In his book *The Art of Dramatic Writing* (1977), teacher and playwright Lajos Egri discusses at length how premises work. Egri states:

Everything has a purpose, or premise. Every second of our life has its own premise, whether or not we are conscious of it at the time. That premise may be as simple as breathing or as complex as a vital emotional decision, but it is always there...Every good play must have a well-formulated premise...No idea, and no situation, was ever strong enough to carry you through to its logical conclusion without a clear-cut premise.

The premise should be the driving force behind every event in your screenplay. A good premise is derived from emotions--love, hate, fear, jealousy, desire, etc.--and revolves around a character, a conflict and a conclusion. For example, the premise of William Shakespeare's *Othello* is that unchecked jealousy leads to death. Othello is the character, his jealousy of Desdemona is the conflict and death (of both) is the conclusion. In James Cameron's film *Titanic* (1997), the premise is that love conquers death, physically and spiritually. Rose is the character, the sinking ship and Rose's forced engagement are the conflict and the conclusion is that Jack's love helps her beat death and free herself from her fiancé. In Jonathan Demme's film *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), the premise is that courage destroys evil. FBI agent Clarice Starling is the character, the conflict is her fear of the serial killer Buffalo Bill and the conclusion is that she overcomes her fears in order to defeat her opponent. As noted by Egri, "A good premise is a thumbnail synopsis of your play."

If your story does not have a clear premise, it will lack focus and drive. For example, if a story is more "illustrative" than dramatic, presenting ideas rather than conflict, it may not maintain an audience's interest. If a story has more than one premise, or if the premise changes along the way, it will confuse and bore the audience. Either way, the script won't work. However, some screenplays, like Steven Gaghan's script for *Traffic* (2000) and Alan Ball's script for *American Beauty* (1999), are able to succeed with multiple story lines and points of view. This is because while these movies may seem at first to be without a premise, in fact, each separate storyline has its own clear premise.

Starting to write

What inspires screenwriters? Everything. Real-life (SEE BACK) experiences, dreams, songs, paintings, magazine articles, history books, fiction--all can be sources of inspiration. No two writers work in the same way. Some need the discipline of routine--one hour every weekday evening, or all day Sunday, for example. Other writers prefer a more spontaneous approach. Once you've figured out what works best for you, be consistent. Good work habits help keep you focused. Schedule regular breaks during your writing hours. If you get stuck, lie down. Great ideas are more likely to come to you when you're relaxed.

Handwritten annotations:

net-worth ≠ self-worth
3/4/12 trying to fill our lives up vs. living a full life

dialogue" 2b: an exchange of ideas and OPINIONS. (.. True Power Is... exchange" 2b: reciprocal giving and receiving)
ask, what is my story about...17
As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

* From Telling to Teaching: A Dialogue Approach to Adult Learning by Joye A. Norris
↳ mentor
runnin' true (infinite extension) The Moody Blues — The Word

unclaimed inheritance
lost treasures
playground for the children
↓ workplay

teleological materialized creation
metaphysical consciousness - teleological
big bang
awakening awareness - expanded con...

materialized creative consciousness

central theme ← Core concepts
our story to tell ← my perspectives to share

vibrates complete"
spread - on spectrum modulation
execution
Choice layers of / 1st Magnitude" shells
chose your measure... IF THEN CALL OUT
standard principles priorities

Individual & Collective Humanity (The Age of Man)
microcosm & macrocosm

endearing is driving force
impel vs. compel → intrinsic vs. extrinsic
occasion - the event line vs. time line
conflict of forces
external pressure internal

internal desire vs. external pressure

parasitic - see parasite
the parasite is gone, but the empty see back shell
remains... ghosting - latency
character

Sustainability vs Extinction
conflict of forces ↓ human conflict

emotions drive us, PURPOSE intellect guides us. AIM
see: meta-narratives...
see also

competing ideologies
state of human affairs
competing ideologies
state
analysis ↓ synthesis ↓ emergence guides us towards the frontier → we are MOVED
the outer limits of knowledge or achievement

change of state treasure in the field
conscious carrier of / (extension) infinite
to render clear

[type]
1. the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type (kind) are representations or copies : PROTOTYPE
2: IDEA (inherent)
3: an inherited (temperament) idea or mode of thought in the psychology of C.J. Jung that is derived from the experience of the race and is present in the subconscious of the individual
→ postulate [sk+ he asks] CLAIM as true...
Session 2

trust overcomes fear
truth overcomes doubt
fear and doubt ↓ fear and trembling ↓ perfect love knows no fear...

workplay → practice ↓ practice ↓

The role of... is being recreated by... Acting Captain... You Have the Bridge...

premise - proposed for consideration or proved as a basis of argument or inference → something assumed, supposed, or taken for granted → I suspect...
= Session 1
→ foregone conclusion
SMITE: to affect as if by striking... IMPACT IMPARTS EXCITATION... we are moved...

emergent change systems of state
e.g. paradigm shift
- exaltation
- evolution → or revolution!...

The Bridge Function

parasite" - 1. one frequenting the table of the rich and earning welcome by flattery: SYCOPHANT 2: an organism living in or on another organism in parasitism 3: something that resembles a biological parasite in dependence on something else for existence or support without making a useful or adequate return — parasitic

* theme: subject or topic of discourse... our story to tell → The Emergent Form

The Natural Form → The Conditioned Form

2/2
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state^n [to stand — more @ STAND] 1a: mode or condition of being
b(1): condition of mind or temperment (2): a condition of abnormal
tension or excitment 2a: a condition or stage in the physical being
of something b: any of various conditions characterized by definite
quantities (as of energy, angular momentum, or magnetic momentum) in
which an atomic system may exist

SYN STATE, CONDITION, SITUATION, STATUS shared meaning element:
the way in which one manifests existence or the circumstances
under which one exists or by which one is given distinctive
character. STATE may imply a mode of existence but more often
implies the sum of the qualities involved in a particular kind
of existence or existence at a particular time and place
CONDITION more distinctly imputes the effect of immediate
or temporary influences as a ruling factor SITUATION applies
to a state or condition that is the resultant of a combination
of definite circumstances; it implies arrangement of these
circumstances that makes for a particular condition
STATUS applies to one's state or condition as determined
with some definiteness especially for legal administrative
purposes or by social or economic considerations.

→ see Crustacean Analogy →

personal baggage

→ parasitic (see parasite) the parasite is gone, but the empty shell remains...
ghosting → latency

the empty shell can constrain and limit further growth and
development ... room to grow!
→ The Natural Form... The Conditioned Form... The Emergent Form!!!

"The discarded shell has as its vocation, as it were, to be destroyed
(discarded - to slough off) in its primary form in order to conserve the
realization of something else so near of kin that it may be properly
regarded as its own true self in the resulting existence to which
it gives rise, and into whose actuality its own essence enters and
is there conserved."

→ conversion..."and into whose actuality its own essence enters and
                  is there conserved."

→ The essence of being is becoming...

