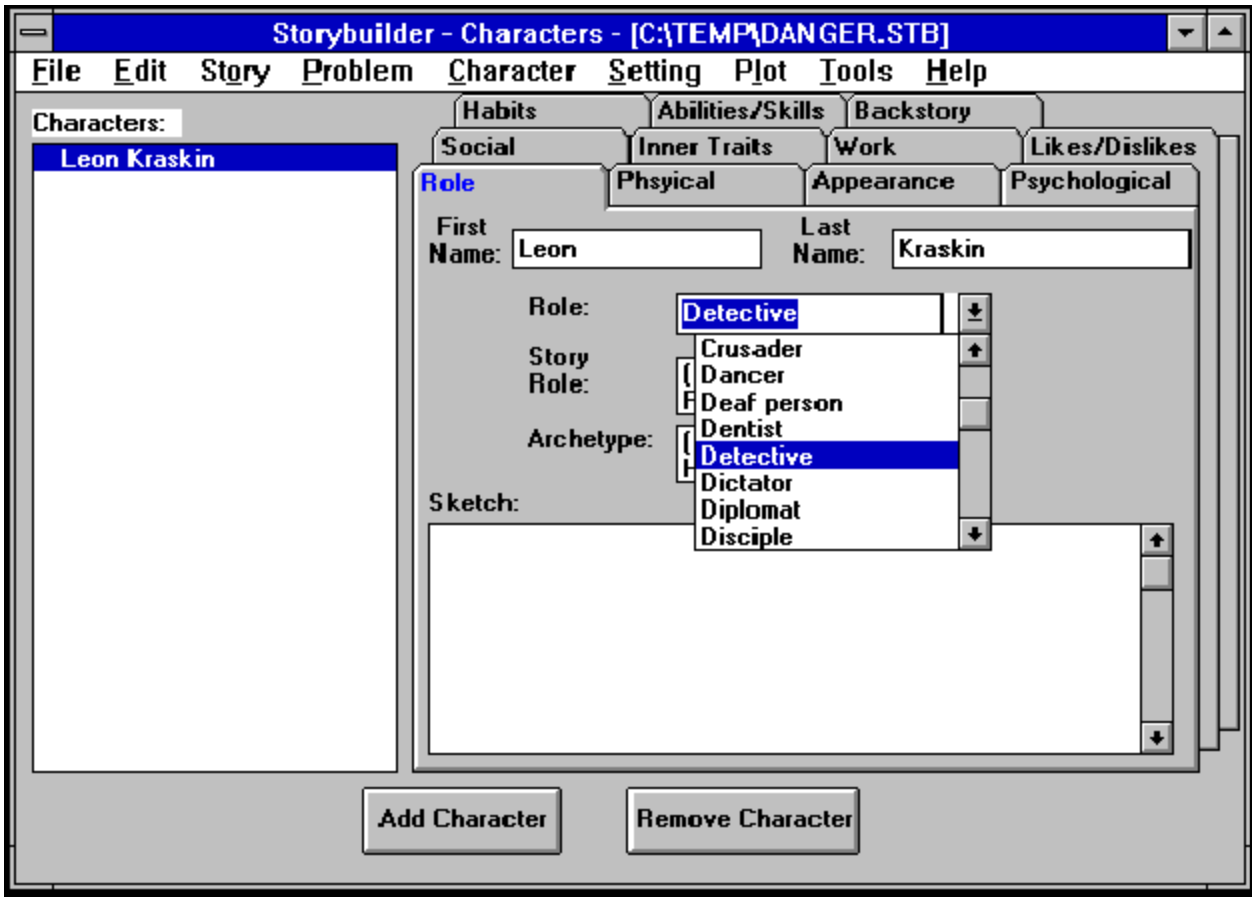
A concept is complete and ready to write: you know who the main characters are, what their problems are, and what the outcome of those problems will be. The characters are fleshed out, you know where the action will take place, and you know what that action is (the plot.) You have a story. Converting story ideas into story concepts is what StoryBuilder is all about.

We could start work on the "Danger Calls" concept from any direction: setting, plot, etc. Let's start with the characters. As a 'cops and robbers' story, two characters are obvious, the cop and the robber. Select the **Character** form by clicking on the **Character** menu. You'll see a blank form that looks like this:



Click on the Add Character button on the bottom of the form to add a character to the story outline. You'll see 'Character 01' added to the list of characters on the left side of the form.
The **Problem**, **Setting**, and **Plot** forms in StoryBuilder all have a layout similar to the **Character** form. There's a list on the left side of the form which displays a label for each problem, location, plot point, or, in the case of the Character form, for each character in the story. The right side of the form is a series of tab cards which contain information about one of the characters (or problems, or settings, or plot points.)

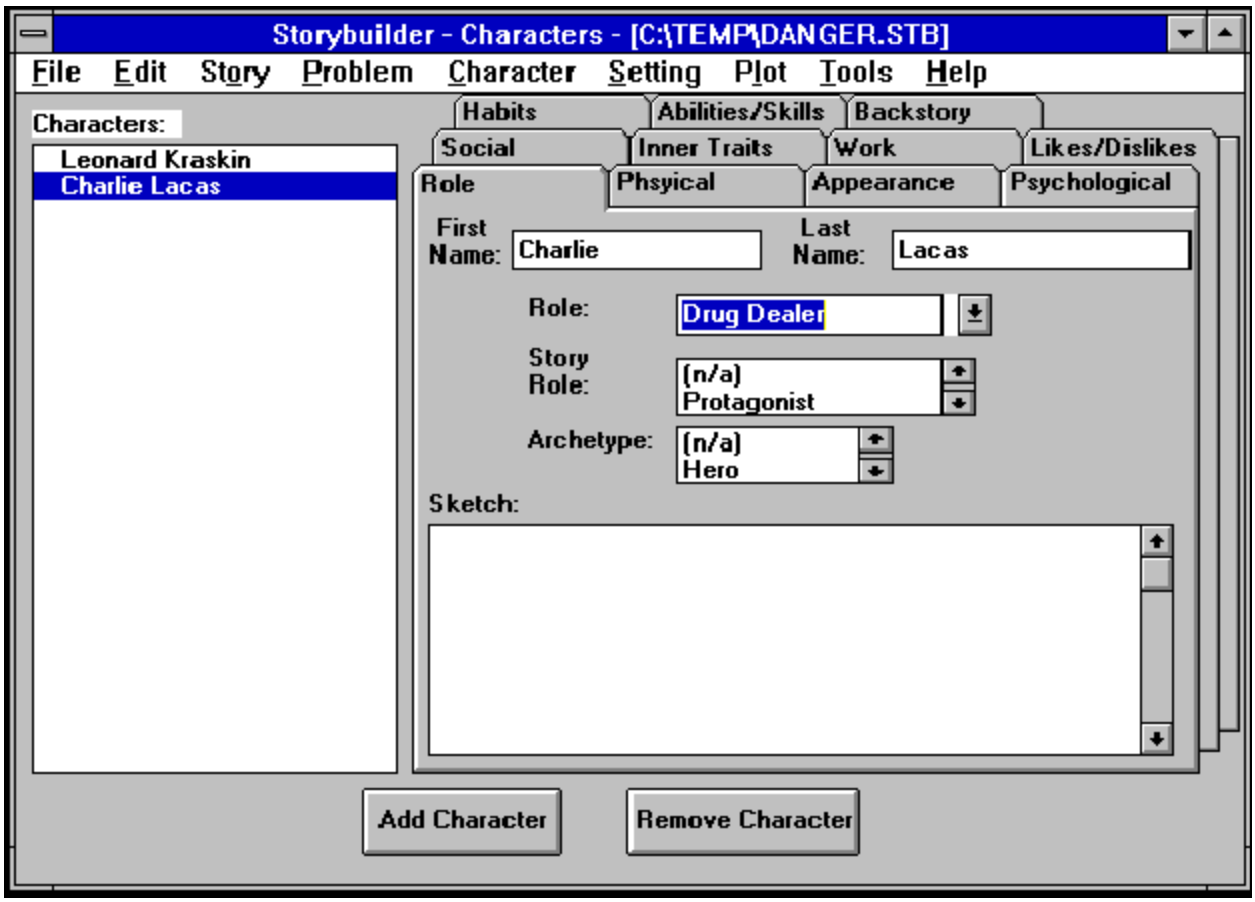
When you add a character by clicking on the Add Character button, StoryBuilder will add a new character with a default label like 'Character 01'. When you key in the character's first and/or last name in the provided elements at the top of the tabs on the right, and press enter or tab to a different element, the 'Character 01' will be replaced with the character's name.
Let's give our character a name and role.



StoryBuilder has tools to help you in naming your character, but for now let's not worry about how we assigned the name and just key it in.

The Role field lists some possible roles. The character we've just added will be our detective. Scanning through the list, `Detective` was selected.

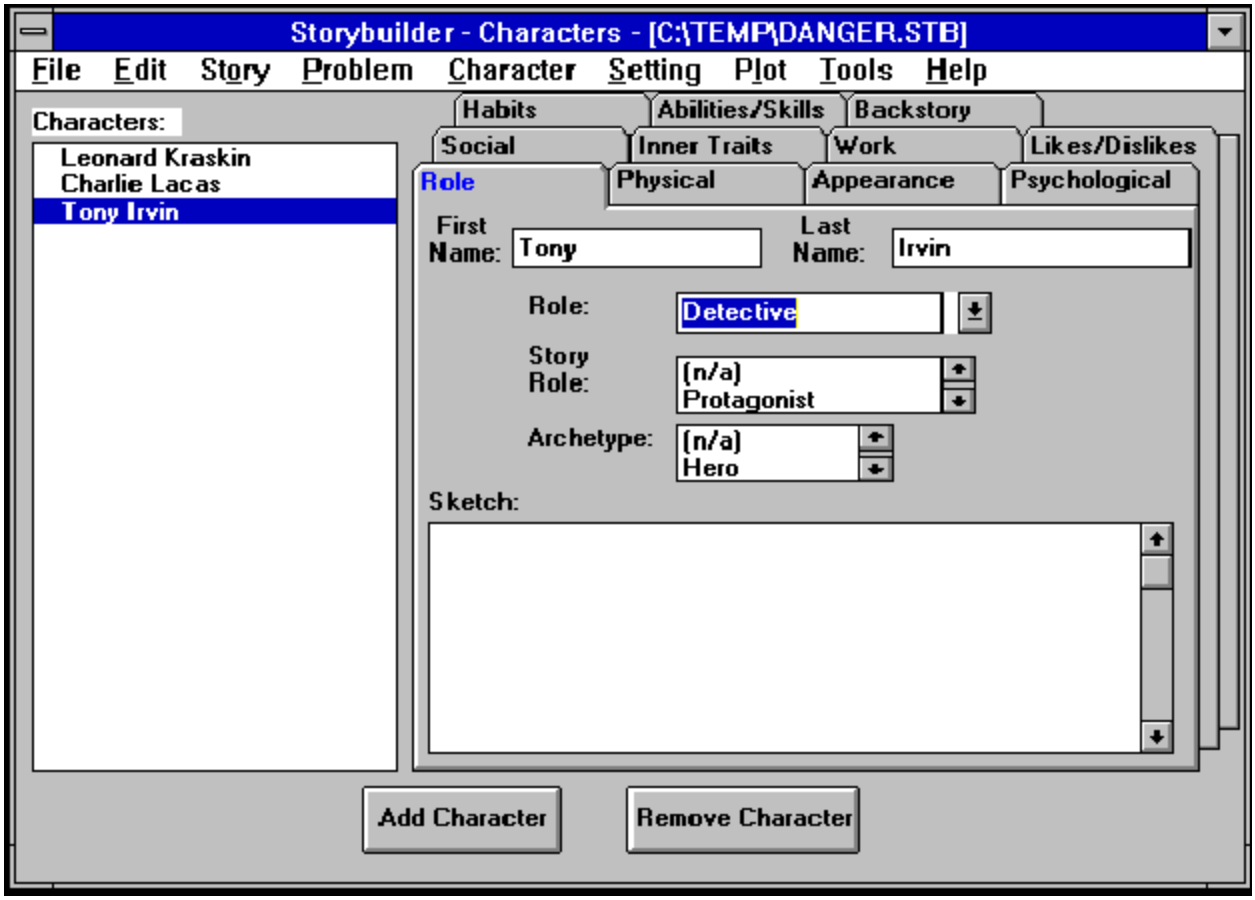
We will also add a second character, the bad guy, the same way: click on the Add Character button, key in the name, Charlie Lacas, and press enter.



Notice that the list of roles doesn't have an entry for `Drug Dealer`, so this was just keyed in. Most StoryBuilder controls have lists of possible entries, but these lists are intended to be suggestions, not limitations. You can key whatever you want into most of these fields.

StoryBuilder also allows you to modify many of these lists of values. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for details.

While we're at it, let's add a third character, another detective who's a partner for Leonard. We'll give him the name Tony Irwin.

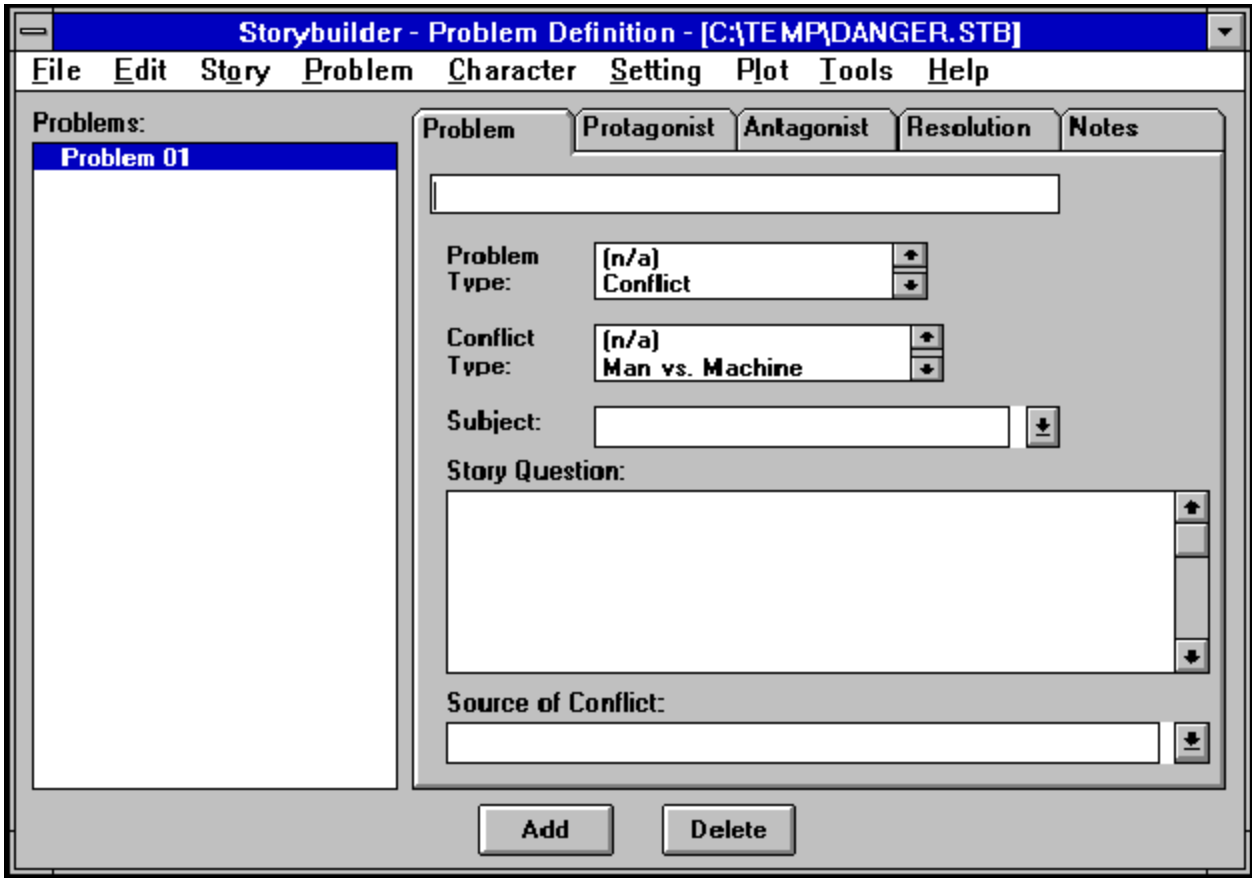


Why a third character? There's no concrete reason at this point in the concept development, but policemen often work in teams. Besides, with two detectives, there's someone to talk to. At some point in the story we're likely to need to narrate events, to explain what's going on. 'Buddy' roles are good for that. And if we don't need Tony, a touch of the **Delete** button can always get rid of him.

At this point all three characters are stick figures, just names and roles. But that's okay, we're making progress.

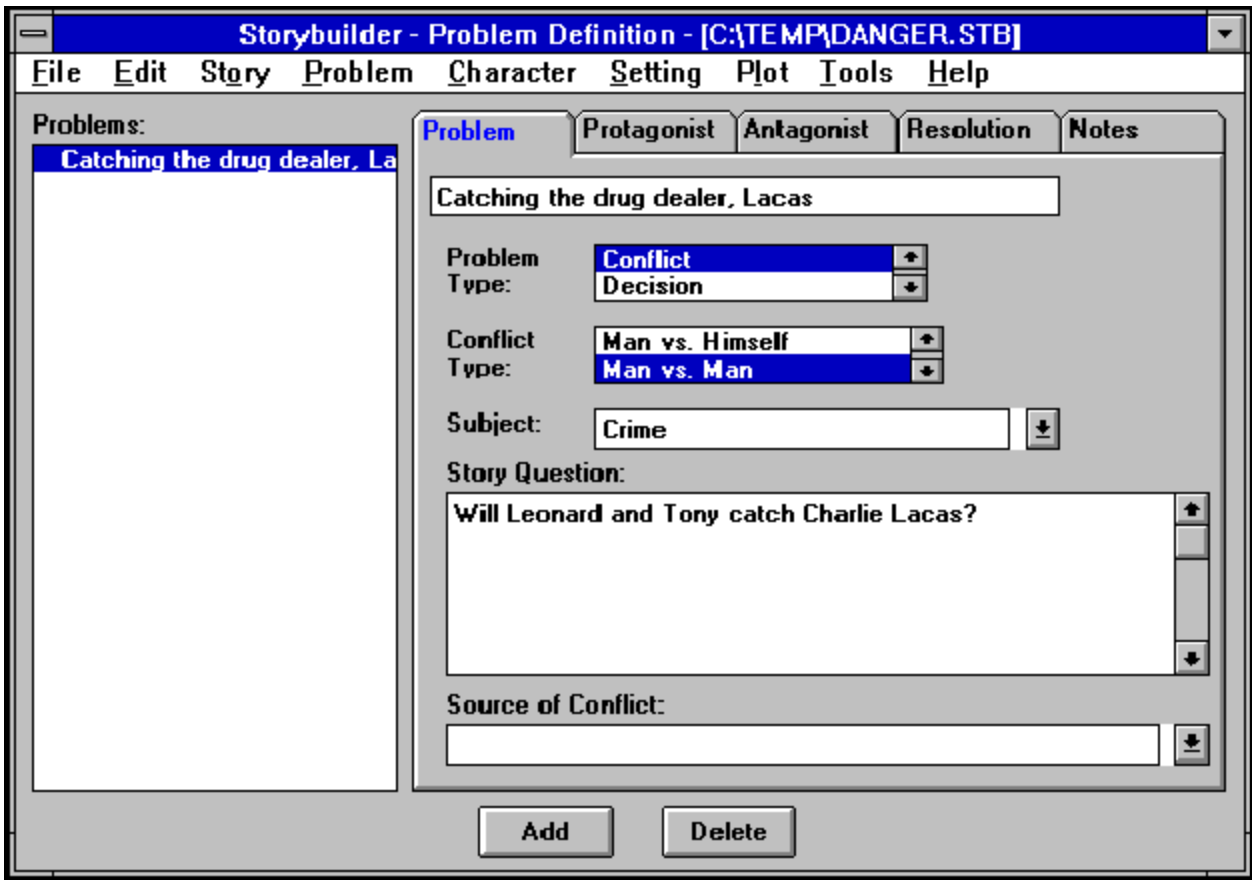
Next, let's turn our attention to the key piece, the story problems. The short definition for story is *trouble*; without story problems there is no story. Your early focus in developing the concept should be to identify a specific protagonist with a specific problem.

Clicking on the **Problem** entry on the menu bar takes you to the **Problem** form, and clicking on the **Add** button adds a problem to the story outline:



This is a 'cops and robbers' story, and these are often action-oriented. Let's stick to that approach; Leonard's basic problem is to catch Charlie. This defines the Problem Type as `Conflict` and the Conflict Type as `Person vs. Person`. The basic idea for this story was a situation or subject, so we know that, too. If our original idea had been a character or setting, nailing down the problem subject would be a priority, and the list of Subject values could have been useful. Or we might have started with a Goal for the Protagonist and found a Subject which interfered with that Goal.

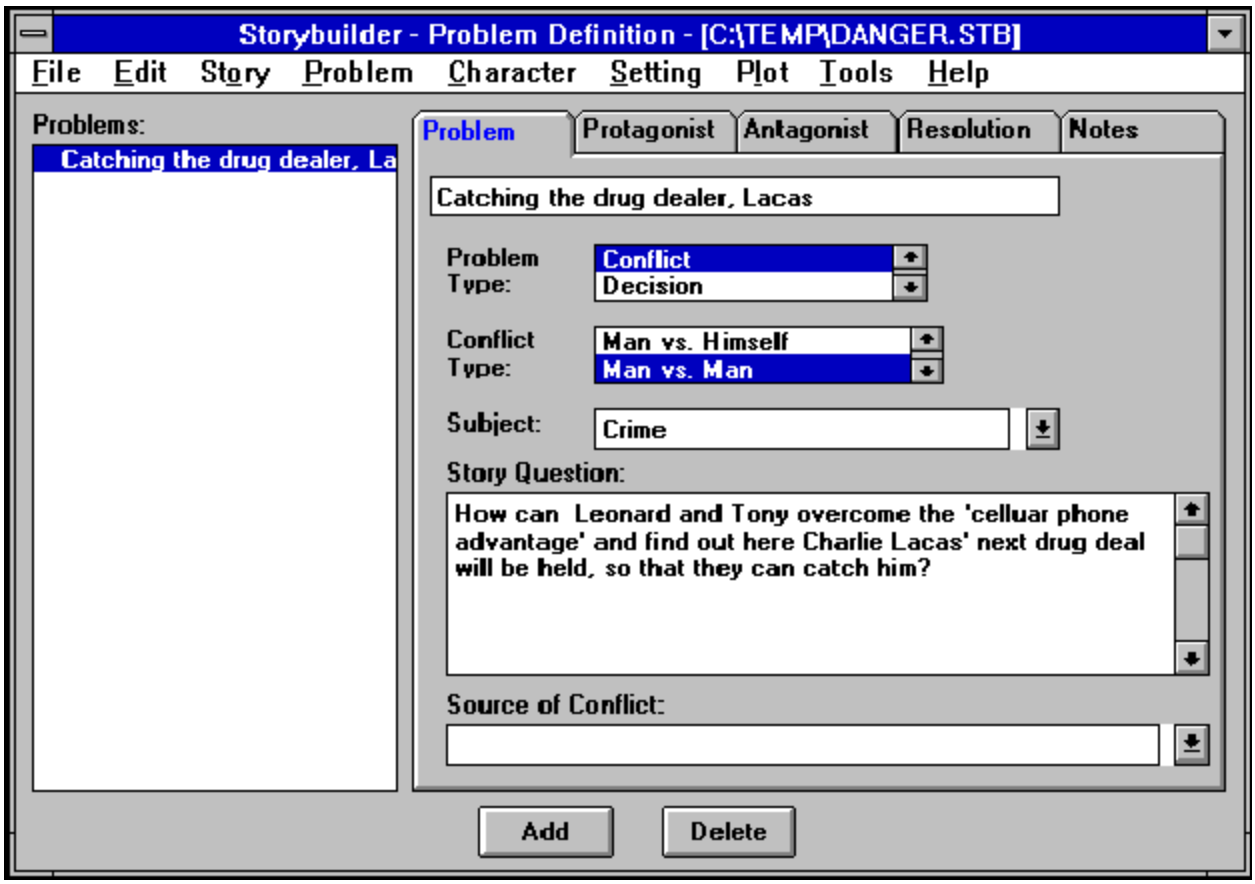
We can also take a stab at the Story Question:



While the cursor is still on Story Question, try pressing the [F1] key to see what **Help** looks like. You can invoke **Help** for any control on any form.

The story problem is still pretty vague. For one thing, it needs to be a *difficult* problem; if Leonard and Tony go out and arrest Charlie in the first scene, the story's over before it begins. Charlie has to be hard to catch; we have to make him so. Focusing on our original idea again, let's say that Charlie is highly mobile, conducting his deals all over town, and that he uses pagers and cellular phones to arrange the deals. The two detectives' problem, then, is how to overcome this technical advantage.

We can treat this issue of overcoming the advantage of the cellular phones as the major complication, on the way to solving the story problem. Let's refine the Story Question for this one problem:



Let's shift gears for a moment and think about outer and inner problems. The section "Outer and Inner Problems" discusses this topic in detail.

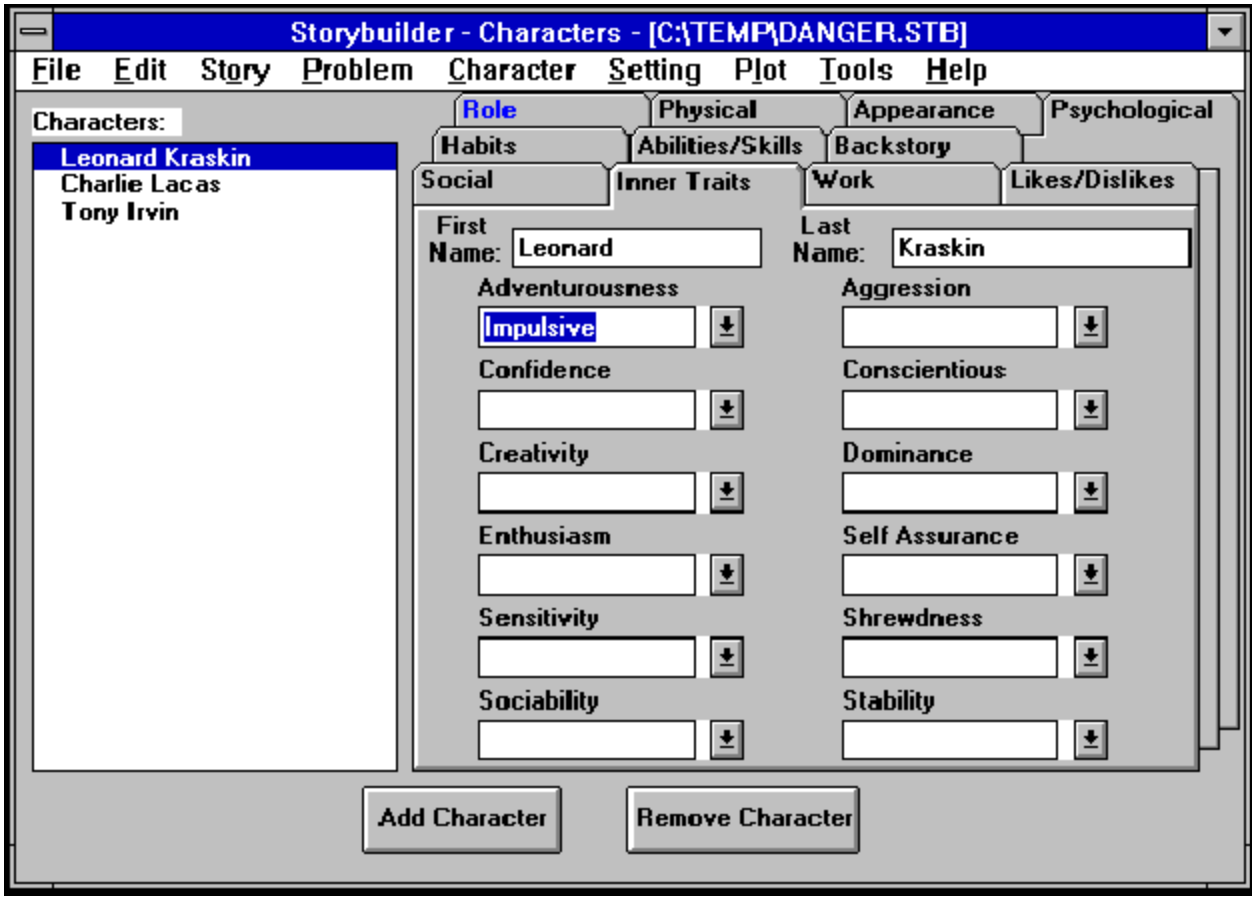
The outer or external problem we've just added has a physical goal— to catch Charlie Lacas and send him to jail. External problems focus attention on physical actions and away from your characters. To balance the story with a measure of character orientation, we'll add an inner problem for our protagonist to overcome. Let's give Leonard a character flaw to deal with.

Going to the **Tools** menu, we select **Virtues and Vices** from the **Characterization Aids** sub-menu and browse through this list of traits until we find one that looks good:

Remember, we have no preconceptions about Leonard's character; he's a blank sheet of paper. He can therefore easily be molded to suit the story, and giving him a character flaw by making him impulsive is a step in that direction.

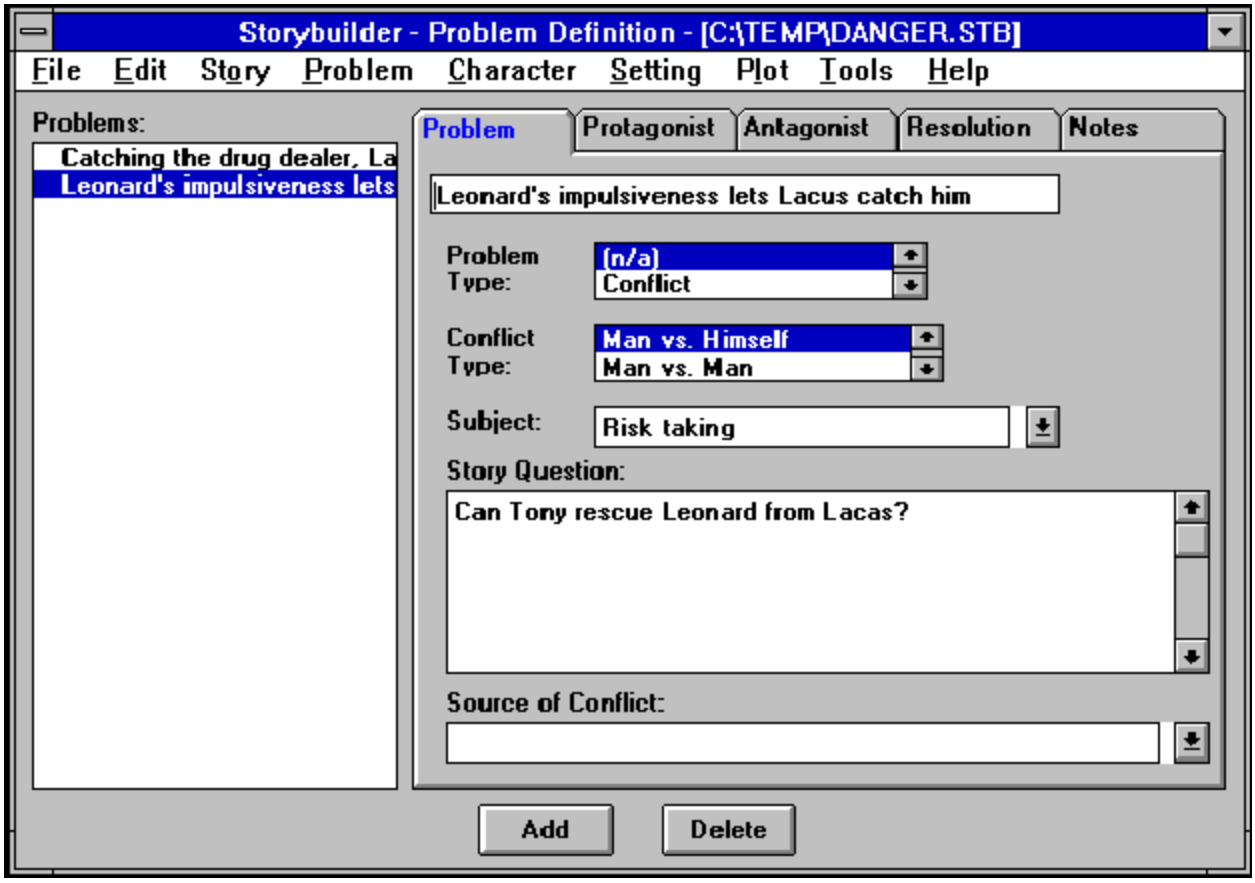
The **Virtues and Vices** tool doesn't update our story outline; it's just a list of traits to review. Clicking **DONE** on the form, we can save this trait in a number of places: on the **Habits** tab, on the **Role** tab, etc., depending on how he manifests this trait.

Let's look at one choice, the **Inner Traits** tab:



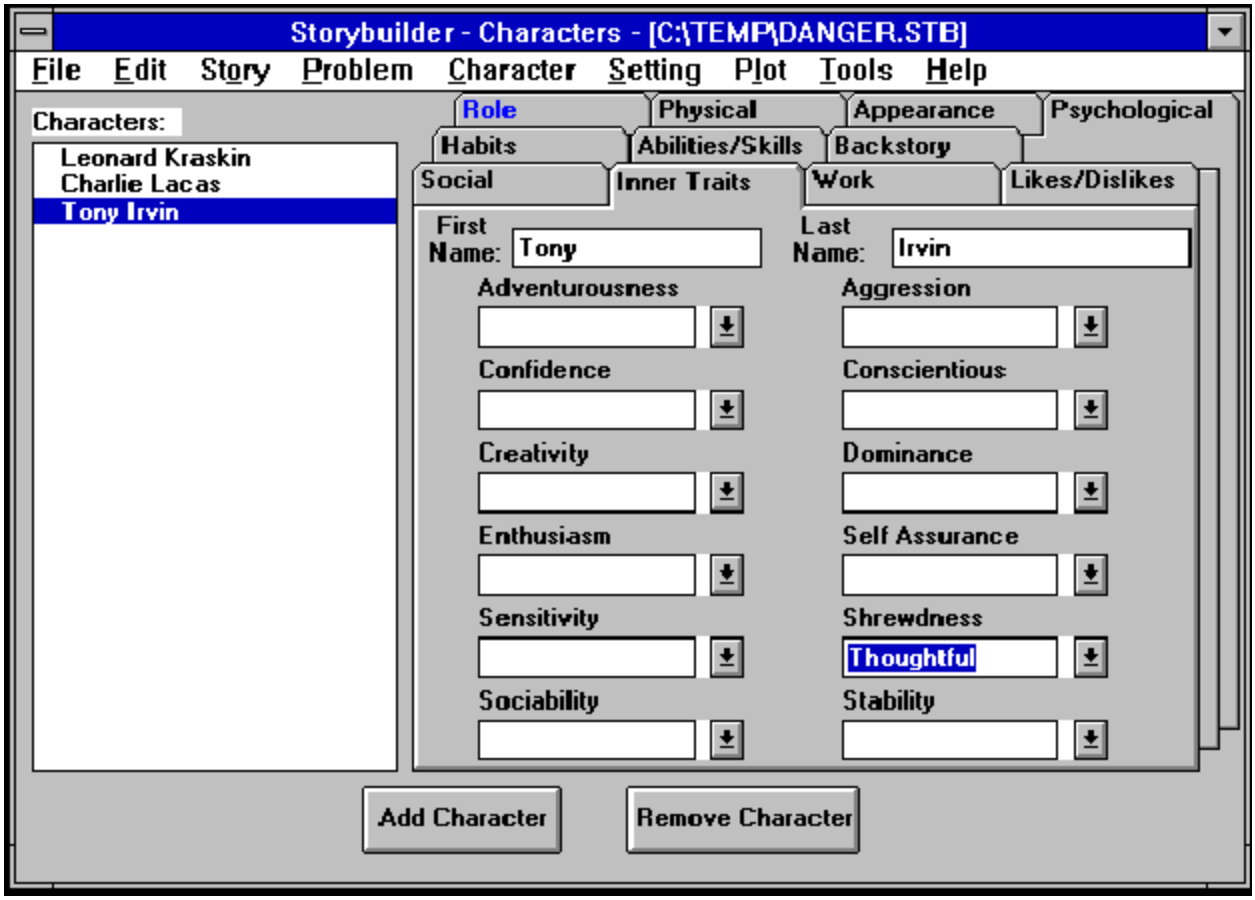
This list of traits (which can be tailored to suit your needs) is adapted from psychological personality profiles. It turns out that Impulsiveness is a value under the Adventurousness trait, so we select that value. We should remember though, that inner traits need to be demonstrated as external actions, under the 'show, don't tell' maxim.

