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Story Creator GUIDE

Creating Compelling Stories

Story Creator is a two part writing tool that helps streamline the thought process of developing the outline of a story and also acts as a check list for already written stories. By using Story Creator in the developmental stage of the writing process, it becomes extremely easy to visualize all of the most important story elements necessary for a story to be compelling, fully fleshed out, and organized.

Story is the single most important thing for art to work. Where a viewers eye travels on a painting, how a song expresses emotion, how a poem or a lyric conveys a feeling, how a journey in a film or a book elects thought...all of it is story. All truly compelling narratives, ones that leave a lasting impression, have certain essential elements no matter what medium the narrative is expressed.

Producing a gripping tale is a task that is much more complex than it appears, which is why more unsatisfactory and spotty stories are written than gratifying and complete ones. Often, major elements that *seem* superfluous are discarded or are over looked while elements that *seem* major take the attention of the writer and lessen the whole piece. The goal behind Story Creator is to allow the writer to develop all the essential aspects and story elements of the narrative before the *outline* is written, and to help strengthen the story once the first draft is complete.

Creating a compelling story is the goal of any storyteller. Using Story Creator as a tool to help conceive the story in its entirety is extremely useful and saves time in the short and long run. The more solid the outline, the more solid the first draft, the less rewrites and editing. By the end you will have written a more fully fleshed out and compelling story, and that, for me, is everything.

Keep thinking
Ajala Bandele

Using Story Creator...

As A Story Generator

Knowing where you are going helps you to figure out how to get there. By breaking story down into its core elements and focusing on those, the story is easier to find, making drafting more about creating detail rather than inventing narrative. The outline phase becomes easier because all the major questions have been answered. Creating an outline is essential to understanding your story before you write it and it shouldn't be the place where you are struggling to figure out what is going on. Story Creator creates markers for your outline to hit. You can think of the outline as a great foundation to a building, and Story Creator as the blueprint. Once you know what you need to do, all you have to do is do it.

As an Outline

An outline is a general description or plan giving the essential features of a narrative and/or also containing the details. Story Creator can function as the outline for your story. If you are the type of writer that likes to discover the details as you go along, then Story Creator can be your guide without needing to create a more exhaustive outline that describes each scene or section. Because Story Creator gives you the most important plot points and story elements, you can easily begin writing from point to point, discovering the detail along the way.

As a Concept Creator

Sometimes an idea comes to you, you want to see where it goes, but you don't have time to write it. Perfect! You don't need to. Story Creator is ideal as a concept creator as well as your own story generator. Using all the same tools, you can quickly create an idea, flesh it out, and either hand the idea off to another writer, or use it as a pitch for a business venture. If you have a hundred ideas and need them out of your head then here you can put them down as full ideas rather than vague concepts, picking them up later on to be developed further.

As A Solution To Writers Block

Often you come to a point in your story or outline where you have no idea where to go. Writers block is common for every writer, whether it's because you don't know what the character is going to do, what to say, or if what you just wrote makes any sense, getting stuck happens. By having a visual representation of all your most important information, Story Creator will help you get out of the muck of writers block.

As A Personal Checklist

Another use for the Story Creator is to act as a checklist for already written stories. By using the Story Creator you should be able to find where the weaker portions of a story lie so they can be strengthened. When you begin writing if you find something special that contradicts an element in your story, you can go back and adjust the Story Creator to account for this new development. Then you can see how that affects the rest of your story.

As A Tool to Review others stories

Along with checking for structural weaknesses in your own story, Story Creator can help you in finding weaknesses in other stories. If you are tasked with providing feedback for another persons story you can look for the major markers or story elements and comment on those. It allows your feedback to be much more pointed and concise. Once you get more and more comfortable with what comprises a compelling story, you should be able to quickly recognize the elements that are strong and weak.

Writing process

From beginning to end

There are four steps to a writing process. Prewriting>Drafting>Revising>Editing.

1. **Prewriting:** Prewriting consists of Concept Creation, Research, and Outlines.
 - A. The point of prewriting is to gain a thorough understanding of the story.
2. **Drafting:** Drafting is creating a first draft of your story focusing on if the structure and ideas are clear.
 - A. The point of drafting is just to write the story. Get it all out of your head and onto the page. It doesn't have to be perfect, but it is easier to edit a flawed script than a hypothetical one.
3. **Revising:** Revising is adjusting the writing of your first draft, focusing on clearing up any structural mistakes, plot holes, weak character arcs, and weak dialogue.
 - A. The point of revising is to refine and perfect the story so that it achieves the writers intention. Revising produces 2nd, 3rd, 4th etc...drafts of a script. This is also your time to really dig in and make sure your story is accomplishing what you want it to accomplish in a structurally sound manner.
4. **Editing:** Editing is checking for grammar, formatting, spelling, and punctuation after the story and all it's elements are complete.
 - A. The point of editing is to polish off your story to look and feel professional, resulting in a final draft.