* metanarrative 2: an overarching account or interpretation of
events and circumstances that provide a pattern or structure
for individual beliefs and gives meaning to their experiences...
1: a narrative account that experiments with or explores the idea
          of storytelling...

invented for your characters will determine their behavior and actions. Acting in character doesn't mean behaving in the same manner throughout the screenplay. People often act in contradictory ways, one minute helping their cause, the next hurting it. But, as Shakespeare once said, there should be some method, or sense, to their madness.

Getting to know your characters

While your characters should be active, they shouldn't be in perpetual motion. Pivotal characters should be allowed to reflect on their behavior from time to time, and audiences should be allowed into their thoughts. Voice-over narration is one way to give audiences insight into your character's head. *American Beauty*, *Taxi Driver* and *Sunset Boulevard* are all movies that use voice-overs effectively. Creating scenes featuring your character alone is a better way to allow your audience to explore the character's conflicts. The most memorable scene in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) is the one in which Travis, wielding his spring-loaded pistol, pretends to confront his imaginary enemies while studying himself in a mirror. His evolution from misfit to killer is dramatized most effectively while he is alone, showing us his anguish through solitary but powerful actions.

Paul Schrader is able to create a compelling story even while the central character is alone on the screen.

American Film Institute

For minor characters, distinguishing qualities can be rendered in simple, visual bits. In Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* (1959), for example, the ruthless gangster "Spats" is known by his immaculate spats shoes, while his doomed rival, "Toothpick Charlie," is always seen with a toothpick in his mouth.

Physical mannerisms and habits, such as a nervous stutter or chain smoking, can also be used in your screenplay to quickly differentiate your characters for the audience, while introducing them to important attributes of the character's background.

The character's progress

[handwritten: character archetypes → the role of... is being recreated by...]

Implicit in the premise of a story is character development. In order for the conflict to climax and resolve, the protagonist must go through change. His understanding of the world must deepen in some way. In *Taxi Driver*, as Travis Bickle's personality becomes more tortured and fractured, he becomes more violent toward the society around him. In Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), George's goals in life--travel, college, business--are consistently derailed, leading him to contemplate suicide. The learning process Travis and George go through alters their attitudes and behavior.

[handwritten left margin: conversion — being → becoming — true power is... the ability to act or produce an effect and the capacity for being acted upon or undergoing an effect.]

American Film Institute

[handwritten bottom right: 121]

Producers...Many Diverse Operational Platforms

→ performance
of production

The master crafts

A ~~Film~~ Producer creates the conditions for ~~filmmaking~~. The Producer initiates,
commands
coordinates, supervises, and controls matters such as raising funding, hiring key
connectors
personnel, and arranging for distributors. The producer is involved throughout all
production   *projection*
phases of the ~~film making~~ process from development to completion of a projection.
There may be several producers ~~on a film~~ who may take a role in a number of areas,   *pitch*
such as development, financing or production. Producers must be able to identify   *catch-*
acting
commercial, marketable projects. They need a keen business sense, and an intimate   *captain*
knowledge of all aspects of ~~film~~ production, financing, marketing and distribution.
Producers are responsible for the overall quality control of productions.

[command performances peak experiences]

Our thoughts are like instruments that provide (can serve) us with guidance as we
navigate our journey of life...our projector we use to author the story of our lives... token triggers

Scripting...
a "way with words"-wordsmith → coin a phrase (coin, token)currency → occasion →
The power   *play on words → turn of phrase → to influence, attract, and   (resonate)*
of suggestion...   *move deeply by incantation → a written or recited formula of*
If you can name it, then you can command it!   *words designed to produce a particular effect... We are "moved"*
What best serves the mission...
→ current cast of characters... Our watch... enduring   *→ stewards*
chain of custody   *Cast...*

Casting...The Casting of Spells, The Casting of Roles
Direct...
Project...
a "way with words" → coin a phrase (coin, token) currency →
play on words → turn of phrase [suggest, accept, reject, cast-off]

The Casting Director chooses the Actors for the characters of the film. This
usually involves inviting potential Actors to read an excerpt from the script for an
audition.

Introduced → Reinforced → Diminished → Discarded,
Reject/Eject, Cast-Off → The role of.... is being recreated by...
project... accept... reject... cast-off   *part imparts impact...we are moved*
impact imparts excitation... we get
stirred up...

Director...

production

The Director is responsible for overseeing the creative aspects of a ~~film~~, including
Commanding plot points, pivot points, way points   production's
~~controlling~~ the content and flow of the ~~film's~~ plot, directing the performances of   *directed &*
for the   "best" performance   protect
Actors, organizing and selecting the locations ~~in which the film will be shot~~, and   *enlightenment*
Participant play
managing technical details such as the positioning of ~~cameras~~, the use of ~~lighting~~,
signs & indicators-verbal cues, incantations, the casting → of spells...
and the timing and content of ~~the film's soundtrack~~. Though directors wield a   *clues*
great deal of power, they are ultimately subordinate to the film's Producer or   *and*
cues...
Producers. Some Directors, especially more established ones, take on many of the
roles of a Producer, and the distinction between the two roles is sometimes
blurred.

Location...Setting the Stage

Choice of 1ST Magnitude
"Standard of Measure"
Choose Your Treasure
principles & priorities
our lives currently
revolve around through
which we project recurring
patterns... our daily
routines -

$$\frac{Exalted}{Base}$$

Intensive
Extraordinary
"supersize" the ordinary

Oversees the Locations Department and its staff, typically reporting directly to the Production Manager and/or Assistant Director (or even Director and/or Executive Producer). Location Manager is responsible for final clearing (or guaranteeing permission to use) a location for filming and must often assist Production/Finance Dept(s) in maintaining budget management regarding actual location/permit fees as well as labor costs to production for himself and the Locations Department at large.

Consumers...The Audience seeks to become inspired!

The author (is) driven to express his or her (passions), and the audience (is) hoping to ignite its own. (resonant ring)

- companions
- shipmates
- our watch
- current cast of characters
- The role of... is being recreated by...

excitation imparts impact... value and gap analysis... can initiate acquisition... ignite(s) their pilot light... resonance
— exaltation intensification — the ring
— tunable resonant cavity...vessel of truth

Ontological Treasure Map of the Human Condition

- conversion cascade -
- tipping point initiates cascade of effects (event cascade, cascade of events) informational cascade - ripple effect
- cascade= a large number of things that happen quickly in a series
  - something arranged or occuring in a series or in a succession of stages so that each stage derives from or acts upon the product of the proceeding
- conversion - to turn - WORTH to bring over from one belief, view, or party to another; to change from one form or function to another; to alter for more effective utilization
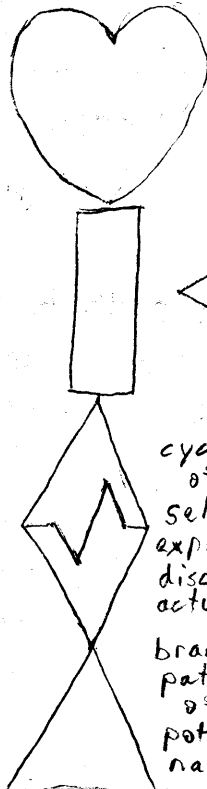
the heart of the matter
The Bridge Function
The Master's Craft
Standard of Measure
- Cascade -
Conversion Cascade

cycles of self... exploration discovery actualization

branch paths of potential natures...