This new flaw isn't useful until it affects the story outcome. That is, the inner problem needs to have something to do with the outer problem we created earlier. Let's add the second problem now. Recalling that our initial idea mentions rescue, we can let Leonard's impulsive act put him in a situation where he needs rescue:



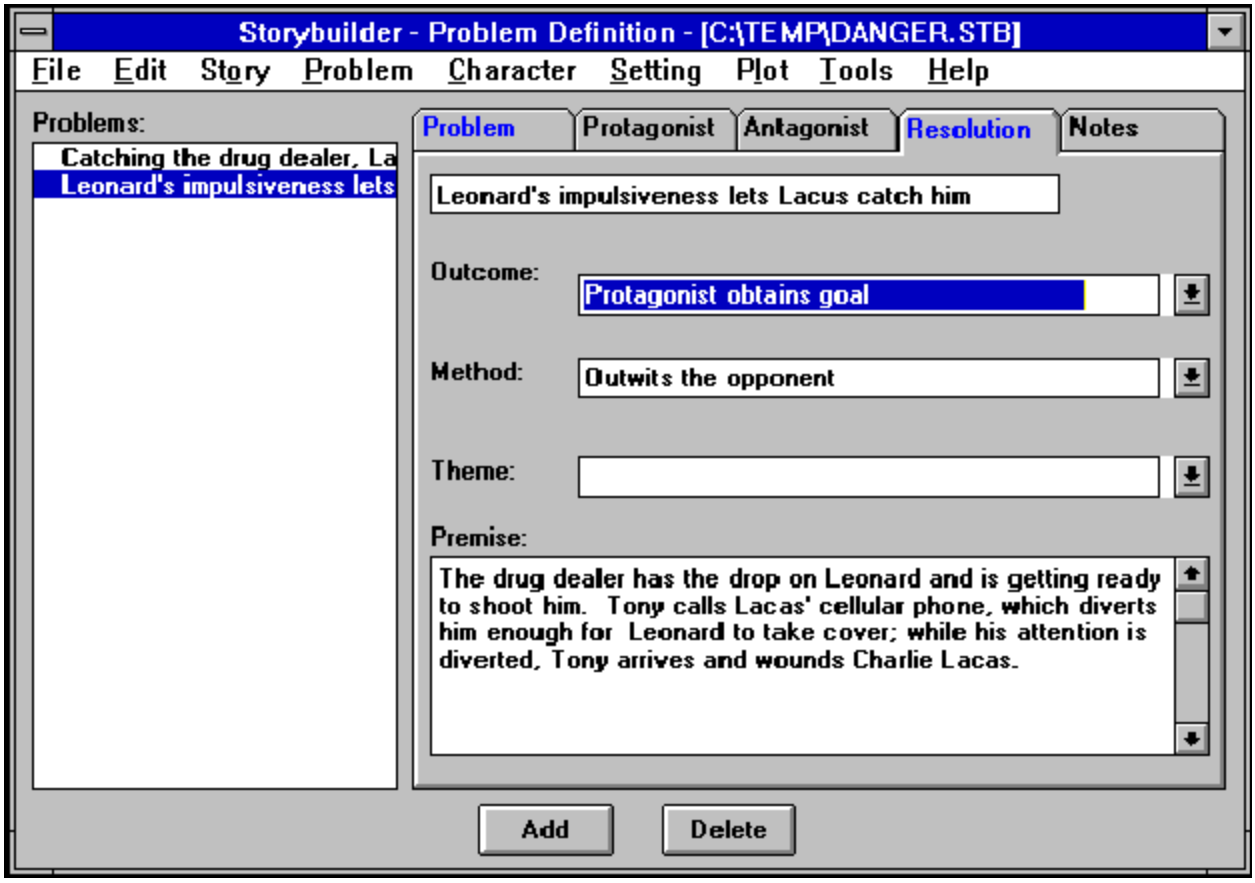
If Leonard's captured, he needs a rescuer, or at least a diversion; Tony's the obvious choice.
The story is beginning to take on substance; we can start to visualize some scenes. In fact, if a plot point occurs to you, there's no reason not to add it, now or at any time. Stories are conceived through a process of accumulation, and one of StoryBuilder's strong points is that you can collect whatever pieces fit as you find them. But before we start plotting let's continue with the problems.

Character traits are also a means of achieving conflict. Many stories don't have enough built-in conflict, which leads to contrived plots. But conflict isn't necessarily limited to the interplay of protagonist and antagonist. We can create conflict by giving Tony a trait which clashes with Leonard's. The opposite of impulsiveness isn't necessarily caution, though. Going back to the **Inner Traits** tab on Tony's record, we select `Thoughtful` from the Shrewdness trait:



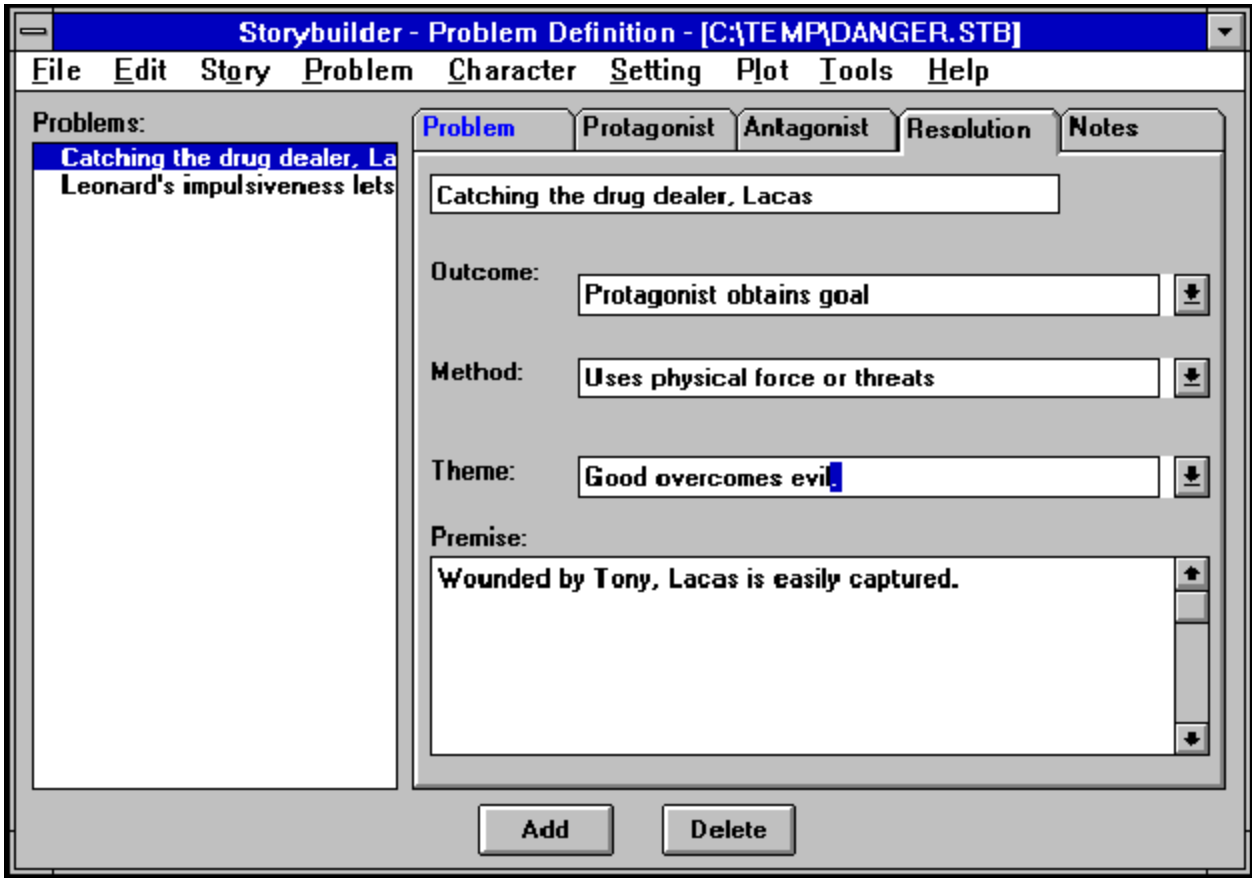
It's tempting to fill up the screen, by selecting other inner traits at this time, but it's better for the story to focus on just one or two traits in a character.

We can clarify the problems further. The **Resolution** tab on the **Problem** form identifies the outcome of a problem. The outcome of the story's major outer or external problem is the most important; the story's over when this problem is resolved. In this case, though, we might solve both problems at once, in a confrontational scene. Let's assume that we want a happy ending, and think about the inner problem's outcome:

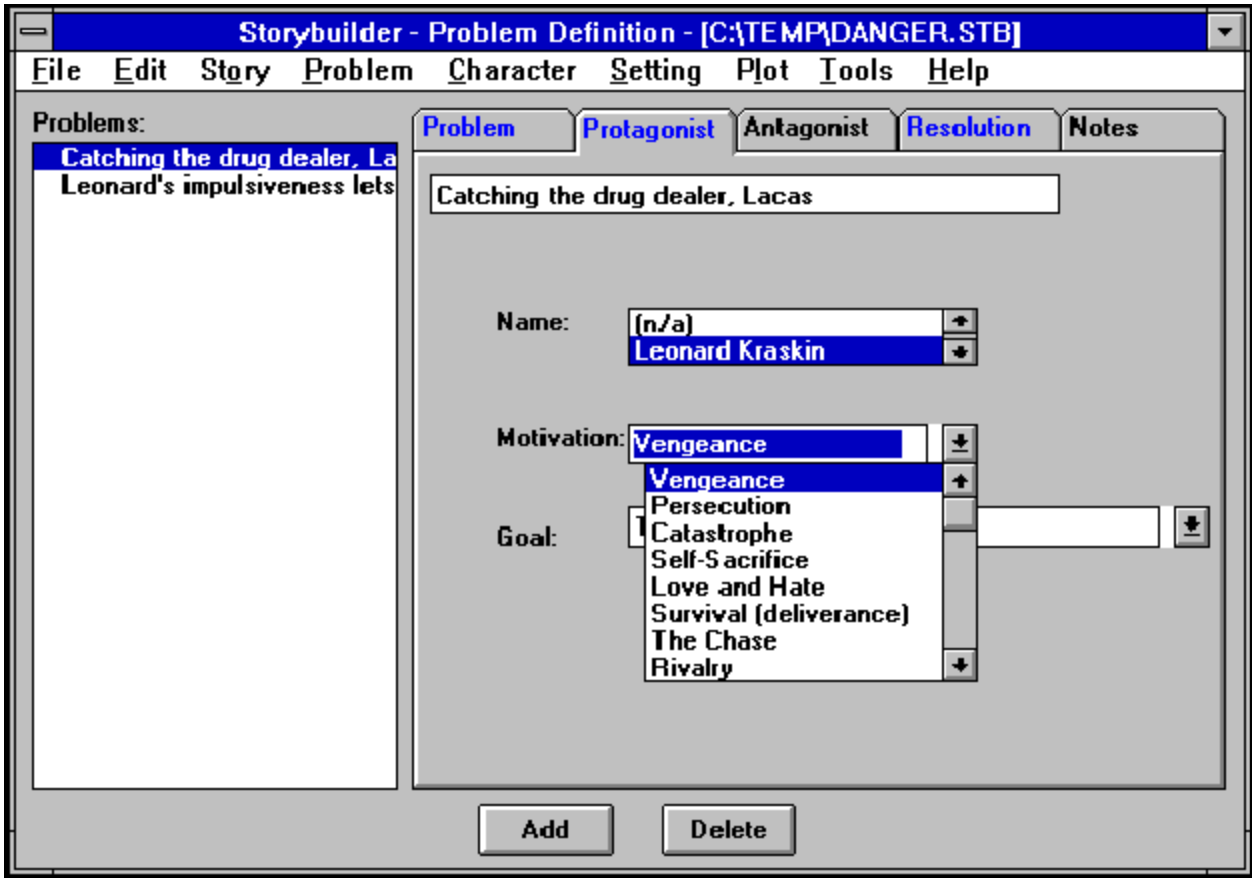


Does this work? The story's over when Lacas is captured, and Leonard's inner problem, his impulsiveness, which might have gotten him killed, ends in his rescue. The question is whether he learns and grows from the experience. In an action-oriented story, this is less important, so we'll leave it alone for now. However, it's worth coming back to; our story's theme will probably have to do with this character flaw (for example, 'Imprudence leads to danger'.)

The original external problem is solved at the same time and in the same scene in this story. This isn't always the case; often the story's turning point is the resolution of the inner problem, and the solution of the outer problem depends on the protagonist's change. We should state the resolution of the external problem. Clicking on the first problem from the list at the left of the screen, and then on the **Resolution** tab, allows us to key this information:



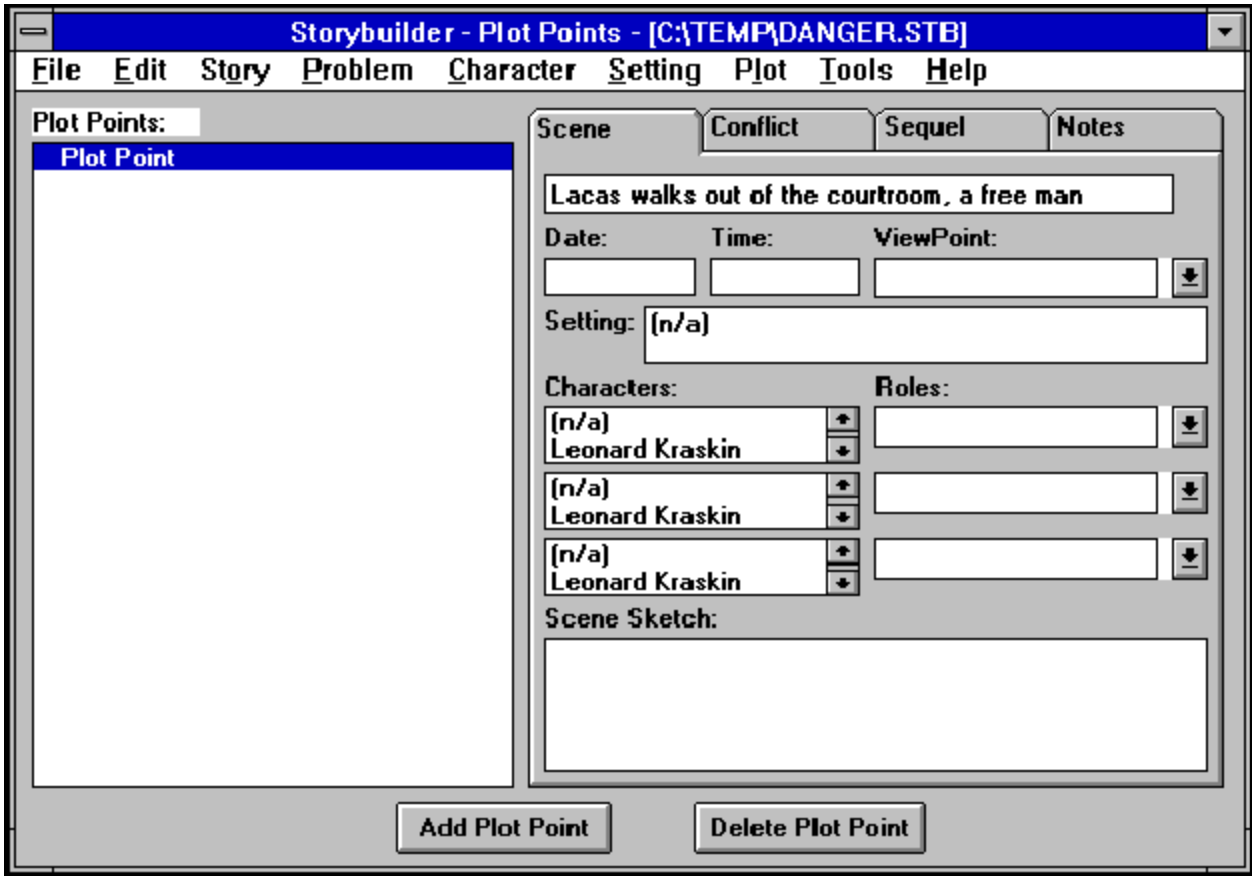
It's a good idea to be precise about the story's problems, so let's look at the **Protagonist** tab while we're visiting this one.



The Name control lists the characters who have been defined on the **Character** form. We'll click on Leonard's name to select him as the protagonist. The Goal is to catch Charlie Lacas. Motivation is why Leonard wants to catch him. It's his job, of course, but it's a good idea to invest a major character with strong, emotional motives. The Motivation control contains a list of a number of motives; the first one, Vengeance, sounds good. Leonard might want revenge for any number of reasons, but let's say that Lacas has shamed him by being freed from earlier charges. For now, let's select this motive.

We can visualize a scene in which Lacas walks out of a courtroom, a free man, talking on his cellular phone to someone, and laughing at Leonard. That might be a good way to open the story, in fact. Let's record it while the idea is fresh.

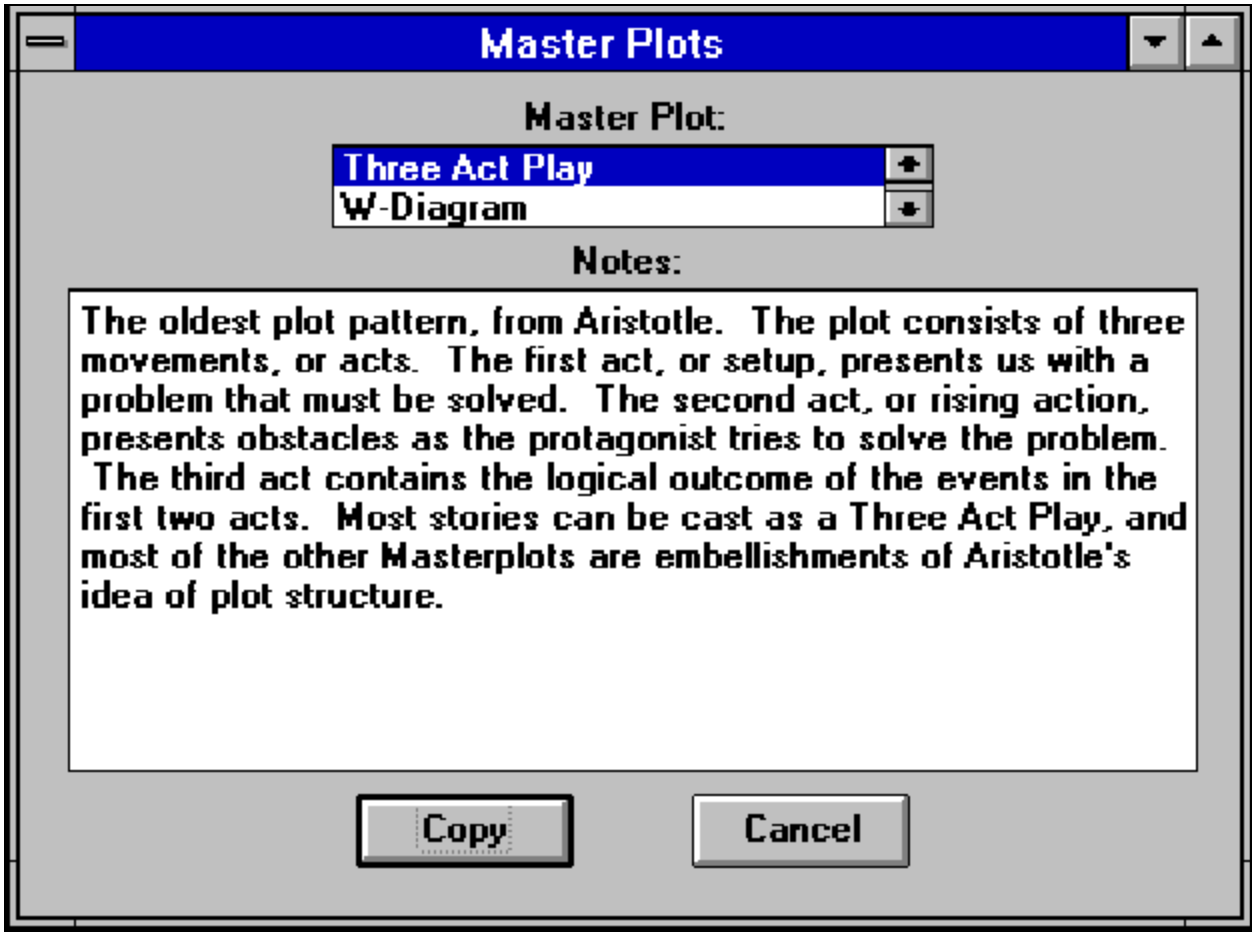
Clicking on the **Plot** entry on the menu bar takes us to the **Plot** form, and clicking on the **Add** button adds a new item labelled 'Plot Point'. We can key our scene title into the control; when we hit **Enter** the 'Plot Point' label will be replaced with the title.



Of course, one scene isn't a plot. While it's premature to worry about plotting before the characters are better defined, let's at least put a skeleton of a plot together.

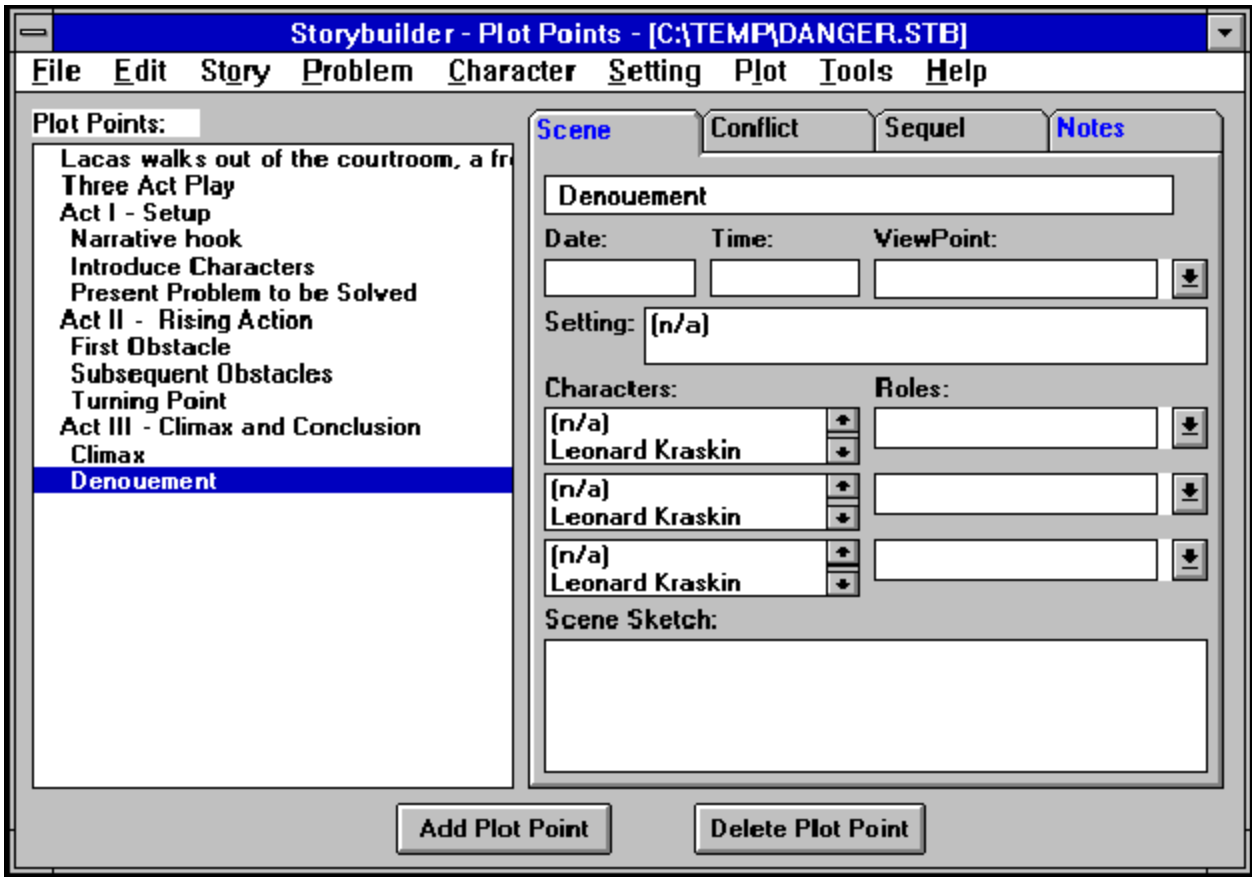
On the **Tools** menu there's a sub-menu with several tools to assist plotting. One of them, **Master Plots**, would be useful in this situation. The master plots available from this sub-menu suggest certain events which take place at different places in a story, and can quickly provide a skeleton plot outline which provides a shape for the plot.

Rather than go through the menus, let's use a shortcut and type in [Ctrl+M]. This will display the Master Plots menu:



Not all of the master plots are true plot outlines; other master plots suggest common story types which recur in fiction. But we're looking for an outline, and the first few master plots do just that.

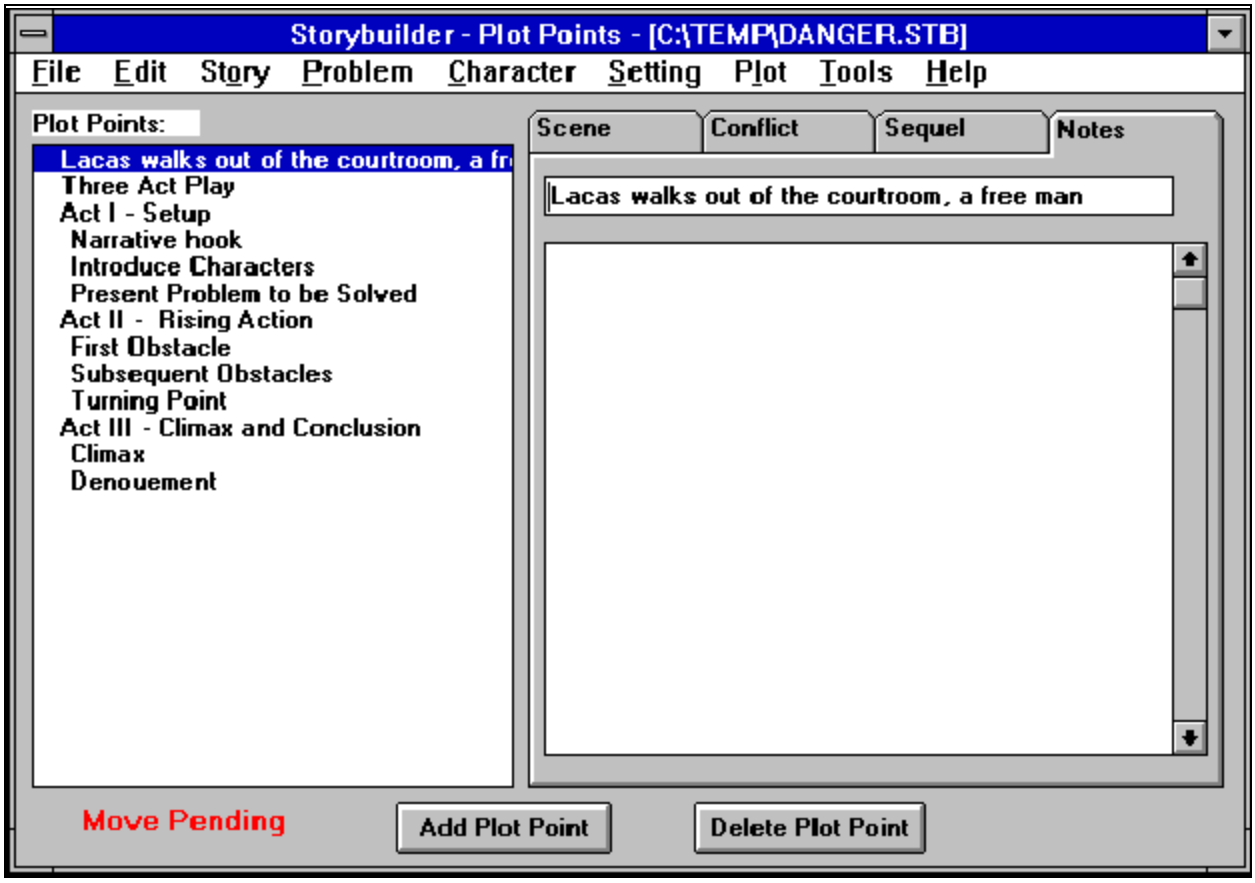
Let's use the first one on the list, the Three Act Play. Clicking on the **Copy** button will populate our story with a set of plot points which serve as the outline.



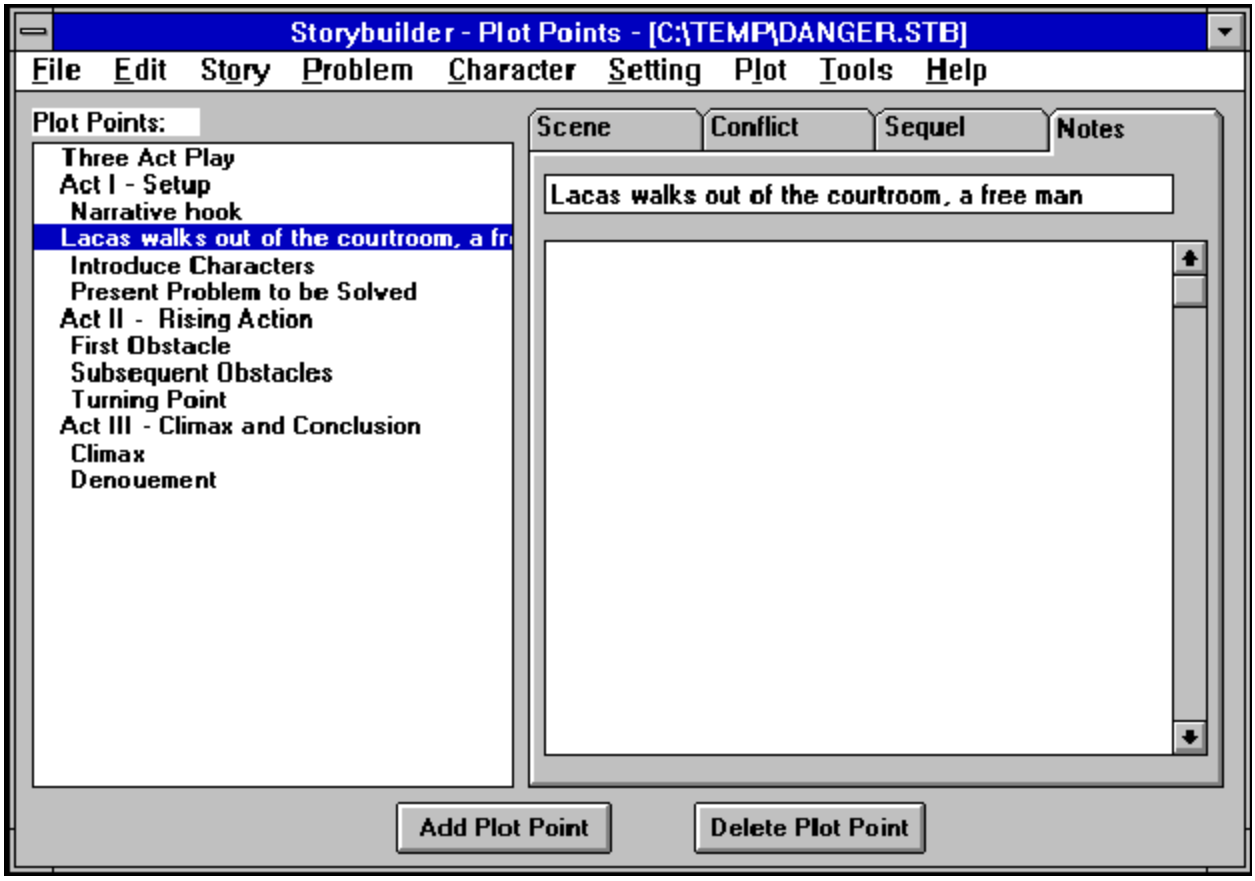
The copy function populated the **Plots** form with a series of plot points which suggest where in the dramatic progression of a story certain things should happen. The **Notes** tabs on these plot points contain some suggestions. For example, the notes for 'Narrative hook' read:

> It's important to capture the reader's interest at the beginning of the story sufficiently to keep him reading until the story itself (the protagonist and the problem) have engaged his attention. The opening paragraphs of the story must serve as an advertisement that it's worth reading.

Let's use the 'Lacas walks out of the courtroom, a free man' scene as our narrative hook. We'll use the Three Act Play as it was intended, a scaffolding, and replace the plot point for 'Narrative Hook' with our scene. To do so, we'll move our scene where it belongs. First we double-click on the 'Lacas walks out of the courtroom' label on the list of plot points on the left hand side of the screen.



A Move Pending label appears in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. This indicates that the label we double clicked has been marked to be moved. We then click once on the 'Narrative hook' plot point. Our scene is moved after it. If you're moving in a downward direction, the plot point is moved after (below) the target, as in this case. If you're moving upwards in the list, the plot point will be moved above (before) the target. See "Moving plot points" in the "Plotting" chapter for more information.



After we've moved our scene to where we want it, we can get rid of the placeholder by clicking on the 'Narrative hook' plot point once more and then clicking the **Delete** button.

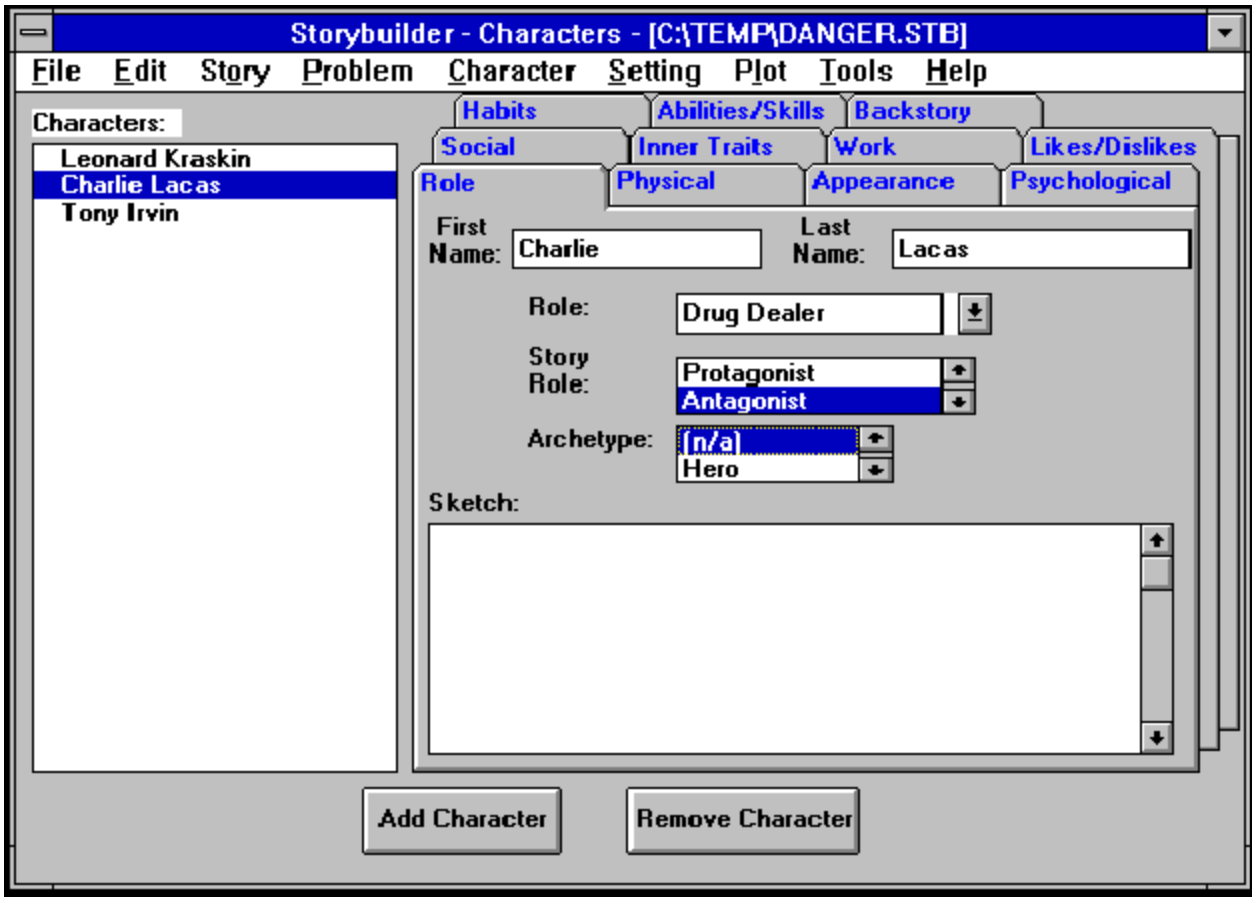
We also have an idea of what our climax scene is— the showdown we visualized when we were thinking about our problem's resolution. Clicking on the 'Climax' plot point, change the description to 'Tony diverts Lacas with the phone and wounds him.' The idea is that Tony calls Lacas' phone, which interrupts him.