Story Creator is a part of the Prewriting Phase.

If you are fan of outlines, then you can use Story Creator as your guide to fleshing out the details more in a fully comprehensive outline. If you prefer to discover the details as you go, then Story Creator *is* your outline. If you are just creating content, then Story Creator is your *final product*, or at least contains all the information and text for your own unique format.

Creating your Story

Following the bread crumbs

Most of the time writers will begin with an idea and just start writing with only a vague sense of what needs to happen. But knowing where you're going and the complexities of your story help you not only to create a better first draft, they let you discover more about your idea than you previously had thought. That being said, there is a method to the madness when it comes to developing your idea.

The most effective order for creating your story is:

1. Idea/Concept
2. Setting
3. Characters
4. Plot
 - Intention
 - Obstacle
 - Stakes
5. The ending

Creating your story in this order lets you zoom in on what your story really is. The **idea** is the largest, most broad part of the story. A step below that is your **setting**, aka, your world. Knowing the where and when gives you a backdrop which will color everything else. After your setting is established then the **characters** have a place to grow. The world you have created has already begun to influence who and what your characters are, and since they drive your plot along you need to develop them. Next comes the three major elements in plot: **Intention**, **Obstacle**, and the **Stakes**. You're characters need an intention, aka super objective, something that they *have* to do. What will make their story compelling is the obstacle that is in their way and the stakes that they face if they win or lose. Once you know what your characters are trying to do, what's stopping them, and why they must do it, then it's easy to know how it ends. Now all you have to do is connect the dots by filling the story in with scenes.

STORY EXAMPLE: **Toy Story**

Idea/Concept: What if toys had lives of their own when we aren't watching.

Setting: Andy's bedroom.

Characters: Andy the kid, Woody the Cowboy, Buzz Lightyear the Space Man and the other toys.

PLOT INTENTION: Woody wants to be Andy's favorite toy.

PLOT OBSTACLE: Andy starts to like Buzz Lightyear more than Woody.

PLOT STAKES: If Andy stops liking Woody, then Woody could be lost and forgotten forever.

ENDING: Woody and Buzz both become Andy's favorite toys.

Metaphor Time

You can think of the process of creating a story like building a house. In this metaphor a house is your story. Before you can start building your house you need space to build. The idea is the piece of land you found, broad and full of potential. Next you need a specific spot to build your house. The setting is the foundation, the place where you are actually going to build. Once you have those, you need people to actually build it. The characters are the workers building your house. Once you have an idea of who your main builders are, you need to tell them what to do. The intention's are the specific jobs the characters are trying to achieve. Once the workers know what their job is they can get to work. But in building your house you're going to come up against problems, and you need to know what they are. The problems that your workers run into are your obstacles. To incentivize your workers they need to know how much time they have to build the house and what happens if they complete it by that time, and if they don't. The criteria of a time line and consequences are your stakes. Finally you need to know what kind of building this house is. If you don't know then the workers might work towards a house you hate. The finished house is you're ending. You need to know the ending so you can guide the workers there.

Idea/Concept

Let there be thought!

An IDEA is anything. It's the spark that can become a story and it doesn't matter what that spark is. The important thing about an idea or a concept is that whatever it is, it plants a seed. If you can't imagine anything about an idea, or it doesn't excite you in any way, then find another. But if the idea ignites something within you and makes you think, then it's a good idea. The development and execution of the idea is what will make the idea grow into something great.

It begins with a what if statement.

IDEA EXAMPLES:

- What if Toys had a life of their own- **Toy story, Small Soldiers, Winnie the Pooh**
- What if Super Hero's had normal lives- **Hancock, The Incredibles, Kick-Ass**
- What if Dinosaurs where alive- **Jurassic Park, King Kong, Journey to the Center of the Earth**
- What if dogs could talk- **Dr. Dolittle, Homeward Bound, All Dogs go to Heaven**
- What if a guy fell in love with a girl- **The Big Sick, Love Actually, Wall-E**
- What if magic was real- **Harry Potter, The Dresden Files, The Lord of the Rings**
- What if we lived on Mars- **Mission to Mars, Stranger in a Strange Land, Ilium**
- What if we could go back in time- **Timeline, Interstellar, The Time Machine**

The possibilities are literally endless and can range from silly to serious. Any concept can fit into any genre, any idea can become any type of story, and all that matters is that it means something to you. Coming up with an idea can come in a variety of forms. If uninspired, then talk to others, watch film, media, go on a vacation. Find something you are passionate about for good or bad, and start there.

Setting

From Chaos to Order

This is the world that your story takes place in. It influences everything. Even if it's "Here and Now" it matters because "Here and Now" are still very specific places in space and time. Because space and time dictate culture, you need to know when and where something takes place in order for the story to have a backdrop, and the characters have a place to live.

