Anatomy of Story

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Contents

Story Space, Story Time

Premise

    The story idea stated in a single sentence. Suggests
    the essence of the story.

Seven Key Structure Steps

    The seven key story structure steps are the major
    stages of the story's development and of the dramatic
    code hidden under its surface. They are:

1. Weakness and need
2. Desire
3. Opponent
4. Plan
5. Battle
6. Self-Revelation
7. New Equilibrium

Character

    Create characters by drawing from the original idea
    and connecting and comparing them in a character web.
    Then, decide the function each is to perform in
    helping the hero develop.

Theme (Moral Argument)

    The author's moral vision or how people should act in
    the world. Instead of making the characters a
    mouthpiece for a message, express the theme inherent
    in the story idea through story structure that
    surprises and moves the audience.

Setting (Story World)

Create the world of the story as an outgrowth of the hero. It will help define the hero and show the audience a physical expression of his growth.

Symbol Web

Symbols are packets of highly compressed meaning. Determine a web of symbols that highlight and communicate different aspects of the characters, the story world and the plot.

Plot

From characters, the right story form is discovered. The plot grows from the unique characters. Use of 22-step structure (the 7 steps plus 15 more) a plot is designed in which all the events are connected under the surface and build to a surprising but logically necessary ending.

1. Self-Revelation, Need, Desire
2. Ghost & Story world
3. Weakness & Need
4. Inciting Event
5. Desire
6. Ally or Allies
7. Opponent and/or Mystery
8. Fake-ally Opponent
9. First Revelation & Decision: Changed Desire & Motive
10. Plan
11. Opponent's Plan and Main Counterattack
12. Drive
13. Attack by Ally
14. Apparent Defeat
15. Second Revelation & Decision: Obsessive Drive, Changed Desire & Motive
16. Audience Revelation
17. Third Revelation & Decision
18. Gate, Gauntlet, Visit to Death
19. Battle
20. Self-Revelation
21. Moral Decision
22. New Equilibrium

Scene Sequence (Scene Weave)

   Before writing scenes, develop a list of every scene
   in the story with all the plotlines and themes woven
   into the tapestry. Place in a sequence.

Scene Construction & Dialogue

   Write the story, constructing each scene so that it
   furthers the development of the hero. Write dialogue
   that doesn't just push the plot but has a symphonic
   quality to it, blending many "instruments" and levels
   at one time.

Premise

Premise

Premise is your story stated in one line. It is the simplest combination of character and plot and typically consists of some event that starts the action, some sense of the main character, and some sense of the outcome of the story. What one chooses to write about is far more important than how to write it.

Examples.

The Godfather: The youngest son of a Mafia family takes revenge on the men who shot his father and becomes the new Godfather.

Casablanca: A tough American expatriate rediscovers an old flame only to give her up so that he can fight the Nazis.

Star Wars: When a princess falls into mortal danger, a young man uses his skills as a fighter to save her and defeat the evil forces of a galactic empire.

Create a story that may change your life by creating:

- Wish list. Of everything you would like to see in a story.

- Premise List. Of everything you have ever thought of.

- Core elements in both of the above

Look for possibilities.

Where might the idea go? Explore your options. Brainstorm the many different paths the idea can take and then choose the best one.

Ask "What if?" Let your mind go free. Don't censor or judge.

Example.

> *Witness*. A boy who witnesses a crime is a classic setup for a thriller. But what if you push the story much further to explore violence in America? What if you show two extremes of the use of force — violence and pacifism - by having the boy travel from the peaceful Amish world to the violent world of the city?

Identify Story Challenges and Problems

Trick is to spot these at the premise line and not after the story has been written.

Example.

> Huckleberry Finn. How do you show the moral, or immoral, fabric of an entire nation in fictional terms?

Find The Designing Principle

The seed of the story. An overall strategy for how you will tell your story. This overall strategy, stated in one line, is the designing principle of the story. This helps you extend the premise into deep structure.

The designing principle is what organizes the story as a whole. It is the internal logic of the story, what makes the parts hang together organically so that the story becomes greater than the sum of its parts. It is what makes the story original.

Premise is concrete and is what actually happens. The designing principle is abstract, the deeper process going on in the story.

Designing Principle = Story Process + Original Execution

Find the designing principle and stick to it. Be diligent in discovering this principle and never take your eye off of it during the long writing process.

Example.

> *Tootsie.*
>
>> Premise. When an actor can't get work, he disguises himself as a woman and gets a role in a TV series only to fall in love with one of the female members of the cast.
>>
>> Designing principle. Force a male chauvinist to live as a woman.
>
> *Moses* (Book of Exodus)
>
>> Premise. When an Egyptian prince discovers that he is a Hebrew, he leads his people out of slavery.
>>
>> Designing principle. A man who does not know who he is struggles to lead his people to freedom and receives the new moral laws that will define him and his people.
>
> *Harry Potter Books*
>
>> Premise. A boy discovers he has magical powers and attends a school for magicians.
>>
>> Designing principle. A magician leans to be a man and a king by attending a boarding school for sorcerers over the course of seven school years.

Determine Your Best Character in the Idea

Always tell a story about your best character. This doesn't mean nicest. It means the most fascinating, challenging and complex, even if the character is not

very likeable. This character should always be driving the action. Determined by asking:

- Who do I love?
- Do I want to see him act?
- Do I love the way he thinks?
- Do I care about eh challenge he has to overcome?

Get a Sense of the Central Conflict

Ask who fights whom over what?

Basic Action/Single Cause-and-Effect Pathway

Find the single cause-and-effect pathway by identifying a basic action that the hero takes in the story.

The basic action should be one action best able to force the character to deal with his weaknesses and change.

Example.

Premise. A man falls in love and fights his brother for control of a winery. (A split premise with two cause and effect trajectories)

Premise. Through the love of a good woman, a man defeats his brother for control of a winery. (Much better because not a split premise).

Determine Hero's Possible Character Change

Character change is what the hero experiences by going through his struggle.

W (weakness) x A (action) = C (changed person)

Start with basic action and then go to the opposites of that action. This will let you know what your hero is at the beginning of the story (his weaknesses) and who he is at the end (how he has changed).

- Write the premise line

- Determine basic action of hero

- Come up with the opposites of basic action for both hero's weakness and the hero's changed person.

Examples.

    Star Wars.

        Premise. When a princess falls into mortal danger, a young man uses his skills as a fighter to save her and defeat the evil forces of a galactic empire.

        Weakness. Naïve, impetuous, paralyzed, unfocused. Lacking confidence.

        Action. Uses skills as a fighter.

        Changed Person. Self-esteem, a place among the chosen few, a fighter for good.

    The Godfather.