Plotting is usually the last thing to worry about, for several reasons. The characters should be well defined, so that their actions are consistent with their natures. The story problems should also be clearly understood, especially the resolutions. Every problem is a story in miniature; plotting a story is largely a matter of arranging events from one or more problems into a satisfactory sequence. But writing is a process of accumulation, and the ideas which you collect to create your story concept can come to you at any time. If you visualize a plot point, don't hesitate to record it.

The characters, so far, have been defined by their roles; the only specific traits we've given them (Leonard and Tony) have been shaped by the story's needs. It's time to put some flesh on these skeletons.

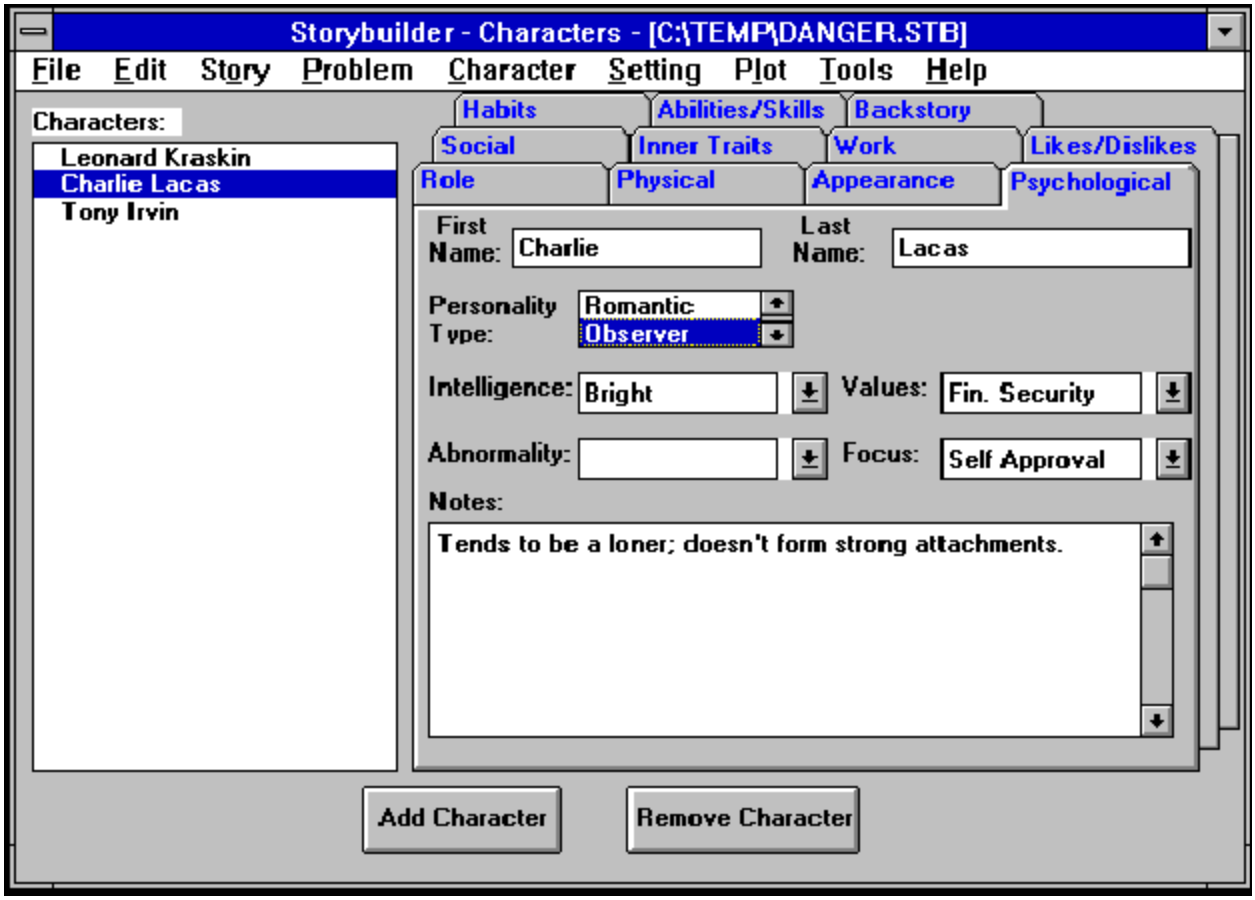
Let's start with Charlie Lacas. We know a few things about him. He's young, he deals drugs, and he uses technology that the detectives don't have. That absence of technology suggests that the story doesn't take place in a big city. But perhaps Charlie is a city boy who's figured out that he can use his supplier contacts in New York to deal drugs in a small city, say in Pennsylvania somewhere. It's safer, the competition is less, and he has an edge over the small-town cops. This implies that he's fairly bright, which makes him a more worthy adversary for our detectives.

Going to the **Character** form, we can start creating some of this:



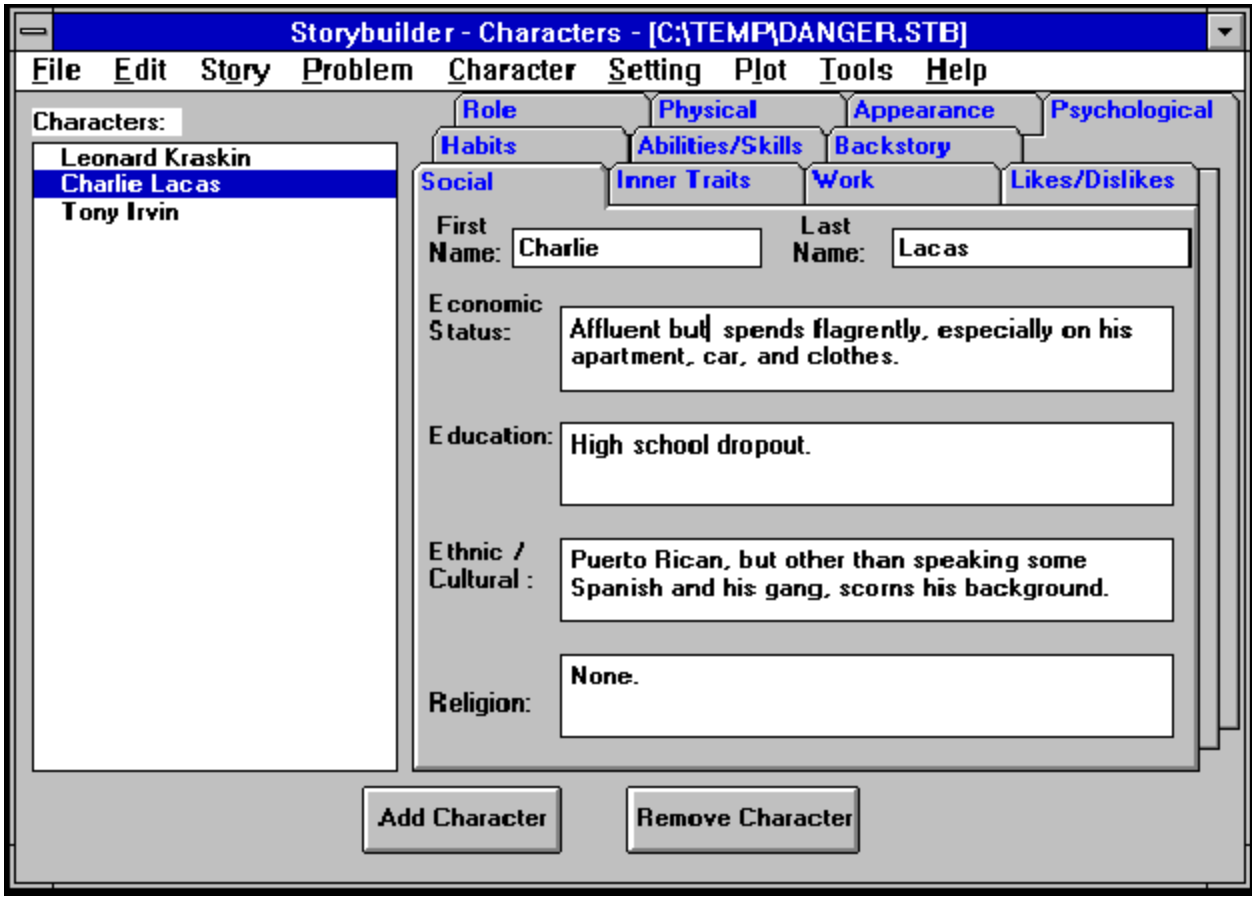
Details of appearance were created also.

We then turn to psychological considerations:



Personality Type is based on the theory of enneagrams (see "Personality Type" under "Psychology Tab" in the "Characters" chapter of this manual for more about enneagrams.) A stereotype such as this can suggest how the character might react in certain situations.

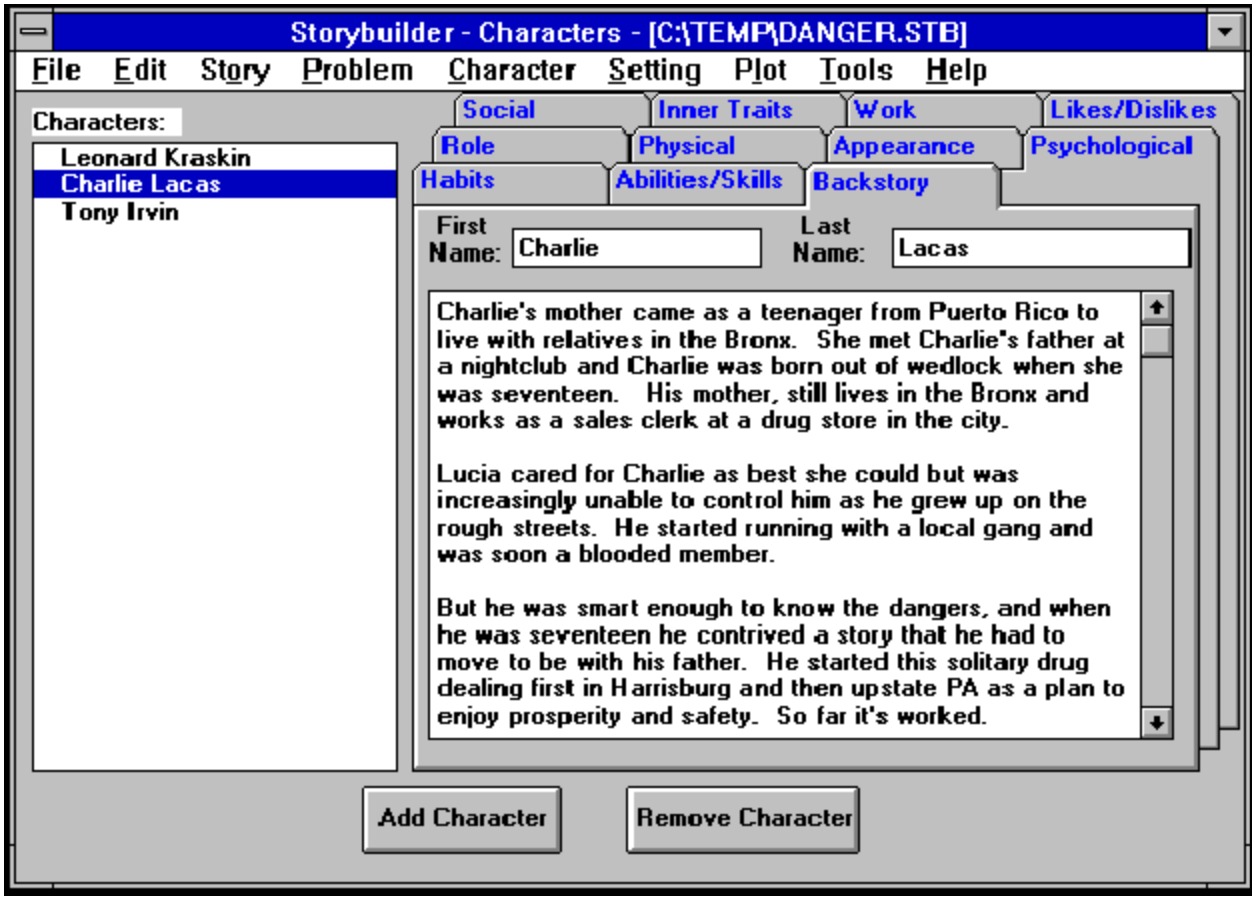
Let's also define some social factors:



The goal of all of this is to create a fully rounded human being, one who is believable and who you can visualize talking and acting in your story.

The other major consideration is that the character should support the role you've given him. Had the initial story idea been for a character, you might have fleshed the character out before you started looking for story problems, and then looked for a role to fit the character, but in this case the role came first and the character should fit the part.

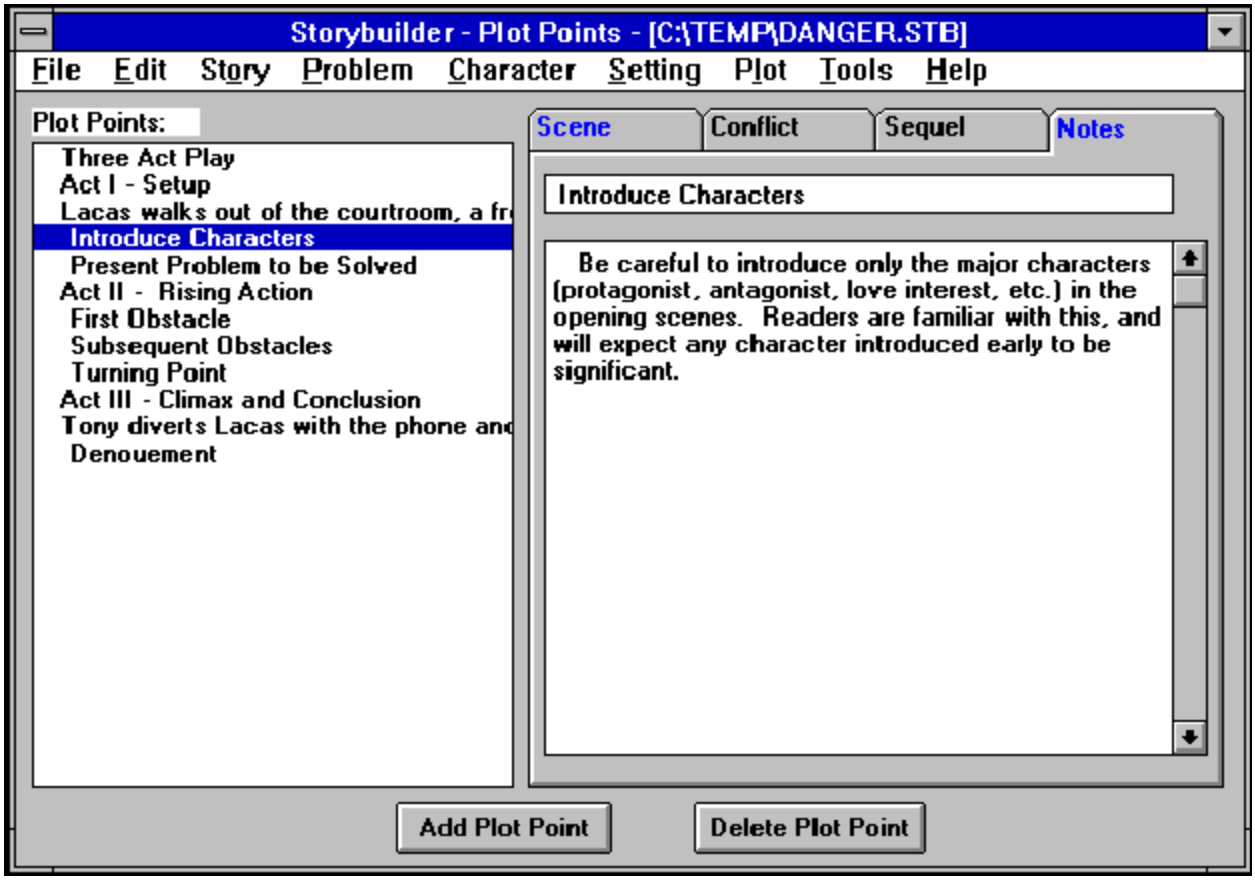
We'll look at one last tab, the Back story tab:



There's always a question of how much detail to provide, for characters, problems, settings, etc. The answer will vary from story to story. For example, this is an action-oriented story, so the characterizations aren't quite as important. But although not everything you know about the character has to be in the story, everything you know will affect the story as you write it.

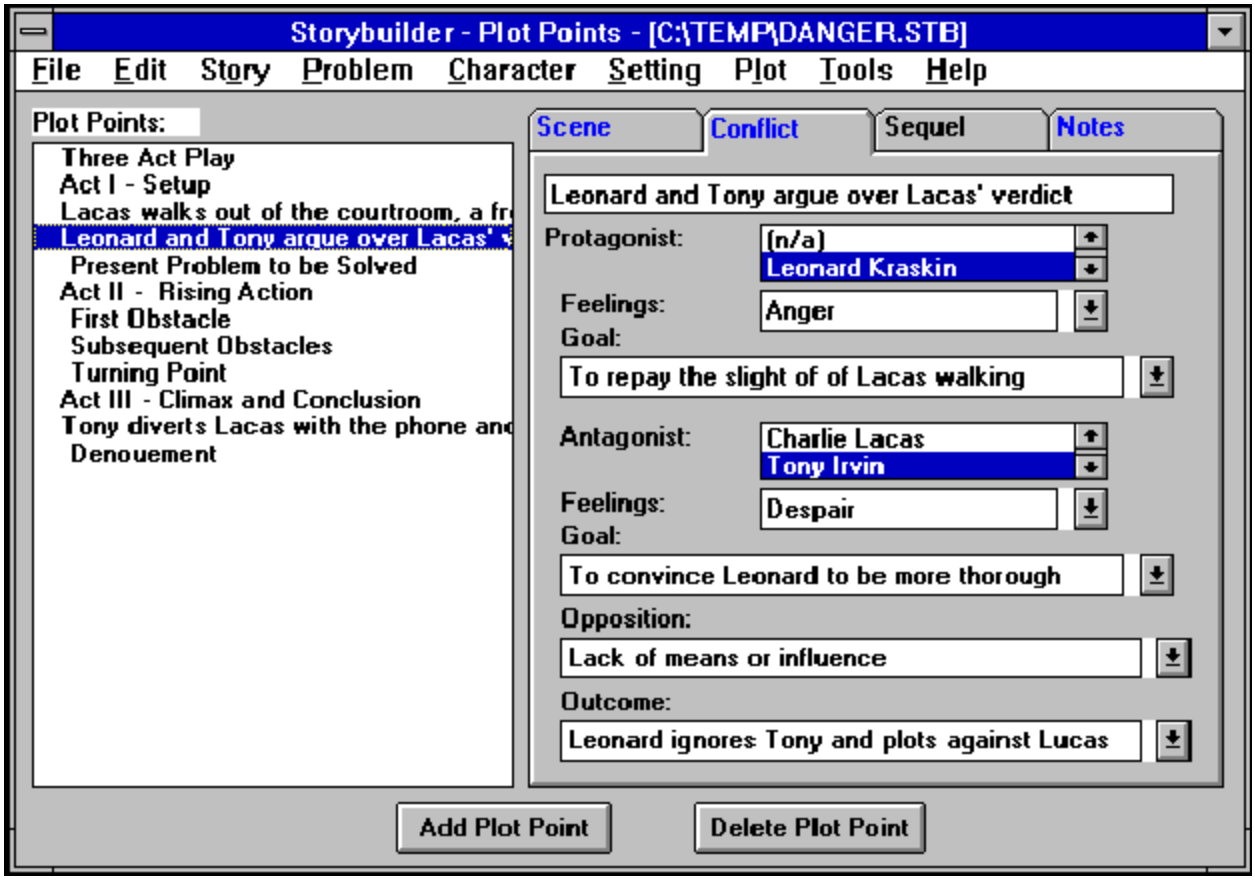
You can look at the `DANGER.STB` outline on the StoryBuilder default directory to see the rest of the character tabs, and to see the developments of the other two characters.

Having developed the characters better, we can look at the plot. So far we have a skeleton plot, created with the **Master Plots** tool, and have added a couple of specific scenes:

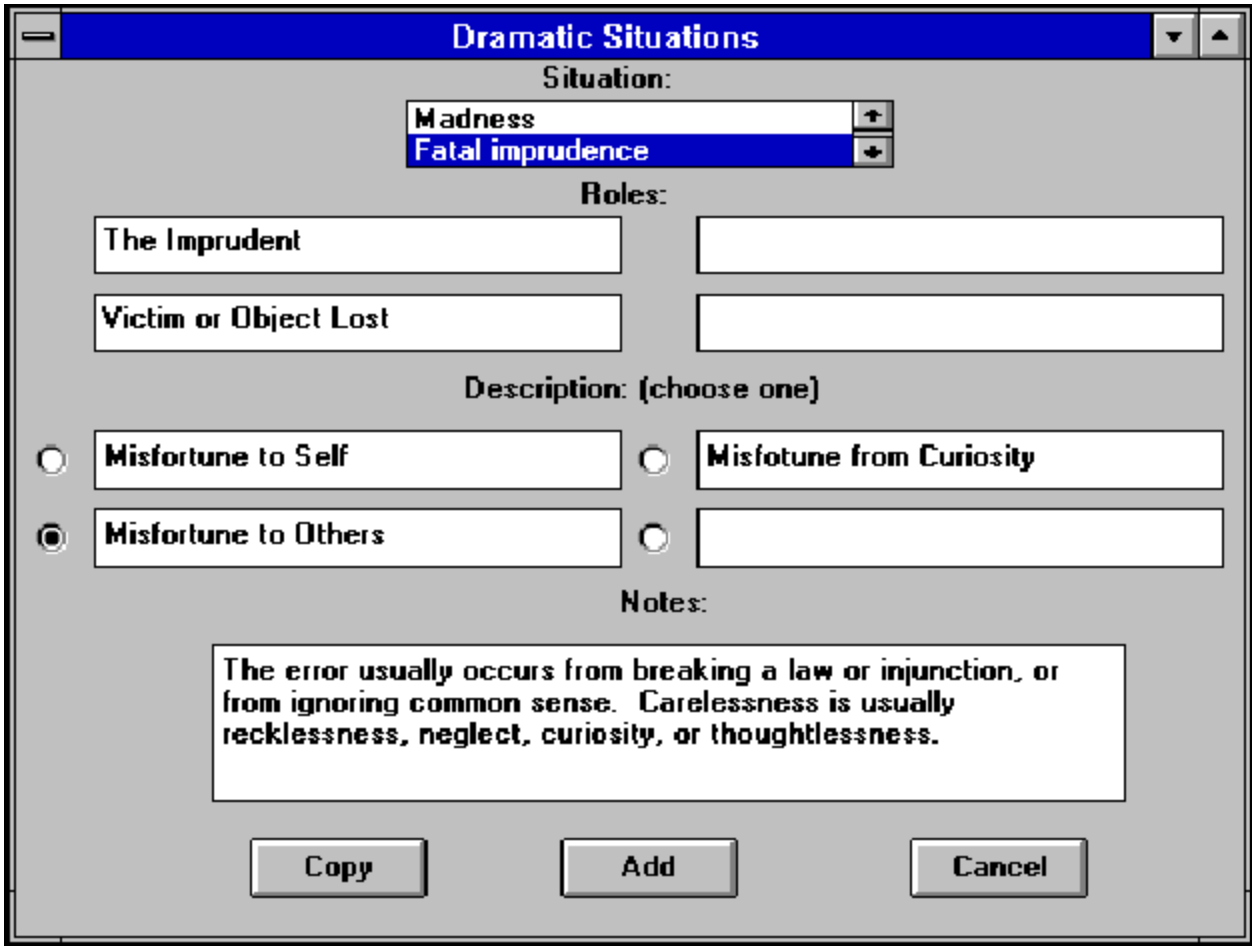


Our goal is to replace the skeleton plot points with specific scenes. Of course, you're not bound to follow the skeleton, but our partial goal here is to illustrate StoryBuilder's tools. We'll write in scenes (see "Plotting in Scenes" for reasons.) The opening narrative hook will have introduced the antagonist, Charlie Lacas, so we next need to introduce the detectives.
We can do this with a scene of dialog between the two detectives right there in the courtroom.

Every scene in the story should have conflict or suspense, and this one is no exception. Since the scene's between Leonard and Tony, the conflict has to be between them. We'll let them argue over Lacas walking, and the scene summary becomes 'Leonard and Tony argue over Lacas' verdict.' Going to the **Conflict** tab, we change the summary and consider the conflict:

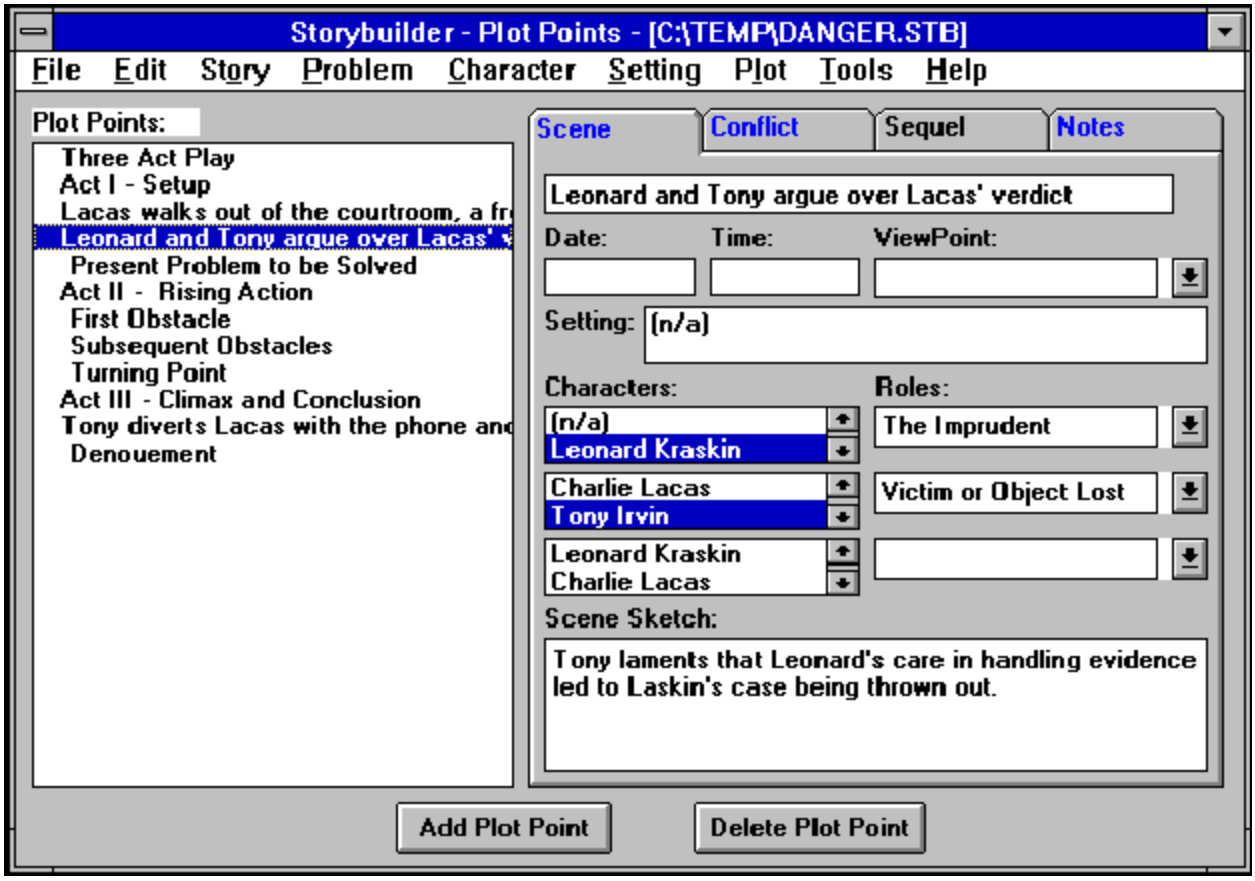


The **Dramatic Situations** form, which is invoked from the **Plotting Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu, might have also been of use in finding conflict for this scene. The shortcut keys [Ctrl+D] bring the form up:



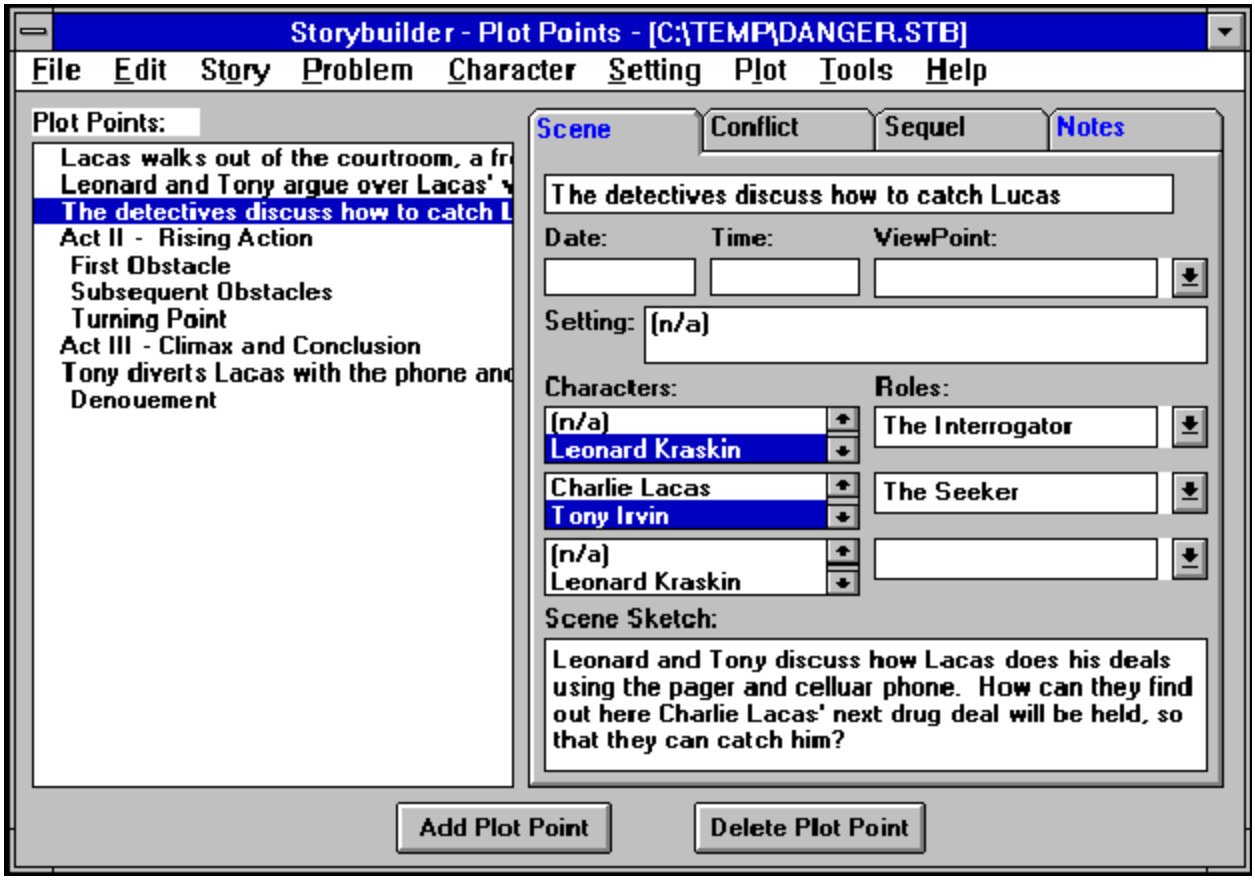
It takes some imagination to see how the dramatic situations can fit to a scene, but once you get the hang of it you'll see these same 36 situations repeated endlessly in fiction. In this case, we've chosen Fatal Imprudence. The purpose of this scene is to introduce the characters Leonard and Tony, and this dramatic situation allows us to show Leonard's character flaw, as well as to create conflict.

The **Copy** button copied roles from the dramatic situation into our **Scene** tab. We can assign these two roles to two of our characters (the choices are obvious):



The next point in the skeleton is 'Present Problem to be Solved'. Since we've worked over the problems, we know what the problem is— the Story Question for our first, external problem: 'How can Leonard and Tony overcome the 'cellular phone advantage' and find out where Charlie Lacas' next drug deal will be held, so that they can catch him?'

All we need to do is to change the skeleton plot point into one which presents this problem. We can let Leonard present it to the reader, by discussing Lacas' use of technology:

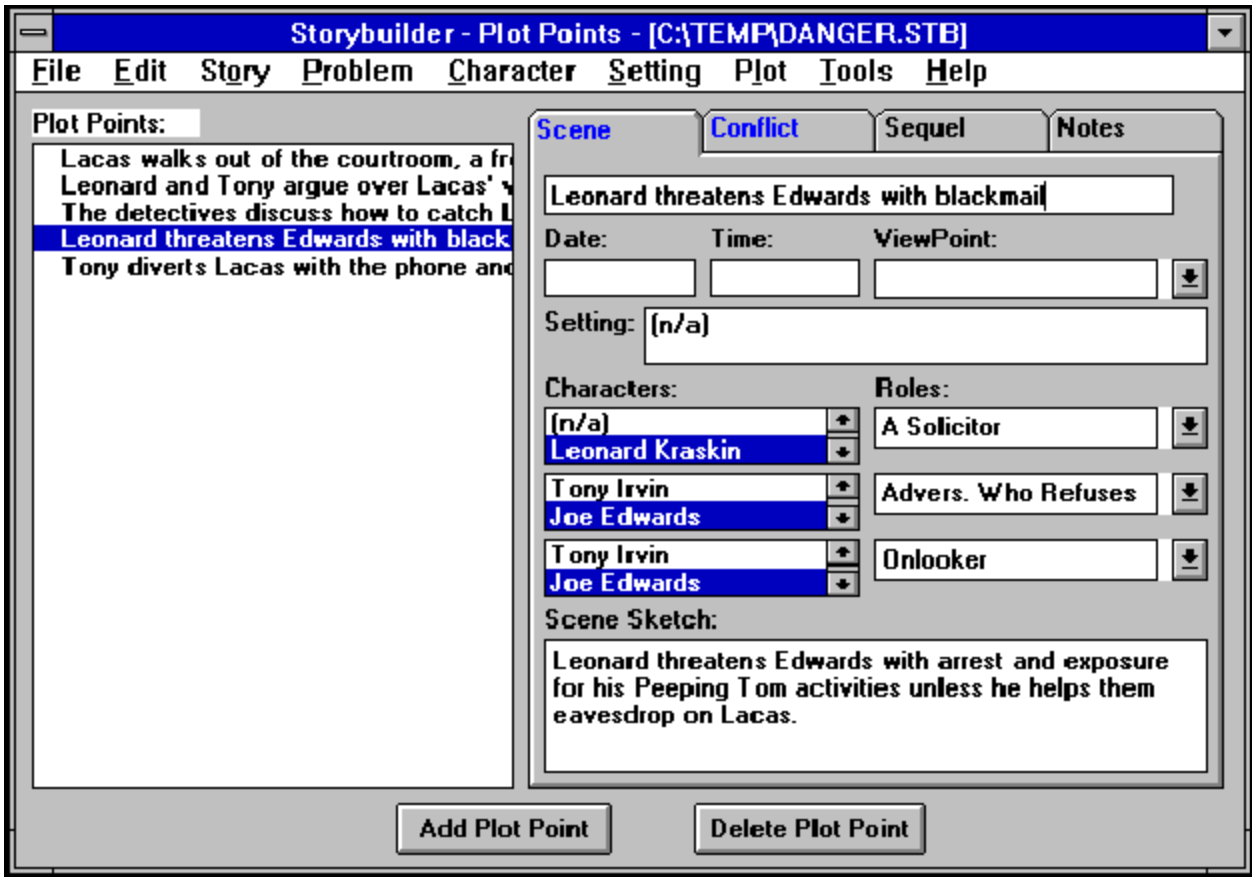


To illustrate the universality of the **Dramatic Situations** tool, we chose a dramatic situation for this scene, as well: Enigma.

We also got rid of the first two placeholder plot points by clicking on them on the outline side of the form and then clicking on the **Delete** command button.

We know how our story starts and how it ends; we're left with the middle story that ties these two parts together.