When: This is the time period that the story takes place in. It can be as specific as *3:15am June 25th, 1945* or as broad as *The fifteenth year of the 24th age of Olrun*.

What's important is that the time in which your story takes place is given consideration. A story set in the past or future is going to change the technology, dialect, history, everything.

Where: This is the main location or locations of the story. It can be as specific as *"The cupboard underneath the stairs of the Dursley's at 4 Privet drive, London, England"* or more broad like *Middle Earth*.

If the character moves around a lot then write some of the places they go. If you don't know them then start with where they start, and where they end.

What: Each location should be unique in some way. Each location will also have different types of cultures, weather, etc. It can be personal like *"This is where all of his nightmares come from"* or as broad as *"This is your typical New York Apartment"*

Even with a location as simple as *Apartment*, there should be something about the location that is interesting, personal, or meaningful to the story. Starting a character in a place that they hate or love is compelling, as it either reminds them where they want to get back to, or stay away from at all costs.

Why: The reason for the necessity of the setting.

The reason why you chose this location is important because setting affects everything. Does it set a character up as a villain? a hero? a thief? Does your setting mean greater adversity or set them up to fall hard? You need to know *why* you are choosing your setting. If it doesn't have a meaning, then it doesn't matter. **Make it matter.**

Characters

Who are you?

These are the vessels in which your story wraps itself around. People, places, things, can all be characters. Characters are the literal life force of your stories. They need to feel real, have **strong opinions** or motivations, and have **arcs**. Knowing your characters opinions helps you as a storyteller to give direction for a character. Once you know what a **character believes in** then the story becomes about their beliefs being challenged. How they respond to that challenge creates the characters arc. If you know the characters arc beforehand, then writing their story becomes significantly easier.

The Three Reactions

With all your characters the audience must have three reactions to them in order for them to be compelling.

1. They must like/despise them
2. They must love/hate them.
3. They must understand them.

Liking or **despising** a character is the first step to creating a compelling character. You like someone or something because you see what it is that they like or despise. It gives something for the audience to relate to in either a positive or negative way. **Liking or despising a character is about finding something that makes an audience sympathetic.**

Loving or **hating** a character is how you get the audience to care about whether they win or lose. Seeing the characters passion is essential to gripping the audience and making sure they are concerned for the remainder of the story. **Loving or hating a character is about finding something that makes an audience empathetic.**

Understanding a character is the final piece in creating a complete character. If the audience likes and loves a character, but doesn't understand what they are doing or why, then the audience will feel disappointed with the end result. **Understanding a character is about giving them a universal goal or fear that everyone can resonate with like loving something or fearing something.**

Protagonist:

Your main character. We follow this storyline the closest. The main plot is directly influenced by and is about the protagonist. An active protagonist is one in which the decisions and actions they take are entirely up to them and come from an internal moral compass. A passive protagonist is one in which the decisions and actions they take are entirely forced upon them and come from an external source.

Deuteragonist:

Your secondary character. Their actions assist in the protagonist's story. They would be the protagonist if this story was more focused on them. They often monopolize the B plot of a story and have major influence on the protagonist. They also must relate to the protagonist in some form or fashion on either a spiritual, physical, or mental level. (Same faith, same disabilities, same ideologies, etc.) For ensemble based stories, you may have multiple deuteragonists. It is important that the deuteragonist is a consequential aspect to the protagonist's life. They will be exerting the most influence over the protagonist and therefore must be supremely relevant to them. If they don't have a major influence or relate to the protagonist in some form or fashion, then they will feel superfluous.

Tertiary Characters:

Your ensemble characters. A character that effects your main plot the least, but still has significant impact to the protagonist or the story itself. Tertiary characters can provide comedic relief, perspective to the main characters, and/or major and minor plot points to the main story. They can also be used to support the theme of the story. Tertiary characters should be similar to the protagonist in at least one way.

When using Story Creator to create your characters you may not know who your tertiary character are. They tend to develop as the need for them arises. If you know who they are, then develop them before you write. If you don't know who they are then once you find them in either your outline or first draft, use Story Creator to flesh them out so you know their qualities.

Antagonist:

The person place or thing that is at odds with the Protagonist. The antagonist is the main source of conflict in your story. The antagonist can be a person, and in that case they should be treated like a Protagonist. For **intangible antagonists** (governments, social systems, insecurities, natural disasters, diseases, etc.) they still have complexity but may not have some of the same aspects of a person. However, thinking of intangible antagonists like a person can give it a unique trait all on its own.

When a character is their own Antagonist then it's important to write down what about them hinders them. Is it their arrogance, greed, insecurity, etc.

Goal: The goal of the Antagonist should be in CLEAR AND IN DIRECT CONFLICT to the protagonist's goal. It should challenge the protagonist in a personal way.

Character Traits

Tall, Dark, And Handsome

Who: Basic details. If your character was born today what would be on their birth certificate? Name, Sex, Age, Race, Profession. Each detail is important to knowing who someone is.