Diamond in the Rough
- Facets of Freedom from Ignorance -
The most loathsome disease.   Inclined vs. Disinclined
Initiative vs Set in their ways
The natural form, The conditioned form, The emergent form
temperment < The Master's Craft
             The Tyrant's Reign

materialized expression of consciousness

Domain   World

boundary - frontier of (event horizon) materialized creative consciousness

sphere - most amount of mass with least amount of surface area

pyramid - most amount of surface area with least amount of mass

platform stage

Radiant carrier singularity

Cascade

materialized creative consciousness

Emergence

Avatar signal Reflector

hierarchy complement or zenith apex or base to base   diamond   convergence emergence   pyramid hierarchy base to apex or zenith   sphere circle domain world   heart   star-beacon performer as a principle/central role gifted-talented abilities thought to be divine trust   cascade   stage platform

e.g. Maslow's
Hierarchy
of needs,
wants, desire
↓
intent...
willful intent...

change the
course of
thought
↓
change the
course of
events
↓
event line

[the nature,
creation, and
appreciation of
beauty...
— initiate,
reinforce,
diminish,
cancel out

"...you aren't showing
me anything
but ugly."

feedback
loops

"An indication
of the point of
view is constructed
upon the relation
of the potential
under examination
to the evolution
possible for it."

We live in
the gap!

Grand Unification
of Infinite Potential

archetypical
meta narratives
→ template
pattern...
recognition

→ materalized
creative
consciousness...
sustainability
versus
extinction!...

occasion...
magical moments...
occasion...
we are
moved
natural form
conditioned form
emergent form
project, (suggest)
accept,
reject,
cast-off
(intelligence impressed
upon the carrier
(wave)
conversion of
the principle and
priorities our lives
revolve around →
willful intent

travels (propagates)
as a wave (function)
arrives as a part
(particle)... the
part of... is
being recreated
by...

are inoperative so far as our powers of discernment are concerned. The lowest stages of effective mentality, controlled by the inheritance of physical pattern, involves the faint direction of emphasis by unconscious ideal aim. The various examples of the higher forms of life exhibit the variety of grades of effectiveness of mentality. In the social habits of animals, there is evidence of flashes of mentality in the past which have degenerated into physical habits. Finally in the higher mammals and more particularly in mankind, we have clear evidence of mentality habitually effective. In our own experience, our knowledge consciously entertained and systematized can only mean such mentality, directly observed. → draw a distinction → difference in value...

The qualities entertained as objects in conceptual activity are of the nature of catalytic agents, in the sense in which that phrase is used in chemistry. They modify the aesthetic process by which the occasion constitutes itself out of the many streams of feeling received from the past. It is not necessary to assume that conceptions introduce additional sources of measurable energy. They may do so; for the doctrine of the conservation of energy is not based upon exhaustive measurements. But the operation of mentality is primarily to be conceived as a diversion of the flow of energy. In these lectures I have not entered upon systematic metaphysical cosmology. The object of the lectures is to indicate those elements in our experience in terms of which such a cosmology should be constructed. The key notion from which such construction should start is that the energetic activity considered in physics is the emotional intensity entertained in life.

Philosophy begins in wonder. And, at the end, when philosophic thought has done its best, the wonder remains. There have been added, however, some grasp of the immensity of things, some purification of emotion by understanding.

— conversion —

draw a distinction discern magical moments
decompose

(intelligence impressed
upon the carrier... modulation) course correction
the narrow path
way points → the way

→ origin and structure of the universe

Impact Imparts Excitation... We get
stirred up... List and Duration...

sheer bliss

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"The comparitive advantage shifts from those with information glut to those with ordered knowledge. From those who process vast amounts of throughput to those who can explain what is worth(y) (of) knowing and why. This is the difference between data and information, between facts and knowledge.

"And when you respond, respond briefly and to the point. Do not add more noise than signal."

"The secret of this success is not a series of brilliant insights or bold gambles, but a fanatical attention to detail."
- He championed a defect reduction initiative called Six Sigma

Jack Welsh
CEO of GE
"Neutron Jack"

see Player Piano written by Kurt Vonnegut publicity man for GE

"We are strong believers that once complexity is reduced, uncertainty is minimized, and decision makers can start to take charge of their jobs and their lives."

"The single most effective ingredient or compenent is differentiation. Differentiate yourself in three parts:
- Have a simple idea that seperates you from others;
- Have the credentials, the product, or the service that makes the concept real and believable;
- Build a program to make your potential readers, your (prospective) clients, and prospects aware of this difference ... It's just that simple!"

draw a distinction

A treasure map of sorts...
Reality Check
Adventure Training
Cardinal Awakenings
The Master's Craft
- Establish a practice in the art and science of crafting yourself and the world around you...

"Leading others is often times in walking behind them much as a shepherd herds the sheep by moving to the left to guide them to the right or moving to the right to guide them to the left from behind."

"In differentiation, own the position (The Bridge Function Acting Captain) in the minds of others that identifies what makes you and your material, your service, your product different from others. Own that position. Start with the idea but don't forget the strategy. If the idea is a nail, strategy is the hammer. You need both to establish position in the minds of others. Strategy is not the goal but is the focus on the journey!"

Acting Captain...
You Have The Bridge...
Function

Everyone told me to write what I know... I know in my time here, I have learned more than I ever thought I could... Like physics, which I loved, because the laws of physics are basically the
* laws of life. With all the unpredictable chaos around us, there are certain universal constants -- gravity, the speed of light. These constants never change, even when everything else around them does. Life is full of unknows, and when those unknowns are too overwhelming, it's the constants that we have to hold on to. Like our friends. The ones who are not afraid to tell us that there's no such thing as normal. The ones who have been in our life, for every minute with you, even the hardest minutes. Like those who could have walked away, but chose to stick around, even though they had their own lives, families, their own children. Like our parents, because we wouldn't be here without them... who pick us up when we fall... who come when we call them... who answer when we knock. We all learned what a light-year is. And these years together... have been our light-years. The years where everything became brighter, and we learned that the bright spots in our life aren't merely spots, but constants. And no matter where I go, or what I do... you are my constant. May you never forget yours.

connect-the-dots
"...and a star to steer her by."

key concept   cosmological origin and structure of the universe
* The key notion from which such construction should start is that the energetic activity considered in physics is the emotional intensity entertained in life.

Alfred North Whitehead
Nature and Life

- When examining data - one can always find individual data points or short term trends that support a biased view or conclusion if one is willing to ignore the mean (signify-signs & indicators)
  - cues & clues

- the essence of Greek tragedy - the Greek sense of tragedy is where something happens because it has to happen because of the nature of the participants - because the people involved make it happen and they have no choice but to make it happen because that's their nature ... elites - the natural form   entitlement

- law of unintended consequences

- "A man can surely do what he wills to do, but cannot determine what he wills." -Schopenhauer-

Bear Stearns -1985 | Public | Founded 1923

- Investment Houses convert from partnerships to publicly traded
  investment bank vs. commercial bank vs combined (universal or full service?)