        Premise. The youngest son of a Mafia family takes revenge on the men who shot his father and becomes the new Godfather.

        Weakness. Unconcerned, afraid, mainstream, legitimate, separated from family.

        Action. Takes revenge.

        Changed Person. Tyrannical, absolute ruler of family.

Moral Choice

The central theme of a story is often crystallized by a moral choice the hero must make, typically near the end of the story. Theme is best expressed through the structure of the story and the moral argument. The author makes a case for how to live via actions of the

character going after a goal. The most important step in this argument is the moral choice of the hero.

Don't make the mistake of giving your hero a fake choice between a positive and a negative. To be a true choice, the hero must select between one of two positive outcomes and, on rare occasions, avoid one of two negative outcomes (*Sophie's Choice*). Make the options as equal as possible with one only slightly better than the other. One example of choice between two positives is between love and honor. In *Farewell to Arms* the hero chooses love. In *The Maltese Falcon* (and most detective stories) the hero chooses honor.

Audience Appeal

Seven Steps

A story has a minimum of seven steps in its growth from beginning to end. The seven steps are not arbitrarily imposed from without, the way a mechanical story structure such as three-act is. They exist in the story and are the nucleus, the DNA, of the story because they are based on human action. They are the steps that any human must work through to solve a life problem.

1. Weakness & Need

> From the beginning of the story, the hero has one or more great weaknesses that are holding him back. Something missing within him that is profound and is ruining his life.
>
> The need is what the hero must fulfill within himself in order to have a better life. Usually involves overcoming his weakness and changing or growing in some way.
>
> The hero should not be aware of his need at the beginning of the story. The hero should become aware of need at the self-revelation near the end of the story.
>
> The hero should have a moral need as well as a psychological need. A character with a moral need is hurting others in some way at the beginning of the story.
>
> Example.
>
> > *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Weaknesses. Clarice is inexperienced, suffering from haunting childhood memories and a woman in a man's world.

Need. To overcome the ghosts of her past and gain respect as a professional in a man's world.

Problem — an aspect of weakness and need. All good stories begin with a problem the hero find himself in.

Sunset Boulevard.

Weakness. Joe Gillis has a fondness for money and the finer things of life. He is willing to sacrifice his artistic and moral integrity for his personal comfort.

Problem. Joe is broke. A couple of guys from the finance company come to his apartment to repossess his car and he makes a run for it.

2. Desire

What the hero wants in the story, his particular goal. A story doesn't become interesting to the audience until the desire comes into play.

One of the biggest mistakes is to confuse need and desire.

Need — overcoming an internal weakness. Lets the audience see how the hero must change to have a better life. Key to the story but remains hidden.

Desire. Gives the audience something to want along with the hero. Something they can all be moving towards at various twists and turns. On the surface and what the audience *thinks* the story is about.

Examples.

Saving Private Ryan.

Need. Hero John Miller must do his duty in spite of his fear.

Desire. He wants to find Private Ryan and bring him back alive.

3. Opponent

Must not be seen as evil but rather structurally and in terms of his function within the story. A true opponent not only wants to prevent the hero from reaching his goal but is also competing with the hero for the same goal.

It is only through competing for the same goal that the hero and the opponent are forced to come into direct conflict again and again throughout the story. If they have two separate goals, each can get what he wants without competing in direct conflict and you have no story.

The trick to finding an opponent who wants the same goal as the hero is to find the deepest level of conflict between them. What is the most important thing they are both fighting for?

To find the right opponent, start with the hero's specific goal. Whoever wants to keep him from getting it is the key opponent.

Examples.

Star Wars.

Luke's opponent is Darth Vader and each is competing over who will control the universe.

4. Plan

Action is not possible without some plan. The plan is the set of guidelines or strategies the hero will use to overcome the opponent and reach his goal. It is organically linked to desire and the opponent. The plan should always be specifically focused toward defeating the opponent and reaching the goal.

Example.

> *The Godfather*.
>
>> Michael's first plan is to kill Sollozzo and his protector, the police captain. His second plan, near the end of the story, is to kill the heads of the other families in a single strike.

5. Battle

   Throughout the middle of the story, the hero and opponent engage in a punch-counterpunch confrontation as each tries to win the goal. The battle is the final conflict between hero and opponent and determines which of the two characters wins the goal.

6. Self-Revelation

   The battle causes the hero to have a major revelation about who he really is. This comes n two forms:

   - Psychological revelation

   - Moral revelation

7. Equilibrium

   Everything returns to normal and all desire is gone. The hero has moved to a higher or lower level as a result of going through the crucible.

Character

Character Web

    The single biggest mistake writers make when creating characters is that they think of them all as separate individuals. The most important step in creating the hero, as well as all other characters, is to connect and compare them to the others. Consider them all as part of an interconnected web.

    The steps to creating character web:

- Connect and define characters in four major ways: by story function, archetype, theme and opposition.

- Then, concentrate on the hero and build him step-by-step to create a multilayered complex person

- Create the opponent in detail (in many ways, the key to defining your hero)

- End by working through the character techniques for building conflict over course of story

Function

    Every character must serve the purpose of the story found in the story's designing principle. Each character has a specially designed role to help the story fulfill that purpose

Hero (H)

    The most important character. Has the central problem and drives the story action in an attempt to solve the problem. The hero decides to go after a goal (desire) but possesses certain

weaknesses and needs that hold him back from
success.

All other characters in a story represent an
opposition, an alliance with hero, or some
combination of the two. The twists and turns of
the story are largely the product of the ebb and
flow of opposition and friendship between various
characters and the hero.

Opponent (O)

The character who most wants to keep the hero
from achieving his goal (desire). Not merely a
block to the hero. Rather, someone who wants the
same thing as the hero. Consider the deepest
conflict the hero and opponent are fighting over.
Hero and opponent is the single most important
relationship in the story.

There can be more than one opponent. However,
there is only one main opponent.

Ally (A)

The hero's helper. Also serves as a sounding
board allowing the audience to hear the values
and feelings of the lead character. Usually, has
the same goal as the hero. Occasionally, has a
goal of his own.

Fake-Ally Opponent (FAO)

Appears to be the hero's friend but is actually
an opponent. One of the main ways to add power to
the opposition and twists to the plot.

One of the most complex and fascinating
characters in the story because torn by a
dilemma. While pretending to be an ally of the
hero, this character comes to feel like an ally.

Fake-Opponent Ally (FOA)

Appears to be fighting the hero but is actually
the hero's friend. Not as common as the Fake-Ally

Opponent because not as useful to the writer.
Cannot give the audience the conflict and
surprises of an opponent.

Subplot Character (SC)

The subplot is used to contrast how the hero and
a second character deal with the same problem in
slightly different ways. Through comparison, the
subplot character highlights the traits and
dilemmas of the main character.