Strength: What are they best at and what do they think they are best at? What a character is best at and what they think they are best at often are two different things. Knowing both can allow a character to grow into their strength, or realize they were wrong about their strength. This can be anything from actual physical strength to emotional, spiritual, or intellectual strength. It can also include skills of any type.

Strength Reason: Why do they have this actual strength and perceived strength? This strength is going to help them out or hinder them during the story so give them the reason why they **think** they are as strong as they are and why they are **actually** as strong as they are.

Inner Conflict: What are they struggling with? Characters all have something that they are worried about, dealing with, or fighting against inside of themselves. It is a conflict that is either spiritual, mental, or emotional that will be tested throughout the story.

Inner Conflict Reason: Why are they struggling? What are the reasons that the characters are having an internal conflict? What in their past, present, or future causes them to worry now?

Established Norm: Before the plot begins what is the character doing? This is important because it helps define who the person was before the story begins so we can discover who they become after the climax. This is what would continuously be happening to the characters and the world around the characters if nothing extraordinary happened.

Goal: Also known as the objective, this is the thing that the character wants most in life before the plot begins. It has to be PERSONAL. This can be anything that the character would be trying to attain as apart of their established norm. This can also be thought of as the characters dream life or highest aspiration.

Goal Reason: Why do they want this thing? A goal without a reason is a bad plot device. A goal with a reason gives the audience a desire to care about your main character.

What makes them Dynamic?: What makes this character unique? A dynamic character is one that has something different about them, often in opposition of something about them. If they want to be a good guy, then growing up with thieves will help make them much more interesting. Juxtaposition, hypocrisy, and/or dilemma are great tools in creating a dynamic character.

Significance?: What makes this character important to the story? Every character in the story needs a purpose. They need to serve the plot or the character arcs of the protagonist in a way that is vital.

Similarity?: What makes this character similar to the protagonist? Secondary, tertiary and antagonist characters must have something in common with the protagonist, It can be a character trait, goal, inner conflict, etc. Having a similarity adds depth and potential drama to the story.

Character Arcs

I See Great Conflict In You

A Character Arc is a personal journey that the character takes within a story. The protagonists character arc is intrinsically tied to the main story arc, one influencing the other. Character arcs are internal stories that are affected by the external world. There are four types of character arcs that can express themselves in different ways, and they each follow the structure of Beginning, Middle, and End.

1. Growth Arc
2. The Change Arc
3. The Fall Arc
4. The Flat Arc

The Growth Arc

The Growth Arc is a character arc in which the character begins their journey as a dark person, is challenged, and becomes a better person.

You see this arc when a character believes in doing something to the detriment of themselves and/or others. That path ultimately fails and they are forced to do something to the betterment of themselves and/or others in order to succeed.

Example:

A character who believes that hate is the only way to live is challenged with hate and the only way the character can defeat hate is with love.

The Change Arc

The Change Arc is a character arc in which the character begins their journey as one type of person, is challenged, and becomes a different type of person. You see this arc with characters who have a perceived strength and when they apply that perceived strength they fail. Their only option is to discover their actual strength and to apply that to the situation.

Example:

A character who believes that fighting is the only way to live is challenged with hate and the only way the character can defeat hate is finding the love.

The Fall Arc

The Fall Arc is a character arc in which the character begins their journey as one type of person, is challenged, and becomes a darker person. You see this arc with characters who have a perceived strength or an actual strength and when they apply either, they fail. Their only option is to become the worse version of themselves and apply their strength and or perceived strength to that situation.

Example:

A character who believes that love is the only way to live is challenged with hate and the only way the character can defeat hate is to join it.

The Flat Arc

The Flat Arc is a character arc in which the character begins their journey as one type of person, is challenged, and stays as themselves. You see this arc with characters who have a perceived strength or an actual strength and regardless of what happens they never stray from either strength. A protagonist with a flat arc is usually surrounded by characters with either change, fall, or flat arcs. A Protagonist with a flat arc is also typically the catalyst for change in others.

Example:

A character who believes that love is the only way to live is challenged by hate and the only way the character can defeat hate is with the same love.

Characters are challenged throughout a story either physically, mentally, spiritually, or emotionally. The more complex a character, the more of those 4 human elements are affected. How they respond to those challenges define what type of Arc they have. With the Flat arc it is important that the character is extremely interesting from the set up since they will not change throughout the story. With the other arcs, their change on their journey will make them interesting.

Plot

What Had Happened Was...

The plot is the sequence of major events that create a story. A plot can be broken down into three parts: Beginning, Middle, and End. Along with this *main* plot you can have supporting plots or Subplots. The more complex the story the more subplots you will have. The major story elements for plot are Intention, Obstacle, and the Stakes. Without knowing the Intention, Obstacle, and Stakes in that order, it becomes difficult for the story to have cohesive meaning and thus capture your audience.