2004 - Bush Jr. - Republicans increase their majority in both houses - SEC ruling - led by Hank Paulsen CEO Golden Sachs - 12 to 1 rule is onerous SEC grants Bear Stearns exemption - Bear Stearns and any larger - derivatives risk exemptions - leverage amplification

2008 -   Ben Bernanke & Hank Paulsen

-crisis of trust
- a nation refusing to grow up - to be responsible and accountable for our actions

? DAB - (casino capitalism) When capitalism becomes the greatest threat to security and sustainability...

- not a problem of capitalism when the moral hazard self-regulates & self-adjusts ... it is a cultural crisis - an ethical problem - crisis of character

* → Private Interests Overwhelm the Public Trust - Privatize the Wealth, Make Public the Debt (Social Contract)

- Pattern Recognition -

Series of Turnings - Generation Zero by Citizens United

- Launched by a so-called crisis work
    - genocide, killing, starvation, disease
    - the worst times in history
    - all vow the horror should never be allowed to
    happen again (all events are local - the stage is set)

1ST Turning = The High (like the 1950's)
    - period of consolidation
    - stable families & family structure
    - high birth rates, investment in infrastructure
    - emotional life becomes vacant, void - of awareness of the crisis
      - no memory of crisis

2nd Turning = The Awakening
    - the children of the awakening who come of age
    during social and personal revolution/evolution
    - the questioning (quest) - great passion - anger

3rd Turning = The Unraveling
    - revolt - revolution/evolution accelerates
    - restraints are broken down in personal, economic,
    and political life
    - periods of economic speculation, stronger boom & bust cycles

4th Turning = The Crisis
    - current "The Unraveling" 1987-2007
    - godlessness reference - Chesterton - "When men stop
    believing in God they don't believe in nothing, (DAB anything)."
    they will believe any thing.
    - led to the belief that the self is God - Me Generation
    - collapse of work ethic virtues   → Privatize
    - 80's & 90's money culture - casino capitalism -   wealth...
    how to game the system - conspicuous consumption   make
                                                          Public
    - measure all things by money ("DAB standard of measure =   the Debt
    net worth = self worth)
    - blame game - blame the elites - economic & political
    leaders
    - Both parties demand the socialization, nationalization
    of risk and the privatization of profit - Reagan
    jumpstart of singularity of political interests
    concept of "moral hazard"   crisis of character

moral hazard:
lack of incentive to
guard against risk
where one is protected
from its consequences...
by e.g. insurance,
qualified immunity,
corporate liability
shield, agency
liability protection,
liability insurance

The world can provide for
the needs of mankind but
not for his greed.

dishonor/
disregard/Scientists
vilify ⊥ Journalists

sheeple being
herded to
browse only
what promotes
fear and
intolerance
...ignorance

Wolves

Diversity

Wildebeasts
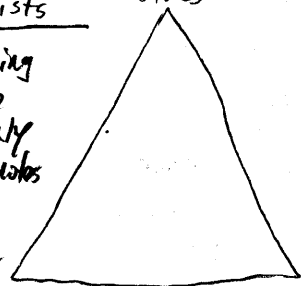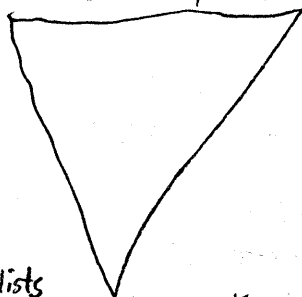
disappearing forest-
over consumption
of green growth
by deer from the
forest floor to the
browse line. Old
growth trees are
not replaced by
new growth because
of the constant
new growth consumption

Fear
Factor
sustainability
vs
Extinction

Marginalize/
Environmentalists
Moderates
blades of
grass akin
to little
lies or
half-truths

{ Beguiled
  Misdirected
  Misinformed
  Misguided
  Misled }

controlled wildfires
by eating/consuming
the grasses thereby
reducing the fuel
availability for
wildfires
promoting new
growth of trees

31:00 downgrading vs. upgrading

Hyper Keystone Species

The tree of knowledge...
new growth promotes evolution

The tree of life...
evolution promotes new growth

Change the course of thought...
change the course of events!

unfold in my life, at times a portion of my childhood innocence would be displaced by an 'awakening awareness' of the realities of the human condition. And while I see signs of the advancement of civilization, especially in science and technology, I really don't see this pace of advancement mirrored in our humanity towards each other.

As far back as I can remember, I've always questioned why this is the case. What is the source of the continuum of our individual and collective circumstances? When I would ask others about the persistence of the prevailing state of human affairs we commonly refer to as 'reality', I was usually informed by others that reality 'is what it is' and there is little if anything that can be done but to accept it.

As I began to mature, I grew increasingly suspicious that there was something wrong-minded, something fundamentally flawed, with this way of thinking, with this kind of mindset. Intuitively I knew something was amiss. Being a somewhat curious and probing young man, I'd contemplate this matter from time to time in search of insight into the 'state of affairs' we commonly refer to as 'reality'.

By the time I was 17 years old, the quest for insight into the human condition and our collective 'state of affairs' had become a passion. I began to lose interest in conventional education, and yearning for a change, decided to join the U.S. Marine Corps. Upon discharge from the Marines, I was afforded an opportunity, through the G.I. Bill, to pursue my passion by attending a community college.

It was during this exposure to secondary education that I discovered that my passion had a name. I was, in essence, a philosopher. Now...this is a declaration that can result in questioning stares and disbelieving looks. It is as if it's common knowledge that philosophers were a species that once existed but are now long extinct. I further established that my specific interest in this field was in the discipline known as ontology.

Point to the gap - potential under consideration to the evolution possible for it.

"It is not untrue that where one finds the greatest controversy, there he will find the least comprehension. And where the facts are least precise there one can also find the greatest arguments."   L. Ron Hubbart

Triangulation is useful as the proper tool for fixing current frame of reference (position) You Are Here!

Solution Set - values that satisfy an equation.
Variables of choice and combination.
unknown is possibility, potential...
known is actualized... We live in the gap...
Solve for the unknown! The essence of being is becoming!

- It is not enough merely to write down an expression and expect it to be understood. We must also indicate a point of reference from which the observer is supposed to be standing. To make an expression meaningful, we must add to it an indicator to present a place from which the observer is invited to regard it.
    ↳ position... standing... stand and point!...

with (legal) standing

G. Spencer Brown
Laws of Form

  - You Are Here!
   - The Bridge Function
    - Acting Captain... You Have the Bridge
    - The role of... is being recreated by...

- It is unnecessary to assume that participants have full knowledge of the total structure of the game, or the ability or inclination to go through any complex reasoning process. But the participants are supposed to accumulate empirical information on the relative advantages of the various pure *strategies at their disposal. (recursive feedback loops... see: cybernetics)

Zero Sum- Win/Lose Games
vs.
Non-Zero Sum- Win/Win Games

*strategy [generalship] the science and art of exercising command - a careful plan or method: a careful stratagem [to be a general, maneuver - to spread out + to lead - more @ STRATUM, AGENT] (a: an artifice or trick in war (or during conflict) for deceiving and outwitting the enemy (opponent) b: a cleverly contrived trick or scheme for gaining an end...

