

Structure

Structure, or form, is the arrangement of story elements according to purpose, style and genre. Structure doesn't just happen on its own. Rather, it's carefully considered by the author to make sure their intended meaning is conveyed.

In order for a story to be truly immersive, the structure must play the part of a skeleton. In other words, the structure supports the story to ensure the most powerful delivery of elements, yet in a manner unseen and not easily identified by the reader.

Why do we need structure?

Structure is the literary device that turns words and sentences into a story. It aims to present that story in the most favourable way, for a specific audience. The writing process is more than simply piecing together words on a page:

... turning all that raw material into a novel isn't simply a matter of putting it into words on a page or screen. You have to 'translate' it into a form that readers can relate to. That's what structure does. And if you ignore it or mess with it, you risk frustrating – or worse, losing – readers.” — James Scott Bell

Consider this very article. If we opened with the 'tips' section, and finished with a definition, readers would become frustrated, scrolling up and down to make sense of the information. If all the quotes were lumped in a pile right in the middle of the article and sub-headings placed at the end of their sections, instead of at the start, would the article be easy to read? No.

It doesn't matter if your sentences alone read like golden honey. Your story *must* have a readable and engaging structure or your readers will switch off.

Working with structure

The way that writers approach structure can vary. At one end of the spectrum are the strict planners. Before they beginning a first draft, these writers spend hours constructing each scene and the order in which the scenes will appear.