This character is usually not an ally. The ally
helps the hero reach his goal. The subplot
character tracks a line parallel to the hero with
a different result.

Example.

The Silent of the Lambs

Hero - Clarice
Main Opponent — Buffalo Bill
Second Opponent — The warden
Fake-Ally Opponent - None
Ally — Jack, Clarice's boss at FBI
Fake-Opponent Ally — Hannibal Lecter
Subplot Character - None

Archetype

Fundamental psychological patterns within a person, or
roles a person may play in society. Cross cultural
boundaries and have universal appeal. Each expresses a
fundamental pattern that the audience recognizes. But
be careful not to let an archetype become a
stereotype. Always make the archetype specific and
individual to your unique character.

For writers, the key concept of an archetype is the
notion of a shadow, or negative tendency of the
archetype, a psychological trap that a person can fall
into when playing his archetype role.

Therefore, each character possesses the strength of the archetype meaning as well as the weakness of the archetype's shadow quality.

King or Father (KF)

> Strength — Leads family or people with wisdom, foresight and resolve so that they can succeed and grow. Defines what is right.

> Weakness — Can force wife, children or people to act according to a strict and oppressive set of rules and remove himself from the emotional realm of the family or kingdom or insist that others live solely for his pleasure and benefit.

> Examples: Brando in *The Godfather*, Rick in *Casablanca*, Kane in *Citizen Kane*.

Queen or Mother (QM)

> Strength — Provides the care and protective shell within which the child or people can grow.

> Weakness — Can protective or controlling to the point of tyranny or use guilt or shame to hold children too close to guarantee her own comfort.

> Examples: Wife in *American Beauty*, Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Wise Old Man/Woman, Mentor, Teacher (WOM)

> Strength — Passes on knowledge and wisdom so that people can live better lives and society can improve.

> Weakness — Can force the students to think in a certain way or speak for the glory of himself rather than the glory of his ideas.

> Examples: Yoda in *Star Wars*, Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs*, Gandalf and Saruman in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Warrior (W)

   Strength — The practical enforcer of what is
   right.

   Weakness — Can live according to the harsh motto
   of "kill or be killed." May believe that whatever
   is weak must be destroyed and so becomes the
   enforcer of what is wrong.

   Examples: Luke Skywalker and Hans Solo in *Star
   Wars*, Bruce Willis in *Die Hard*, Sundance in *Butch
   Cassidy*.

Magician or Shaman (M)

   Strength — Can make visible the deeper reality
   behind the senses and can balance and control the
   larger or hidden forces of the natural world.

   Weakness — Can manipulate the deepest reality to
   enslave others and destroy the natural order.

   Examples: Harry Potter in *Harry Potter*, Merlin,
   Phantom of the Opera.

Trickster (T)

   Strength — A lower form of the magician
   archeytpe. Uses confidence, trickery and a way
   with words to get what he wants.

   Weakness — May become a complete liar who looks
   out only for himself.

   Examples: *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Home Alone,
   Crocodile Dundee*, Hanibal Lecter in *The Silence
   of the Lambs*.

Artist or Clown (A)

   Strength — Defines excellence for a people
   (artist) or shows them what doesn't work (clown).
   Shows them beauty and a vision of the future or
   what appears to be beautiful but is in fact ugly
   or foolish.

Weakness — Can be the ultimate fascist insisting on perfection, may create a special world where all can be controlled or simply tears everything down so that nothing has value.

Examples: Stephen in *Ulysses and Portrait of the Artist*, *Frankenstein,* Holden Caufield in *Catcher in the Rye.*

Lover (L)

Strength — Provides the care, understanding and sensuality that can make someone a complete and happy person.

Weakness — Can lose himself in the other or force the other to stand in his shadow.

Examples: Etta in *Butch Cassidy*, *Frankenstein,* Kay in *The Godfather,* Rick and Ilsa in *Casablanca.*

Rebel (R)

Strength — Has the courage to stand out from the crowd and act against a system that is enslaving people.

Weakness — Often cannot or does not provide a better alternative, so ends up only destroying the system or the society.

Examples: Holden Caufield in *Catcher in the Rye*, Rick in *Casablanca.*

Examples.

    Star Wars.

        Luke — Prince, warrior, magician.
        Hans Solo — Rebel, warrior
        Darth Vader — King, warrior, magician
        Princess Leia - Princess

Individuate The Characters

You begin individuating characters by finding the moral problem at the heart of the premise. You then play out the various possibilities of the moral problem in the body of your story.

Central Moral Problem

Compare Characters

>   (Hero and opponent first and then all other opponents and then to allies and all other characters on the following parameters)

*   Weaknesses
*   Needs
    o   Psychological
    o   Moral
*   Desires
*   Values
*   Power, status and ability
*   How each faces the central moral problem

Variation on Moral Problem

>   Make sure each character takes a different approach to the hero's central moral problem

Focus on Hero

*   Make constantly fascinating
*   Audience identify with the character but not too much
*   Audience empathize with hero but not sympathize with him
*   Hero a moral as well as psychological need

Determine Hero's Character Change

*   Self-revelation (first)
*   Need

>   Some types of character change more common than others:

- Child to adult
- Adult to leader
- Cynic to participant
- Leader to tyrant
- Leader to visionary
- Metamorphosis

Changed Beliefs

> The beliefs the hero challenges and changes over the course of the story.

Hero's Desire (goal)

> Clarify the hero's desire line.

- Single, specific goal extending throughout the story?
- When does audience know whether the hero has accomplished the goal or not?

Opponents

> Detail opponents. First describe how the main opponent and then each of the lesser opponents attack the great weakness of the hero in a different way.

Opponent's Values

> List a few values for each opponent

- How is each opponent a kind of double for the hero?
- Give each one some level of power, status and ability
- Describe which similarities each shares with the hero
- State moral problem of each character and how each character justifies the actions he takes to reach his goal.

Minor Character Variation on the Hero's Weakness and Moral Problem

In what ways are any of the minor characters
variations on the hero's unique weakness and
moral problem?

Four Corner Opposition

Map the four-corner opposition for the story.

Put hero and main opponent on the top line with
at least two secondary opponents underneath.

Label each character with his or her archetype,
but only if appropriate. Many characters are not
archetypes and don't force it.

Push the four major characters to the corners.
Make sure each is as different from the other
three as possible.

CHAPTER NOTES

Character Techniques

Two Main Characters

Multiple Heroes

Cutting Extraneous Characters

Double Reversal

Theme
(Moral Argument)

Theme

Author's view of how to act in the world. The moral vision of the author.