John Nash

Non-Cooperative Games

- There can be no distinction without motive, and there can be no motive unless contents are seen to differ in value.

G. Spencer Brown
Laws of Form

- Any ontology must give an account of which words refer to entities, which do not, why, and what categories result.   Wiki?
    Individual... Legal Fictionals... Artificial Intelligence
    Human Rights vs. Legal Rights   vs.   Sapient, Sentient Rights
- "Just a man" from The Wizard of Oz - Toto pulls the curtain back to reveal the wizard...

[- An indication of the point of view is constructed upon the potential under consideration to the evolution possible for it. 'unknown'
  - "... to be is to be the value of a variable." Quine, Willard Van Orman
  ↳ - The key notion from which such construction should start is that the energetic activity considered in physics is the emotional intensity entertained in life.

From Modes of Thought
Alfred North Whitehead

If the story began after the Villain's scheme was already a known problem, then perhaps we could say that was the status quo, and Bond is taking the initiative to change it, thereby making him the Protagonist. But most Bond films set the status quo as a peaceful world scene into which the Villain interjects an element of threat. Only then does Bond spring into action, to stop what the Villain is trying to do.

So, Bond remains a Good Guy, is still the Central Character, continues to carry the story's moral position, but is an Antagonist, rather than a Protagonist. In a story, the Protagonist represents our own initiative - the motivation to shake things up, change the order, alter the course. *course corrections*

In contrast, the Antagonist represents our reluctance to change - the motivation is to maintain the status quo or to return things to the state in which they had been. The battle between them illustrates the inner conflict we all experience when trying to decide if it is better to try something new or to let sleeping dogs lie. *evolution vs. revolution*

So, simply swapping the qualities of being Protagonist and Antagonist will have a tremendous effect on a Hero and Villain, even though all the other qualities remain the same. If you have only been creating the standard Hero and Villain, this one technique alone will open many new creative avenues.

Main / Influence Swap

Now how much would you pay? But wait! There's more.... Suppose we put the Protagonist and Antagonist qualities back in their usual places and try another kind of swap:

Hero: Protagonist, *Influence Character*, Central Character, Good Guy

Villian: Antagonist, *Main Character*, Second-Most Central, Bad Guy

Here we have set the Villain up as the Main Character, which basically means that the reader or audience experiences the story through the Villain's eyes, and, that the Villain is the one grappling with the moral dilemma and the Hero is the one trying to change his world view.

Now that's interesting, isn't it? A good example of this arrangement is *A Christmas Carol*, in which Scrooge is the Bad Guy, suffering the Moral Dilemma, we see things from his position, and he is the Antagonist, trying to put a stop to the meddling of the ghosts and get the status quo back to normal.

The Ghosts, collectively, form the Hero of the story, taking the initiative to change Scrooge's life-course, tying to change his attitude, and trying to do the right thing for someone else, even though they can't help themselves (classic Good-Guy mentality).

There's one other change in that story that doesn't match the line-up listed above, however. Scrooge is also the Central Character and the Ghosts are the Second Most Central. So, the proper arrangement of qualities in *A Christmas Carol* would look like this:

Hero: Protagonist, Influence Character, *Second-Most Central*, Good Guy

Villian: Antagonist, Main Character, *Central Character*, Bad Guy

This example has served to illustrate that you don't have to limit yourself to swapping just one quality, but in fact, can mix and match them in any combination you want! Imagine the possibilities!

Good Guy / Bad Guy Swap

Still, there's one more kind of alteration in the classic Hero and Villain we have not yet addressed at all: Good Guy and Bad Guy. Based on what we have done so far, you might assume we would simply want to swap those two traits and, to be sure, we could do that:

Hero: Protagonist, Influence Character, Central Character, *Bad Guy*

Villian: Antagonist, Main Character, *Second-Most Central*, Good Guy

Now you have a Hero that is, perhaps, more of the classic Anti-Hero, something like the Main Character in Taxi Driver. Here's a disturbed individual who is under such personal pressure that he snaps into a fantasy world and acts to the harm of others. But, he is definitely the Central Character, and he is the Main Character because we see the story through his eyes and he grapples with the moral dilemma, He is also the Protagonist, because he is the one who take the initiative.

Now, while we could do that simply Good Guy/Bad Guy swap, there's something a little different that really opens up the game...

What if we make both characters Good Guys? You know, just because two people disagree doesn't mean one of them has to be operating from ill intent. They might both have the best interests of others paramount in their minds, yet differ in their views of how to accomplish that.

So, if one wants to build a dam on the river that runs through the small town in which he grew up in order to end the poverty under which his people are suffering, another of the town's citizens might be dead-set against it because he believes it would ruin the small-town atmosphere, and even if the people have more money, it wouldn't be worth living there anymore.

Clearly both are Good Guys, yet in the effort to achieve the goal, they are diametrically opposed. The man trying to build the dam is the Protagonist. The man trying to stop it is the Antagonist.

Putting it All Together

Okay, let's take the example above and use the freedom of all that we have learned to fashion two completely non-stereotypical characters.

First, we already have the Protagonist trying to build the dam and the Antagonist trying to stop **Contact us!** more important and memorable of the two. You make this choice by picking the one you find r

Feedback

character will almost automatically cause you to give him more media real estate and to draw him with the greatest passion.

Choosing which one you want as your Main Character may be trickier, since it doesn't necessarily have to be the Central Character nor the Protagonist. Often, a charismatic Antagonist makes a good Main Character, but so does a dull bystander who simply provides a good perspective on the story for the reader or audience to adopt.

Finally, you determine if both are Good Guys, Bad Guys, or if one is Good and the other Bad. This choice will depend on whether you want your audience or reader to stand in the shoes of a Good perspective, as with Dr. Richard Kimble in *The Fugitive*, or in the shoes of the Bad perspective as with Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*.

In the Good scenario, you make your reader or audience feel self-righteous, and teach by example. In the Bad scenario, you accuse your reader or audience and teach by encouraging them to deny it in their own lives and prove you wrong. Then, you use your plot to explore both characters' points of view, ultimately passing your judgment upon them as your story's message. *An invitation to consider my perspectives, and a challenge to attempt to falsify them.*

[handwritten margin: external pressure versus internal desire]

Well, you get the idea. All this might seem pretty obvious by now, but recall back to the beginning in Part One one of this trilogy of articles when we were only talking about the classic Hero and Villain. At the time, they might have seemed the best way to go for any story, but now... Well, Hero is a four-letter word, and by breaking him and his Villainous counterpart into their various components, you can now create far more interesting, unpredictable and believable characters than you could before.

Study Exercises for Part Three: Mixed up Heroes and Villains

1. List three pairs of Heroes and Villains, such as Chief Brody and The Shark from *Jaws*.

2. Break down each pair to show how the four basic qualities of each are either in the classic arrangement, or have been redistributed between the two.

3. For each pair, list examples from the story in which they appear that illustrate each quality as belonging to the character you have determined possesses it.

Writing Exercises for Part Three: Building Non-Stereotypical Heroes and Villains

1. Devise a goal for a hypothetical story. Create a Hero/Villain pair with Protagonist and Antagonist swapped. Write an example of what might happen in the hypothetical story that would illustrate their positions in regard to the goal.