We need to figure out how the two detectives can find out where the next drug deal is to be held. One way is to enlist an ally who knows all about wireless communications. Let's say he's the owner of a small radio-electronics shop. But as with the interplay between Leonard and Tony, we need conflict. Let's make this character a reluctant ally, one who's coerced into helping our protagonists. We might make him a petty criminal of some sort, for instance, and have Leonard threaten or blackmail him. That fits Leonard's character as we know it: he'll go to any lengths to catch Lacas. Let's call our new character Joe Edwards. For his crime, we need something serious enough to get him into trouble, but not too serious, or the reader will be outraged that Leonard's left him on the street. Let's say that he's used his electronics skills to bug the people in the apartment where he lives; and in particular, the single woman who lives downstairs— he's a Peeping Tom. We can also add the scene where Kraskin threatens Edwards with arrest and exposure unless he cooperates.



We've also gotten rid of the rest of the scaffolding plot points; we know where we're going now and don't need additional directions. The **Dramatic Situations** entry (had we used it) would have been 'Obtaining (through force)'.

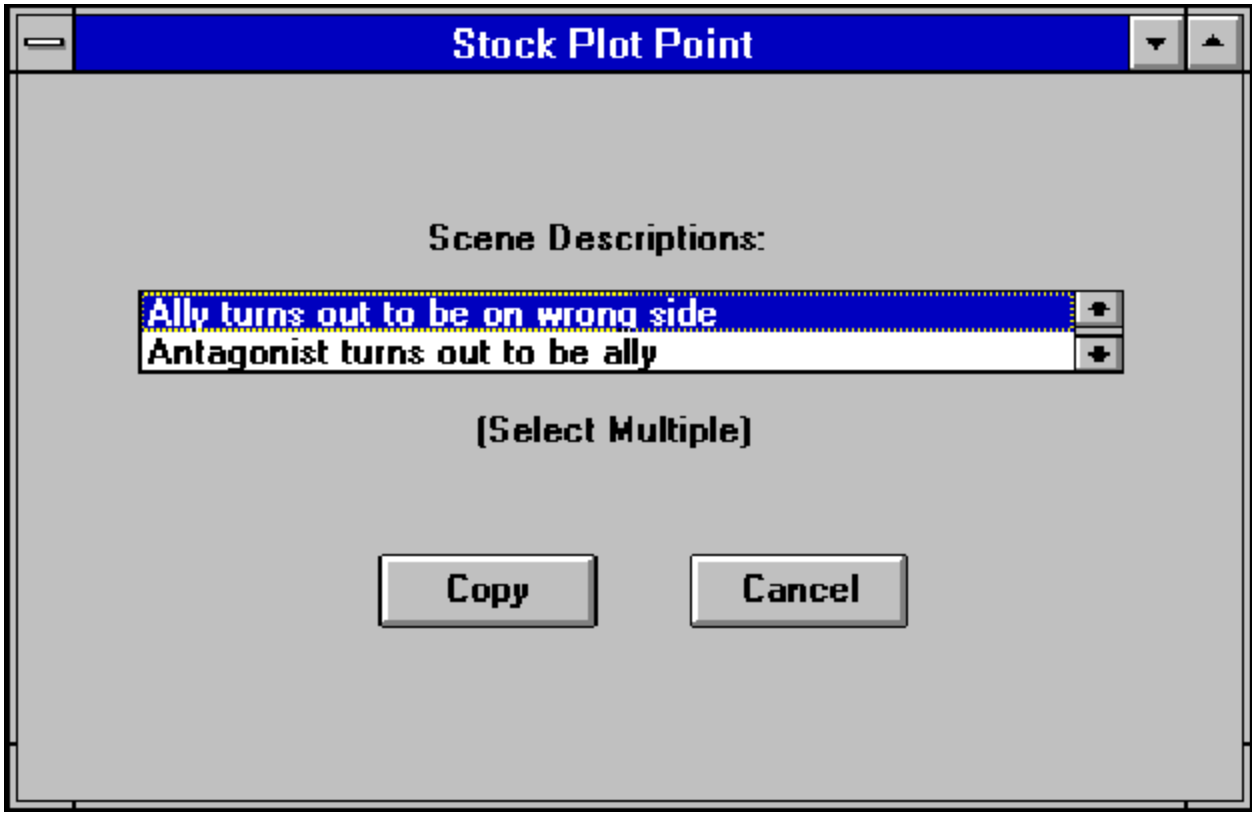
The question now turns to what Edwards will provide our detectives to enable them to eavesdrop on Lacas' cellular phone. This is the place where some research might be useful, to make the story more believable. However, we'll just have Edwards pull out a modified scanner and key Lacas' phone number, which the detectives provide. This gizmo will be our detectives' 'listening post' and will let them overhear anything the drug dealer says on the phone. We'll add a plot point for this, although technically it's a continuation of the preceding scene.

It's vital, when plotting, to keep the readers in mind, and to think about what will keep them turning pages. This particular plot point isn't too dramatic, but it does have appeal to curiosity. We can spice this up further by having Tony remind Lacas of the laws they're breaking.

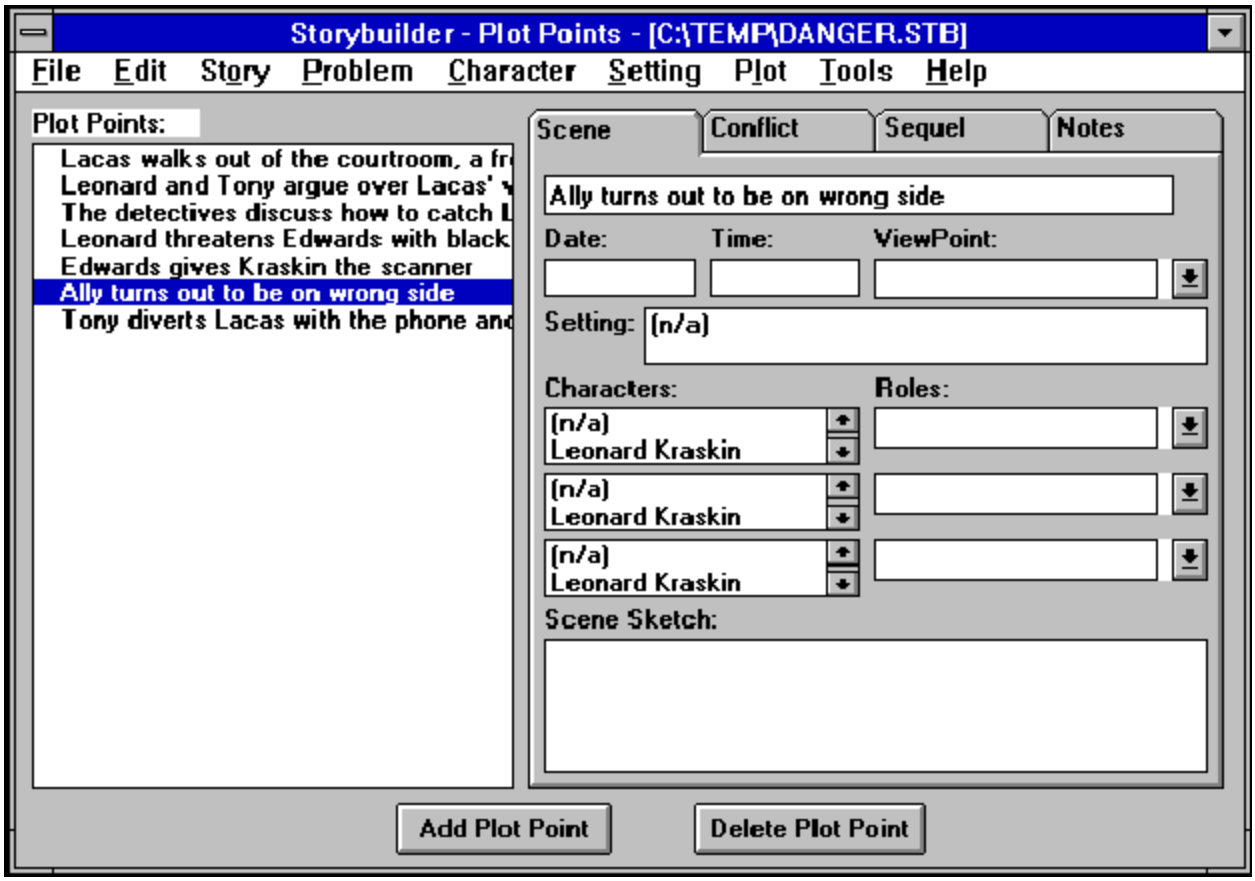
We've developed two story problems. The first or external problem is the one we just gave the reader— the setup or first act. We've also just resolved this problem, by giving the detectives the means to eavesdrop Lacas. The second problem, based on Leonard's impulsiveness, has him captured by Lacas, and we'll want the reader to know if Tony can rescue him. The second problem provides us with a complication, the capture. We could therefore look at the middle story as a way to leapfrog from the one story problem to the other. Since a story problem is a sort of story in miniature (so is a scene), plotting will frequently involve working this way; see "Plotting and the Problem form" for more details.

Let's look for a way to get Leonard captured. Turning once more to the **Tools** menu, we select **Stock Scenes** from the **Plotting Aids** sub-menu. Several further choices appear. Let's look at the **Twists and Turns** choice.

This provides us with a number of stock scenes which offer dramatic twists:



In this case the first twist listed might help us; our electronics buff ally, Joe Edwards, could be tied to Lacas in some fashion and tip him off that the two detectives are listing in on his call. Lacas could then set the cops up. We decide to go with this. Clicking on the first item in the list, and then on the **Copy** button, adds this stock scene into our plot outline.



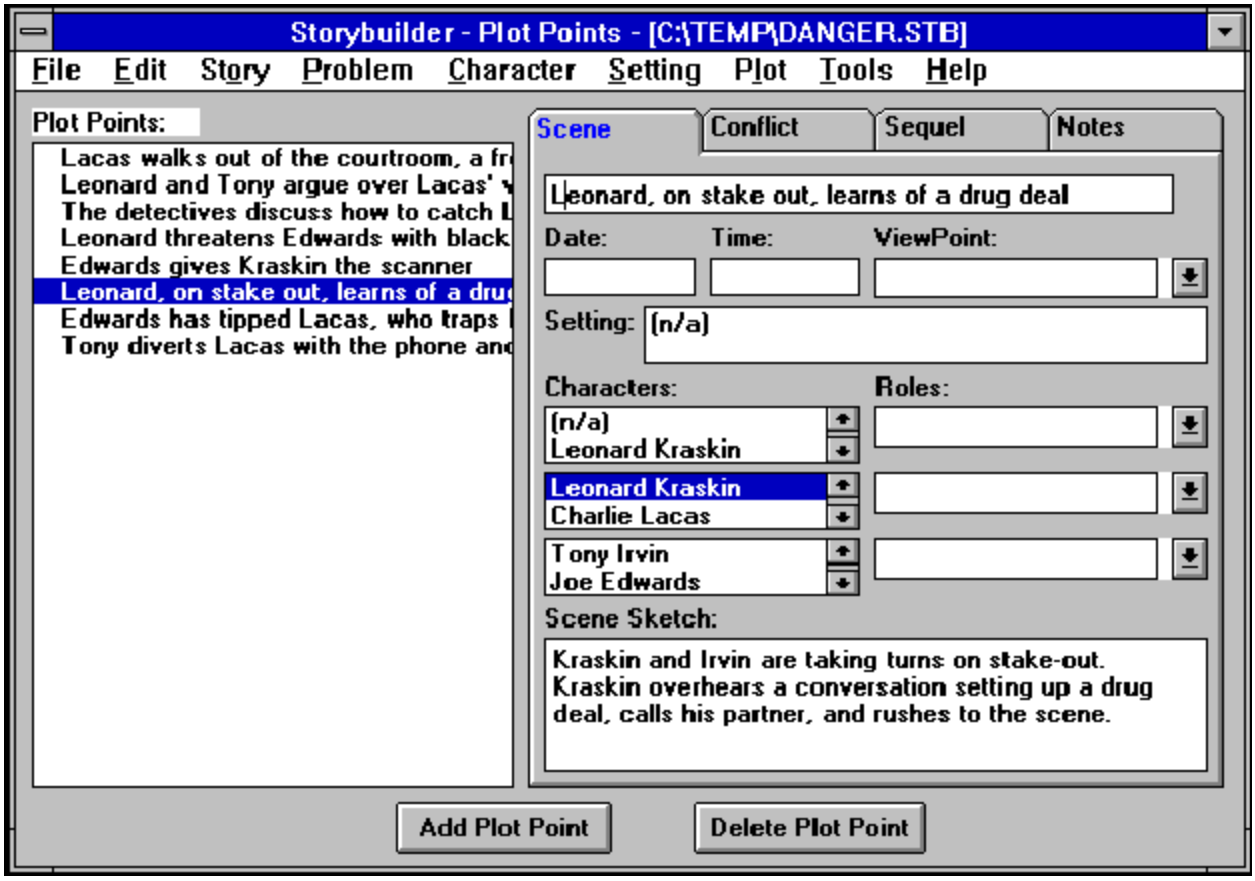
We can change the scene summary to read 'Edwards has tipped Lacas, who traps Kraskin.'

There's something missing, a piece in which the detectives overhear the Charlie Lacas setting up a drug deal, and which leads Leonard to rush impulsively into the ambush. But why would Leonard rush to catch Lacas and leave his partner behind?

We know that our detectives are using an illegal bug to catch Lacas, so they can't implicate their boss or other cops in their quest. It's just the two of them. The two of them might have decided to take turns on an unoffical stake out. That way we can have Leonard working the stake out when the deal goes down.

So let's add a plot point immediately prior to this where this takes place, and title it 'Leonard, on stake out, learns of a drug deal .' We can add notes to explain the details of the stake out.

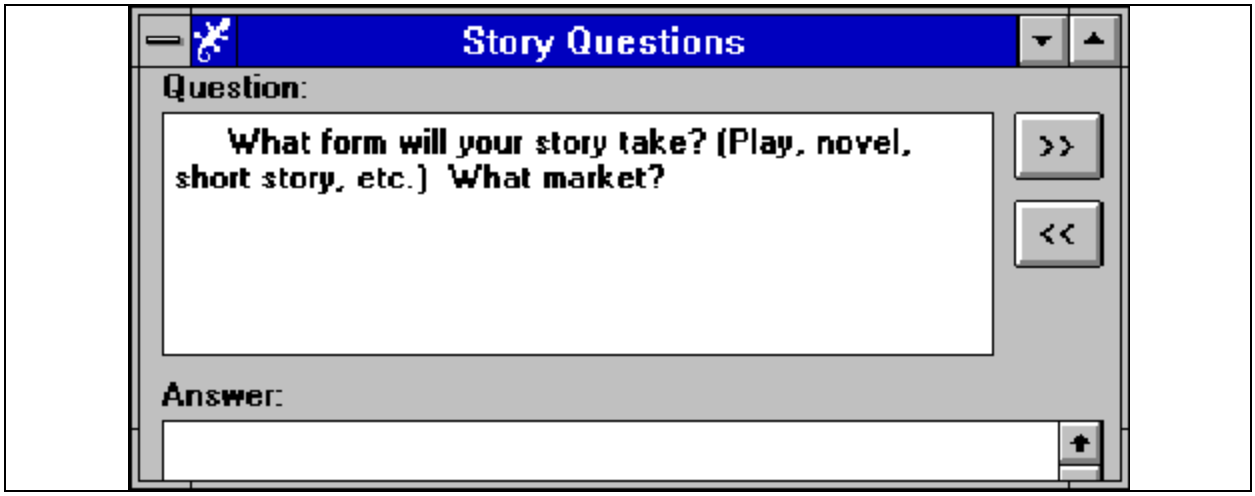
Our plot outline now looks like this:



This is a relatively complete plot. We could sit down and start writing the story now, but that would be a mistake. There's a lot left unfinished: we haven't created settings, the characters are still unrefined, etc. The more these things are worked out, the richer and more complete the first draft will be when you write it.

We should evaluate our work so far. The creation of the story outline is an excellent time to review and revise. For one thing, changes at this point in the story's development, while it's still just an outline, are relatively cheap and easy; you're not sacrificing prose and dialog that took time and effort to produce. There's also another advantage: at this point you're looking only at the structure of the story. Every story has these components of problems, characters, setting and plot; but once you begin to write, the bones will be fleshed out in narrative and dialog and dressed with your writing style. The naked structure will be, in a sense, hidden by the prose. This makes spotting and correcting structural problems more difficult.

StoryBuilder offers a tool, **Key Questions**, to assist in refining and testing your story elements. There are questions for Story, Problem, Character, Setting, and Plot. From the **Tools** menu, select **Key Questions** and then **Story Questions**. A form displaying a series of questions for the overall story will appear. We can test the story concept against these questions. If one is worth further study, notes can be recorded in the Answer section. For example, scrolling through the questions, we find:



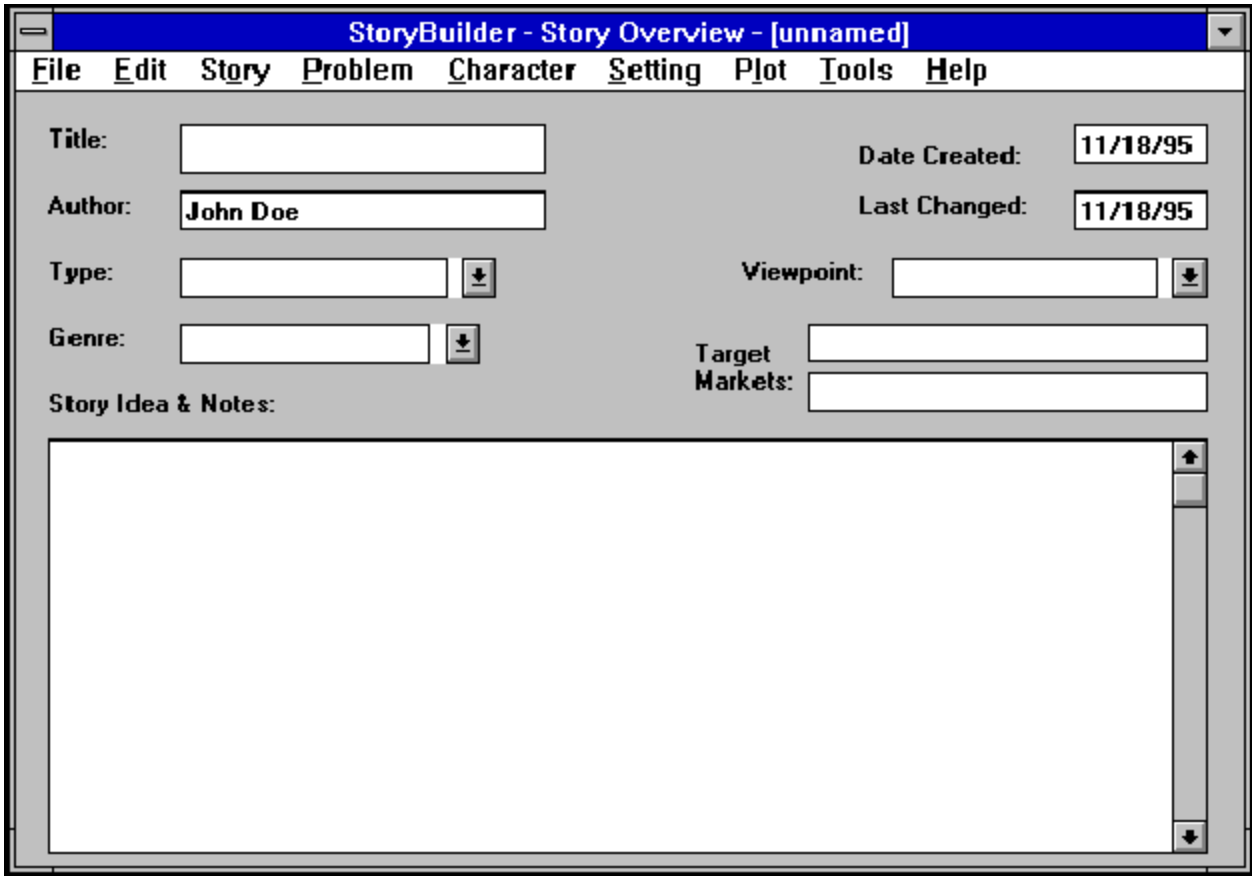
The second part of the question is a good one; we haven't selected a market, and therefore don't know if the story will match slant, length requirements, etc.

It's a good idea to use **Key Questions** frequently while creating the concept, and to review them before going on to the draft.

In this tutorial we've produced most of a story outline. We've worked through problem refinement, created several characters, drafted a plot, and along the way we've examined several tools to help these processes. The story outline was created as this tutorial was being written, exactly as shown. We feel that any story idea can be converted into a fully developed concept using these techniques.

"Danger Call" is a action-oriented suspense tale and stresses plot over character development. A character-driven story would be developed in much the same way, but the character profiles and relationships would, of course, developed more fully before developing the plot.

Story Form



The Story form contains overview information for the story. It's a good place to capture the original idea which prompted the story.

Title	Your working title for the story.
Date Created	This field is set automatically when the story outline is first created.
Author	Your name. The field defaults to the licensee name from the Preferences form.
Last Changed	This field is updated whenever the story outline is modified.

Type	The dramatic form in which you plan to tell the story.
Genre	The category or class of the story. Each genre has its own particular forms, conventions, and techniques.
Viewpoint	The place or person from which the story is told.
Target Markets	Where you plan to sell the story. Be specific; in order to hit a target you must be able to see it.
Story Idea and Notes	General notes. This is a good place to record the original idea that led you to want to write this story.

Problems

The short definition for a story is *trouble*. Like people, stories are at their best when things are at their worst.

You create problems by devising goals for your story's characters, motives which propel them to strive for their goals, and opposition to prevent them from reaching their goals. The opposition leaves the outcome uncertain, which keeps the reader turning pages to find out what happens.

This chapter describes StoryBuilder's commands for defining and analyzing the problems which are the heart of your story.

Defining the Problem

The heart of fiction is *drama*— a struggle in which the outcome is in doubt. The struggle usually starts with a goal, want, or lacking in a central character, the protagonist. The character acts to satisfy the goal, fulfill the desire, or cure the fault; but is opposed by someone or something, the antagonist. A story problem is the character's attempt to overcome the opposition and achieve the goal.

A story can have multiple problems. For example, the protagonist's major conflict may be between himself and another character, but that conflict may be mirrored by an internal 'Man against Himself' problem such as lack of confidence. Another example is a subplot which will usually have its own problem to be solved. StoryBuilder allows you to have as many story problems as you need.

Stories usually need closure: a sense of certainty or completeness. In order to achieve closure, the major story problems must be resolved, or you must at least hint at the solutions. The solution to an inner problem, which is concerned with character development, typically relates to the story's premise and theme. See "Outer and inner problems" for further thoughts on this matter, and "Finding the meaning" for details on StoryBuilder's tools to help define this part of your story.

The **Problem** form contains choices to help refine a story problem by breaking the problem into its component pieces: the type of conflict, what's at stake, the motivations of the opposing characters, etc.

Outer and Inner Problems

Plots are commonly classified as either action oriented or character driven. Examined more closely, every story has elements of both. The common thread is the story's problems. The story's action comes from the external events which occur as the characters struggle to reach their goals. Similarly, character growth and development occurs as characters struggle to reach their goals. The difference is whether the problem is an outer one or an inner one.

An outer problem is the character's struggle to achieve some physical goal— to solve a problem, to win the love of his life, to find a treasure.

An inner problem is some want or need within the character himself, a need to grow or change. This problem may be some character flaw or psychological hurdle to overcome. It may be the real reason why the character pursues his external goal, even though the superficial reason he gives is quite different. The character frequently doesn't know that he has an inner problem at the start of the story, and sometimes, in tragic endings, refuses to acknowledge or resolve the inner problem.

The outer problem asks 'what does the character want?' The inner problem asks 'why does he want it?' The outer problem is tangible. The inner problem is intangible, invisible. The outer problem is solved when something is accomplished. The inner problem is solved when the character grows or changes. The outer problem is related to plot. The inner problem is related to character growth and theme.

It's often constructive to use StoryBuilder to define both an external and an internal problem for your protagonist. The protagonist's inner problem ties the character's definition to the plot, and through the premise, adds depth and meaning to the external problem. Both problems help to shape the story's plot.

Finding the Meaning

The story problem and its outcome combine to produce the premise. If the subject is depression over the death of a spouse, and your protagonist finds and wins a new romantic interest and overcomes his depression, your premise might be: 'An elderly man, depressed over the death of his wife of many years, finds new meaning in life when he finds a new love.' The premise is simply the basic idea of the story, which answers the story question. The Premise field on the **Resolution** tab of the **Problem Definition** form holds the premise.

Readers expect the protagonist's problems to be resolved in some fashion, and not just left hanging. But the solutions, especially to the inner problems which show character development, must have significance and meaning. This meaning is the story's theme. The Theme field on the **Resolution** tab of the **Problem Definition** form holds a synopsis of this meaning.

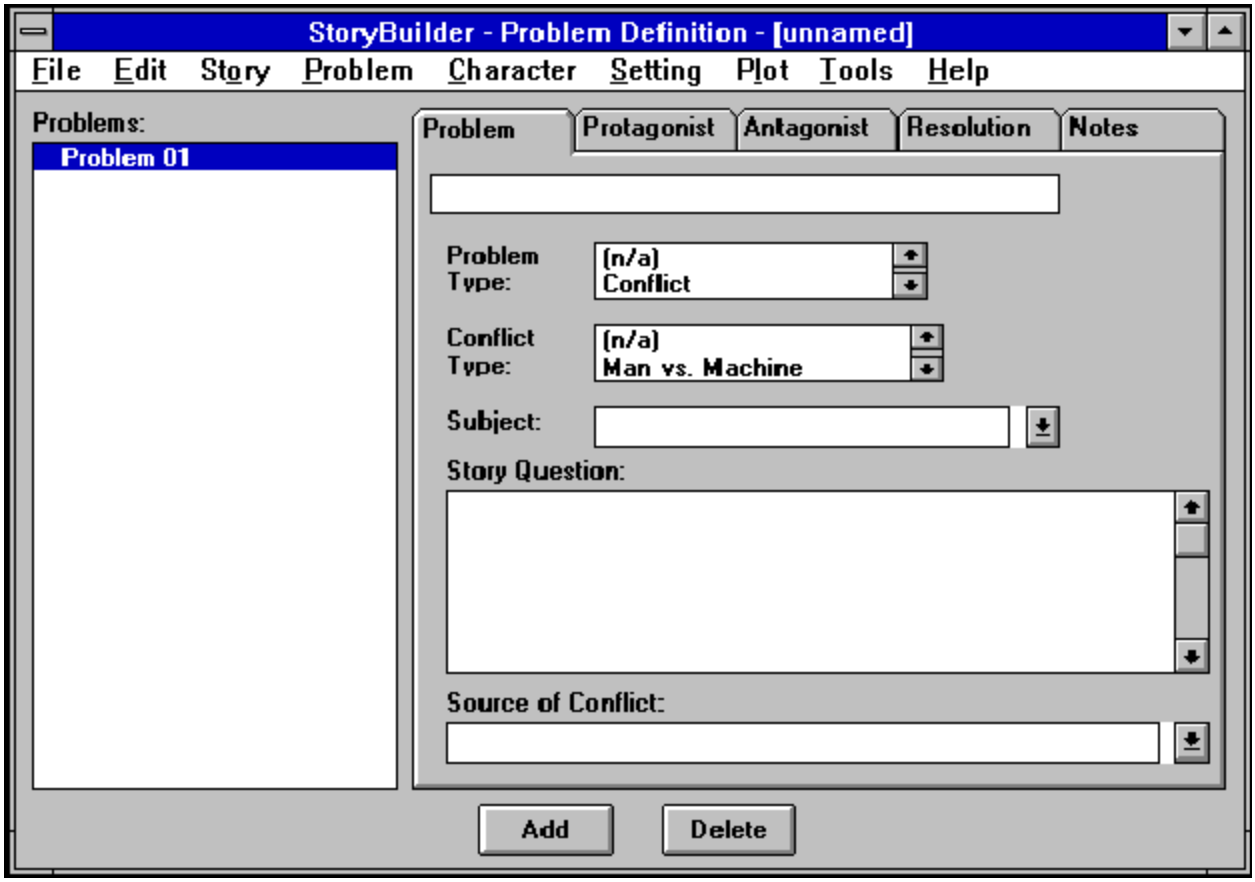
The theme or moral is derived from the premise. To find the theme, consider the elements of the premise as symbols. The above premise might have the theme 'Love overcomes depression.' If you change the outcome and premise, the theme will also necessarily change. If the protagonist gives up and is overcome by depression, the theme might be 'Grief overcomes even love' or 'Grief ends in tragedy.'

The failure to invest a story with this meaning can be as unsatisfactory as an unresolved story problem, because fiction, unlike real life, has to make sense. While it's sometimes good to challenge reader's perceptions with thought-provoking ideas, the fit of the story to its intended market is largely determined by the theme.

The theme can sometimes be difficult to define. The problem subject (contained in the Subject field on the **Problem** tab of the **Problem Definition** form) is a good starting place. It's also useful to consider

certain traits of your protagonist and antagonist as symbols which the premise describes. Motivation, Values, Focus, and **Virtues and Vices** are the controls which are most useful in this regard.

Problem Tab



The **Problem** tab on the **Problem Definition** form contains elements which help to define a story problem.

To select this tab and bring it to the front of the stack, click on the tab's label.

A problem can be defined as a matter involving uncertainty. The matter is the protagonist's goal or want, and the uncertainty is the antagonist's opposition to the goal. The protagonist may not initially be aware of his need (this is common in stories of discovery). The opposition may not even be a human antagonist, but a force or process or situation. But all problems have the elements of goal and opposition.

59 Problem

The elements on this tab pertain directly to the problem itself.

Problem Type

There are three problem types:

Conflict	The protagonist has a goal or objective, but something or someone (the antagonist) opposes the achievement of this goal. The protagonist and the antagonist struggle until one or the other wins.
Decision	This story pattern ends with the protagonist making a difficult and important decision. The problem is a choice.
Discovery	The protagonist eventually makes a not too obvious discovery. The discovery, which is the story's resolution, represents a change for him.

Conflict Type

The nature of the contention may be physical, psychological, or philosophical. More specifically:

Human vs. Nature	At its worst— fire, tidal wave, earthquake, epidemic disease...
Person vs. Person	The struggle may be two characters contending for the same prize, one person out to get another, or *The Odd Couple* stories of characters with opposing traits, or ideological.
Person vs. Himself	The protagonist is his or her own antagonist. The antagonistic side may be a destructive trait or habit, such as an addiction, or two opposing traits might fight for control in one person's soul.
Person vs. Society	...In the form of prejudices, taboos, or traditions.
Person vs. Situation	This is typical of Underdog master plot stories; the situation is an overpowering juggernaut such as a war, poverty, the 'system', or a corrupt organization.
Person vs. Fate	Fate (old age, death, evil, etc.) is usually personified as a character.
Person vs. Machine	The Machine's role may be as a symbol (for example, of dehumanizing society). *Pinocchio* and *Frankenstein* are the archetypes of Person vs. Machine stories.

The terms 'human' and 'person' in these labels means that these roles are humanized, not that they must be humans. The protagonist can be a dog, a wooden puppet, or a hobbit, but the reader must be able to identify with the character's humanity.

Subject

This control identifies the basic area or type of problem.

The Subject control lists many of the common types of problems encountered in fiction. This list isn't exhaustive, but is meant to help you if you're stuck, or to broaden your thinking about areas of conflict when you're working on the story.

The problem subject should be as specific as possible. If you start with a generic subject from the list, make it unique. Instead of 'Being Hunted', you might say 'Chased by Lieutenant Girard.'

As with many other controls, you can modify the problem subjects listed to suit your own needs and interests. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for details.

Story Question

The primary reason your reader reads your story is to find out how it comes out, to find the answer to a question the story poses. It's useful to clarify exactly what that question is.
The story question can usually be framed as a yes or no question in terms of the protagonist's goal: 'Will Scarlett manage to save her plantation?', or 'How will Macbeth prove that his father was murdered?'

Consider whether the reader should know the story's outcome prior to the climax scene. In many character-oriented stories the answer should be yes, and the story's dramatic arc deals with how things happen rather than what will happen. If the answer should be no, the story question is the essential suspense of the story, and your plot must serve to keep the outcome in doubt.

Source of Conflict

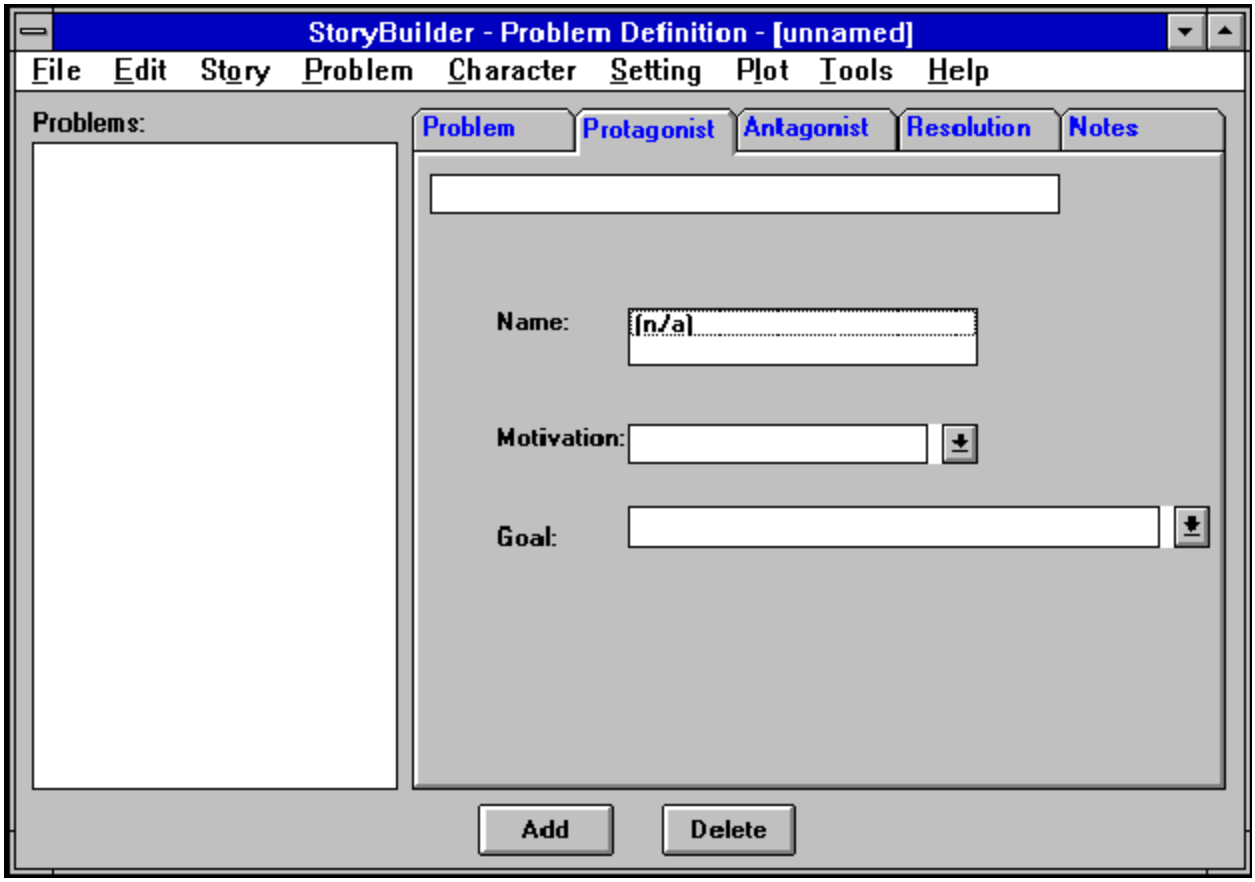
This control identifies the beginning or origin of the problem.

Think of the story as a flow from a state of equilibrium (the way things were before the action started), through a state of change (the story itself) to a new state of equilibrium (resulting from the story's resolution.) Source of Conflict identifies how the original equilibrium is shattered, and why a change is necessary.

The Source of Conflict is useful in identifying your story's point of attack, the opening scene.

The provided choices are generalized sources from which many problems spring. Be specific. If you start with a generic source, replace it with one specific to your story and your protagonist. Instead of 'Protagonist wants to change his situation", say 'Joe wants to escape his poverty.'

Protagonist Tab



The protagonist is the character who has the problem. The problems of the story's main character drive the plot. In the case of a subplot, that problem's protagonist may be a different character than the story's protagonist.

Name

This is a list of the characters who have been defined on the **Characters** form. Select one of these characters from the list as your protagonist.