Intention:

Also known as the super objective, the Intention is the motivating factor for the plot.

This will be the main focus of your protagonist's story and therefore should be life and death either internally or externally. In each scene the protagonist's actions should aid them in getting closer to achieving that intention. The intention is the driving force of the story and can change midway through. Without the intention, there is no movement to the story.

The Intention supersedes all character goals in level of importance. This doesn't mean that they still don't pursue their goals, only that they don't take priority unless it directly affects the plot. This dichotomy pulls the focus of the characters, creating more conflict both internally and externally for them. The intention does not need to be the same as the goal in the established norm.

Obstacle:

The obstacle serves as the major source of conflict for the plot. The obstacle brings internal and external conflict to the story which forces the characters to grow. This is what is standing in the protagonist's way. It can be either internal or external, but regardless it must be deeply personal to the protagonist. In order for the obstacle to be an obstacle there must be an UNAVOIDABLE reason why.

Stakes:

The stakes are what give the story tension. Stakes give the story importance. The stakes bring a sense of danger or urgency by giving the character a time frame and repercussions for their actions. Stakes are the major consequences that befall the protagonist if the journey

to achieve their intention is a success or a failure. Without stakes there is no sense of urgency and the story feels inconsequential.

Subplots

Subplots are secondary plots that run parallel to, and supports the main plot. Subplots are used to add complexity to the main plot. They can also change the pacing of a story to feel faster or slower.

A Plot: The A plot is the sequence of major events that takes precedence over all other plots and mainly concerns the actions of the protagonist and the Antagonist.

B Plot: The B plot is the sequence of events that directly effect and inform the A plot and mainly concerns the actions of the deuteragonist and/or the protagonist.

C Plot: The C plot is the sequence of events that indirectly effect and inform the A plot and mainly concerns the tertiary characters and/or the protagonist.

Stories are not limited to just the A, B, and C plot, but often are. With larger stories following multiple groups of people that don't always interact with each other you may have many more subplots. You may also have multiple A plots if you have multiple Protagonists that share equal story time or importance. The same is true for B and C plots if you have multiple characters who are equal in importance. Each plot is a story in its own right and have beginnings, middles, and ends as well and should be treated as such.

Story

Once Upon A Time

Story is a combination of an idea, setting, characters, and plot. The three parts to a story are Beginning, Middle, and End.

Building your story is connecting the major story elements to each other using scenes. Each scene contains characters navigating their own arcs within the setting. Those characters advance the audience from plot point to plot point by hooking us with intrigue and personal journeys, all to serve a grander vision. After collecting all the story elements, you are ready to begin laying the foundation of your story.

How To Begin

How does it end?: When beginning to write a story, start with an idea of how the story ends. Once the ending is known it's easy enough to start the story on the other end of the spectrum. The ending is often the make it or break it portion of a story. Good set up followed by a mediocre ending can make the whole story fall into obscurity. A story is a race, and races always know where the finish line is. Know your ending, then you know where to begin.

The Beginning: Exposition

The beginning of a story is the Exposition phase, where the most critical information is given to the audience. The beginning of a story has certain story elements that must be introduced. Without these elements the story can feel lost, confused, or unimportant. The beginning is where we find out who the Characters are, where they are, what they are doing, what starts them on their journey, what they are trying to do, what's blocking them and what happens if they succeed or fail. The majority of the exposition is going to be here, as the audience needs to understand what is going on and why they should care.

The required story elements for the BEGINNING are:

1. **Setting**
 2. **Protagonist**
 3. **Deuteragonist**
 4. **Antagonist**
 5. **Established Norm**
 6. **Goals** of the protagonist, deuteragonist and Antagonist.
 7. **Inciting Incident**
 8. **Obstacle**
 9. **Intention**
 10. **Stakes**
-

The Middle: Conflict

This is the bulk of the film in which the conflict rises both internally and externally for the characters. This is where the situations take a dive for the “worse” and when the main characters are challenged the most. During the conflict the audience needs to understand what steps are being taken for the characters to achieve their goals and intentions, what the consequences of those actions are, and what major event changes everything. This is also the section where the characters move closer or further away from their original goals.

The required story elements for the MIDDLE are:

- 1. Rising Action**
 - 2. Rising Reaction**
 - 3. Climax**
-

The End: CONCLUSION

This is the finale of the film. The final action happens and the side effects are established. This is where the protagonist succeeds or fails and their character arc concludes. During the falling action is where a plot twist, or a change in the expected outcome, usually occurs. The resolution establishes the new established norm that is a direct result of the falling action. This is also the conclusion or fulfillment of the characters original goals. The theme of the movie is either revealed or reinforced within the last few scenes to give a sense of purposeful completion to the story.