Body metaphor of story:

Characters — The heart and circulatory system

Structure — The skeleton

Theme — The brain

Dialogue is not a way to express the author's moral vision. This way, the morals often overwhelm the story.

Good writers express their moral vision slowly and subtly primarily through story structure and the way a hero deals with a particular situation.

Moral vision is communicated by how the hero pursues his goal while competing with one or more opponents and by what the hero learns (or fails to learn) over the course of his struggle.

The single biggest reason a story comes across as preachy is because there is an imbalance between moral argument and plot. Need to have enough plot to support moral argument. Plot is an intricate choreography of actions by the hero and opponents designed to surprise the audience. It is this element of surprise, of magic, that floats the moral sequence and gives it punch.

The moral argument is most powerful when it is most dramatic. That means, among other things, holding off

the hero's moral self-revelation and decision until as close to the end of the story as possible. Keep the question 'Will the hero do the right thing, and will he do it in time?' in the back of the audience's mind for as much of the story as possible.

Create Theme Line

Use Designing Principle to Create One Line Theme Line

Theme Line Techniques:

Traveling Metaphor — perfect foundation for a moral line because entire moral sequence can be embedded into the line.

Examples: Huck's trip down the river; Marlow's trip up the river; journey from Manhattan Island to Skull Island in *King Kong*

Single Grand Symbol — Using a single symbol can also stand for the theme line.

Examples: *The Scarlet Letter*; *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

Connecting Two Grand Symbols — Same benefit as the journey as the symbols represent two poles in a moral sequence. Usually signals a declining morality but can be rising.

General Examples:

Ulysses
Designing Principle: In a modern odyssey through the city over a single day, one man finds a father and another man finds a son

Theme Line: The true hero is the man who endures the slings and arrows of everyday life and shows compassion to another person in need

Harry Potter Books

Designing Principle: A magician prince learns to be a man and a king by attending a boarding school for sorcerers over the course of seven school years

Theme Line: When you are blessed with great talent and power, you must become a leader and sacrifice for the good of others

A Christmas Carol
Designing Principle: Trace the rebirth of a man forcing him to view his past, present and future over the course of Christmas Eve

Theme Line: A person lives a much happier life when he gives to others

Citizen Kane
Designing Principle: Use a number of storytellers to show that a man's life can never be known

Theme Line: A man who tries to force everyone to love him ends up alone

Oppositions: Express Theme Line Dramatically Through Oppositions

Split theme line into oppositions

Attach these oppositions to Hero vs. Opponents

Key Point: The moral argument will always be simplistic if a two-part opposition, like good versus evil, is used. Only a web of moral oppositions can give the audience a sense of the moral complexity of life.

Three main techniques:

Hero given moral decision

Hero's moral need at beginning
Some moral flaw at beginning and hero's desperation to beat the opponent which

brings out the worst in him. He must
get worse before better.

Hero's moral self-revelation
Realizes problem comes down to a choice
between two ways of acting

Hero's moral decision
Usually comes just after the revelation

Each character made a variation on theme

Determine central moral problem and decision
the hero must deal with in the story

Make sure each of the major characters deals
with the same moral problem in a different
way

Start by comparing the hero and the main
opponent. Then, the hero to the other
opponents.

Over the course of the story, each of the
major characters should make a moral
argument in dialogue, justifying what they
do to reach the goal

Character's values put into conflict

Using character web, values of each major
character put into conflict as they all
compete for the same goal.

Identify a set of values for hero and each
of the other major characters

Give a cluster of values to each character

Make each as different from others as
possible

As hero and opponents fight over the goal,
make sure their values come into direct
conflict

Sequence & Story Structure: Moral Argument Sequence

In a good story, the story structure converges near the end at the same time that the theme expands in the mind of the audience.

Beginning. Hero and opponent in opposition but conflict is not intense and audience doesn't know yet how values of each come into conflict. No sense of the story theme.

Middle. Hero and opponent come into increasing competition and hence the converging structure. Through this conflict, a difference in values begins to emerge. So, theme starts to expand. Yet, in a good story, it's still largely hidden but quietly growing in the minds of the audience.

Battle is the convergent point and right after this the self-revelation and more decision. Theme expands at self-revelation and again at decision.

The Sequence

Hero's Beliefs and Values

Moral Weakness — Hurting others in some way. Not evil but acting from weakness or is unaware of the proper way to act towards others.

Moral Need — Based on his moral weakness, hero must learn how to act properly towards others in order to grow and live a better life.

First Immoral Action — Hero acts in some way that hurts others. Evidence to the audience of the hero's basic moral flaw.

Desire — Hero comes up with a goal toward which all else is sacrificed. Leads him into direct conflict with an opponent who has a differing set of values but the same goal

Drive — Hero and the opponent take a series of actions to reach the goal

Immoral Actions — During the early and middle parts of the story, the hero is usually losing to the opponent. He becomes desperate and as a result he starts taking immoral actions to win

> Criticism of Hero by other characters
> Justification of actions by Hero

Attack by Ally — The hero's closest friend makes a strong case that the hero's methods are wrong

Obsessive Drive — Galvanized by new revelations about how to win, the hero becomes obsesses with reaching the goal and will do almost anything to succeed

Immoral Actions — The hero's immoral actions intensify

> Criticism of Hero by characters grows
> Justification of actions by Hero grows

Battle — The final conflict that decides the goal. Regardless of who wins, the audience learns which values are superior.

Final Action Against Opponent — The hero may make one last action (moral or immoral) against the opponent just before or during battle.

Moral Self-Revelation — The battle produces a self-revelation in the hero. Realizes he has been wrong about himself and wrong towards others and realizes how to at properly towards others. Because audience identifies with this character, theme driven home with great power.

Moral Decision — Hero chooses between two courses of action thus proving his moral self-revelation

Thematic Revelation — In great storytelling, the theme achieve its greatest audience impact at this stage. This revelation is not limited to the hero. Instead, it is an insight the audience has about how people in general should act and live

in the world. The insight breaks bounds the characters. Audience sees the total design of the story, the full ramifications of what it means on a much greater scale than just a few characters.

Genre Variants of Moral Argument (can be combined)

- Good versus Bad (lowest variation)

- Tragedy

- Pathos

- Satire and Irony

- Black Comedy

Moral argument in dialogue

When you let structure do the heavy lifting to make the moral case, you free up the dialogue to do what it does best, which is provide subtlety and emotional force.

Most commonplace to use dialogue to express oral argument is when an ally criticizes the hero for taking immoral action while trying to win the goal.

A second way moral argument comes out of dialogue is in the conflict between hero and opponent (most likely during a battle scene.)