2. Devise a moral dilemma (such as working weekends to support one's family vs. spending time with your children). Create a Hero/Villain pair with Main and Influence Character qualities swapped. Use a story example to illustrate how the reader/audience sees the story through the Main Character's eyes, or from his or her position. Illustrate how the Hero, as Influence Character, will pressure the Villain to change his or her point of view in regard to the moral dilemma.

3. Create a story scenario that fits each of the following:
- Hero is a Good Guy and Villain is a Bad Guy.
- Both Hero and Villain are Good Guys.
- Both Hero and Villain are Bad Guys.
- Hero is a Bad Guy and Villain is a Good Guy.

Meet the Author: Melanie Ann Phillips

Contact us!

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Be a Story Weaver - NOT a Story Mechanic

Too many writers fall into the trap of making Structure their Story God. There's no denying that structure is important, but paying too much attention to structure can destroy your story.

We have all seen movies and read novels that feel like "paint by numbers" creations. Sure, they hit all the marks and cover all the expected relationships, but they seem stilted, uninspired, contrived, and lifeless.

The authors of such pedestrian fare are Story Mechanics. A Story Mechanic is a writer who constructs a story as if it were a machine. Starting with a blueprint, the writer gathers the necessary dramatic components, assembles the gears and pulleys, tightens all the structural nuts and bolts, and then tries to make the story interesting with a fancy paint job.

But there is another kind of writer who creates a different kind of story. These Story Weavers begin with subjects or concepts they are passionate about and let the structure suggest itself from the material. They see their players as people before they consider them as characters. Events are happenings before they are plot. Values precede theme and the story develops a world before it develops a genre.

A book or movie written by a Story Weaver is involving, riveting, and compelling. It captures the fullness of human emotion, and captivates the mind.

This article will explore how to be a Story Weaver - NOT a Story Mechanic.

The Story Weaver's Method

First, clear your mind of any thoughts about characters, plot, theme, and genre. Avoid any consideration of character arc, hero's journey, acts, scenes, sequences, beats, messages, premises, settings, atmosphere, and formulas. In short - don't give structure a second thought.

Now work to create a world in which people live and interact, things happen, meaning can be found and the environment is intriguing. To do this, we'll progress through four different stages of story creation: Inspiration, Development, Exposition, and Storytelling.

Inspiration

Inspiration can come from many sources: a conversation overheard at a coffee shop, a newspaper article, or a personal experience to name a few. And, inspiration can also take many forms: a snippet of dialogue, a bit of action, a clever concept, and so on.

If you can't think of a story idea to save your life, there are a few things you can do to goose the Muse.

First of all, consider your creative time. Some people consistently find inspiration in the morning, others in the afternoon, evening or even in the dead of night. Some people are more creative in the summer and can't write worth a darn in the other three seasons. There are authors who work in cycles and those

In Development you'll begin to populate your story with people you might like to write about, work out some of the things that will happen in your story, and establish the world or environment in which it takes place. These efforts will ultimately result in your characters, plot, theme, and genre.

There are many Story Weaving techniques for the Development stage, but one of the most powerful is to project your world beyond what is specifically stated in the log line. *the current 'frame of reference' → 'inherent state of affairs'*

As an example, let's use the log line from above: "The marshal in an old western town struggles to stop a gang that is bleeding the town dry." Now let's see how we can expand that world to create a whole group of people who grow out of the story, some of whom will ultimately become our characters.

The only specifically called-for characters are the marshal and the gang. But, you'd expect the gang to have a leader and the town to have a mayor. The marshal might have a deputy. And, if the town is being bled dry, then some businessmen and shopkeepers would be in order as well.

Range a little wider now and list some characters that aren't necessarily expected, but wouldn't seem particularly out of place in such a story.

Example: A saloon girl, a bartender, blacksmith, rancher, preacher, schoolteacher, etc.

Now, let yourself go a bit and list a number of characters that would seem somewhat out of place but still explainable in such a story.

Example: A troupe of traveling acrobats, Ulysses S. Grant, a Prussian Duke, a bird watcher.

Finally, pull out all the stops and list some completely inappropriate characters that would take a heap of explaining to your reader/audience if they showed up in your story.

Example: Richard Nixon, Martians, the Ghost of Julius Caesar

Although you'll likely discard these characters, just the process of coming up with them can lead to new ideas and directions for your story.

For example, the town marshal might become more interesting if he was a history buff, specifically reading about the Roman Empire. In his first run-in with the gang, he is knocked out cold with a concussion. For the rest of the story, he keeps imagining the Ghost of Julius Caesar giving him unwanted advice.

This same kind of approach can be applied to your log line to generate the events that will happen in your story, the values you will explore, and the nature of your story's world (which will become your genre).

Exposition [n] *1: a setting forth of the meaning or purpose (as of a writing) AIM
2a: discourse or an example of it designed to convey information or explain what is difficult to understand ... occultation - something hidden from view or lost to notice*

The third stage of Story Weaving is to lay out an Exposition Plan for your story. By the time you complete the Development Stage, you will probably have a pretty good idea what your story is about. But your audience knows nothing of it - not yet - not until you write down what you know.

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Of course, you could just write, "My story's goal is to rid the town of the gang that is bleeding it dry. The marshal is the protagonist, and he ultimately succeeds, but at great personal cost."

Sure, it's a story, but not a very interesting one. If you were to unfold your story in this perfunctory style, you'd have a complete story that felt just like that "paint by numbers" picture we encountered earlier.

Part of what gives a story life is the manner in which story points are revealed, revisited throughout the story, played against each other and blended together, much as a master painter will blend colors, edges, shapes and shadows.

As an example, let's create an Exposition Plan to reveal a story's goal. Sometimes a goal is spelled out right at the beginning, such as a meeting in which a general tells a special strike unit that a senator's daughter has been kidnapped by terrorists and they must rescue her.

Other times, the goal is hidden behind an apparent goal. So, if your story had used the scene described above, it might turn out that it was really just a cover story and, in fact, the supposed "daughter" was actually an agent who was assigned to identify and kill a double agent working on the strike team.

Goals may also be revealed slowly, such as in The Godfather, where it takes the entire film to realize that the goal is to keep the family alive by replacing the aging Don with a younger member of the family.

Further, in The Godfather, as in many Alfred Hitchcock films, the goal is not nearly as important as the chase or the inside information or the thematic atmosphere. So don't feel obligated to elevate every story point to the same level.

Let your imagination run wild. Jot down as many instances as come to mind in which the particular story point comes into play. Such events, moments or scenarios enrich a story and add passion to a perfunctory telling of the tale.   perfunctory [to accomplish, get through with, through + to perform] characterized by routine or superficiality: MECHANICAL ⟨a ~ smile⟩

＊One of the best ways to do this is to consider how each story point might affect other story points. For example, each character sees the overall goal as a step in helping them accomplish their personal goals. So, why not create a scenario where a character wistfully describes his personal goal to another character while sitting around a campfire? He can explain how achievement of the overall story goal will help him get what he personally wants.