The required story elements for the END are:

- 1. Falling action**
 - 2. Resolution**
-

Reference Tools

That's What It's All About

By the time you have finished constructing your story its time to see if it works. Using the LINEAR STORY ARC you have the ability to see if your story 'holds up' to your original idea. Often writers will finish a story and not recognize it as the concept that they started with. At the end of the Story Creator phase you will be able to see if you stayed on track, veered off course, and if you like what you created. If you don't like what you have done, then you can easily see what needs work. If you do like what you have done, then you are ready to create literature that will help you explain your story to others.

Baby Arc

The baby arc is a tool to quickly establish the beginning, middle and end of your story.

It helps you to understand your story in it's most basic format.

Linear Story Arc

The linear story arc is a tool to quickly establish all the major elements of a story. It can be used as a quick reference guide, a check list, and even a miniature outline of the story.

Synopsis

The synopsis is your story in a condensed format. It covers the 11 story elements in basic detail using concise sentences that explain the story and engage the reader.

Log Line

A log line is a brief (usually one-sentence) summary of a story that states the central conflict of the story with an emotional "hook" to stimulate interest. It gives an audience the feeling of the piece.

Tag Line

A tag line is a hook, phrase, or saying that encapsulates the tone and or feel of a story. It is more commonly used in long for narratives like novels and screenplays.

Theme

The central or unifying idea/s of the story. Themes are the topics that are constantly discussed and explored that deal with abstract nouns (love, fear, beauty, etc.) The theme is a writers chance to include what they feel, or think, about a subject. The theme serves the plot by giving it a common through line and adding more substance to the plot, giving the story as a whole a deeper purpose. Theme guides your story from beginning to end. Every story has a theme, regardless of whether it's intended or not, but not knowing your theme can leave people not knowing what the story is 'about'.

Storytelling

So what had happened was...

Storytelling is the way in which a story is conveyed. There are two overall types of storytelling: Linear and Non-Linear. To effectively and efficiently tell your story you must know how the story plays out in a linear structure. Knowing the beginning, middle, and end beforehand can make the rearranging of the structure easier for non-linear stories. Commonly, writers use the ACT STRUCTURE to organize their stories.

Genre and Medium

After you have your story it's time to decide what genre and medium it belongs in. Depending on the size of your story, the complexity, and your own preferences, the genre and medium can be anything, although some genre and mediums may fit better than others.

Genre

Genre is a particular category within art. Any story can be any genre. That being said once you have your story you can choose how you want it to feel. Looking at your story it's fairly easy to see what genre it belongs to. Sometimes the story is dark, but during the drafting phase the writing might be funny, which creates a dark comedy. A 'ridiculous plot' with dramatic dialogue can be drama. The dialogue, scenarios, and style of writing dictates what genre the story will fall into and the genre can change from one to another if you so choose. But the point is, you must choose.

Medium

Medium is a particular form of artistic expression. Choosing how to tell your story is your preference. If a story is vast and complex, then a longer form of narrative might be ideal (TV Novel). If the story is a good length, not too long or short, then you have other options like movies, plays or blogs. If the story is shorter, then you have options like poems, songs, short films and novellas. What is most important is that you write your story in the medium that you are most comfortable with and that fits the story.

Linear Storytelling

Linear storytelling watches the protagonists journey in the order in which it happens. It is the most common form of storytelling as it is easy for the audience to understand and progresses in a logical fashion. You start from the beginning, progress through the middle, and finish with the end, just like in your outline. The audience is curious as to HOW the story ends and is learning things at the same pace as the protagonist.

- The story follows the structure of:
 1. EXPOSITION
 2. INCITING INCIDENT
 3. RISING ACTION
 4. RISING REACTION
 5. CLIMAX
 6. FALLING ACTION
 7. RESOLUTION

The advantage it has over Non-Linear storytelling is the ease in which it is to read, witness, and write. Everything falls like dominoes and is presented in the same manner we experience life.

Non-Linear Storytelling

Non-Linear storytelling presents the protagonists journey out of linear order. It doesn't conform to any particular standard and is much more difficult to write or comprehend. The rules of linear storytelling are abandoned in favor of freely expressing the story elements as the storyteller sees fit. The audience is curious as to both HOW and WHY the story ends that way.

The benefits of Non-Linear storytelling is that it can make a simple story seem more complex. It can also reveal story elements in unique and unpredictable ways. It is also a great way to hide information from the audience for them to rediscover it later, making the story feel more mysterious.

Acts

To The Theatre, My Boy!

An act is a major section of a story that is used to create a story structure. There are two typical types of story structures: a **3-Act** structure and a **5-Act** structure. There is also a **7 Point Plot Structure** which can be implemented into the 3-Act and 5-Act structures; following the same order of story elements but with more plot points. Typically an act is signified by a major turn in events and direction of the story. Three act stories have two major plot points to mark the changing of the act, whereas a 5-act story has four. Depending on the medium the story is in and how complex the story is, a one or the other structure may be more useful.

Another way of thinking about an act is simply any time a plot point changes the direction of the main characters intention you have entered into a new act.