Third place to use moral dialogue is a scene in which the main opponent gives a moral justification for his actions, even though he is wrong. By giving the opponent a strong (though wrong) justification, the author avoids the simplistic good-hero-versus-evil-opponent pattern and gives depth to the opponent as well as the hero.

Setting
(Story World)

Use designing principle to express setting

    The designing principle involves linear story movement

    The story world is everything surrounding the characters at once

    Take rough sequence found in story line and expand it three-dimensionally

    Examples:

        Ulysses
            Designing Principle: In a modern odyssey through the city over a single day, one man finds a father and another man finds a son

            Theme Line: The true hero is the man who endures the slings and arrows of everyday life and shows compassion to another person in need

            Story World: A city over the course of twenty-four hours with each of its parts being a modern version of a mythical object.

        Harry Potter Books
            Designing Principle: A magician prince learns to be a man and a king by attending a boarding school for sorcerers over the course of seven school years

            Theme Line: When you are blessed with great talent and power, you must become a leader and sacrifice for the good of others

            Story World: A school for wizards in a giant magical castle

A Christmas Carol

Designing Principle: Trace the rebirth of a man forcing him to view his past, present and future over the course of Christmas Eve

Theme Line: A person lives a much happier life when he gives to others

Story World: A nineteenth century London countinghouse and three different homes — rich, middle class and poor in the past, present and future.

Citizen Kane

Designing Principle: Use a number of storytellers to show that a man's life can never be known

Theme Line: A man who tries to force everyone to love him ends up alone

Story World: The mansion and separate "kingdom" of a titan of America

Story Arena

The basic space of the drama that marks the physical boundaries of the world.

Having too many arenas results in a fragmented, inorganic story.

Creating the arena:

- Create a large umbrella and then crosscut and condense. Describe the largest scope of the story near the beginning and then focus on the smaller worlds within it as the story progresses

- Send the hero on a journey through generally the same area, but one that develops along a single line

- Send the hero on a circular journey through generally the same area. Like above but here, hero returns home at the end.

- Make the hero a fish out of water

Value & Visual Oppositions

Dramatize visual oppositions among characters.

Return to the character web and tease out three or four central ones.

Detailing the story world

Done by combining three major elements: natural settings, man-made settings and technology.

Natural settings

Ocean — Divides surface and below the surface. Surface is the ultimate two-dimensional landscape. Below surface is the ultimate three-dimensional landscape where all creatures are weightless. Oceans also divide civilizations and values.

Outer space — The "ocean" of out there, an infinite nothingness that hides an unlimited diversity of other worlds

Forest — A natural cathedral which symbolizes contemplation and wisdom.

Jungle — The state of nature and primary effect on mind is state of suffocation. Gives audiences the strongest sense of power of nature over man.

Desert or Ice — Place of dying and death at all times. When something comes out of these places it is because the strong-willed have gone there to be toughened and grow through isolation.

Island

Mountain

Plain

River

Weather

Man-made Spaces

House

        Safety V. Adventure
        Ground V. Sky
        The Warm House
        The Terrifying House
        Cellar V. Attic

Road

        The opposite of the house

City

        Biggest man-made microcosm is the city.
        To codify the vast scope of the city,
        storytellers shrink it down to a
        smaller microcosm. One of the most
        popular is the institution (often via a
        large building with many levels and
        rooms).

        Combining natural settings with city

                City as mountain
                City as ocean
                City as jungle
                City as forest

Size

        Big to Small
        Small to Big

Passageways Between Worlds

Technology (Tools)

Extensions of humans

Fundamental ways characters connect to the world

Any tool a character uses becomes part of his identity

Hero's Change or World Change

Consider the overall change in hero.

Will the world change along with him or not?

Seasons

Is one or more seasons important in the story?

If so, try to come up with a unique way to connect the seasons to the dramatic line.

Holiday or Ritual

If the philosophy of a holiday or a ritual is central to the story, decide in what way you agree or disagree with that philosophy. Then, connect the holiday or ritual at the appropriate story points.

Visual Seven Steps

Detail the visual subworlds that you will attach to the main structure steps in your story. Look especially at these structure steps:

1. Weakness or need

2. Desire

3. Opponent

4. Apparent defeat or temporary freedom

5. Visit to death

6. Battle

7. Freedom or slavery

Focus on Three Major Subworlds

Figure out how to connect the major natural settings and man-made spaces to the subworlds you use. Concentrate on the following three subworlds:

1. Weakness subworld: If hero starts the story enslaved, explain how the initial subworld is an expression or accentuation of the hero's great weakness.

2. Opponent subworld: Describe how the opponent's world expresses his power and ability to attack the hero's great weakness.

3. Battle subworld: Try to come up with a place of battle that is the most confined space of the entire story.

Symbols

Story Symbol

    Is there a single symbol that expresses the premise, key story twists, central theme, or overall structure of the story?

    Review premise, theme and one-line description of the story world.

Symbolic Characters

    Determine the symbols for your hero and other characters using the following steps:

    Review entire character web before creating a symbol for a single character

    Begin with the opposition between hero and main opponent

    Come up with a single aspect of the character or a single emotion you want the character to evoke in the audience

    Consider applying a symbol opposition within the character

    Repeat the symbol in association with the character many times over the course of the story

    Each time you repeat the symbol, vary the detail in some way

    Character Type

    Consider connecting one or more of your characters to a character type, especially to gods, animals or machines.

Symbolic Character Change of Hero

Is there a symbol you can connect to the character
change of the hero? If so, look at the scenes where
you express the hero's weakness and need at the
beginning of the story and his self-revelation at the
end.

Symbolic Theme

Look for a symbol that can encapsulate the main theme
of the story. For a symbol to express theme, it must
stand for a series of actions and moral effects. A
more advanced thematic symbol is one that stands for
two series of moral actions that are in conflict.

Symbolic World

Determine what symbols you wish to attach to the
various elements of the story world, including the
natural settings, man-made spaces, technology and
time.

Symbolic Actions

Are there one or more specific actions that merit
symbolic treatment?

Figure out a symbol you can attach to each such action
to make it stand out.

Symbolic Objects

Create a web of symbolic objects by first reviewing
the designing principle of your story. Make sure that
each symbolic object you create fits with this
designing principle. Then choose the objects you want
to give extra meaning.

Symbolic Development

       Chart how each symbol you use changes over the course
       of the story.

Plot (22 Steps)

Types

      Journey

      Three Unities

      Reveals

      Antiplot

      Genre

      Multistrand

Story Plot Steps (22 Steps)

      1. Self-Revelation, Need, Desire

            Sets the frame of the story. Overall range of change of hero in story and gives the structural journey the hero will take. This establishes the endpoint of the plot first. Ask the following questions:

                    - What will hero learn at end?
                    - What does he know at the beginning?
                    - What is he wrong about at the beginning?