Since the protagonist is generally the character with whom the reader identifies, it's normal to give the protagonist qualities and traits which make the reader sympathetic to the protagonist and his problems. An exception to this is the 'biter bit', in which the protagonist is an unsympathetic character who comes to a bad end. See "Outcome" under "Resolution tab" in this manual.

Motivation

In real life, things sometimes just happen. In fiction, with few exceptions, they happen *for a reason*. Motivation should be closely related to the story's Outcome and to the Theme. The clash of motives is the abstract counterpart to the concrete conflict between protagonist and antagonist, and provides thematic significance to the story.

Motivation is closely tied to character— it could be thought of as the place where character and plot meet. The psychological and social factors, traits, back story, and the motivation of your character must all be consistent. Deep motives can only change as a result of character development or growth.

The list of provided motivations is not meant to be exhaustive, but covers many of those found in literature.

As with many other controls, you can modify the motivations listed to suit your own needs and interests. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for details.

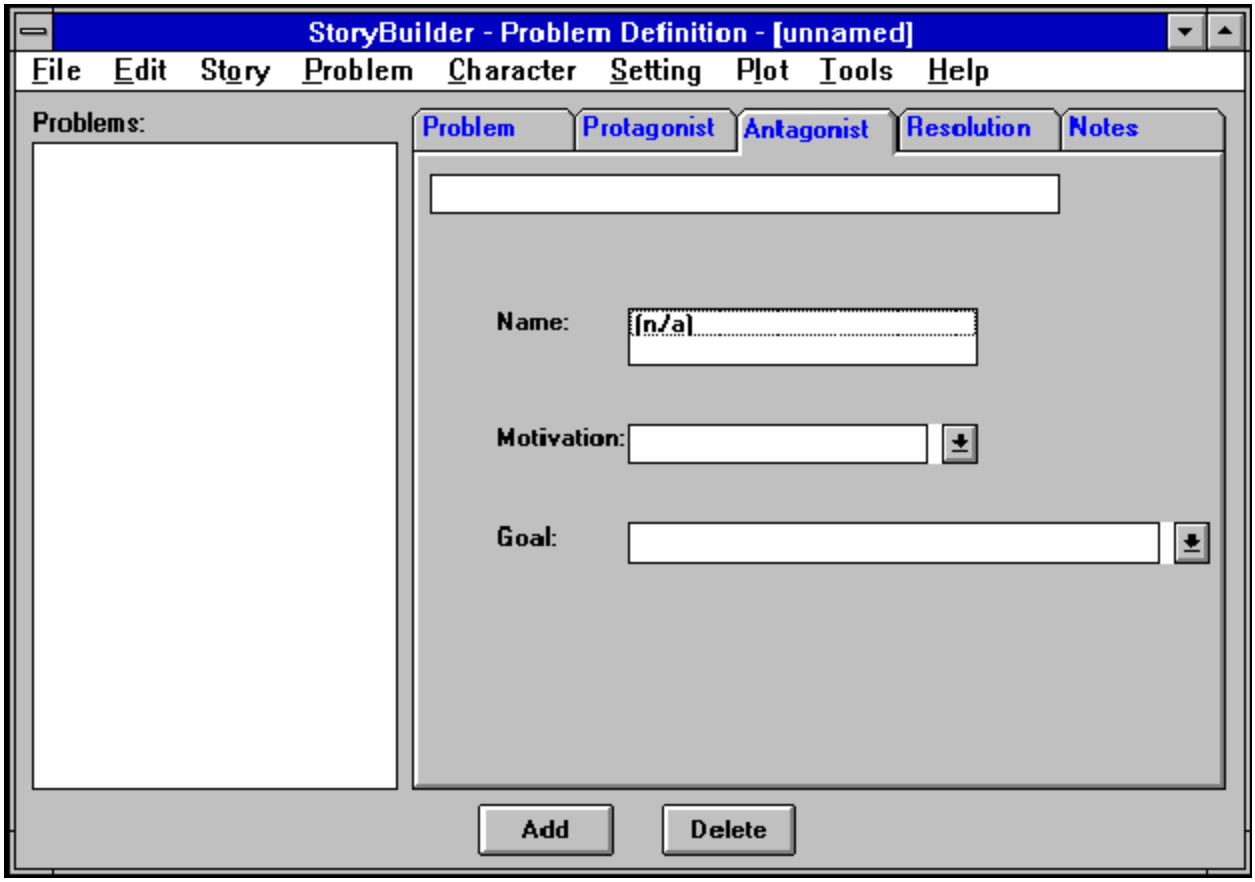
Goal

The Goal is the result or end toward which the character's efforts are directed.

As with all story elements, the more specific the goal, the better. The Goal control lists a number of generic goals, which is certainly not a comprehensive list. Even if one of these is selected, you should convert it into a specific desire: rather than 'To find a missing object', your goal should be 'To find the Maltese Falcon.'

You can modify the goals listed to suit your own needs and interests. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for details.

Antagonist Tab



The problem's antagonist is the source of the opposition to the problem protagonist's goal.

Don't automatically assume that the antagonist is a villain. Your antagonist should have perfectly valid reasons for opposing your protagonist— when seen from his point of view. He may even think of himself as the hero.

On the other hand, don't hesitate to use negative traits such as vices or prejudices, base motives, or aspects of the Shadow archetype in casting your antagonist if the story calls for it.

Name

This control is a list of the characters who have been defined on the **Characters** form. Select one of these characters from the list.

The antagonist may not be a person. If the conflict type is 'Person against Nature', for instance, the antagonist might be a mountain or a fire. In this case, you may want to consider defining a character for the non-human antagonist, and possibly personifying this force with human traits.

The antagonist may also be the same character as the protagonist, in the case of 'Man against Himself' conflicts.

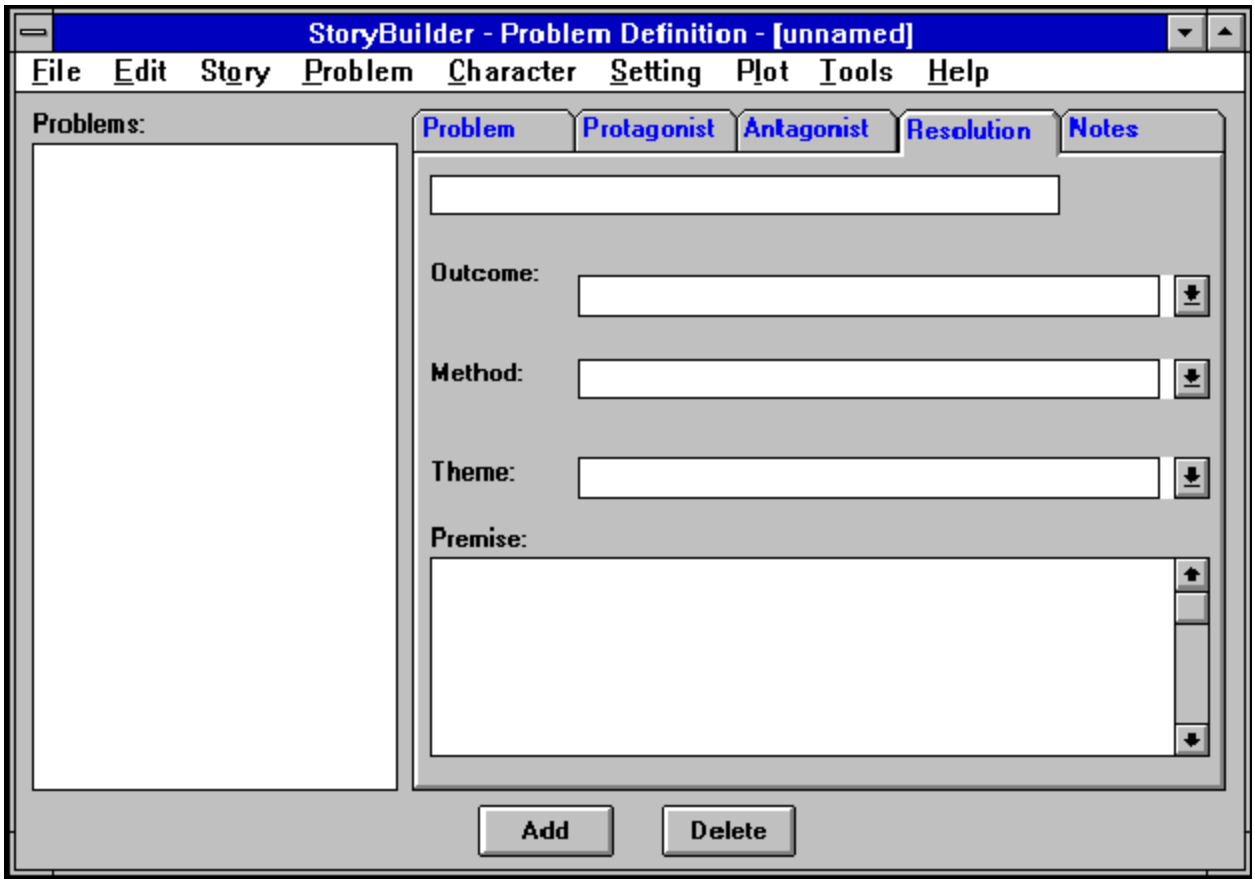
Motivation

See "Motivation" under "Protagonist tab."

Goal

See "Goal" under "Protagonist tab."

Resolution Tab



The resolution is the outcome of the problem. Not every problem in a story must be resolved, but the important ones which affect the protagonist's desire and show his growth must be. If they are not, the reader, who has been turning pages to find out what happens, will feel cheated.

The resolution of a problem is more than what happens. It also includes how the outcome came to be reached, and for the major story problems (especially the inner problems which deal with character growth), what the story means— the lessons learned.

Outcome

The outcome is the actual results or end of the problem. Outcomes can be generalized into 'successful' or 'not successful', but the choices listed for this story element are more useful. They represent story patterns which recur throughout fiction.

The more specific the outcome, the better. If you select one of the generic outcomes, you should convert it into a specific ending. Rather than 'Protagonist declines morally', you might have 'Scarlett looses Rhett.'

The generalized outcomes are:

Protagonist obtains goal	The protagonist should be a sympathetic character with a worthwhile goal, who solves her problem through her own efforts.
Protagonist reaches decision	The sympathetic protagonist must decide between two courses of action. The complications are from making the wrong choice. At the end she reverses and chooses correctly, leading to a happy ending.
Protagonist 'comes to realize'	The initial situation has the protagonist feeling depressed, guilty or anxious. The turning point results in her being made aware that things are not as bad as they seem.
Protagonist abandons goal	The sympathetic protagonist has a destructive goal such as revenge. At the turning point he realizes that his goal is no good and abandons it.
Protagonist is rehabilitated	The protagonist is dominated by a negative trait. The crisis shocks him into rehabilitation. This outcome is common in confessionals.

Villain is foiled ('biter bit')	The protagonist must be a villain, with a goal which will have ruinous effects if achieved. bring disaster to a sympathetic goal. The hero is the antagonist who opposes him, in a role reversal. At the crisis, when things are darkest, the protagonist seems to win, but the outcome is a reversal to a defeat.
Protagonist declines morally	The protagonist must start with some good qualities and hope of a good outcome, but at the moment of crisis he declines. The seeds of the negative trait which dooms him must be present from the start.
Protagonist is defeated	The sympathetic protagonist has a desirable goal, but is defeated in the end. This is true tragedy. The **Conflict Type** is often 'Person vs. Fate' or 'Person vs. Society.'
Villain is successful	Frequently the villain is a Trickster who succeeds through cleverness. This outcome is common in comedies.
Protagonist fails to realize	The protagonist doesn't adapt to changes in the story situation due to denial or stubbornness. A tragic ending of lesser drama.

Method

The Method control on the **Resolution** tab of the **Problem** form identifies the means by which the protagonist tries to achieve his goal. The examples are some of the methods used in many stories.

As with all story elements, the more specific, the better. You might change 'Pleads for another chance' with 'Pleads for a chance to fight Apollo Creed.'

Theme

The theme is the story's underlying moral or message.

The story problem and its outcome combine to produce the Premise. The theme is a symbolic distillation of the premise. If the subject is depression over the death of a spouse, and you have the protagonist win a new romantic interest and overcome his depression, your theme might be 'love overcomes depression'.

The control contains several simple templates which contain spots for thematic material. Key values from Subject, Motive, Values, Virtues and Vices, etc. can often be juggled to find the theme.

The result should be a simple sentence, free of qualification and ambiguities.

Premise

The premise is simply the basic idea of the problem. The premise of the major external story problem is generally the quick answer to the question 'What's your story about?'. A Premise can be thought of as the answer to the Story Question about the protagonist's goal. If the story question is 'Will Sam convince Judith that he's innocent of robbery?', the premise might be 'Sam is accused of robbery. He struggles to prove his innocence, especially to his fiance, Judith, and eventually succeeds when he finds the true identity of the thief.'

The premise can also be written in a slightly longer form, in a paragraph or two. When written in this form, some writers write a summary with a sentence or two devoted to the situation (beginning), complication (middle), and resolution (end).

Notes Tab

Use this area to contain any remarks or ideas relevant to the problem and which don't fit on the **Problem**, **Protagonist**, **Antagonist** or **Resolution** tabs.

Characters

Stories happen to *people*. This is true even if your protagonist is a puppy or a switching engine. If your character isn't a human being, you'll personify him. The reader wants to feel vicariously what your characters are feeling.

Your story's success hinges on your ability to create strong, well-drawn characters.

This chapter describes StoryBuilder's commands for defining and refining the characters in your story.

Making Characters Come Alive

The character is one of the most important elements of fiction. A memorable character will live in the mind of the reader long after details of the story are forgotten. Sequels are written about characters much more frequently than about the events in a story.

The thing we notice about a character is personality— the sum total of his or her physical, mental, emotional, and social characteristics. A real person has all of these traits, and we expect a believable fiction character to be equally multifaceted.

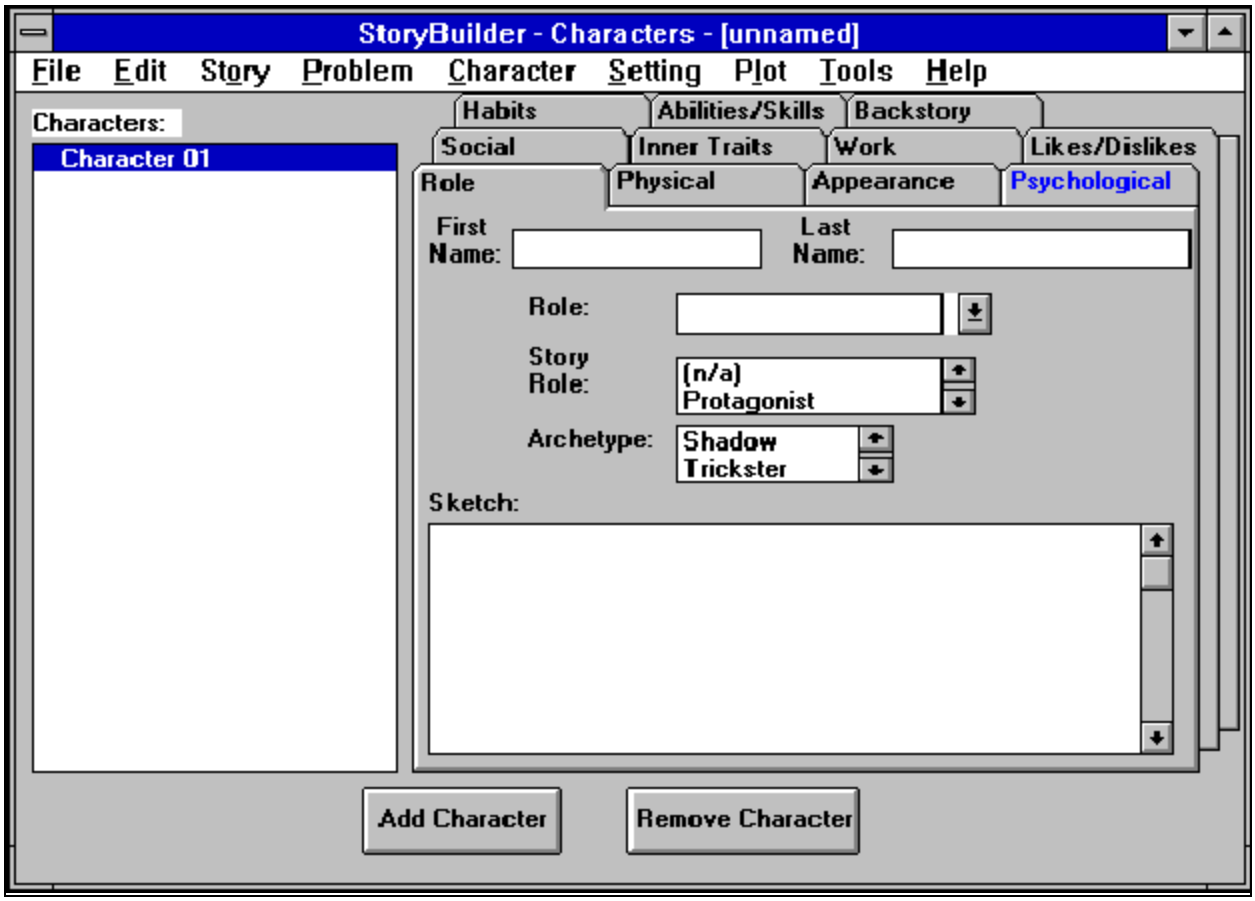
The multiple tabs on the **Character** form (especially the **Physical**, **Psychological**, **Social** and **Inner Traits** tabs) provide a sketch of a rounded, three-dimensional character. Your character should usually act in a manner consistent with these characteristics.

But to go beyond the stereotypical, your characters should also contain contradictions, just as real people do. To build these paradoxical elements into a character, start with a completely drawn character, and ask yourself what trait or characteristic would be at odds with that personality. Then write the trait in. Often the contradiction can be built into the character's back story, such as the prostitute who becomes a nun.

As with all the elements of a story outline, be specific and use details. Look for the details which support and illustrate the character's overall personality. Giving these details to the reader will allow him to explore the character and learn his personality for himself, which is more effective than any explanation.

Your character has a back story, the events of his life which occurred prior to the start of your story. The back story will often explain motivation, or the character's reactions to the story situation. Elements of the back story may limit or expand the character's choice of actions as the story unfolds. Use the **Back story** tab to expand upon elements of background.

Role Tab



The role tab contains the information which defines the relationship between this character and the story.

Unless your story's conception started with a particular character in mind, you should define the role before any other aspects of the character.

Role

The Role is the part played by this character in your story. It's often the character's occupation since many characters' story context hinges on their job or work. The role may be stereotypical— 'private eye' brings to mind a composite image of thousands of fictional characters. The character himself, though, should be as unique as you can make him.

The roles of major characters are often dictated by the genre. For example, a western suggests a cowboy. But placing a character in an unusual milieu can be very effective, as when the cowboy Deputy McCloud is moved to urban New York.

Another useful way to liven up a role is to cross gender in casting the part, such as with a lady alligator wrestler, or a man who runs a wedding dress shop.

Story Role

The story role is the relative importance of the character's part to the story's development.

The more significant a character is to the story, the more fully developed he or she should be. The characters in major roles should ideally be so rounded out that they 'come alive'. Writing scenes for such a well-developed character often becomes a matter of putting him in a situation and watching how he reacts.

StoryBuilder assigns four levels to characters:

Major Role	The protagonist and antagonist are major characters. If the story's dramatic arc hinges on other parts, they may also be major characters. A love triangle involves three major roles: protagonist, love interest, and rival.
Supporting Role	Supporting roles are defined by the plot. Characters who appear in many scenes, but don't directly carry the plot, are supporting characters. Supporting roles should be well rounded. These roles can often be made very colorful.
Minor Role	The character in a minor role appears briefly in the story, but has a story purpose and dialog. Minor Roles are often used to convey information.
Service Role	A service role is a walk on part. Service role characters are created to fill a specific plot requirement but are otherwise not a part of the story. A taxicab driver, needed to get the hero to the airport, is a service role.

Archetype

An archetype is a prototype or model from which something is based. The character archetypes listed here derive from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and are deeply rooted in the myths and legends of many cultures. A significant character's role can often be associated with one of these archetypes.

Hero

The essence of the hero is not bravery or nobility, but self-sacrifice. The mythic hero is one who will endure separation and hardship for the sake of his clan. The hero must pay a price to obtain his goal.

The hero's journey during a story is a path from the ego, the self, to a new identity which has grown to include the experiences of the story. This path often consists of a separation from family or group to a new, unfamiliar and challenging world (even if it's his own back yard), and finally a return to the ordinary, but now expanded, world.

The hero must learn in order to grow. Often the heart of a story is not the obstacles he faces, but the new wisdom he acquires, from a mentor, a lover, or even from the villain.

Other characters besides the protagonist can have heroic qualities. This can be especially true of the antagonist.

Heroes can be willing and adventurous, or reluctant. They may be group and family oriented, or loners. They may change and grow themselves, or act as catalysts for others to grow and act heroic. The hero can be an innocent, a wanderer, a martyr, a warrior, a vengeful destroyer, a ruler, or a fool. But the essence of the hero is the sacrifice he makes to achieve his goal.

Mentor

The mentor is a character who aids or trains the hero. The essence of the mentor is the wise old man or woman. The mentor represents the wiser and more godlike qualities within us.

The mentor's role may be to teach the hero. These characters are often found in the roles of drill instructor, squad leader or sergeant, the older officer policeman, the aged warrior training the squire, trail boss, parent or grandparent, etc. An effective teacher may be an otherwise inept or foolish character who possesses just the skill or wisdom the hero needs for his challenge.

The other major role of the mentor is to equip the hero by giving him a gift or gifts which are important in his quest. These gifts may be weapons, medicine or food, magic, or some important clue or piece of information. Frequently, the mentor requires the hero to have passed some sort of test before receiving the gift. The gift may be a seemingly insignificant object, the importance of which doesn't emerge until later.

The mentor may occasionally be the hero's conscience, returning him to the right path after he strays or strengthening him when he weakens. The hero doesn't always appreciate this assistance, of course.

Threshold Guardian

The threshold guardian is the first obstacle to the hero in his journey. The threshold is the gateway to the new world the hero must enter to change and grow.

The threshold guardian is usually not the story's antagonist. Only after this initial test has been surpassed will the hero face the true contest and the arch-villain. Frequently the threshold guardian is a henchman or employee of the antagonist.

But the threshold guardian can also be an otherwise neutral character, or even a potential ally— such as the police lieutenant who warns the hero private detective off the case, or the Cowardly Lion who first frightens and then joins Dorothy on her journey to Oz.

The role of the threshold guardian is to test the hero's mettle and worthiness to begin the story's journey, and to show that the journey will not be easy. The hero will encounter the guardian early in the story, usually right after he starts his quest.

Herald

The role of the herald is to announce the challenge which begins the hero on his story journey. The herald is the person or piece of information which upsets the sleepy equilibrium in which the hero has lived and starts the adventure.

The herald need not be a person. It can be an event or force— the start of a war, a drought or famine, or even an ad in a newspaper.

Shapeshifter

The shapeshifter changes role or personality, often in significant ways, and is hard to understand. That very changeability is the essence of this archetype. The shapeshifter's alliances and loyalty are uncertain, and the sincerity of his claims is often questionable. This keeps the hero off guard.

The shapeshifter is often a person of the opposite sex, often the hero's romantic interest. In other stories the shapeshifter may be a friend or ally of the same sex, often a buddy figure, or in fantasies, a magical figure such as a shaman or wizard.

The shapeshifter is sometimes a catalyst whose changing nature forces changes in the hero, but the normal role is to bring suspense into a story by forcing the reader, along with the hero, to question beliefs and assumptions.

As with the other archetypes, any character, including the protagonist and antagonist, can take on attributes of the shapeshifter at different times in the story. The hero often assumes the role of shapeshifter to get past an obstacle. Mentors often appear as shapeshifters.

Shadow

The Shadow archetype is a negative figure, representing things we don't like and would like to eliminate.

The shadow often takes the form of the antagonist in a story. But not all antagonists are villains; sometimes the antagonist is a good guy whose goals disagree with the protagonist's. If the antagonist is a villain, though, he's a shadow.

The shadow is the worthy opponent with whom the hero must struggle. In a conflict between hero and villain, the fight is to the end; one or the other must be destroyed or rendered impotent.

While the shadow is a negative force in the story, it's important to remember that no man is a villain in his own eyes. In fact, the shadow frequently sees himself as a hero, and the story's hero as his villain.

Trickster

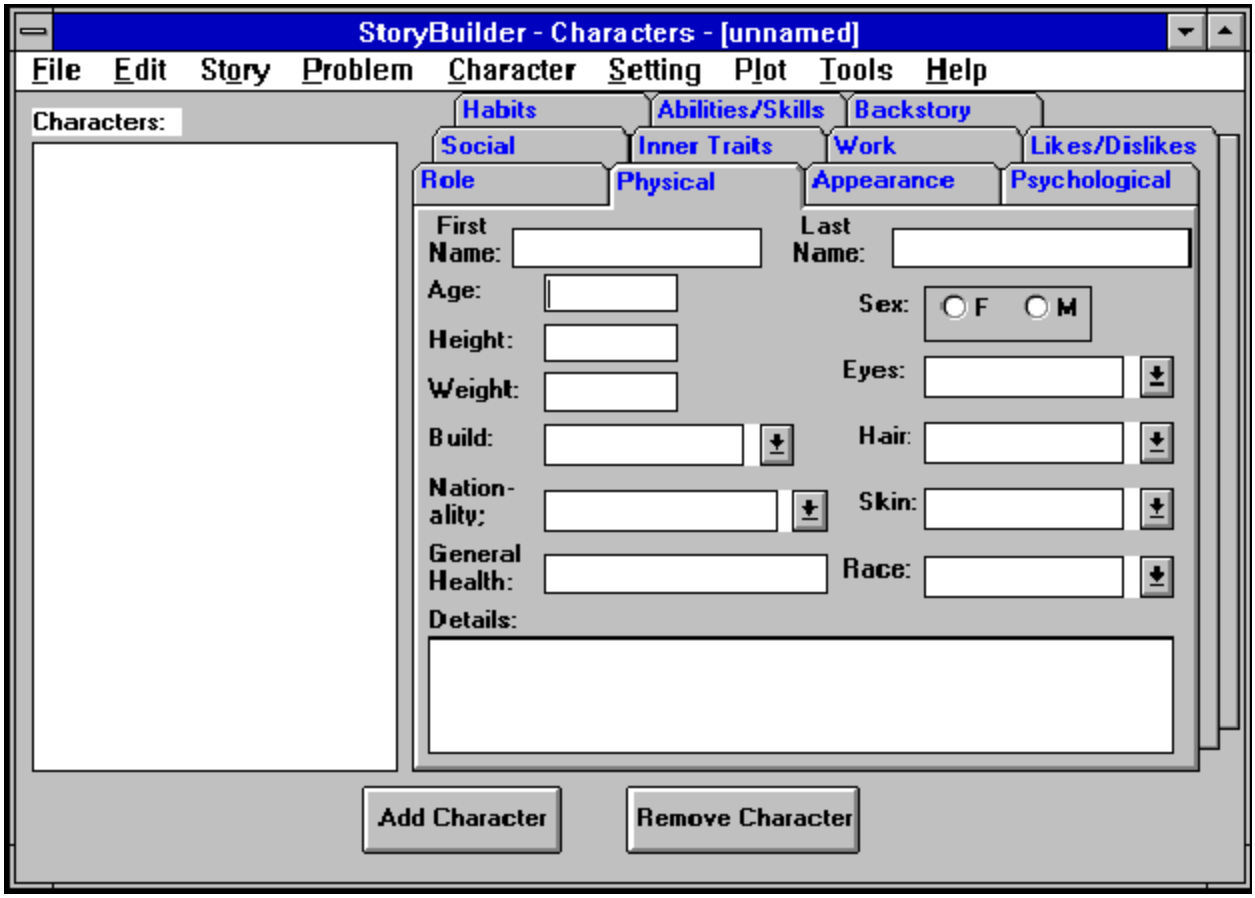
The Trickster is a clown, a mischief maker. He provides the comedy relief that a story often needs to offset heavy dramatic tension. The trickster keeps things in proportion.

The trickster can be an ally or companion of the hero, or may work for the villain. In some instances the trickster may even be the hero or villain. In any role, the trickster usually represents the force of cunning, and is pitted against opponents who are stronger or more powerful.

Character Sketch

Use these notes to provide a thumbnail picture of the character and the overall impression he makes.

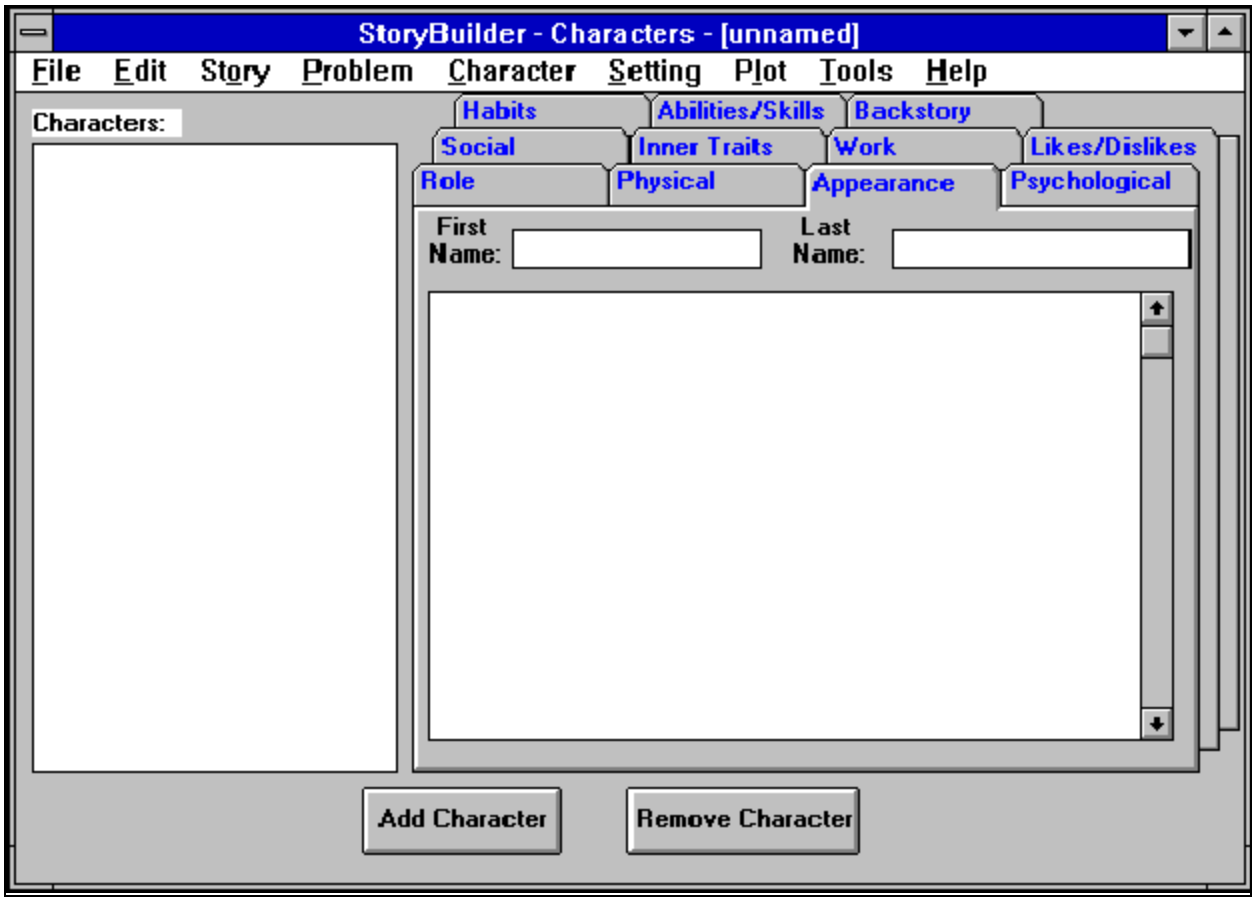
Physical Tab



These character traits describe the external physical characteristics and appearance of the character. They are generally self-explanatory.

Use the Appearance tab to round out the physical description of the character with looks, style of dress, etc.

Appearance Tab



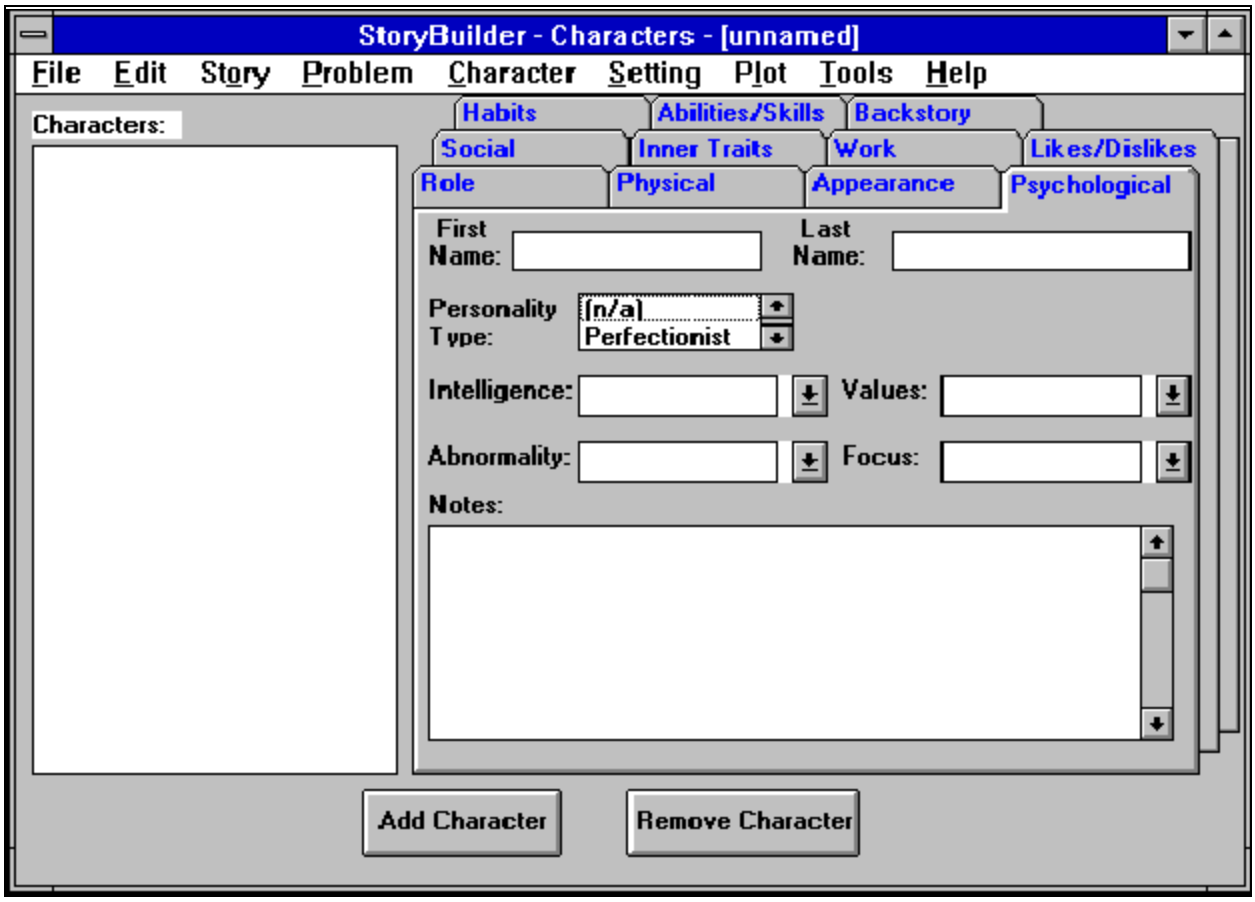
The Appearance tab is a companion to the Physical tab.

Use this note area to describe your character's looks, style of dress and movement, and the impression he leaves.

Some writers will select a photograph of someone which they use when describing the character's appearance. You and your readers should be able to visualize the character as though he were a real person.

In writing plays, where the characters must be cast, try to avoid writing dialog or situations which describe the characters more than necessary. The producer will cast the part from available actors and actresses, and too detailed a description makes this task more difficult.

Psychological Tab



The **Psychological** tab on the **Character** form contains information about the mental states and processes of the character.

Personality Type

There are a number of methods for classifying people according to type. For example, Aristotle classified personalities according to 'humor', or temperament, into four categories: melancholic, sanguine, emotional, and phlegmatic. Carl Jung classified people as introverted or extroverted, and also used four categories: sensation, thinking, feeling, and intuitive.