An example of this is in the John Wayne classic movie, The Searchers. John Wayne's character asks an old, mentally slow friend to help search for the missing girl. Finding the girl is the overall goal. The friend has a personal goal: he tells Wayne that he just wants a roof over his head and a rocking chair by the fire. This character sees his participation in the effort to achieve the goal as the means of obtaining something he has personally longed for.

Storytelling   cogent [to drive together, collect; to drive, more @ agent] 1: having power to compel or constrain 2a: appealing forcibly to the mind or reason: CONVINCING
b: presented in a way that brings out pertinent and fundamental points [conditioning, tether-scope
＊point - 1 a(1): an individual detail: ITEM (2): a distinguishing detail
b: the most important essential in a discussion or matter
c: COGENCY 2 obs: physical condition 3: an end or object to be achieved: PURPOSE [question - Skt] P+1 [he asks]
4 a(1): a geometric element of which it is postulated that at least two exist and that two suffice to determine a line + draw a distinction

archetypical character types - avatar vs. troll

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Left margin (top to bottom):

Event Horizon of the Frontier
∞
2ND/Choice of 1ST Magnitude
↓
Standard References
↓
Connect the Dots
↓
Constellation of Concepts
↓
The Big Picture Emerges
↓
Expanded Consciousness
↓
Exaltation
↓
Acting Captain
↓
Connect the dots
↓
Standard references of flow chart
↓
constellation of concepts
↓
the big picture emerges
↓
Course Corrections
↓
Change the Course of Thought
↓
Change the Course of Events...

1ST SAMPLE
2ND SAMPLE

By the time you've created an Exposition Plan for each story point you worked on in the Development phase, you'll have assembled a huge number of events, moments, and scenarios. There's only one thing left to do: tell your story!

→ Storytelling is a multi-faceted endeavor. It incorporates style, timing, blending of several story points into full-bodied scenes, sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, and good old-fashioned charisma.

Story Mechanics often get stuck at this point. They write one great line and become so intimidated by its grandeur they are afraid to write anything else lest it not measure up to that initial quality.

→ Fact is, you're only as good as your own talent - GET OVER IT! Don't grieve over every phrase to try and make yourself look better than you are. Just spew out the words and get the story told. Something not up to snuff? That's what re-writes are for!

→ Get in touch with your own passions. Each of us is born a passionate human being. But we quickly learn that the world does not appreciate all our emotional expressions. In no time, we develop a whole bag of behaviors that don't truly reflect who we really are. But, they do help us get by.

Problem is, these false presentations of our selves appear to be our real selves to everyone else. So, they give us presents we don't really want, make friendships with people we don't really like, and even marry people we don't really love!

This false life we develop is a mask, but by no means is it always a well-fitting one. In fact, it chafes against the real "us." The emotional irritation could be eliminated if we removed the mask, but then we ~~risk loss !~~ might lose our jobs, friends, and lovers because they might find the actual people we are to be total strangers and not someone they like. *image vs. identity*

✱→ So instead, we just tighten the mask down so hard it becomes an exo-skeleton, part of what we call *shell → we become hollowed out → empty shells* "ourselves." In fact, after a time, we forget we are even wearing a mask. We come to believe that this is who we really are.

Now, try getting in touch with your passions through that! The mask dampens any emotional energy we have and our writing dribbles out like pablum.

Wanna' really be passionate? Then try this: Lock the doors, take the phone off the hook, search for hidden video cameras, and then sit down to write. For just one page, write about the one thing about yourself you are most afraid that anyone would ever find out.

By writing about your most shameful or embarrassing trait or action, you will tap right through that mask into the your feelings. And a gusher of passion will burst out of the hole.

Once you know where to find the oil field of your soul, you can drill down into it any time you like. Of course, every time you draw from that well, you put more cracks in the mask. Eventually, the darn thing might shatter altogether, leaving you unable to be anyone but yourself with your boss, your friends, and your lover. Downside risk: you might lose them all. But, you'll be a far better writer.

And finally, go for broke. Exaggerate and carry everything you do to the extreme. It is far easier to go overboard and then temper it back in a re-write than to underplay your work and have to try and beef it up.

Remember, there is only one cardinal sin in Story Weaving, and that is boring your audience!

There are far more tips, tricks, and techniques than we can fit into this single article. But by applying even these few, you will be well on your way to being a Story Weaver - NOT a Story Mechanic!

Writing Exercises

Inspiration:

1. Keep a log of the times and places you are most inspired. See if you can spot patterns and trends to help you schedule where and when to write.

2. Try the Synthesis Technique. Subject yourself to two different sources of information, such as reading a magazine while listening to a talk radio program. Jot down the creative ideas that come to mind.

3. Write three nonsense words, such as "Red Dog Rover" and list as many different meanings as you can for your nonsense phrase. Look over the list to see if any spur ideas for stories you might want to tell.

Development:

1. Write a short log line, or get one from a TV listing, and expand it from what is stated to what is inferred.

2. Take the expanded log line and add your own material that is consistent with the log line, but was not inferred at all.

Exposition:

1. From a story you have written, or a story idea you are developing, devise 5 different ways of revealing the nature of the goal.

2. Devise several ways of revealing other story points, such as your Main Character's person problem or drive, the consequences if the goal is not met, or the moral conflict at the heart of your story.

Storytelling:

1. When all alone, write about your most embarrassing or private secret as a means of getting in touch with your passion. (Be sure to destroy all the materials when you are done!)

2. Take a paragraph from something you have written, then re-write it in an exaggerated manner. Put it way over the top. Then, tone it down to a reasonable level and compare it to the original. See if some of the changes might actually work more passionately than the first draft.

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Story Weaving - Story Structure for Passionate Writers

[handwritten top right: clear as a bell... resonant ring of truth... visualize the flame of the burning match moving towards the collective of match tips... to ignite!..]

We all know that a story needs a sound structure. But no one reads a book or goes to a movie to enjoy a good structure. And no author writes because he or she is driven to create a great structure. Rather, *[handwritten: system builder? * awareness... function... structure...]* audiences and authors come to opposite sides of a story because of their passions - the author driven to express his or hers, and the audience hoping to ignite its own. *[handwritten: passion [suffering, being acted upon, to suffer - more @ patient] 3: the state or capacity of being acted on by external agents or forces - x DAB.]*

[handwritten right margin: impact - IMPACT excitation IMPARTS imparts EXCITATION impact x impact we are moved - imparts to impel]

What draws us to a story in the first place is our attraction to the subject matter and the style. As an audience, we might be intrigued by the potential applications of a new discovery of science, the exploration of a newly rediscovered ancient city, or the life of a celebrity. We might love a taut mystery, a fulfilling romance, or a chilling horror story. *[handwritten: True power is... the ability to act or produce an effect and the capacity for being acted upon or undergoing an effect.]*

As authors what inspires us to write a story may be a bit of dialog we heard in a restaurant, a notion for *[handwritten: impel]* a character, a setting, time period, or a clever twist of plot we'd like to explore. Or, we might have a deep-seated need to express a childhood experience, work out an irrational fear, or make a public statement about a social injustice.