      2. Ghost & Story World

            Essential things that happened to hero before the story begins. Like backstory but not as broad. Two types.

              1. Most common is an event from the past that still haunts the hero. Often the source of the hero's psychological and moral weakness.

Device to extend the hero's organic development backward. The hero's internal opponent. The fear that is holding him back from action.

2. Uncommon is where a ghost is not possible because hero lives in a paradise world where hero is free, but where an attack will soon change this.

Story world, like the ghost, is present from the very beginning. It is where hero lives and is comprised of the arena, natural settings, weather, man-made spaces, technology, time. An expression of hero and shows his weaknesses, needs, desires and obstacles. If hero is enslaved, the story world should be enslaving.

3. Weakness & Need

Hero has one or more character flaws so serious they are ruining his life. One is weakness. The other is need.

Weakness comes in two forms.

1. Psychological. All weaknesses are internal.

2. Moral. Also this if it causes someone else to get hurt (has a direct negative effect on someone else).

Need is what hero must fulfill in order to have a better life. Almost always requires he overcome his weakness by the end of the story.

Problem is the trouble or crisis hero faces at the beginning of the story. Is aware of it but not aware how to solve it.

Three types of story openings where ghost, story world, weakness, need and problem are established.

1. Community start — Hero lives in a paradise world where everything in perfect harmony but soon to be disrupted.

2. Running start — Hero has a strong ghost and lives in a world of slavery with a number of serious weaknesses, has both types of need, faces one or more problems. Most good stories start this way.

3. Slow start — Involves a purposeless hero and hero's self-revelation is to learn his purpose. Very few stories can overcome this huge structural flaw.

4. Inciting Event

    An event from outside that causes the hero to come up with a goal and take action. Small step but does connect need and desire. It jump starts hero out of his paralysis in the weakness and need stage and forces him to act.

    The best inciting event is one that makes the hero think he has just overcome the crisis he has faced since the beginning of the story. But in fact, has simply gotten into worse trouble. "From the frying pan into the fire." (Joe in *Sunset Boulevard*)

5. Desire

    Hero's particular goal. Provides spine of the entire plot. Start the goal at a low level and increase importance of desire as story progresses. If started too high, then story can't build and plot will feel flat and repetitious. But be sure you don't create an entirely new desire. Rather the intensity and stakes of the original desire.

    Part of story success is based on levels of desire a hero has. A low desire throughout the

story reduces hero and makes complexity of plot impossible.

Levels of classic desire lines from lowest to highest:

- Survive (escape)
- Take revenge
- Win the battle
- Achieve something
- Explore a world
- Catch a criminal
- Find the truth
- Gain love
- Bring justice and freedom
- Save the republic
- Save the world

6. Ally or Allies

Once hero has a desire line, he will usually gain one or more allies to help him overcome the opponent and reach the goal. More than just a sounding board (though valuable). Really a key figure in the character web and one of main ways the hero is defined.

Consider giving the ally a desire of his own. (The scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*).

But never make the ally more interesting than the hero. (The hero is always the most interesting character). If ally is more interesting, then redesign the story.

Note: subplot character is usually not the ally because a separate function. The ally helps the hero. The subplot character compares his method of reaching goal against hero rather than helps hero reach his goal.

7. Opponent and/or Mystery

Character who wants to prevent the hero from reaching his goal. The relationship between hero

and opponent is the most important relationship in the story.

Best opponent is the necessary one: the character best able to attack the great weakness of the hero. Forces hero to overcome the weakness or be destroyed.

A mysterious opponent is more difficult to defeat. In average stories, the hero's only task is to defeat the opponent. In good stories, the hero has a two-part task: 1) to *uncover* the opponent and then 2) defeat him. Hero's job is doubly difficult and success a far greater accomplishment.

In certain kids of stories like detective and thriller, there must be a mystery to compensate for a missing opponent. Detective stories purposefully hide the opponent until the end. Yet the audience needs something to replace the ongoing conflict between hero and opponent. Here, a mystery is introduced about same time as you would introduce the main opponent.

Making opponent mysterious is extremely important. Think of opponent as an iceberg. Some of iceberg is visible above the water but most is hidden below the surface and this is by far the most dangerous part. There are four techniques to make the opposition as dangerous as possible:

1. Create a hierarchy of opponents with a number of alliances. All are related to one another and working together to defeat the hero. The main opponent sits at the top of the pyramid.

2. Hide the hierarchy form the hero and the audience and hide each opponent's true agenda (desire)

3. Reveal all this information in pieces and at an increasing pace over course of story. More reveals near the end of

the story. How information is revealed makes or breaks your plot.

4. Consider bringing hero up against an obvious opponent early in the story. As conflict intensifies, have the hero discover attacks from a stronger, hidden opposition or that part that has been hidden.

Before introducing main opponent, ask these questions:

- Who wants to stop the hero from getting what he wants?

- What does the opponent want? (Should be competing for the same goal as the hero)

- What are the opponent's values and how do they differ from the hero's?

8. Fake-Ally Opponent

The character who appears to be an ally of the hero but is actually revealed to be an opponent or working for the main opponent. Plot is driven by reveals which comes from the steps the hero takes to uncover the true power of the opposition. Every time a hero discovers something new about an opponent, a revelation occurs and the plot turns.

Valuable also because inherently complex. By pretending to be an ally, the character starts to feel like an ally. Becomes torn by a dilemma: works for opponent but wants the hero to win. Usually introduced after the main opponent but not always if opponent has come up with a plan before the story begins.

9. First Revelation & Decision: Changed Desire & Motive

Hero gets a surprising piece of information that forces him to make a decision and move in a new direction. Causes him to adjust his desire and motive also. (All four — revelation, decision, changed desire and motive — should occur at the same time).

Reveal techniques to keep in mind:

- Best reveals are those where hero gets information about an opponent

- The changed desire must be a bend of the original desire and not a break in it. Like a river that changes course. Adjust, intensify and build original desire line.

- Each revelation should be explosive and progressively stronger than the one that preceded it. Should build on the one before it. This is what "plot thickening" means.

The more revelations you have, the richer and more complex the plot. But the revelation should be important enough to cause your hero to make a decision and change his course of action.

Get away from the three-act structure that requires only two or three plot points or reveals. Average hit film has 7 — 10 reveals.

10. Plan

Set of guidelines and strategies the hero will use to overcome his opponent and reach his goal. Be careful of having hero simply play out the plan. Creates a superficial and predictable hero. In good stories, the hero's initial plan almost always fails. Opponent is too strong at this point in the story. Hero must dig deep and come up with a better strategy, one that takes into account the power and weapons at opponent's disposal.