StoryBuilder uses the Enneagram. This system is very old, and is believed to have originated with the Sufis in the Middle East. It groups people into nine types ('ennea' is Greek for the number nine.) The system teaches that people in a given type often behave and react in similar ways.

You may wish to use personality types to better understand what motivates your characters, and how they may think and feel in certain situations. But remember that a personality type is just a *stereotype*. No two people are alike: one may be an only child; the other, the youngest in a large family. One could be born to poverty, another to luxury. Each character is shaped by different experiences.

Perfectionist

Perfectionists are idealistic. They hold themselves to high standards, and tend to be reliable and organized. They can be very productive, achieve a lot, and tend to get involved in public service and good causes.

Perfectionists also hold others to high standards, and can often be critical or feel superior. They may put things off for fear of not performing perfectly.

Helper

Helpers want to be loved or liked. They tend to react to others, and put great emphasis on relationships. Helpers can be attentive, protective, charitable, and warm. They can also smother relationships, and come across as controlling or manipulative. Helpers frequently have more trouble asking for support than offering it.

Performer

The Performer wants to make a good impression, and to always meet or exceed expectations. Performers are organized, busy, no-nonsense people and are hard workers who get results. They can be great in teams, but Performers can also have misplaced priorities, be obsessed with material things, or be excessively competitive.

Romantic

Romantics are very good at expressing their feelings, and value being in touch with their feelings and the feelings of others. They are free thinkers and don't follow the herd.

Romantics can be very creative and artistic, but Romantics can also be self-indulgent or impractical. Romantics are susceptible to mood swings and bouts of depression.

Observer

The Observer lives a world of the mind, is analytical and likes to figure things out. Observers value being independent, and is comfortable being alone. They can also be out of touch with their feelings, withdrawn, critical, and suspicious.

Questioner

Questioners are motivated by a need for security. They can be anxious and full of doubts, take things too seriously, and can sometimes be suspicious, withdrawn, and sarcastic.

But questioners are also very loyal, supportive, reliable, and hard working Questioners are often very bright, and have a well-developed sense of humor. They like things to be orderly and predictable. If given time, questioners will often get past their anxieties and overreaction.

Adventurer

Adventurers believe that life's full of interesting things to do. They are pleasurable and optimistic. They enjoy planning, but are flexible. If a plan doesn't work, they'll try something else. Adventurers tend to be generalists, not experts in one field, but good in many. Adventurers are opinionated and independent, and don't like to be bossed around.

Adventurers are self-centered and can be narcissistic. They don't like being tied down, and are often ambivalent about relationships. An Adventurer loves excitement and travel, and sometimes is a risk taker.

Boss

Bosses are assertive and self-reliant. They are concerned with the dynamics of power— of getting it, having it and keeping it. Bosses approach situations by attempting to dominate them. They can be protective, generous, and brave, even heroic. Bosses can also be combative, judgmental, and ruthless. Bosses seldom respect people who can't stand up to them, and believe that adversity reveals character.

Peacemaker

Peacemakers want to avoid conflict and love harmony. Peacemakers are usually generous and open-minded, and see both sides of every issue. The personality of a Peacemaker is more changeable than other personality types, at times passive, at other times forceful and opinionated.

Peacemakers tend to avoid confrontations, are easily flattered, have trouble focusing on priorities, and are often overly defensive.

Intelligence

Intelligence is the capacity to grasp meaning. Action-based stories generally require less intelligence in the protagonist than do character-based stories. A character who reacts, rather than acts, can be less intelligent.

The antagonist should generally be as intelligent as the protagonist, to insure a fair struggle.

Values

People can have vastly different ideas of what is right or worthwhile in life. These 'governing values' are seldom articulated, but maintaining and defending them is a large influence on an individual's behavior, because her self image is tied to the values she holds.

In real life, people have multiple values. In fiction, it's more useful to think in terms of just one or two values. Conflict can be created by threatening your character's important value, by giving her two opposing or exclusive values, or by destroying or removing a value.

Another way values can cause conflict (and therefore stories) is through misalignment of Values and Focus. For example, if a man values his family, but spends too much time earning money to support them, this can cause problems.

The choices for this trait represent common values people hold. Be aware that different social backgrounds (especially different cultures and educational experiences) may have profound effects on values.

Abnormality

This control describes the abnormal mental state of a character.

The line between normal and abnormal behavior is one of degrees. Nor should you restrict unusual behavior to your villains. A touch of abnormality adds color and unpredictability to a character.

Abnormal behaviors are complex and difficult to describe. Be sure to research the specific illness you're using carefully.

Manic	Manic behavior is characterized by mood swings, excessive activity and talkativeness, impaired judgment, and sometimes psychotic symptoms.
Paranoid	The paranoid has systematic delusions ascribing hostile intentions to other people or groups. He often has a mission or goal associated with his perceived persecutors.
Depressive	A person suffering from mental depression exhibits emotional dejection and withdrawal, and unreasonable sadness.

	Depression is the most common form of mental illness.
Schizophrenic	Schizophrenics tend to have disorganized speech and behavior, delusions, and hallucinations. This severe mental illness is often associated with physical brain disorders.
Anxiety neurotic	Feelings of anxiety and helplessness tend to dominate personality and behavior.
Obsessive/ compulsive neurotic	In this form of psychoneurosis, obsessive thoughts and/or compulsive and repetitive behavior patterns dominate the personality.
Phobia	Phobia is a persistent and irrational fear of a particular object, activity, or situation.
Psychopath	This character disorder is characterized by amoral or antisocial behavior without feelings of remorse or regret.
Sociopath	These individuals don't have normal feelings and reactions to social influences, and can act in completely asocial or antisocial ways.

Focus

The character's Focus is where he places his attention and activity. His Focus (along with his Values) determine what's important to him. From the perspective of plotting, these frequently determine what's at stake for the character, and therefore what should be put at risk— in other words, what the story problem should be about.

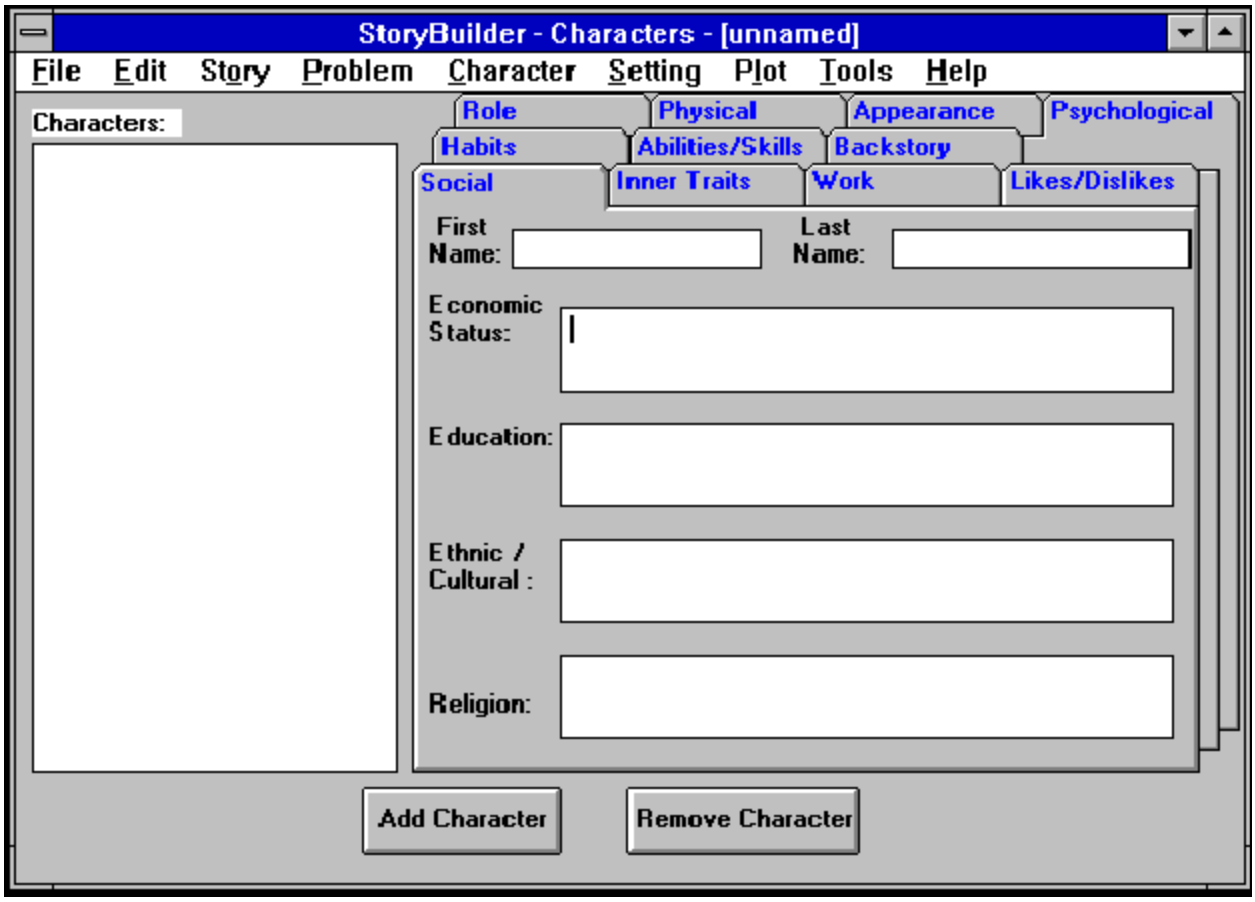
A character's Focus and his Values can be at odds, as a source of conflict in the story.

The character may discover that what he thinks is important isn't, or that values and focus he has neglected are truly important to him. Stories of discovery and decision are often concerned with these traits.

Notes

Use this area to record your notes on the character's psychological makeup.

Social Tab



These elements are the major factors which affect this character's behavior and which come from the influence of others or the community.

The four socializing factors on this tab are important, but there is another, equally important source of social influence: specific relationships with other people. Parents are notable examples.

Social factors may war with each other in an individual, as a source of story conflict. For example, a young white boy might have been raised to dislike or distrust blacks, but the positive influence of a particular person of color could conflict with that background. This type of conflict is common in 'Man against Society' stories.

Economic Status

Use this field to hold information about the economic/financial status of the character.

In considering this trait, consider wealth as a form of freedom; the poor are often shorn of choices which the wealthy enjoy.

However, wealth can also serve as an insulator, which isolates a character from real life. This is true more of inherited than earned money, so also consider how any wealth was acquired.

Changes in economic status can be powerful sources of conflict.

Education

Use this field to hold information about the character's education.

Education is a primary means of social mobility, or rising above poverty or humble beginnings. But education is also sometimes associated with class separation, snobbish behavior, and lack of worldliness.

In either roll, positive or negative, education can place a character in conflict with his pre-education environment.

Ethnic and Cultural

Use this field to hold information about the ethnic and cultural background of the character. These factors can provide great color and variety to stories.

Be sure that you know the ethnic group or culture you're writing about, either from experience or from careful research— or both. Be wary of stereotyping. In fact, interesting characters often come from providing character traits which are at deliberate odds to stereotypes.

As with other social factors, changes in the ethnic and cultural environment can provide a source of story conflicts. This happens in situations in which a person moves from one social group or strata to another, such as from employment, travel, or marriage.

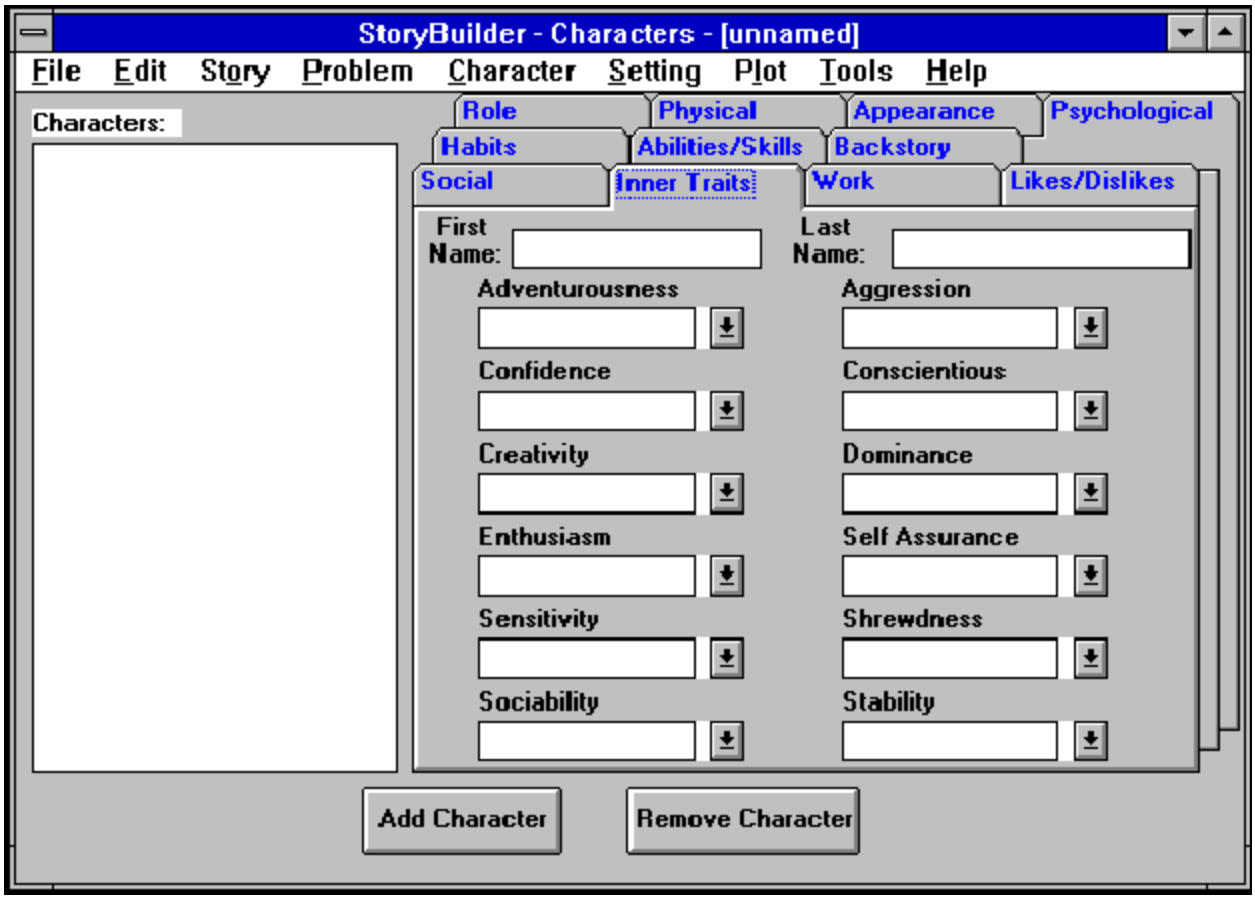
Religion

Use this field on the Social Background tab of the Character form to hold information about the religious background and status of the character.

Religion is not widely used in fictional character development, except in religious market genres. Characters frequently express religious beliefs, but don't show or act upon them except in unusual circumstances.

But religion can provide a foundation for characters in crisis, a source of comfort and strength when things are at their darkest. A religious background can provide the basis for character choices at the turning point. This is especially true for stories in which the protagonist is on the brink of a fall into immoral or unethical behavior.

Inner Traits



A trait is a distinguishing characteristic or quality. As a fiction writer, you may find it useful to think of inner and outer (external) traits. Inner traits are aspects of character stemming from psychological and social causes. External traits are habits and behaviors which reflect and illustrate the inner traits. For instance, a girl may be submissive toward her mother (an inner trait) and may reflect it by bringing her small presents each day (an outer trait.) You will want to find external traits to illuminate the inner traits of your characters, following the 'show, don't tell' maxim.

In the real world there are countless external traits, but fewer inner traits. The **Inner Traits** tab can be used to select your character's inner characteristics. Record external traits in the note areas for characteristics such as **Likes and Dislikes**, **Habits**, and **Skills and Abilities**.

A menu item on the **Characterization Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu, **Virtues and Vices**, lists some external traits which can be positive and negative forces in the story, as well as sources of conflict.

Don't go overboard and provide every possible trait for a character. Focus on the traits which serve your story's premise (see "Plotting through character".) Real people are often complicated and confusing. Characters should be multi-dimensional, but their motives, strengths, flaws, and growth should be clear and understandable to the reader.

Both the **Inner Traits** tab and the **Virtues and Vices** list in StoryBuilder can be tailored to your needs and wishes. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for details on how to add, delete, or modify the listed traits.

Work, Likes/Dislikes, & Habits Tabs

These tab pages contain space for notes, grouped according to the tab title.

Skills/Abilities Tab

This tab contains notes on talents or abilities the character possesses. The **Skills and Abilities** tool on the **Characterization Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu lists a large number of skills.

Back story Tab

Back story is what happened to your characters prior to the start of the story. Use the **Back story** tab, on the **Character** form, to record the character's back story.

Back story is primarily important for explaining why a character comes to behave or feel a certain way in the story 'present.'

Settings

Setting is secondary to character and plot in many stories, but its importance shouldn't be overlooked. In fact, character and plot are shaped and influenced by setting.

This chapter discusses the importance of setting, and describes StoryBuilder's support for settings.

The Importance of Setting

Setting often receives less attention than other story elements such as plot and character. But setting is more than just the backdrop of the story; plot and character are shaped and limited by the choice of setting. Settings:

Provide much of the verisimilitude of the story, making it real and believable to the reader.

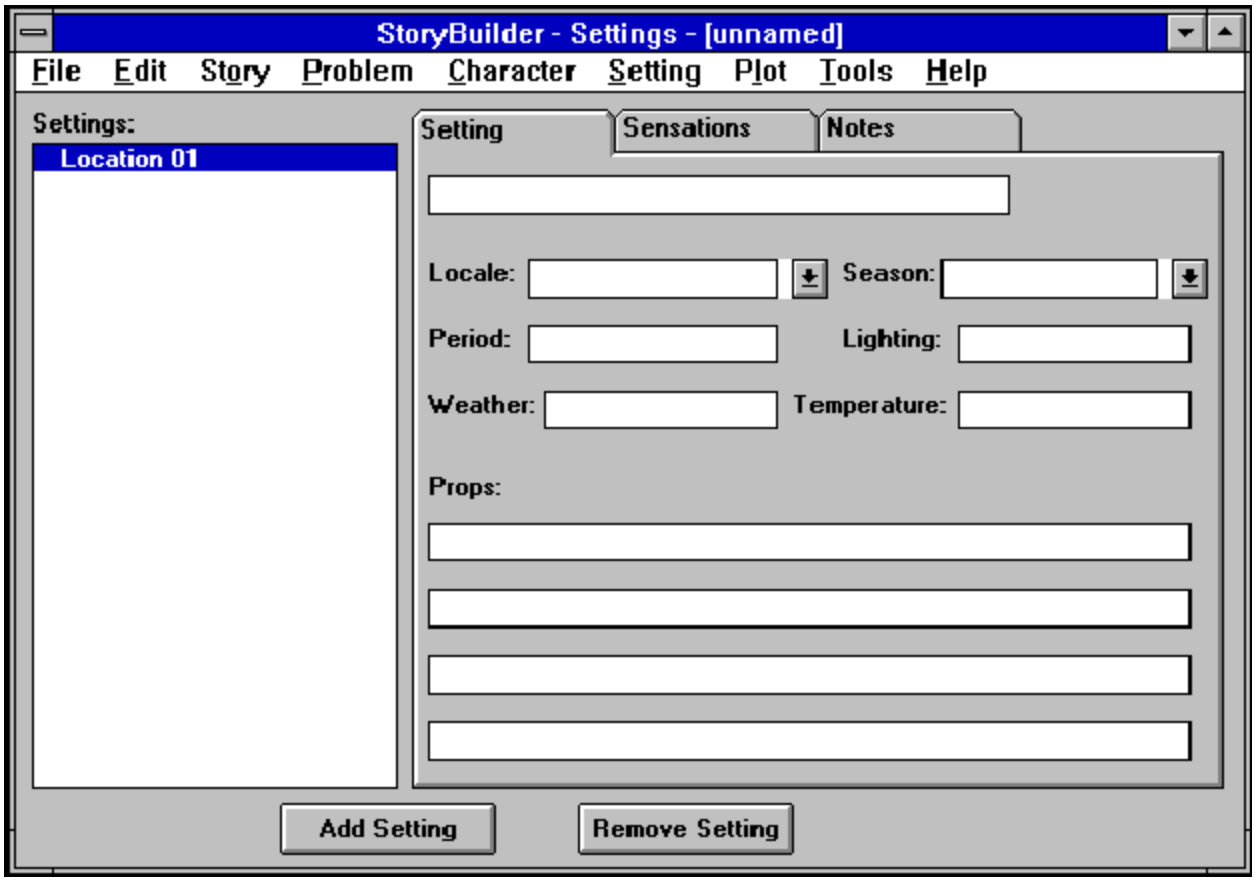
Provide excitement and color. Much of the joy of fiction is to allow the reader to travel to other times, other places, and even other worlds.

Establish mood and tone.

Provide a source of symbolism and meaning for the story.

Settings tie the characters and their acts together. For example, unless you unite your protagonist and antagonist at one place and time, there is no conflict. Confined settings increase dramatic tension. The setting also establishes the framework of beliefs and scope of action which some characters are more comfortable in. A cowboy belongs in a western setting in ways that a ballet dancer or biochemist don't. But placing characters in unusual settings can create or increase drama.

Setting Tab



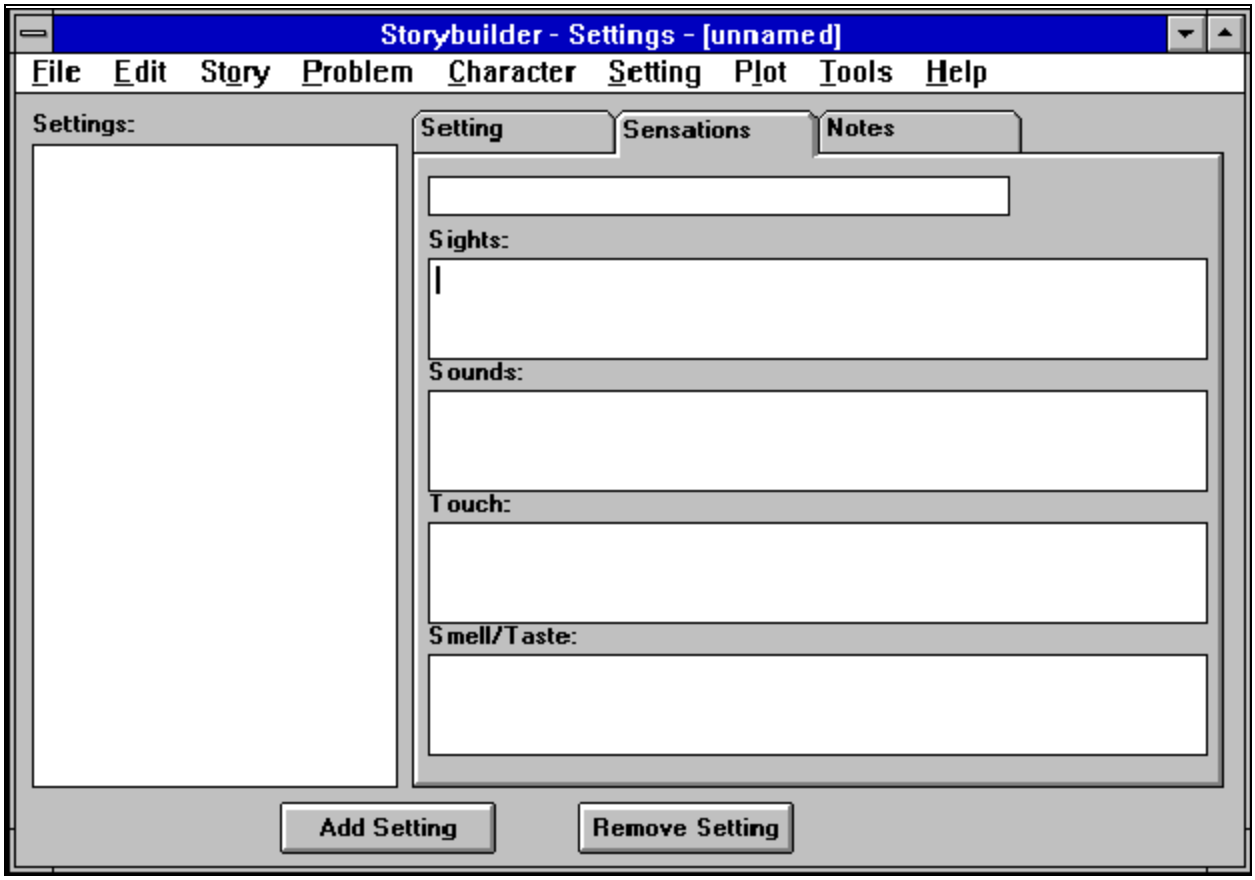
The Setting tab contains elements which make the setting specific and unique.

Locale	The location of the setting in space.
Season, Period	These controls locate the setting in time.
Lighting, Weather, and Temperature	These help to define the setting not only for backdrop, but as a source of mood and atmosphere, as in 'It was a dark and stormy night.'
Props	These are elements which make the scene specific for the characters, and therefore for the reader. An ashtray that a character nervously rocks back and forth is a prop. Props can give characters little things to do ('business', in stage parlance) which help to make the characters come alive.

Think of settings in terms of symbolism. The setting itself, and the props in it, can become tokens of values and motives which reveal character.

If a setting is used in multiple scenes, but the significance of the setting changes, with a different atmosphere or props, you may want to create a separate outline entry for the new setting.

Sensations Tab



Your reader can only experience your settings through the eyes and ears of your characters. To make the setting as effective as possible, you must explore the impressions the setting makes on the five senses.

Sights	This control deals with color, size and enclosure, lighting, texture, and contrasts.
Sounds	Sounds have attributes of loudness, tone, complexity, and direction. The sounds of voices are of special importance.
Touch	This control deals with tactile sensations such as texture, temperature, or pain. Physical contact between characters, from the embrace of lovers to a father resting his hand on his son's shoulders, is especially important.

Smell/Taste

The other senses are often neglected but can be very important. Smells in particular can be effective in pulling a reader into a story; the sense of smell is primitive and powerful and taps into deep emotions.

Notes Tab

Use this area to record remarks or ideas relevant to the setting you're working on, but which don't fit on the **Setting** or **Sensations** tabs.

Plotting

This chapter describes the **Plot** form, which is used to define and manipulate the plot points in your story.

A plot point is simply a detail in your plotting. It may be a scene, scene and sequel combination, or notes and directions for a block of foreshortened prose— any specific point that defines a piece of your plot.

You can have any number of plot points. The plot points you've defined are shown in a list on the left side of the form. The right side of the form consists of a series of tabbed cards, with a different card for several items relating to plotting. See "Tabs and lists" for information on navigating on the form.

Plot points can also be moved from one location on the outline to another. See "Moving Plot Points" for details.

See "Plotting Aids" for a discussion of tools to help in building the plot.

Plot Defined

The plot is the series of events in your story. In life, events sometimes happen for no logical reason, but fiction requires cause and effect: a story must make sense, whereas real life frequently doesn't. The pattern of events, and the reasons behind them, are the blueprint of the story.

The cause and effect comes from your characters. Their thoughts and feelings, and particularly their desires and goals, become actions, which have consequences and cause reactions. The intersection of plot and character is motivation. Your characters must *act*; passive characters make poor stories. Know your characters before you start plotting in detail.

The events in the plot must affect your reader. He has to like or dislike your characters, and care whether they succeed or fail in reaching their goals. He must also feel that something important is in the balance. This requires that the characters' goals are non-trivial and that the outcome isn't certain.

This is the basic pattern of a plotted story: a protagonist seeks to obtain a goal, but is opposed by various forces. He overcomes the obstacles, and succeeds, or is overcome by them and fails to reach his goal.

Opposition can be external (a villain, social pressure, nature), or the opposition may come from within the protagonist himself, in the form of a trait to overcome or some want or need to resolve. There can be both an outer plot, of external opposition, and an inner one, which compliments or contrasts with the outer one. There may be subplots. Each plot is based around one or more problems.

The **Problem** form helps to identify the goals, outcomes, and resolutions that drive the story. The **Plot** form is used to record the scenes and plot points that comprise the plot. Define and understand your story problems before you try to plot in detail.

Plotting in Scenes

A scene is an episode, one of the sequence of events in a story, which takes place at one location and time, and which has a specific cast of characters interacting with each other.

Some forms of fiction, such as stage plays or movie scripts, are written almost exclusively in scenes. Other forms such as novels and short stories can contain foreshortened prose; but modern stories, even for these forms, are mainly written in scenes— perhaps due to the influence of movies and television.

A scene is visual. In order to write a scene, you need to be able to visualize the characters and their interactions. Identifying the setting, the characters, and the conflict in a scene helps to produce this mental picture.

Scenes can be thought of as 'little stories', in which the scene's protagonist pursues a goal but runs into opposition. Every scene should have it's own drama and tension, and its own climax, usually at or near the end of the scene. The scene's outcome will then lead to another scene, and another, etc. The outcome of the story's most climactic scene is usually also the story's climax.

A scene also serves one or more dramatic purposes for the overall story. These might include explaining the story's initial dramatic problem, providing a complication to obstruct the hero, revealing a character's inner nature, etc. A scene which doesn't advance the story should be eliminated.

The **Plot** form in StoryBuilder contains a **Scene** tab which contains the key elements of a scene. The **Conflict** tab defines the problem which is the scene's 'little story.' The **Sequel** tab is also related to plotting in scenes (see "Scene and Sequel.")

Key, Obligatory, and Stock Scenes

A key scene is a scene critical to the overall plot. The climax of a story is always a key scene. Another key scene may occur at the end of the first act, when the protagonist is unalterably committed to solving his story problem.

The term 'obligatory scene' refers to a scene which the audience expects to see in the play. A confrontation scene between the protagonist and antagonist, or a chase scene, are common examples.

Your story may read sequentially, but when you're outlining, there's no law that requires you to create your scenes in any particular order. Many writers write their key scenes, and in particular the story's ending, first. StoryBuilder, which makes it easy to add, delete, or move a plot point, encourages this same strategy when you're outlining.

A stock scene is defined as any scene which is typical or common in stories of a particular type. An obligatory scene is almost always a stock scene, but not all stock scenes are obligatory. A stock scene can be too cliched and therefore loose the reader's interest. A good tactic in such cases is to find some twist on a stock situation in order to add a touch of originality.

The **Stock Scenes** tool from the **Plotting Aids** sub-menu of the **Tool** menu offers several lists of stock scenes which may be useful in selecting scenes for your story. The **Stock Scenes** lists can be customized. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for details.

Scene and Sequel

Your story can move from one scene to another through a transition or through a sequel. The dictionary defines sequel as 'a subsequent development'. In this case, it's the events that happen subsequent to a scene.

The sequel consists of the reactions of the scene's viewpoint character to the scene just ended. Since most scenes will end in a disaster for the protagonist, these reactions will usually begin as an emotional response. But as the emotions are replaced by thought, he will start to analyze his new dilemma. This will result in a new goal, intended to overcome or circumvent the new problem.

This new plan, as it turns into action, is the start of a new scene. As the newly planned actions unfold, they, in turn, will encounter opposition— and the whole process will repeat. This alternating sequence of scene/sequel/scene is a basic building block for plotting fiction.

Jack Brickham's great book *Scene and Structure: How to construct fiction with scene-by-scene flow, logic and readability* describes plotting with scene/sequel combinations in detail.

The **Sequel** tab on the **Plot** form, along with the **Scene** tab, supports plotting in scenes and sequels.

Plotting and the Problem Form

An entire story, each problem defined on the **Problem** form, and most scenes defined on the **Plot** form are similar in that they all involve conflict and drama. Just as a scene, with its built-in conflict, is a 'small story', so is each story problem. The story can be broken into a series of story problems, which are episodic components of intermediate size, and each story problem can be decomposed further into a series of scenes.

There are various ways that story problems tie together to form complete stories. One of them, the interrelation of external and internal conflicts, is explored in "Outer and inner problems." This section explores other methods of creating a story's plot from multiple story problems.

A story can move from one external problem to another in a linear fashion. This occurs when a story problem is solved; if another problem doesn't appear, the story's over. The story problems used in this manner are external problems with tangible goals and involve the same protagonist. These story problems can be thought of as major story sections or episodes. Each such problem will consist of multiple scenes. The scenes will first present a dilemma for the protagonist, then provide setbacks or

complications on the way to solving it, and finally show the resolution. But, just as in real life, the resolution of one problem often leads to another.

A good example of this is found in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. This novelette consists of three sections, each of which is a separate story problem. In the first problem, the old Cuban fisherman hasn't caught a fish for over eighty days, and the Story Question is 'Will he catch a fish before he starves to death?' After a struggle, he hooks a giant marlin. The first problem is solved, but a second problem emerges: the fish is so gigantic that catching it is doubtful; the Story Question is 'Can he catch the fish?' After an epic battle he does kill the fish and secure it to the side of his small boat. But a final story problem emerges when sharks appear and attack the fish. The Story Question is 'Can the fisherman save his catch and bring the marlin safely to shore?'

A story can also contain problems which are not directly a part of the main story problem(s). The scenes and events which comprise these story problems are called subplots. One way to think about subplots is to consider who the subplot problem's protagonist is. If a problem is not directly a part of the main story line, but the problem's protagonist is also the main story's protagonist, the subplot will frequently concern an inner need or character flaw (see "Inner and outer problems".) In such cases, solving the subplot problem is often the key to solving the main story's problem— the protagonist has to grow or change first in order to meet the external challenge. Subplot problems involving the story's protagonist which don't fit into this 'inner problem' classification are frequently completely unrelated to the main story line. They exist to round out the character by making the scope of his life bigger than just the story problem. They may also act as complications to the main story problem(s) by diluting or diffusing the protagonist's concentration and energy away from the story problem.

Subplots frequently involve other characters as the subplot problems' protagonists. In these cases the subplots do tie directly to the main problem (or the reader may find himself asking why he's reading two different stories at once.)

One variety of the 'other protagonist' subplot is the counterplot. The dictionary defines 'counterplot' as a plot intended to foil another plot. In this case, the other plot is the story protagonist's effort to reach his goal, that is, to solve the main story problem(s). The 'other protagonist' in a counterplot is usually the story's antagonist or a henchman. In a counterplot you're telling the same story simultaneously from the viewpoint of the hero and the villain, alternating from the one to the other. As with the 'biter bit', the better things look for the antagonist, the worse they are for the story's protagonist.

Another common form of 'other protagonist' subplot is a story problem involving an ally of the main story's protagonist, such as a buddy or lieutenant. These subplot problems typically concern the ally's difficulties in aiding or supporting the story's protagonist. These subplot problems are thus also a form of complication for the main story's problem(s). The worse things are for the ally, the worse off the protagonist is, since his aid is less likely to appear.

Subplots are often braided. That is, scenes from the main plot and from the subplots are intermixed, so that the various story problems unfold simultaneously. Braids require careful writing because of the changing points of view they often require. In return they offer increased suspense, because a story problem can be left hanging at a moment of crisis while the narrative switches to another problem. The various problems can be managed like pots on a stove, with first one problem and then another coming to a boil.

One technique for braiding with StoryBuilder is to plot each story problem into a set of scenes separately, one problem at a time. Then, after the subplots and main story problems are plotted, you can move the plot points around to build the braid (see "Moving Plot Points.")

Plotting Through Character

Plot and character are so closely woven, in good stories, that it's difficult to imagine one without the other. Imagine the plot of Gone with the Wind without the character of Scarlett, or Casablanca without Bogart's Rick.

Character and plot intersect through motivation. Motivation is defined as the thing that causes a person to act a certain way. The **Protagonist** and **Antagonist** tabs, on the **Problem** form, contain two related fields: Goal, which is what your character wants, and Motivation, which is why he wants it. Your character's actions will make 'story sense' if they stem from his efforts to achieve his goal.

Action, particularly action at crisis, reveals character. Your character must act in accordance with his nature. Psychological traits such as Values and Focus, Inner Traits, and the character's **Virtues and Vices**, will show through.