3-ACT STRUCTURE

A 3-act structure consists of The Exposition act, the Confrontation act and the Conclusion acts.

1. The Exposition act contains all the necessary backstory and set up. It focuses on making the audience understand the world that we are going to be spending time in, who the character's are, and what they want for themselves before everything changes. It also sets up the plot by introducing the intention, obstacle and stakes for the characters.

STORY ELEMENTS: Established Norm, Inciting Incident

2. The Confrontation act contains the actions that the characters choose in order to get closer to achieving their intentions and goals. This is the bulk of the story as it contains the majority of the hardships of the journey, peaking with a moment where everything changes from "bad to worse".

STORY ELEMENTS: Rising Action, Rising Reaction, Climax

3. The Conclusion act contains the final action the characters take and the conclusion of the story. It also contains the outcomes of all the actions the characters chose to make in the previous act. It establishes a new norm and resolves any plot points that directly involve the main plot.

STORY ELEMENTS: Falling Action, Resolution

5-ACT STRUCTURE

A 5-act structure consists of The Exposition act, The Motivation Act, the Confrontation Act, the Falling Action Act and the Conclusion acts.

The reason for the multiple acts is to give more time in each of the story elements and to spread the pacing of the story. Each act ends in a dramatic shift in one form or another.

1. The Exposition act contains all the necessary backstory and set up. It focuses on making the audience understand the world that we are going to be spending time in, who the character's are, and what they want for themselves before everything changes. It also sets up the plot by introducing the intention, obstacle and stakes for the characters.

STORY ELEMENTS: Established Norm

2. The Motivation Act contains the first rise in conflict and the inciting incident where the characters intentions, obstacles, and stakes are introduced. This act focuses on the moment of dramatic change that shift the story away from the characters long term goal towards the characters immediate intention.

STORY ELEMENT: Inciting Incident

3. The Confrontation act contains the actions that the characters choose in order to get closer to achieving their intentions and goals. This is the bulk of the story as it contains the majority of the hardships of the journey, peaking with a moment where everything changes from "bad to worse".

STORY ELEMENT: Rising Action, Rising Reaction, Climax

4. The Falling Action Act contains the final action the characters must take. This is the make-it-or-brake-it section where the characters will either fail or succeed based on the decisions they made.

STORY ELEMENT: Falling Action

5. The Conclusion act contains the final action the characters take in order to achieve their intentions and goals. It also contains the outcomes of all the actions the characters chose to make in the previous act. It establishes a new norm and resolves any plot points that directly involve the main plot.

STORY ELEMENT: Resolution

3 Act Structure					
ACT	ACT ONE		ACT TWO		ACT THREE
Name of Act	Exposition		Confrontation		Conclusion
Story Elements	Established Norm		Rising Action		Falling Action
	Inciting Incident		Rising Reaction		Resolution
			Climax		

5 Act Structure					
ACT	ACT ONE	ACT TWO	ACT THREE	ACT FOUR	ACT FIVE
Name of Act	Exposition	Motivation	Confrontation	Falling Action	Conclusion
Story Elements	Established Norm	Inciting Incident	Rising Action	Falling Action	Resolution
			Rising Reaction		
			Climax		

7 Point plot Structure

The 7-point plot structure is a method of creating minor plot points called PINCH POINTS in order to help motivate the main characters journey. A pinch point is a minor plot point where something significant happens, but not so much that it severely alters the outcome of a story. The pinch points happen during the second act in a 3-Act story and in act three and four in a 5-Act story. The midpoint of the story also becomes a minor plot point and separates the other two pinch points. The addition of the three minor plot points bring the total of plot points to seven.

Established norm > Inciting Incident > Pinch Point 1 > Midpoint > Pinch Point 2 > Climax > Resolution

How to tell a story

And Here...We...Go!

There is no solid formula for how to tell a story. There is only advice. Telling a story is a personal endeavor and isn't limited to anything. The only requirements are that all the story elements are there, there is a clear beginning, middle, and end, the characters each have character arcs, and you know the genre and medium. Aside from those criteria the way to convey the story is entirely up to the individual.

Perspective

A perspective is the lens through which an audience observes characters, events, and happenings. There are 3 Basic Perspectives, each able to convey different feelings when storytelling.

1. First Person
2. Second Person
3. Third Person
 - A. Objective
 - B. Omniscient
 - C. Limited

First Person Perspective

First person perspective is writing from the point-of-view of the author or main characters. The main character narrates their story, and uses first person pronouns, such as "I" and "we." This perspective shows the inner feelings and thinking of the individuals.

Second Person Perspective

Second person perspective is writing from one person to another. Second person perspective uses "you" perspective or a writer tells the story by using second person personal pronouns, like "you" and "your."

Third Person Perspective

The third person perspective uses "he," "she," "it" and "they" personal pronouns. There are three types of third person perspective.

Third Person Objective – An impersonal narrator or neutral observer expresses the facts or details to the audience.