Training important in certain genres like sports, war and caper stories and when it is will come right after plan and before the main action in the story.

11. Opponent's Plan and Main Counterattack

Just as the hero has a plan and takes steps to win, so does the opponent. The opponent comes up with a strategy to get the goal and begins to execute a line of attack against the hero. This step's importance cannot be emphasized enough. Each of these attacks is a reveal. The more intricate the opponents plan and the better you hide it, the better your plot will be.

12. Drive

The drive is a series of actions the hero performs to defeat the opponent and win. Start with hero's plan and continue to his apparent defeat.

During the drive, opponent is usually too strong so the hero is losing. As a result, hero becomes desperate and often starts taking immoral steps to win.

During the drive, plot development needed and not repetition. The hero's actions need to change in a fundamental way rather than continue hitting the same plot beat.

13. Attack by Ally

When hero is losing and starts taking immoral steps to succeed, the ally confronts the hero. At this moment, the ally becomes the conscience of the hero. Typically, the hero tries to defend his actions and does not accept the ally's criticism.

This attack by the ally provides the story with the second level of conflict after the first being the hero versus the opponent. The ally's attack increases pressure on the hero and forces

him to begin questioning his values and ways of acting.

14. Apparent Defeat

About 2/3 or 3/4 way into story, the hero suffers an apparent defeat. Believes he has lost the goal and the opponent has won. The hero's lowest point. Increases drama by forcing him to come back from defeat to win at the end. (As in sporting events when a team comes back, the story audience loves the same thing in a hero).

Apparent defeat should not be small or temporary setback but rather an explosive, devastating moment for the hero. The audience must really feel the hero is finished.

You want only one apparent defeat (although the hero can and should have many setbacks). Otherwise, the story will lack shape and dramatic power.

15. Second Revelation & Decision: Obsessive Drive, Changed Desire & Motive

After the apparent defeat, the hero almost always has another major revelation. If he doesn't, the apparent defeat is real and the story is over.

At this point, the hero gets another piece of information that shows him that victory is still possible. Now, he gets back into the game and resume his quest for the goal.

This major revelation has a galvanizing effect on the hero. Before he simply wanted the goal (desire and drive) but now he is obsessed with it. Hero will virtually do anything to win. The hero becomes tyrannical in his quest to win.

Makes hero change his desire and motive. The story turns in a new direction. Make sure all five elements — revelation, decision, obsessive drive, changed desire and motive — occur or this moment will deflate the plot.

16. Audience Revelation

The moment when the audience (but not the hero) learns an important piece of new information. Often, they learn the true identity of the fake-ally opponent and the fact that the character they thought was the hero's friend is really an enemy.

This moment valuable for a number of reasons:

- Provides an exciting pop in what is often a slow section of the plot
- Shows audience the true power of the opposition
- Allows audience to see certain hidden plot elements played out dramatically and visually.

Marks a major shift in the relationship of her to audience. In most stories up to this time, the audience learns information at the same time as the hero. A one to one connection or identity is created between hero and audience.

But with the audience revelation, the audience, for the first time, learns something before the hero. This creates distance and places audience in a superior position to the hero. Allows the audience to step back and see the hero's overall process of change (culminating at the self-revelation).

17. Third Revelation & Decision

Another step in the hero's learning what he needs to know to beat the opponent. If a fake-ally opponent this is often the moment the hero discovers this character's true identity, or what the audience learned in the audience revelation.

As hero finds out more and more about true power of the opponent, one might think he would want to back out of the conflict. But on the contrary,

this information makes the hero feel stronger and stronger and more determined to win.

18. Gate, Gauntlet, Visit to Death

Near the end of the story, the conflict intensifies to such a degree that the pressure on the hero becomes almost unbearable. Has fewer and fewer options. The space through which he passes often becomes narrower. Must pass through a a narrow gate or travel down a long gauntlet while being assaulted in every direction.

This is the moment when the hero visits death. Myth stories, time when he goes to the underworld and foresees future in the land of the dead. In modern stories, the visit is psychological and hero has a sudden realization of his own morality. Spurs him to fight rather than retreat.

Most moveable of the 22 steps and is often found in other parts of the plot.

19. Battle

The final conflict. Determines who, if anyone, wins the goal. A big, violent conflict is the least interesting form of battle. Lots of fireworks but not much meaning. The battle should give the audience the clearest expression of what the two sides are fighting for. Emphasis not on which is the superior force but which ideas or values win out.

The funnel point of the story. Everything converges here. Brings together all the characters and the various lines of action. Occurs in the smallest space possible which heightens the sense of conflict.

Hero usually (but not always) fulfills his need and gains his desire. Also, where hero is most like his opponent.

Battle is where the theme first explodes in the minds of the audience. In this battle, the

audience sees clearly for the first time, which way of acting and living is best.

20. Self-Revelation

   After battle, hero for the first time learns who he is. Tears aside the façade he has lived behind and sees, in a shocking way, his true self. Facing truth about himself either destroys him or makes him stronger.

   If the self-revelation is moral as well as psychological, the hero learns the proper way to act towards others.

   Great self-revelation should be:

   - Sudden
   - Shattering
   - New

   Two pitfalls to making self-revelation work:

   - Make sure that what the hero learns about himself is truly meaningful rather than fine-sounding words.

   - Don't have the hero state directly to the audience what he has learned.

   Double reversal plot technique at this time is where a self-revelation is given to the opponent as well as to the hero. Each learns from the other and the audience sees two insights about how to live in the world. Ways to create this:

   - Give both hero and opponent a weakness and a need

   - Make the opponent human, or capable of learning and changing.

   - During or after the battle, give the opponent as well as the hero a self-revelation

- Connect the two self-revelations. The hero should learn something from the opponent and the opponent should learn something from the hero.

- The author's moral vision is the best of what both characters learn.

21. Moral Decision

    Once the hero learns the proper way to act in the self-revelation, he must make a decision. This is the moment when he chooses between two courses of action. Each of these ways stands for a set of values and way of living that affects others. This is the proof of what hero has learned in the self-revelation. Hero shows audience what he has become.

    Thematic revelation. An advanced technique. The audience sees how people in general should act and live in the world. This allows the story to go beyond the bounds of particular characters to affect the audience in their own lives. Done properly, can be stunning.

22. New Equilibrium

    Once the desire and need have been fulfilled (or tragically left unfulfilled) everything goes back to normal. With one big change: the hero is either at a higher or lower level.

Revelation Sequence

    Revelations are key to plot. They should be separated from the rest of the plot and looked at as a unit. Tracking the revelations is one of the most valuable of all storytelling techniques. Needs to build properly.

- Sequence must be logical. Occur in the order the hero would most likely learn them.

- Must build in intensity. Ideally, each one should be stronger than the previous one.