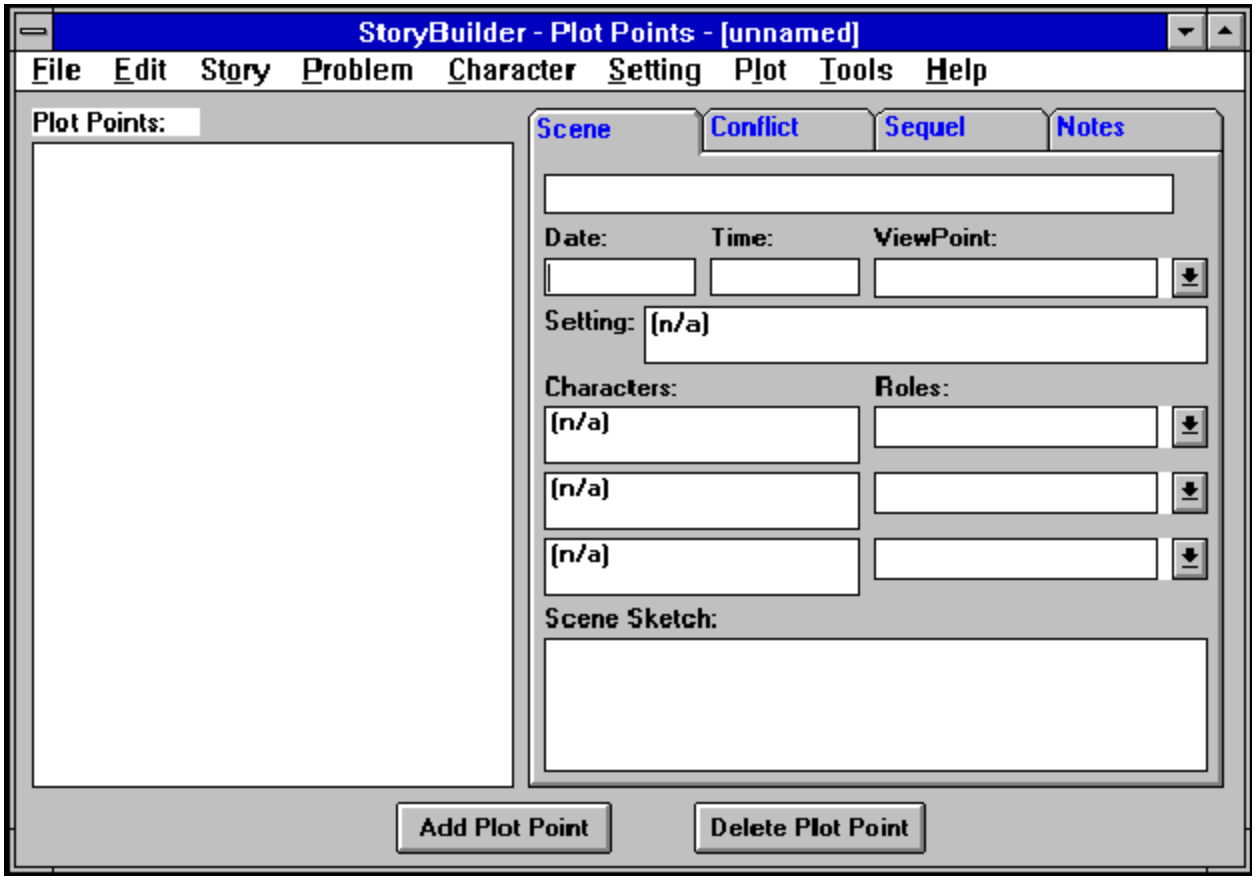
Action can also mold character. Normally, in fiction, this occurs where the character's innermost qualities are untested. When a crisis calls upon your character to do new things, the inner traits will be revealed. People can also sometimes change their inner values in fundamental ways. This usually requires him or her to 'go through the fire', to undergo literally life-changing experiences.

A particular character, fully realized, can only act in certain ways. But there are infinitely many possible characters. Plotting through character consists of finding the character who will face a particular problem in a particular way.

To do this, start with the problem's Goal, Outcome, and Premise, and consider the character as a blank sheet of paper. Ask why your character wants to achieve that particular goal, and what sort of traits would lead to the story conclusion you want. Then devise a back story which gives your character those traits.

Until the moment your story concept is fully developed, your characters are as fluid and tractable to change as your plot or settings. But once a character's inner traits and beliefs are molded, they cannot easily change, and the other story elements must be consistent with the character's nature.

Scene Tab



This tab contains the elements to define a scene as a plot point.

Date and Time — Identify when the scene occurs.

Viewpoint — StoryBuilder is concerned with story structure rather than with the writing itself. The element of viewpoint, though, overlaps between the structure and the actual writing. It's impossible to construct a scene in detail without knowing the scene's viewpoint character. Viewpoint should generally not change within a single scene.

Setting

This control lists the settings defined on the **Setting** form. Select one of the listed settings to provide a backdrop for the scene.

Characters/ Roles

These are the cast for the scene. The number of characters in a scene should be limited to those who contribute to the scene's purpose and dramatic structure.

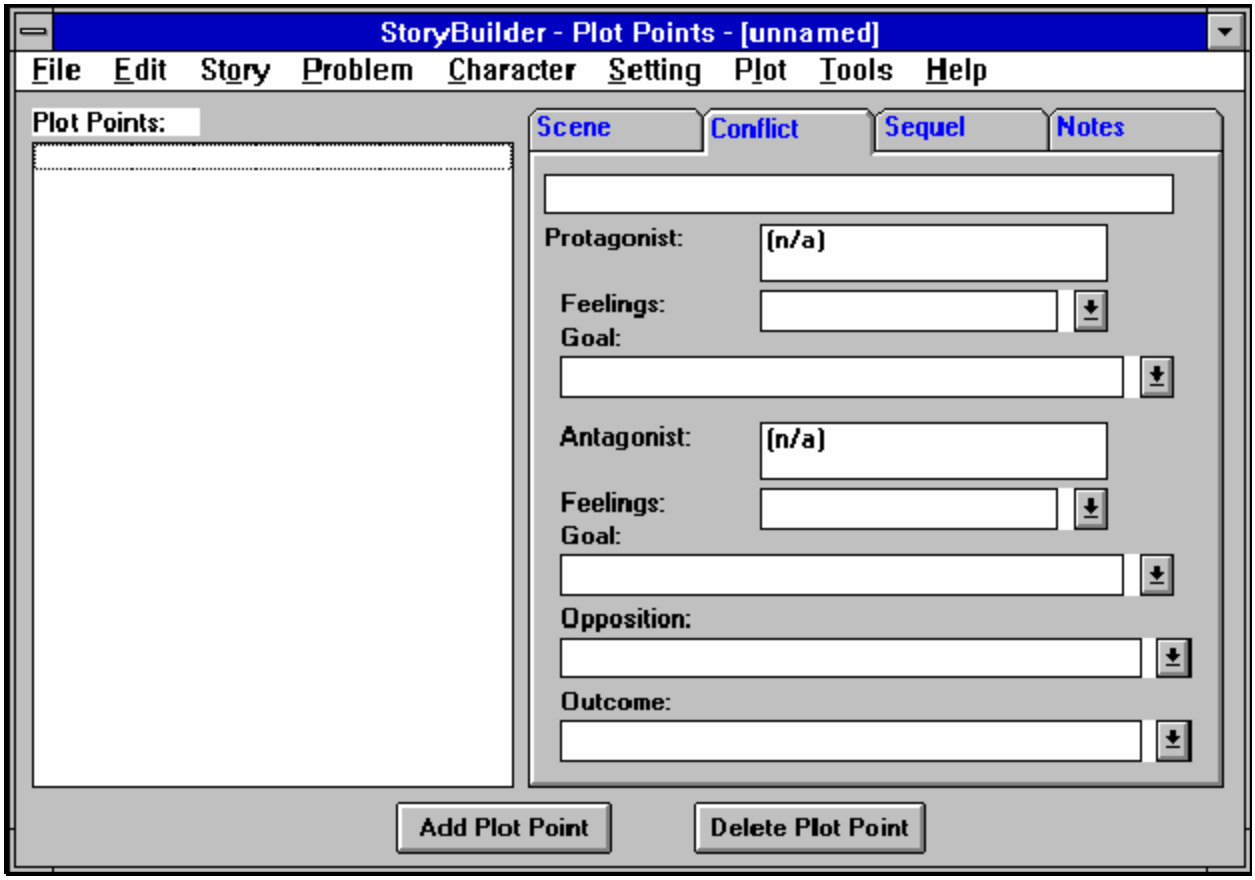
If a scene seems to require a larger cast, try to break it into multiple smaller scenes at the places where a character first makes his appearance (the stage term for these is 'French scenes'.)

Roles may be selected from the pull-down list, keyed by you, or copied from the **Dramatic Situations** form which is invoked from the **Plotting Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu.

Scene Sketch

Use this note control to provide a thumbnail sketch of the scene, in a sentence or two.

Conflict Tab



The **Conflict** tab on the **Plot** form is used to help define the drama in a scene.

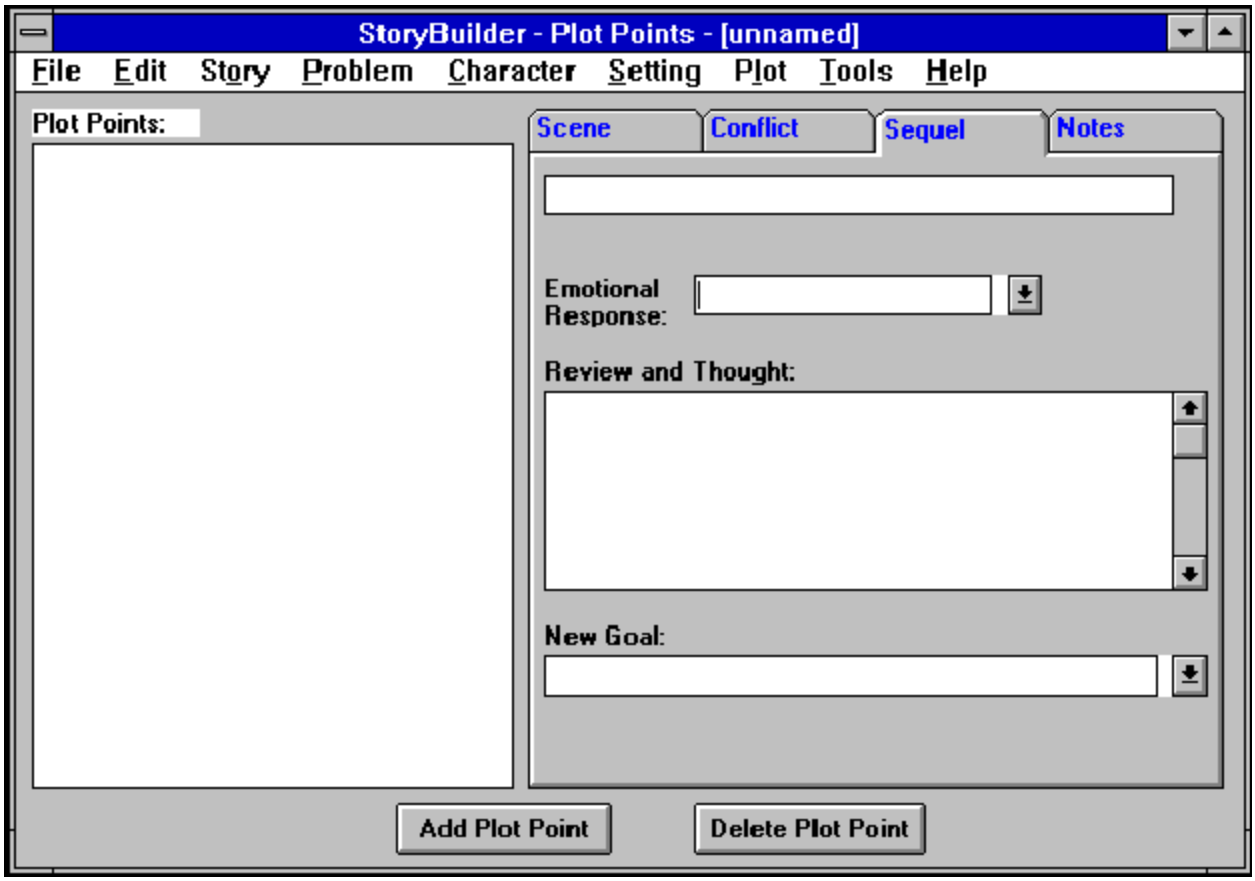
A scene is a 'small story', which has the same key elements of the overall story: a goal, opposition to that goal, and an outcome. The **Conflict** tab compresses the elements on the **Problem** form into a single tab page.

Protagonist and Antagonist	These roles are selected from the list of characters defined on the Characters form.
Feelings	Motive is modified, at the scene level, into an emotional response which is specific to the character and the scenic action. This control lists some common emotions.
Goal	The goal is the character's purpose or objective.

Opposition	The nature of the resistance to the Protagonist's goal.
Outcome	The result of the scene, from the Protagonist's point of view. Most scenes should end in a disaster or failure to reach the scene's goal, lest the story end too easily.

The **Dramatic Situations** tool on the **Plotting Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu can help to define a scene's conflict, and works with the **Conflict tab.**

Sequel Tab



This tab describes a scene's sequel.

The prose which immediately follows a scene usually ties that scene to the next. The two literary devices which serve this purpose are the transition and the sequel.

A sequel is told from the viewpoint of the scene's protagonist and describes his reaction to the events in the scene. The reaction follows a repeatable pattern.

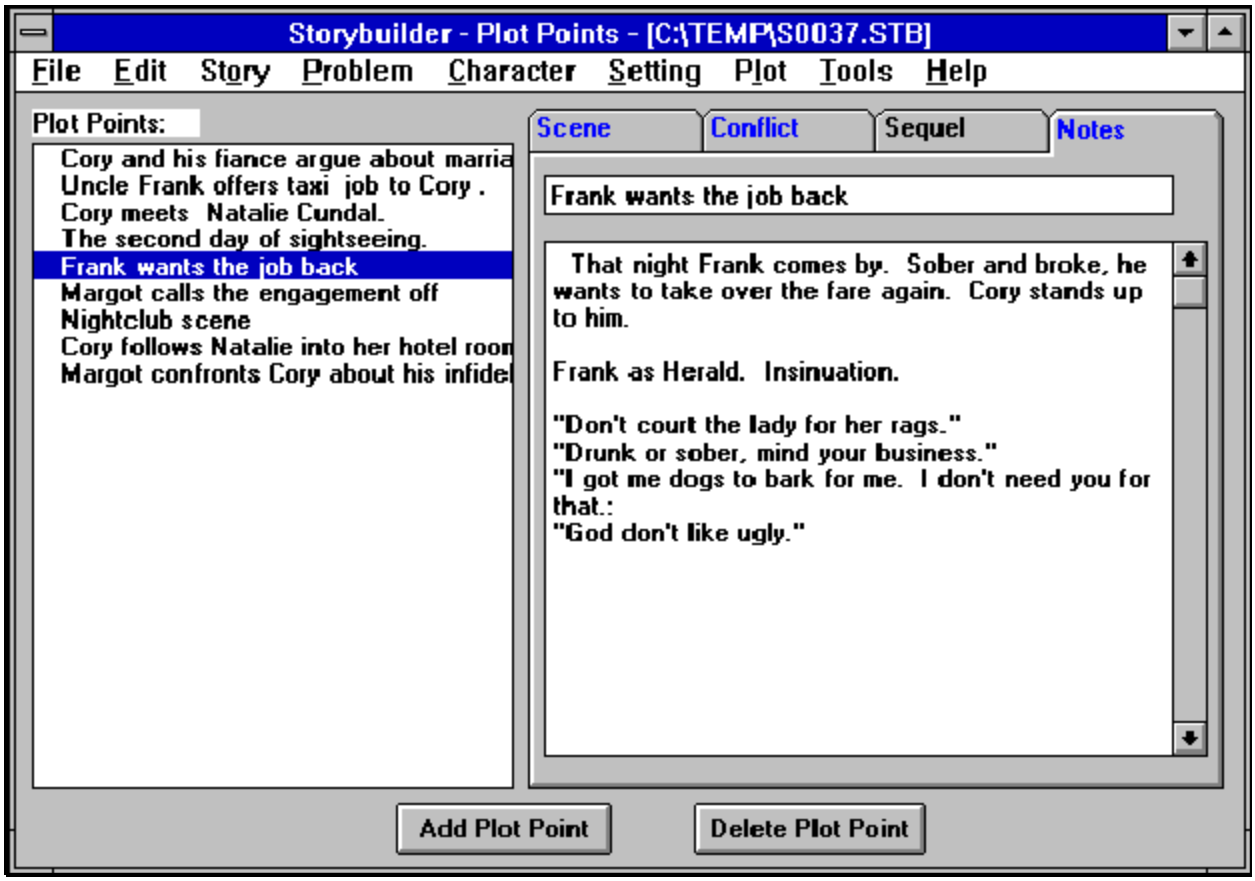
Emotional Response	First there's an emotional response. Since most scenes' outcomes are setbacks, this is frequently shock, disbelief, anger, etc.
Review and Thought	As the emotions ebb, the character will begin to reflect on the events in a more dispassionate and logical manner. He may recall other and earlier information. This period of review and thought is a good place to put back story.
New Goal	The period of thought leads to a new plan, by which the protagonist can overcome the setback of the previous scene. This new goal is in turn the scene's goal for the next scene, which propels the story forward.

See "Scene and Sequel" for more information.

Notes tab

Use this tab to contain remarks or ideas which don't belong on the **Scene**, **Conflict**, or **Sequel** tabs.

Moving Plot Points



Plot points can be rearranged by moving a plot point from one place in the list to another.

Double clicking on a plot point on the outline will mark it to be moved. Single clicking on another plot point will move the original plot point to the new location. If you are moving in a downward direction, the plot point will be moved after (below) the target. If you are moving upwards in the list, the plot point will be moved above (before) the target.

A warning message at the bottom of the screen tells you that a move is pending. To cancel a move, single click on the original plot point's location.

To illustrate, let's move the highlighted scene ('Frank wants the job back') from the following short story plot outline.

To move this point, double click (with the left mouse button) on that text on the outline (left side of screen.) A Move Pending label will appear in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. To complete

the move, click on the line you want to move the plot point to, in this case 'Margot calls the engagement off':

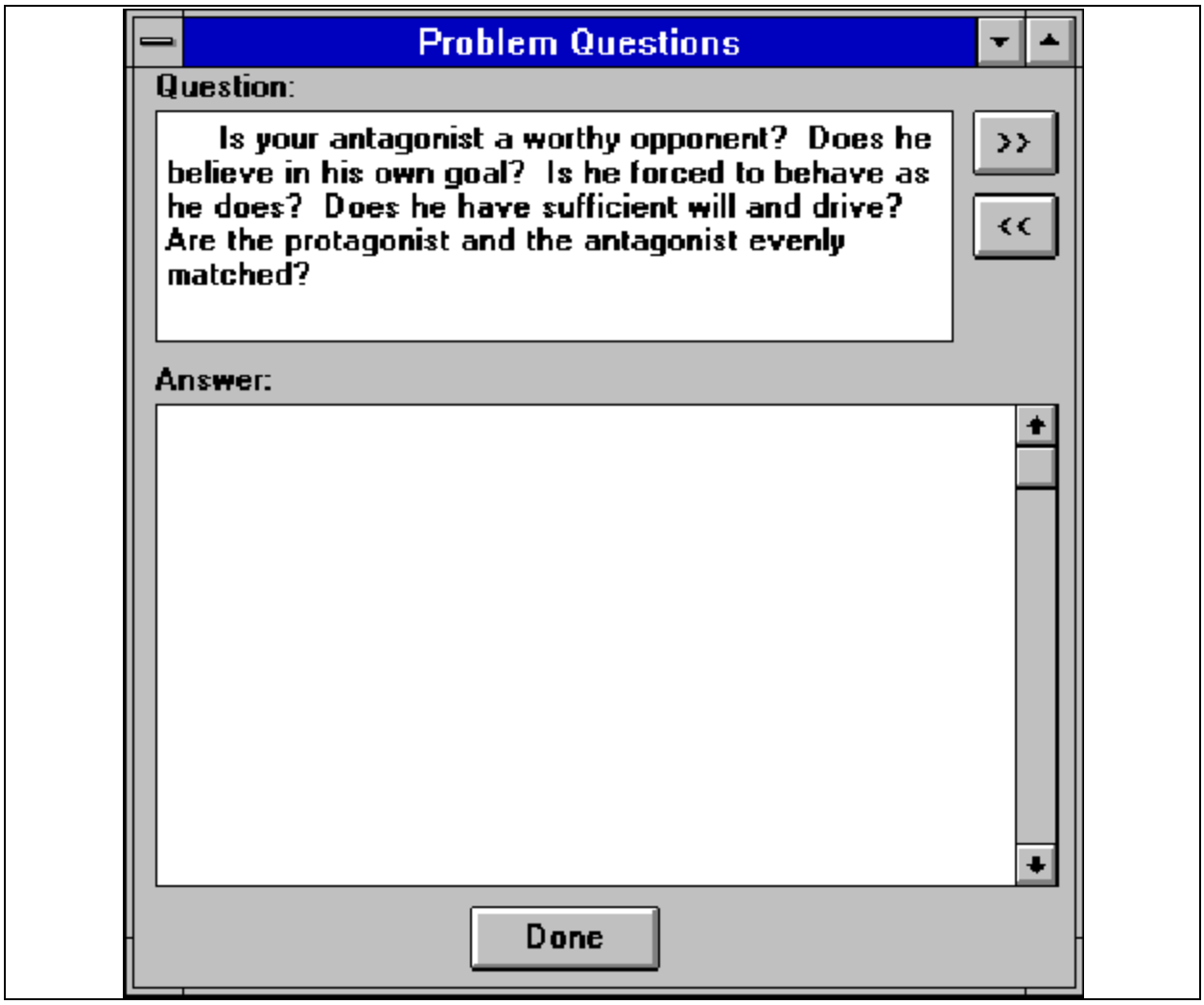
Since the target line is above the line you wish to move, the scene is moved before the target.

Tools

The **Tools** menu displays a pull-down menu of tools to assist in creating effective story outlines. These tools include lists of questions to help you test and refine your story, various topics related to writing, including information particular to various genres, and sub-menus of aids specific to the process of character definition and to the plotting process.

This chapter describes the tools StoryBuilder provides to assist you in crafting your story.

Key Questions

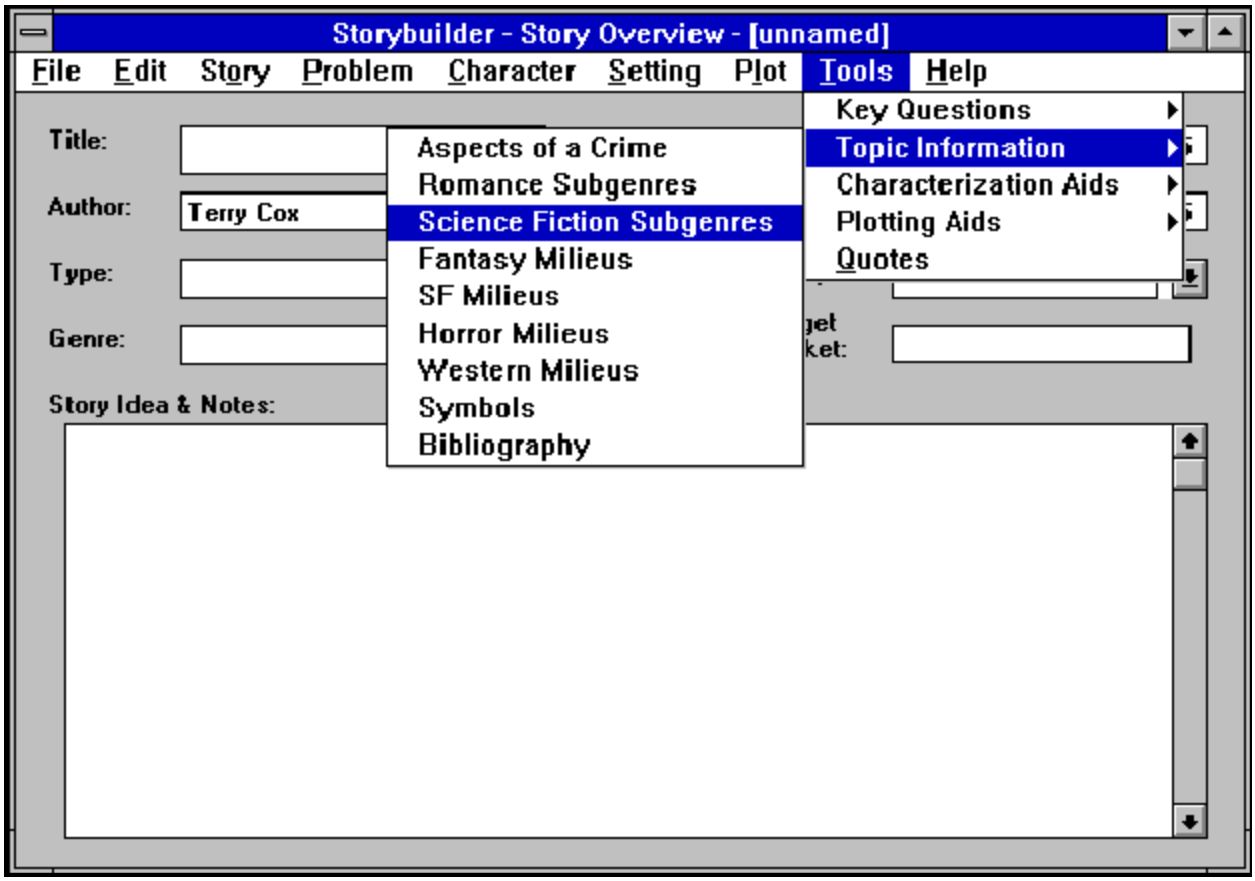


Key Questions are accessible from the **Tools** menu. There are sub-menus which contain lists of questions appropriate to the **Story**, **Problem**, **Character**, **Setting**, and **Plot** forms and story elements.

Use the key questions to refine and test your story elements. If you wish, you can record answers or notes to questions that need highlighting or require more thought. These answers will be saved with your story folder and displayed when you invoke **Key Questions** in later outlining sessions, and can also be printed.

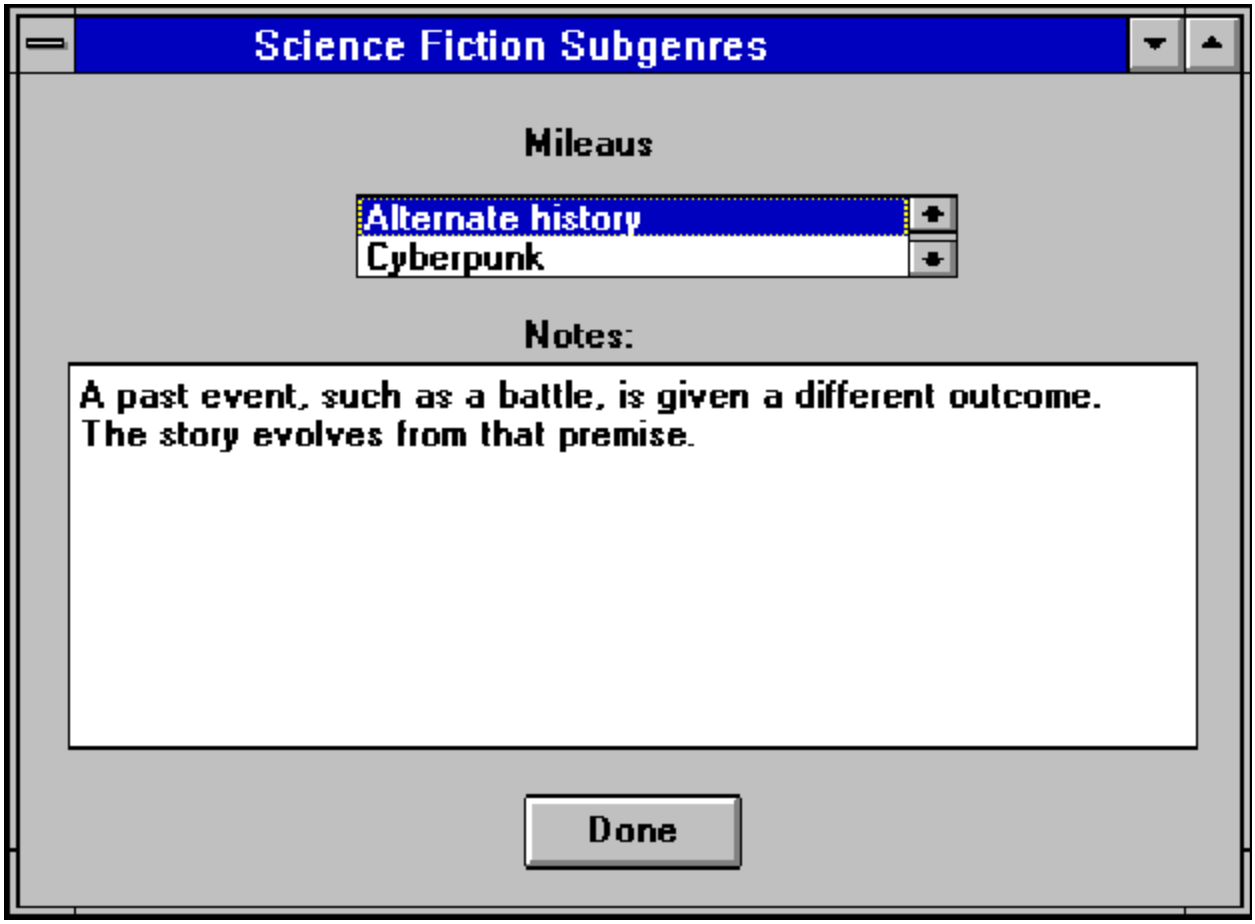
The questions for a story element are a circular list. That is, when you've displayed the last question for this form, the next question to display will be the first question for the form. To navigate through the questions, use the Next **(**>>) and Previous (<<) buttons.

Topic Information



The **Topic Information** sub-menu on the **Tools** menu contains a list containing information specific to certain topics. These items will be displayed either on a card file-like list or a Windows notepad, depending on the contents.

The card file entries look like this:



Notepad entries invoke the Windows Notepad accessory to browse the topic document.

Topic information can be tailored to display any information you wish, using the two provided tools. You can modify the contents of the exiting sub-menus, or add or replace sub-menus. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" and "Changing Topic Information" for more details.

Information on some of the default topics follows.

Parts of a Crime — When plotting a mystery, it's useful to plot 'backwards' from the crime itself. Parts of a Crime provides a reminder of aspects of a crime you should take into consideration.

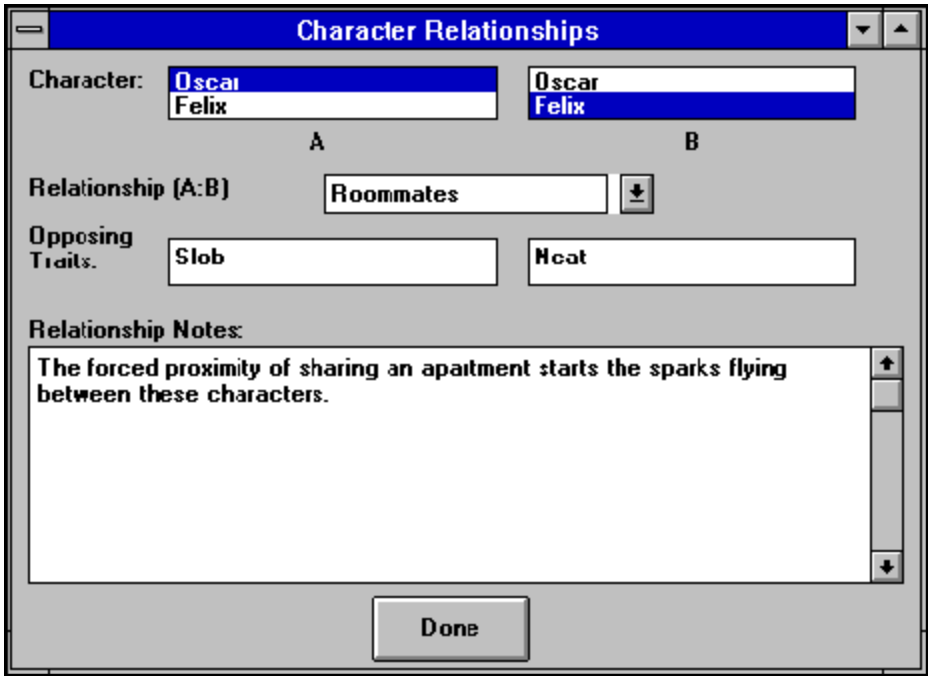
Milieus	Each genre contains certain elements which tend to recur as environment, backdrop, settings, and situations. The Milieu entries contain lists of some of these elements.
Sub-genres	Contains brief descriptions of some of the finer classifications of a particular genre.
Bibliography	Contains a list of books on or about the craft of writing.

Characterization Aids

The **Characterization Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu displays a pull-down list of tools specific to the process of character definition.

These include tools to refine **Character Relationships**, lists of **Virtues and Vices** and **Skills and Abilities** to develop character traits, and naming aids.

Relationships



The **Character Relationships** tool is found on the **Character Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu. **Character Relationships** helps to refine the connections and involvements between characters. Particular attention is focused on creating conflict by defining character traits which clash with another character's traits.

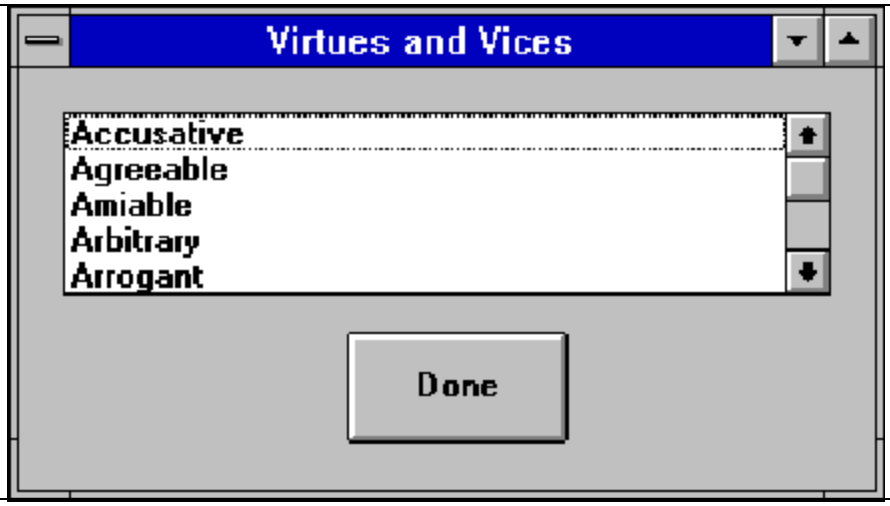
The **Character Relationships** form contains two lists of characters side by side. Each list contains all of the characters defined on the **Character** form. To focus on the relationship between any two characters, select the two names from the lists. The order is often important. For example, "A is B's" father is a different relationship than "B is A's son."

You may also specify the same name on both lists, if you want to examine internal conflicts in a single character by contrasting traits.

Trait	This field identifies the particular trait. Traits which cause conflicts can include Personality Type (for example, a Boss wife married to a Peacemaker husband), Values, Focus, Inner Traits, and **Virtues and Vices** (such as *The Odd Couple* relationships.)
Trait Value	The particular values which conflict (Fussy vs. Sloppy, etc.)
Type	The type of the relationship. Some common blood, marriage, and working relationships are listed here.
Relationship Notes	Record your comments on this relationship here.

When creating conflict through contrasting character traits, you need to create a situation where these unlike characters are forced in proximity with each other— through marriage, living in the same house, working at the same office, etc.

Virtues and Vices

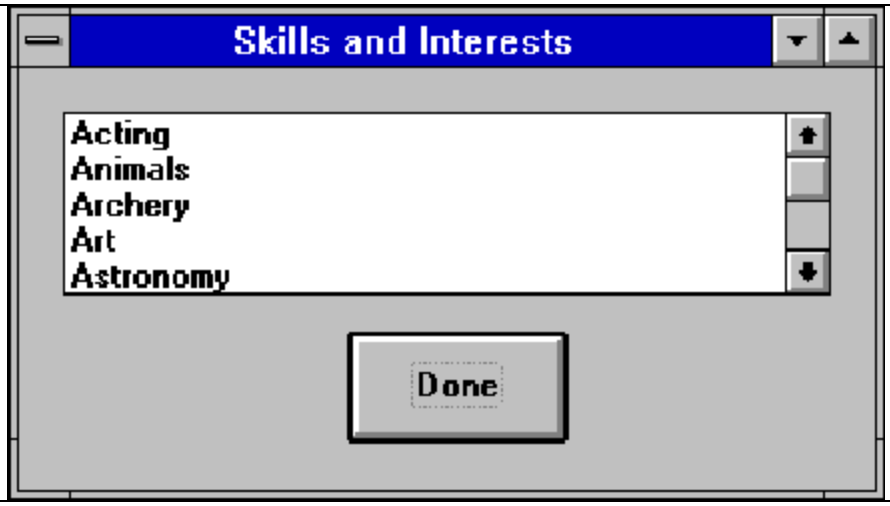


This tool can be selected from the **Characterization Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu. This menu entry will display a list of character traits which may help you in defining your character.