Third Person Omniscient – A narrator reports the facts, events, and thoughts of the characters.

Third Person Limited – A narrator reports the facts, events and thoughts from a single character's perspective.

When writing your story, the perspective can change, but it must do so deliberately. If the perspective changes erratically, the audience may become confused. That being said, changing the perspective often is a great way to confuse your audience.

Writing Advice

Writing is always evolving and changing, so there are few hard and fast rules. Ask around for advice from other writers and storytellers. Read older texts, watch older plays and movies, listen to older poems and songs. Then do the same for each medium in its current form. Blend ideas, break rules, invent new ones. What fails today may not fail tomorrow and what works today may not have worked before. The single most important piece of advice is to enjoy the process and love the outcome. If by the end of your story you are happy despite the critics, then you have written something worth writing.

Plot

- Starting your story in the middle of something important is always a good idea.
- Make sure all the elements of story are clear.
- Coincidence is strongest when it's putting characters in danger and weakest when getting them out of it.
- Higher personal stakes are more thrilling than non-personal stakes.

Actions:

- Show, don't tell.
- All actions need a consequence and a reason.
- Follow the consequences of each action to find logical outcomes in your story.
- Probable possibilities are preferable to improbable possibilities.
- Actions that contradict your characters beliefs help grow them.

Character:

- Higher personal stakes make characters journey's more important.
- Introducing your characters is important, so take your time.
- How a character deals with mounting adversity shows us who your character is.
- Have a voice in mind when you write a character. Any voice. Friends, family, anyone's.
- Write what you know, but now in the context of your story.
- Never let your character off the hook, keep them squirming.
- Interactions are strong ways to develop character.
- A character's strength is often best employed in their rise and downfall.
- The inner conflict should be present in every scene. Let the demons haunt them.

Writing:

- Write what you know, now in the context of your story.
- If you can't think of something good, then write something bad and fix it later.
- Write as if your story needs to be written.
- Your first draft is a pretty decent representation of what your story is. Now fix it.
- A writer at rest tends to stay at rest, a writer in motion...
- Take time in exploring the death of a character's body, mind, and soul.

Literary Definitions

1. **Story:** A sequence of intriguing events that uses Characters and Plot to recount a narratives beginning, middle, and end.

2. **Plot:** The cause-and-effect sequences of events in a story that concern the Intention and Obstacle_and_Stakes.

3. **Sub Plots:** Subplots are secondary plots that run parallel to, and supports the main plot.

4. **Intention:** The super objective that the Protagonist will either accomplish or fail at by the end of the story.

5. **Obstacle:** The person place or thing that hinders the protagonists quest to fulfill their intention.

6. **Plot Point:** A significant event within a Plot that alters the direction of the Story.

7. **Pinch Point:** A minor plot point that increases the conflict significantly within the plot.

8. **Event:** A moment of importance.

9. **Acts:** A major section of a story that contains scenes or chapters that are used in creating a story's structure.

10. **Exposition:** The introduction of the necessary backstory of characters and events.

11. **Conflict:** The main struggle of the characters.

12. **Conclusion:** The end of the story.

13. **Goal:** The character's original ambition inside the story before the inciting incident.

14. **Reason:** A cause or an explanation for an element inside a story.

15. **Story Elements:** One of the seven essential plot points of a story.

16. **Setting:** The locations where the story takes place.

17. **Character:** The people, places, or things that live in your story and advance a narrative.

18. **Protagonist:** The leading character of a story that the audience follows.

19. **Deuteragonist:** The most influential character to a protagonist who accompanies them on their journey.

20. **Tertiary Character:** A character who is less important than the Deuteragonist but still has an important significance to the story.

21. **Antagonist:** The person place or thing that is directly in opposition to the Protagonist.

22. **Character Arcs:** A personal journey that a character takes within a story.

23. **Established Norm:** The lifestyle of characters before the inciting incident of a story.

24. **Inciting Incident:** The first major plot point that breaks the protagonist away from the Established Norm and introduces the Obstacle, Intention, and Stakes of a story.

25. **Rising Action:** The series of events and/or plot points after the inciting incident that directly affect the characters and advance a plot.

26. **Rising Reaction:** The consequences following the rising action that directly affect the characters and heighten the conflict of a story.

27. **Climax:** The turning point in a story which changes the protagonists fate and/or Intention.

28. **Falling Action:** The conclusion of the conflict with the success or failure of the Protagonist's intention.

29. **Consequence:** The result of the falling action.

30. **Resolution:** The establishment of the new norm.

31. **Theme:** The central idea of a story.

32. **Stakes:** The major consequences of the protagonists successes and failures.

33. **Genre:** A particular category within art.

34. **Medium:** A particular form of artistic expression.

35. **Perspective:** The Point-Of-View through which an audience observes characters, events, and happenings.

36. **Storytelling:** The way in which a story is conveyed.