- Must come at an increasing pace. Audience gets hit with the grater density of surprise.

Most powerful of all reveals is the reversal. This is the reveal in which the audience's understanding of everything in the story is turned on its head. They suddenly see every element of the plot in a new light. All reality changes in an instant. (Most common in detective stories and thrillers). Examples:

In *The Sixth Sense*, comes when audience discovers the Bruce Willis character has been dead for most of the movie.

In *The Usual Suspects*, when audience discovers that the meek Verbal has been making up the entire story and that he is the terrifying opponent Keyser Soze. Note, in both come at the end of the story that sends the audience home with a knockout punch.

The Storyteller (Narrator)

Someone who recounts a character's actions, either in the first person or the third person. Using a recognizable storyteller allows one greater complexity and subtlety. A storyteller lets you present the actions of the hero along with commentary on those actions.

One of the most important decisions one makes in the writing process. Can radically change the way one sequences the plot. The vast majority of popular stories do not use a storyteller. They are linear and told by an omniscient storyteller.

A number of techniques allow the author to take full advantage of the storyteller if used. The techniques right for the story should be used (not necessarily all of them).

- Realize the storyteller is probably the true main character (hero)

- Introduce the storyteller in a dramatic situation

- Find a good trigger to cause him to tell the story

- The storyteller should not be all-knowing at the beginning

- Try to find a unique structure for telling the story instead of a simply chronology

- The storyteller should try different versions of how he tells the story as he struggles to din and express the truth

- Do not end the storytelling frame at the end of the story but rather about three-quarters of the way in

- The act of telling the story should lead the storyteller to a self-revelation

- Consider having the storyteller explore how the act of telling the story can be immoral or destructive to himself or to others.

- The act of telling the story should cause a final dramatic event

- Don't promote the fallacy that a character's death allows the full and true story to be told

- The deeper theme should be concerned with the truth and beauty of creativity, not heroic action

- Be wary of too many storytellers

CHAPER NOTES

"Plot depends on how the author withholds and reveals information. Involves the 'masterful management of suspense and mystery, artfully leading the reader through an elaborate … space that is always full of signs to be read, but always menaced with misreading until the very end.'"

Plots should be organic rather than a simple sequence of events with no purpose and no designing principle. Organic plot does a number of things: 1) shows actions that lead to hero's character change 2) each of events fully connected 3) each event is essential 4) each action is proportionate in its length and pacing 5) plotting seems to come naturally from the main character rather than being imposed by the author on characters.

The history of plot evolves from an emphasis on taking action to learning information, the two legs by which every story moves.

Scene Sequence

List All Scenes in Story (In one line)

Tag any Scene that Includes one of the 22 Steps

Ordering Scenes

    Make sure scene builds by structure not chronology

    See if scenes can be cut

    Opportunities to combine two scenes into one

    Add a scene whenever there are gaps in story development

CHAPTER NOTES

The average movie has 40 — 70 scenes while a novel has twice this number.

If story has sub-plots or sections, label each scene with a plotline and subsection number

Pay special attention to the juxtaposition of scenes. Focus on the contrast of of content. Then, the contrast of pacing and proportion. One of the best is the juxtaposition between sight and sound. The cross-cut is one of the most common juxtapositions where you jump back and forth between two lines of action.

Scene Construction & Symphonic Dialogue

Write Hero's Character Change Before any Scene

Scene Construction

- Where fits in hero's development of character arc?

- What problems must be solved?

- What strategy used?

- Whose desire drives scene? (Not necessarily the hero). What does this character want?

- What is the endpoint of character's goal (Desire) in scene? How does character's desire resolve itself? (By knowing endpoint in advance, author can focus entire scene towards that point.)

- Who opposes character's goal (Desire)?

- What plan will character use to accomplish his goal? (Character with desire comes up with the plan.)

- Direct or indirect plan?

    - Direct Plan — Character states exactly what he wants. Increases conflict and drives characters apart.

    - Indirect Plan — Character pretends to want one thing while actually wanting something else. Decreases conflict initially and brings characters together. But can cause greater conflict later when the deception becomes clear. (Other character will either

recognize deception and play along or be
fooled and give the other character what he
wants.)

- Will scene end in height of conflict or some
  solution?

- Will there be a twist, surprise, reveal in scene?

- Will one character end scene by commenting about
  who another character is deep down?

Dialogue

First write scenes without dialogue (Character's
actions tell the story)

Writing dialogue (great dialogue) is like a symphony
happening on three tracks at once):

Story dialogue (Melody) — Story expressed through
talk about what the characters are doing. Story
dialogue is written the same way a scene is
constructed.

Lead character states his desire

Character two speaks against this desire

Lead character responds with dialogue that
uses direct or indirect plan to get what he
wants

Conversation between the two becomes heated
as scene progresses, ending with some final
words or anger or resolution

Moral dialogue (Harmony) — Talk about right and
wrong action and about values or what makes a
valuable life. Provides depth, texture and scope
to the melody line. Not about story events but
rather the character's attitudes about these
events. Characters express their values, their
likes and dislikes. Two or more ways of life are
compared.

Lead character proposes or takes a course of action

Character two opposes that action on grounds it is hurting someone

Scene continues as each attacks and defends with each giving reasons to support his position

Key words – (Repetition, Variation, Leitmotif)

Taglines or single lines of dialogue

Unique Voices

Make sure each character speaks in a unique way

CHAPTER NOTES

"A scene is defined as one action in one time and place."

"A scene is a ministory. A good scene has six of the seven structure steps: the exception is self-revelation, which is reserved for the hero near the end of the story. The self-revelation step within a scene is usually replaced by some twist, surprise, or reveal."

Two objectives must be achieved in constructing any scene: 1) determine how it fits into and furthers the overall development of the hero and 2) make it a good ministory.

The beginning of a scene should always frame what the whole scene is about. The scene should then funnel down to a single point, with the most important word or line of dialogue stated last.

Many writers, in an attempt to be 'realistic,' start the scene early and build slowly toward the main conflict. This doesn't make the scne realistic; it makes it dull. Rather, start the scene as late as possible without losing any key structure elements you need.

Once a scene has been constructed, use description and dialogue to write it.

Dialogue is not real talk. It is highly selective language that sounds like it could be real. Good dialogue is always more intelligent, wittier, more metaphorical, and better argued than in real life.

Dialogue is best understood as a form of music. Like music, dialogue is communication with rhythm and tone. Also like music, dialogue best when it blends a number of 'tracks' at once. The problem most writers have with dialogue is that they write their dialogue only on one track, the melody. This is dialogue that explains what is happening in the story. Great dialogue is not a melody but a symphony happening on three major tracks at once.