When you assign one of these traits to your character, think of how he came to have this characteristic. Was there some incident in his background or element in his upbringing which fostered this trait?

The virtues and vices list can be changed to your preferences. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for details on how to add, delete, or modify the listed traits.

Skills and Abilities



This form displays a list of some of the skills and abilities people may possess, for use when you're defining character traits.

Character Names

The **Male First Names**, **Female First Names**, and **Last Names** tools can be selected from the **Characterization Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu. These menu entries will cause a list of common names to appear to help you in selecting a name for your character.

All three of these lists can be tailored to your preferences. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for details on how to add, delete, or modify the lists.

Plotting Aids

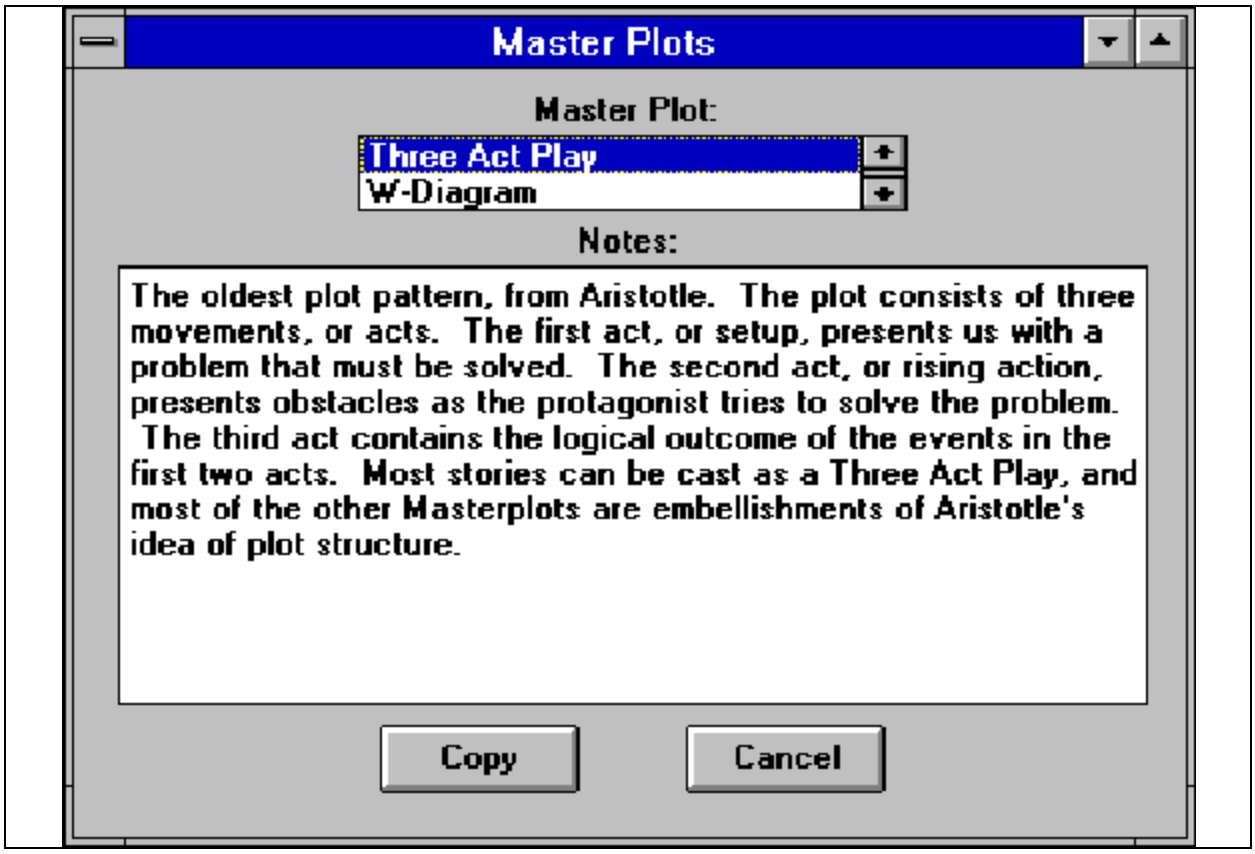
The **Plotting Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu displays a pull-down sub-menu of tools specific to the process of defining your plot.

The **Master Plots** tool will populate your plot outline with a set of plot points according to a template or master plot outline, or will provide information on commonly recurring plot patterns.

The **Dramatic Situations** tool uses standard dramatic situations to help you beef up the drama in an existing scene, or to add a scene which relies on a particular dramatic situation.

The **Stock Scenes** tool provides lists of scenes frequently found in certain plotting situations, or in a particular genre.

Master Plots



Plots tend to include the same story elements. Aristotle was the first to identify and expand upon some of these elements, which have been elaborated in the centuries since his time. These elements have to do with the shape of the plot.

The same story forms also repeat themselves in fiction: stories of adventure, discovery, pursuit, etc. Stories based upon one or more of these forms will tend to repeat certain story elements.

StoryBuilder's **Master Plots** tool helps you shape your story's plot based on suggestions from these two sources.

The **Master Plots** tool is invoked from the **Plotting Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu. It provides a list of plot skeletons, or master plots. Selecting one of the master plots from the list at the top of the form will display notes relevant to that master plot.

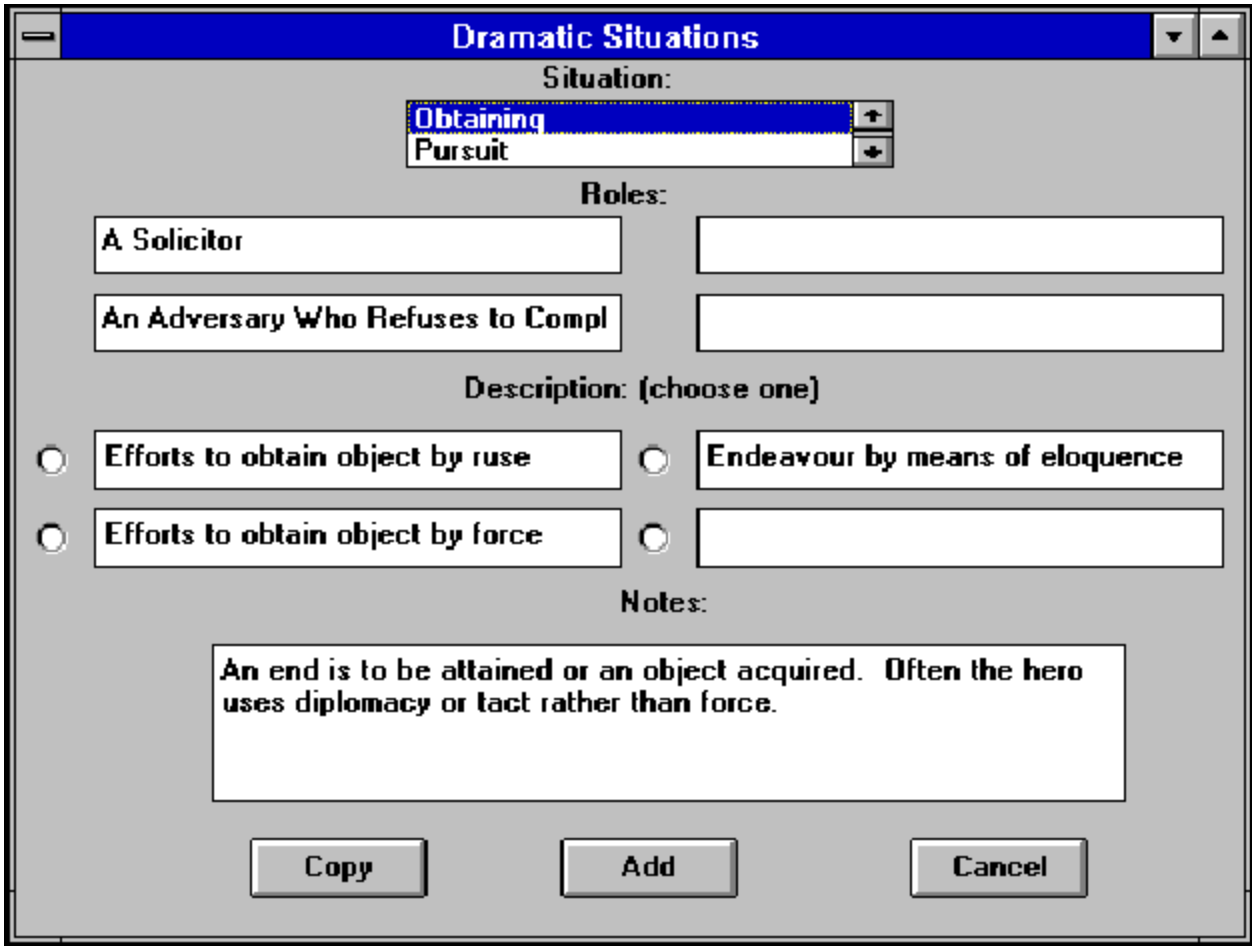
The first few master plots (Three Act Play, W-Diagram, and Hero's Journey) are story outlines. Selecting **Copy** when one of these master plots is selected will copy a skeleton plot into your plot

outline, which can then be edited from the Plot form. The remaining master plots concern story forms or patterns. Selecting **Copy** when one of these master plots is selected will add a plot point to your plot outline. This plot point contains notes and suggestions for stock scenes which are relevant to this story form. You can copy more than one master plot into an outline.

Ronald Tobias' excellent book *20 Master Plots (And How to Build Them)* is a detailed look at the fundamental plots which recur through all fiction.

The master plots can be changed according to your preferences. See "Customizing Storybuilder" for details on how to add, delete, or modify the listed items.

Dramatic Situations



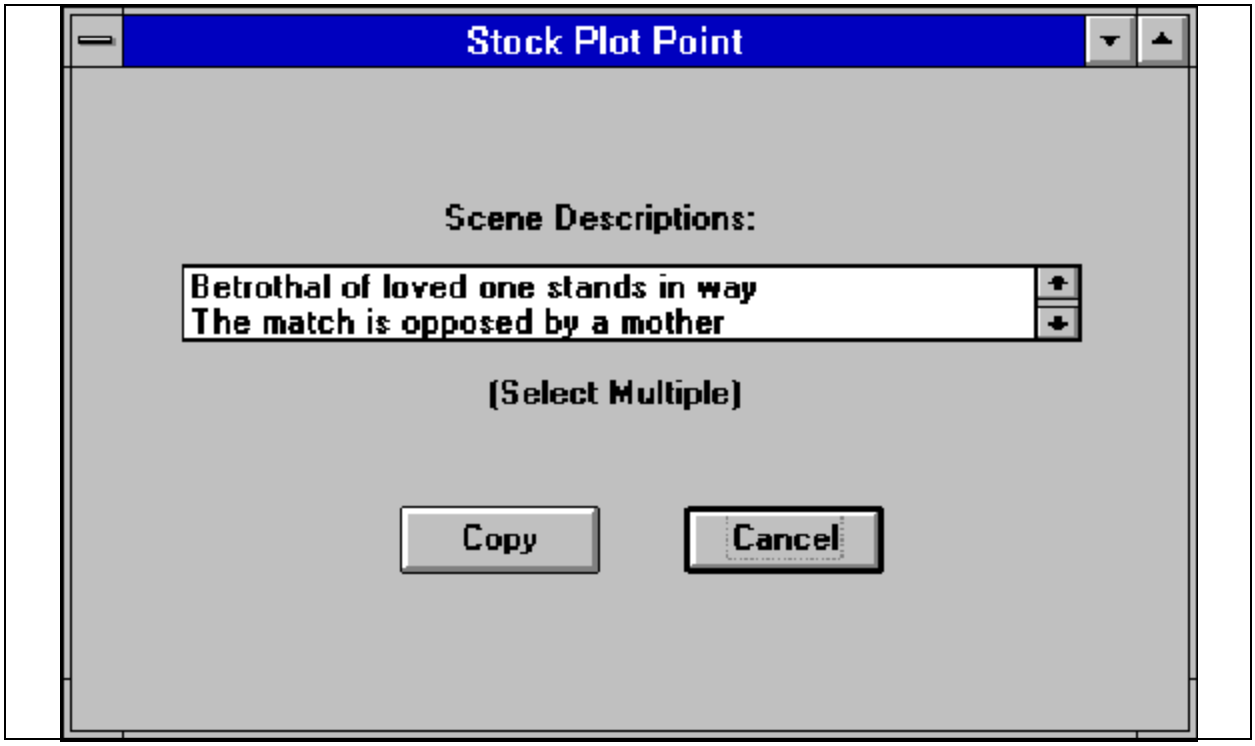
Georges Polti, in his book *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, proposed that there are only a limited number of dramatic situations, based on fundamental human conflicts. He defined each of his situations in terms of dramatic elements and examples.

The **Dramatic Situations** form is invoked from the **Plotting Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu. It contains the thirty-six dramatic situations and the dramatic elements of each.

The central story problem will frequently be based upon one of these situations, but the **Dramatic Situations** tool is intended more for use with the plot outline and with scenes. Every scene can be thought of as a 'little story' with its own conflict; and each scene will generally, therefore, involve one or more of these dramatic situations.

This tool works with the **Scene** tab on the **Plot** form to help define the conflict for a scene. If you select **Copy** from the **Dramatic Situations** form, the elements of the situation you have selected will be copied into the elements on the **Scene** tab of the **Plot** form for the currently selected plot point.

Stock Scenes



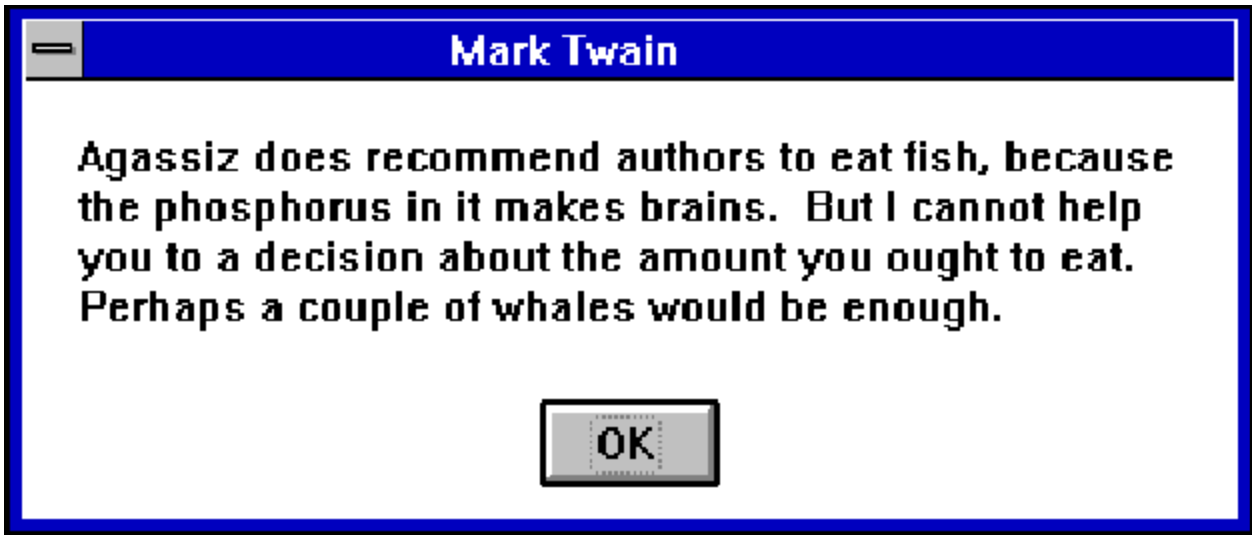
This tool, invoked from the **Plotting Aids** sub-menu of the **Tools** menu, provides a list of several categories of stock scenes. These are scenic situations which recur frequently in fiction.

While your plot and story should be as distinct and original as you can make it, stock scenes can be found throughout literature, and are a valuable part of any writer's tool kit.

Selecting one of the categories will result in the display of a form listing some stock scenes in that category. Selecting one or more of these scenes, and clicking on the **Copy** control, will cause a scene to be added to the plot, immediately after the current scene, with the stock scene's title as the scene summary.

Stock Scenes can be tailored to display any sub-menus of stock scenes you wish. You can modify the contents of the exiting sub-menus, or add or replace sub-menus. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" for more details.

Quote



Selecting this item from the **Tools** menu will cause a randomly selected quote about the craft of writing to be displayed.

The **Preferences** form, invoked from the **File** menu, can specify that a quote be displayed each time StoryBuilder starts, if you wish.

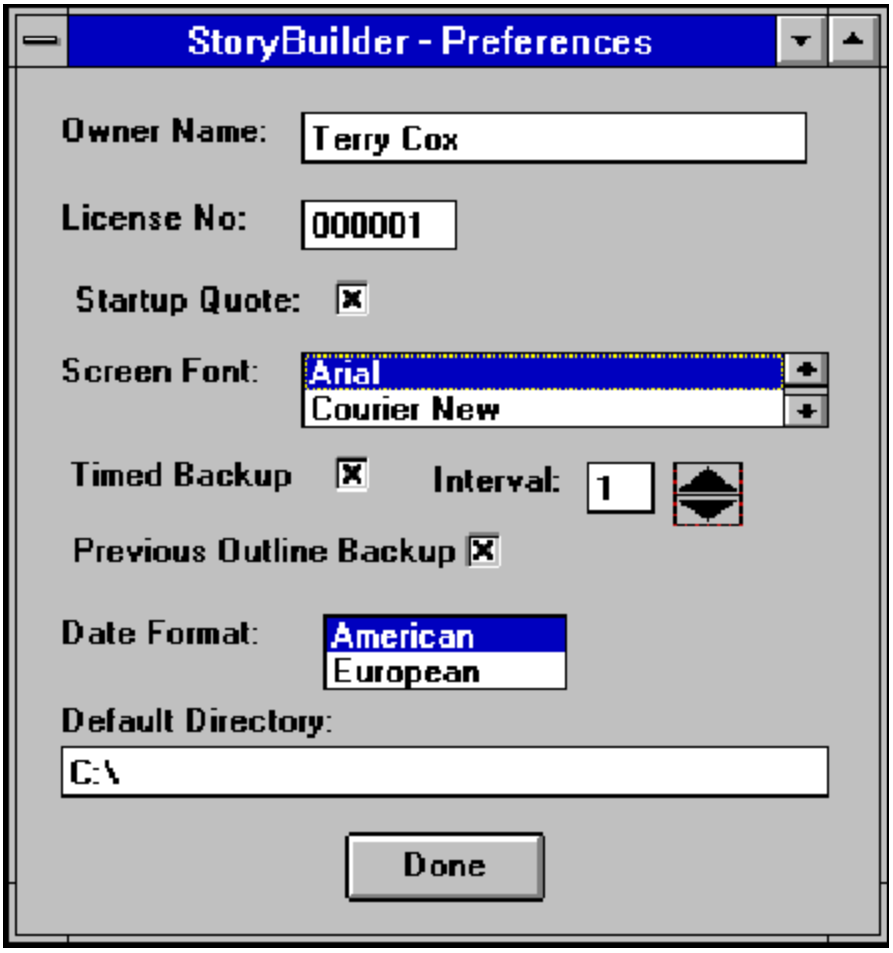
Customizing StoryBuilder

No two writers will tell the same story. Some will write in one genre, some in another; some will write novels, others plays; some will write tragedy, others comedy.

StoryBuilder allows you to modify the contents of many of its features to accommodate different writing needs and styles.

This chapter describes the features of StoryBuilder which allow you to make these modifications.

Preferences



The **Preferences** option on the **File** menu displays a form which allows you to change several items which tailor StoryBuilder to your individual preferences.

Owner Name

Use this field to record your name as the licensed owner of your copy of StoryBuilder. Owner name appears in the Author field on the Story form whenever a new story outline is started.

License No

Use this field to record the product serial number of your copy of StoryBuilder. The serial number can be found on the Product Registration card included with your purchase. Please record the number and complete and mail the

registration card. Your purchase must be registered for you to obtain product support and update information.

Startup Quote — This option toggles on and off. If checked, it will cause a randomly selected quote about the craft of writing to be displayed when StoryBuilder is started.

A quote can also be displayed at any time by selecting **Quote** from the **Tools** menu.

Screen Font — This option lists a number of Windows® scalable fonts. The font you select will be used when displaying StoryBuilder's major fonts. The font will only be selected when StoryBuilder starts. To change the screen font, select the font you wish on the Preferences form and then exit and restart StoryBuilder.

Timed Backup — This option, if clicked on, will cause StoryBuilder to save a backup of your work every so many minutes. The Interval field identifies how often to take these backups. The outline is saved to a temporary file {STORYB.BAK}. If your computer crashes, StoryBuilder will load this file when you next start the program.

Interval — This option identifies how frequently, in minutes, timed backups will be automatically performed.

Previous Outline Backup — If you select this option, each time you save your outline StoryBuilder will first save the .STB outline file with the file suffix of .SB!.

Date Format — This option identifies whether you prefer American (mm/dd/yy) or European (dd/mm/yy) formats for the Date Created and Date Modified fields on the Story form.

Default Directory — Use this option to identify the default directory where new StoryBuilder outlines will be placed. This directory is displayed when the Save option on the File menu is first selected, or whenever Save As is selected.

You can also tailor StoryBuilder in other ways, by modifying the StoryBuilder initialization file, `STORYB.INI`. See "Customizing StoryBuilder" and "Changing Topic Information" for details.

StoryBuilder Initialization File

Many of the lists and tools in StoryBuilder are designed to be modified by you to suit your needs and preferences. The components that may be tailored can be found in two initialization files: `STORYB.INI` and `TOOLS.INI`. These files are located in the default StoryBuilder directory. Appropriate changes to them will customize StoryBuilder. The `STORYB.INI` file contains values for many of the story elements located on the StoryBuilder forms. `TOOLS.INI` contains the contents of the various tools found on the **Tools** menu.

`STORYB.INI` and `TOOLS.INI` are ASCII text files and can be viewed and changed with most text editors and word processors. Remember that the file must be saved as a regular ASCII text file, without the special embedded control characters that many word processors use. We recommend making a copy of the files before making any changes.

Both initialization files have a similar structure. They are divided into sections. Each section starts with a section header, set off in brackets. For example, a Goals section begins with the line:

```
[Goals]
```

Nothing else should appear on a section header line.

Following the section header are the detail records for that section. These detail records take the form:

```
KeyWord=Value
```

Each detailed item should appear on a line by itself. A section can contain many different keywords, although most sections only contain one or two. When you're modifying `STORYB.INI`, be careful to spell the keywords exactly as found.

Changing Topic Information

Topic Information is contained in the `TOOLS.INI` file, like other information that can be customized. See "Customizing Storybuilder" for an introduction to this file.

Topic Information is a single section in the `TOOLS.INI` file, headed by the line:

```
[Topic Information]
```

Following the section header are multiple topics, each of which will appear as a sub-menu entry under the Topic Information line on the Tools menu. Each topic starts with a line which contains the keyword:

```
Topic=name
```

'name' is the title which displays on the menu line. You can have up to ten topics.

Each topic can be either of two types, depending on the contents you wish to place in it. One type displays a form which provides a card file-like list of subtopics, each of which can have an attached note. The other uses the Windows Notepad accessory to display a text file.

The card file type will be used if the Topic= record is followed by one or more lines containing:

Subtopic=name

'name' is the name which appears on the card file's list of topics. If there are remarks associated with the subtopic, they can be placed on one or more of the following lines:

Remarks=comments

The Notepad accessory will be invoked if the Topic= record is followed by the single line:

Notepad=filename

'filename' should be the fully qualified name of the file you wish to edit. Only one 'Notepad=' entry can follow a single topic, and mixing 'Subtopic=' and 'Notepad=' records under a single topic is invalid.

The provided 'Notepad=' entries are static reference material, but the Notepad facility is a functional text editor, and you can use a Notepad topic as such. For example, you might create a 'Notepad=' entry as a writer's log or journal, or create an entry for research notes to accompany a story's outline file.

If you add new topics or change the titles of topics on the 'Topic=name' cards, you will also need to modify the `STORYB.INI` file section:

[Topic Titles]

After the section header are a numb of 'Topic=name' cards; these names must be the same as the 'Topic=name' cards in the `TOOLS.INI` file. The topic titles are the topics displayed on the **Tools** menu's **Topics** sub-menu.

The topic information provided with StoryBuilder contains examples of both kinds of information. Study the provided `TOOLS.INI` file for examples to use as guidelines when creating your own entries.

Glossary

A

ab ovo: Telling a story by starting at the earliest possible scene. See 'in media res.' From the Latin 'from the egg.'

act: A major division of a play or opera. Subdivisions of acts are called scenes or episodes.

action: The events which unfold in a story and which answer the question 'What happens next?' Action comes from characters who do things in order to achieve their goals or overcome obstacles.

ambiance: The mood or tone of a situation.

anima: The inner personality of a character. See '**persona**'. A term from Jungian psychology.

antagonist: The adversary of the protagonist or central character in a story.

anticlimax: A descent from an important or dramatic situation to a trivial or less dramatic one.

antihero: A protagonist who lacks heroic qualities, such as well-intended motives.

archetype: A model or pattern with symbolic significance which recurs throughout literature.

atmosphere: The dominant impression a story creates through such elements as setting and dialog.

C

catastrophe: A misfortune or disaster, usually sudden. A plot in which events result in an outcome not in line with the protagonist's motives.

catharsis: The purging of emotions. Aristotle wrote that the effect of tragedy upon the audience is a purification of the spirit through the discharge of emotions, with the resulting relief from tension.

cause and effect: In stories, events must have a reason, rather than occur through coincidence. Causes are usually the actions of characters, and are based on motives.

chapter: A main division of a book, usually numbered, but sometimes titled. Since you don't want the reader to quit reading, arrange your chapter breaks so that chapters end at places of high dramatic tension.

character: A person represented in a story. Character is the sum of the traits and features which distinguish one person from another; the storyteller creates character by selecting these qualities.

climax: The point of maximum dramatic intensity which occurs at a turning point or crisis.

coincidence: An event which occurs through random chance. Readers don't often accept coincidence in fiction, but demand cause and effect.

comedy: A story of light and cheerful tone with a happy ending.

conflict: The struggle between opposing forces. Conflict is the force which drives the events which comprise the plot.

counterplot: A subplot in a story which contrasts to the principal plot line. For example, scenes which depict the antagonist's actions can be a counterplot.

crisis: A turning point in a story, at which a choice or change or decision must occur. Climax refers to the emotional intensity a crisis should generate.

D

denouement: The final outcome or unravelling of the complications in a story. The falling action which follows the final climax.

details: Specific and particular items or features. Effective stories rely on details rather than generalizations, particularly in characterization, settings, and props.

deus ex machina: Using an improbable or supernatural force at the end of a story to resolve the complications of the plot. Such devices are no longer accepted by most audiences. The term is Latin for 'god from a machine.'

dilemma: A choice between undesirable alternatives. Effective conflicts in a story should be dilemmas; if the choice is obvious, the character's path is clear, and suspense is weakened.

drama: (1) Events which have vivid, conflicting elements. (2) A literary composition which tells a story about characters in conflict.

dramatis personae: A list of the characters in a story and their relationships or roles. Printed in the program of a play or at the beginning of a literary work.

E

empathy: Identifying with or experiencing the sensations and emotions of another person. A major goal of fiction is to invoke from the reader empathy for the characters in the story.

F

fable: A short story designed to teach a moral lesson. Fables are often written for children and sometimes contain animals as characters.

fairy tale: A story about magical creatures such as elves, dragons, dwarves, etc. Fairy tales are often written for children.

falling action: The part of a story that follows the climax. See 'resolution' and 'denouement.'

fantasy: A story based on extravagantly imaginative characters and premises.

fiction: A literary work created from imagination and designed to entertain the reader. 'Effective fiction makes readers think, but the primary purpose of all fiction is to make readers feel.' — H. Shaw.

flashback: A scene or episode which relates earlier events in the story. Flashbacks are often written as remembrances by a character.

foreshadowing: Writing events into a story which foretell a later event, so that when the later event occurs, it will have more impact or seem more believable.

foreshortened prose: Contracted or abridged narration which summarizes story events or scenes. Foreshortened prose can compress large stretches of time into a few words, but is less graphic and compelling than writing in scenes.

formula: A plot created according to stereotyped or set forms. Most stories follow a formula at a base level. Good stories transcend formula through attention to detail and complexity of characterization, motive, situation, and setting..

frame: A border which encloses story elements. Examples of frames are opening and closing a story with the same words or in the same setting, and the prose which surrounds a story-within-a-story or tale.

G

genre: A categorization of fiction according to similar milieus, locales, and dramatic situations.

H

hero: A character who possesses physical or moral courage, bravery, and/or a noble nature. The protagonist, or central character, may be but doesn't have to be a hero. A heroine is a female hero.

historical novel: A novel which is a fictional representation of actual historical events or persons.

I

in media res: Starting a story in the middle of the events the story relates, rather than at their beginning. This is often done to provide a narrative hook, by opening with an action scene. Stories which employ this device often use flashbacks to provide information to the reader. From the Latin 'in the middle of things.'

incident: A distinct piece of action in a story. Incidents may be related in a scene or in foreshortened prose.

L

legend: A non-historical story handed down from earlier times, or a literary work which is supposed to be based on a legend. See '**myth**.'

locale: The setting for a novel, play, or motion picture.

M

McGuffin: An object which is searched for, fought over, or fled from, but which has no value other than to set the action in motion. The term was devised by Alfred Hitchcock.

melodrama: Plays which exaggerate emotion and relate sensational and thrilling action, often at the expense of character development.

metamorphosis: A complete change of form or substance, often caused by some form of magic or witchcraft, found in fantasies.

mimesis: A principal of drama proposed by Aristotle, which states that dramatic works should mirror and mimic life.

mise-en-scene: The surroundings and environment of a scene. Often used to refer to the stage setting of a play.

mood: The prevailing emotional tone or atmosphere of a scene or episode.

morality play: An allegorical play from the 14th to 16th centuries which involved characters personifying virtues and vices.

morality: Conformity to rules of proper conduct; virtue. All stories, except for decadent works, are concerned with morality, since conflict involves choices between 'right' and 'wrong' action.

motif: The recurring subject or theme of a literary work.

motivation: The reasons and explanation as to why a character acts in a certain way. Motives are often goals, and are formed from the character's background and traits. Well-motivated actions have a sense of inevitability.

movement: The pace and force of action in a story. Action is 'fast', description is 'slow'.

mystery: (1) Something kept secret or that remains unexplained. Elements of mystery in a story create suspense in the reader (see 'suspense'.) (2) A detective story involving a criminal act whose perpetrator is not immediately divulged to the reader.

myth: A traditional or legendary story, usually involving gods and heros or supernatural occurrences.

N

narration: Relating or telling events. Narration implies a narrator, always either the writer or someone involved in the action, and thus relates to point of view.

narrative hook: Events or scenes placed at the beginning of a story for the purpose of arousing the reader's interest so as to make him read further.

novel: A lengthy fictitious prose narrative. Novels are usually 70,000 words or more in length. Short novels are called novelettes.

novelette: A short novel, typically 30,000-40,000 words in length.

novella: A long short story. Novellas span the range from short story to novelette.

O

obligatory scene: An episode which the reader expects in the story so strongly that the writer is obliged to put it there. Confrontations between protagonist and antagonist are often obligatory. Obligatory scenes are a subset of stock scenes.

one-act play: A play consisting of one act. A one-act play, like a short story, demands concentration upon one theme as well as economy in style, setting, and plotting.'— H. Shaw

outline: The essential features or main aspects of a project, which reveal its order and organization. 'Every literary work of any distinction is so ordered and organized that an outline can be made of its contents and structure.' — H. Shaw

P

parable: A short story or play which is allegorical and which teaches some moral or religious truth.

passion play: A play representing Christ's Passion, usually performed during Lent.

pathos: The ability of a story to evoke feelings of pity and sadness. From the Greek for 'suffering.'

persona: (1) A character in a fiction. (2) The public role a character assumes or is perceived to assume (contrasted with 'anima'.) Character development in stories sometimes consists of stripping the persona of a character.

picaresque: A story in which the adventures of a roguish hero are described. Usually a comedy or satire.

play: A dramatic work intended to be acted out on the stage (stage play) or in a television show or motion picture (screen play). Because they are performed by actors, plays emphasize dialog and scenes.

play-within-a-play: A scene in a story in which a miniature drama is presented. Act III, Scene IV from Hamlet is an example. A form of 'frame.'

plot: The order or sequence of scenes and events in a story. The plot points generally progress from goal to conflict to resolution. Motive is what separates plot from a mere string of episodes. 'The king died and then the queen died' is a string of events; 'the king died, and then the queen died of grief' is a plot.— E.M. Forster.

point of view: The position of the narrator in relation to the story. Point of view covers not only vocal, spacial, and temporal aspects, but also mental and attitudinal aspects. Point of view is to prose what camera angle and lens choice are to the director.

premise: The basis or proposition from which a story proceeds. The premise may be a moral the story is intended to illustrate, or an idea or concept it intends to prove. See 'theme.'

problem: A matter involving uncertainty or doubt. A character with a problem is the basis of a plotted story. The major story problem should directly relate to the story's premise.

props: Furniture, ornaments, and objects handled by the characters in a scene.

protagonist: The leading character of a drama or literary work.

R

resolution: The final state of affairs in the plot; the story's ending situation.

rising action: The episodes in the plot which lead up to the climax. The rising action consists of the complications which make up the second act in a three act play.

roman a clef: A novel which depicts actual historical events and persons under the guise of fiction.

S

scene: A plot point which takes place in one time and place, and which involves a particular set of cast members, one of whom (the scene protagonist) is usually pursuing a goal.

script: The written form of a play. Scripts have particular formatting requirements which relate to the director's and actors' needs.

sequel: (1) A story based on an earlier work. (2) The reactions of a scene's viewpoint character to the events in the scene. Usually this starts with an emotional response and leads to a plan for new action, which starts the next scene. Thus, a type of transition.

short story: A work of fiction under 10,000 words. Often refers to a story with a plot; the term 'slice of life' refers to unplotted stories.

situation: The state of affairs at the beginning of a story.

slice of life: The term was coined around the turn of the century by the novelist Jean Jullien. Jullien felt that plots reduced the realism of fiction. A slice of life story attempts to depict a scene or character without contrived drama so realistically that it invokes an emotional response in the reader.

stereotype: A simplified concept of a character or situation.

stock character: A familiar character expected by readers in certain types of fiction, such as the hard-boiled detective or the prostitute with a heart of gold.

stock situation: A situation or incident which is commonly found in fiction, such as 'boy meets girl' or revenge.

story: A narration of incidents designed to amuse and inform an audience.

stream of consciousness: A style in which a character's random thoughts are presented without concern for sequence, syntax, or reality.

subplot: Scenes and events in a story which are secondary to the main plot. Subplots may contrasted with the main plot (counterplots), highlight it by coming together at some point (braids), or be unrelated.

suspense: Uncertainty as to the outcome of an event or situation. Suspense is caused by posing questions for the reader but not answering them right away. A man hiding in an apartment with a knife leaves the reader wondering 'what will happen when the tenant arrives home.

suspension of disbelief: The willingness of readers or the audience to suspend doubt about the reality of characters or events in a story. For example, a movie goer may ignore that he is sitting in a darkened room looking at projected image, and treat the film as 'real.' Bad storytelling can break this spell.

T

tale: A story which narrates (usually in the first person) the details of some incident in the story's 'past.' The narration is a form of 'frame.'

theme: The story's unifying idea, or motif. Theme can be a category, such as idea-based or character-driven, but in common usage theme often means the story's moral or premise. The story's outcome and cast should support the theme. See 'premise.'

three-act play: A formula for fiction derived from the five acts Aristotle described in his *Poetics*. The formula is structured around the modern three-act stage play and describes which story elements should occur in which act, and by inference, the logical order of material in any dramatic story.

tragedy: A serious story whose theme is illustrated by a disastrous or unhappy outcome. Most tragedies can be traced to some character flaw or defect in the protagonist.

transition: A piece of narrative which links one scene with another by telling the reader that time, setting, or viewpoint has changed since the last scene.

twist: A sudden and unexpected turn of events. A twist ending, in which the twist occurs at the end of a story, has effects similar to the deus ex machina, if not properly foreshadowed.

V

verisimilitude: 'The appearance of truth.' The aspects of a story which make it believable to the reader, so that he will 'suspend disbelief' while he's in the story. Ways to achieve verisimilitude include showing rather than telling, use of specifics and details, and accuracy in factual (non-fictional) elements such as procedures, settings, or slang.

vignette: A term derived from the art work which decorated the front plates of novels, 'little vines.' It refers to a brief literary sketch or episode such as a character study or a single scene. The term usually refers to a short, unplotted work.

villain: A character who represents an evil or unwelcome force. The villain is a stock character frequently cast as the antagonist in stories.

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