No matter what our attraction as audience or author, our passions trigger our imaginations. So why *[handwritten: and our]* should an author worry about structure? Because passion rides on structure, and if the structure is flawed or even broken, then the passionate expression from author to audience will fail.

Structure, when created properly, is invisible, serving only as the carrier wave that delivers the passion to the audience. But when structure is flawed, it adds static to the flow of emotion, breaking up and *[handwritten: signal to noise]* possibly scrambling the passion so badly that the audience does not "hear" the author's message.

The attempt to ensure a sound structure is an intellectual pursuit. Questions such as "Who is my Protagonist?" "Where should my story begin?" "What happens in Act Two?" or "What is my message?" force an author to turn away from his or her passion and embrace logistics instead.

As a result, authors often becomes mired in the nuts and bolts of storytelling, staring at a blank page not because of a lack of inspiration, but because they can't figure out how to make their passions make sense.

Worse, the re-writing process is often grueling and frustrating, forcing the author to accept unwanted changes in the flow of emotion for the sake of logic. So what is an author to do? Is there any way out of this dilemma?

Absolutely! In fact, there are quite a number of techniques that can accommodate the demands of structure without hobbling the Muse. In my StoryWeaving seminar the entire focus is on the different approaches that can be used to develop a sound story without undermining our creative drive. But of all of these, there is one that stands above the rest.

Tricking the Muse: The Creativity Two-Step

StoryWeaving - Avoiding the Genre Trap

A common misconception sees genre as a fixed list of dramatic requirements or a rigid structural template from which there can be no deviation. Writers laboring under these restrictions often find themselves boxed-in creatively. They become snared in the Genre Trap, cranking out stories that are indistinguishable from a whole crop of their contemporaries

In fact, genre should be a fluid and organic entity that grows from each story individually. Such stories are surprising, notable, memorable, and involving. In this article, you'll learn a new flexible technique for creating stories that are unique within their genres.

How We Fall Into the Genre Trap

The first step in escaping from the Genre Trap is to understand how we fall into it in the first place. Consider how wrapped up you become in the details of your story. You slave over every plot point, struggle to empathize with every one of your characters, and perhaps even grieve over the effort to instill a passionate theme.

The problem is, you become so buried in the elements of your story that you lose sight of what it feels like as a whole. So while every piece may work individually, the overall impact may be fragmented, incomplete, or inconsistent. To avoid this, we fall back on "proven" structures of successful stories in a similar genre. We cut out parts of our story that don't fit that template, and add new sections to fill the gaps. We snip and hammer until our story follows along the dotted lines.

And lo and behold, we have fallen into the genre trap - taking our original new idea and making it just like somebody else's old idea. Sure, the trappings are different. Our characters have different names. The big battle between good and evil takes place in a roller rink instead of a submarine. But underneath it all, the mood, timber, and feel of our story is just like the hundred others stamped out in the same genre mold.

A New Definition of Genre

Rather than thinking of your story as a structure, a template, or a genre, stand back a bit and look at your story as it appears to your reader or audience. To them, every story has a personality of its own, almost as if it were a human being. From this perspective, stories fall into personality types, just like real people. *Two Steps Back*

When you meet someone for the first time, you might initially classify them as a Nerd, a Bully, a Wisecracker, a Philanthropist, or a Thinker.

These, of course, are just first impressions, and if you get the chance to spend some time with each person, you begin to discover a number of traits and quirks that set them apart from any other individual in that personality type.

Similarly, when you encounter a story for the first time, you likely classify it as a Western, a Romance, a Space Opera, or a Buddy Picture. Essentially, you see the personality of the story as a Stereotype.

At first, stories are easy to classify because you know nothing about them but the basic broad strokes. But as a story unfolds, it reveals its own unique qualities that transform it from another faceless tale in the crowd to a one-of-a-kind experience with its own identity.

At least, that is what it ought to do. But if you have fallen into the Genre Trap, you actually edit out all the elements that make your story different and add others that make it the same. All in the name of the Almighty Genre Templates

How to Avoid the Genre Trap

Avoiding the Genre Trap is not only easy, but creatively inspiring as well! The process can begin at the very start of your story's development (though you can apply this technique for re-writes as well).

Step One - Choosing Genres:

Make a list of all the Stereotypical Genres that have elements you might want to include in the story you are currently developing. For example, you might want to consider aspects of a Western, a Space Opera, a Romance, and a Horror Story.

Step Two - Listing Genre Elements:

List all the elements of each of these genres that intrigue you in general. For example:

Western - Brawl in the Saloon, Showdown Gunfight, Chase on Horseback, Lost Gold Mine, Desert, Indians.

Space Opera - Time Warp, Laser Battle, Exploding Planet, Alien Race, Spaceship Battle, Ancient Ruins.

Romance - Boy Meets Girl, Boy Loses Girl, Boy Gets Girl, Misunderstanding alienates Boy and Girl, Rival for Girl throws out Misinformation, Last Minute Reveal of the Truth leading to Joyful Reunion.

Horror Story - Series of Grizzly and Inventive Murders, The Evil Gradually Closes in on the Heroes, Scary Isolated Location, Massive Rainstorm with Lightning and Thunder.

(Note that some genre elements are about setting, some about action, and some about character relationships. That's why it is so hard to say what genre is. And it is also why looking at genre as a story's Personality Type is so useful.

Step Three - Selecting Genre Elements:

From the lists of elements you have created, pick and choose elements from each of the genres that you might like to actually include in your story.

For example, from Western you might want Lost Gold Mine, Desert, and Indians. From Space Opera you might choose Spaceship Battle, Exploding Planet and Alien Race. Romance would offer up all the elements you had listed: Boy Meets Girl, Boy Loses Girl, Boy Gets Girl, Misunderstanding alienates Boy and Girl, Rival for Girl throws our Misinformation, Last Minute Reveal of the Truth leading to Joyful Reunion. And finally, from Horror Story you might select Scary Isolated Location, Massive Rainstorm with Lightning and Thunder.

Step Four - Cross Pollinating Genres:

From this Master List of Genre Elements that you might like to include in your story, see if any of the elements from one genre have a tie-in with those from another genre.

For example, Indians from the Western and Alien Race from the Space Opera could become a race of aliens on a planet that share many of the qualities of the American Indian. And, the relationship between the boy and the girl easily becomes a Romeo and Juliet saga of a human boy colonizing the planet who falls in love with an alien girl.

Step Five - Peppering Your Story with Genre Elements:

Once you've chosen your elements and cross-pollinated others, you need to determine where in your story to place them. If you are stuck in a Genre Trap, there is a tendency to try and get all the genre elements working right up front so that the genre is clear to the reader/audience.

This is like trying to know everything there is to discover about a person as soon as you meet him or her. It is more like a resume than an introduction. The effect is to overload the front end of the story with more information than can be assimilated, and have nowhere left to go when the reader/audience wants to get to know the story's personality better as the story unfolds.

So, make a timeline of the key story points in your plot. Add in any principal character moments of growth, discovery, or conflict. Now, into that timeline pepper the genre elements you have developed for your story. *conflict... discovery... growth*

For example, you might decide to end with a massive spaceship battle, or you could choose to open with one. The information about the Alien Race being like the America Indians might be right up front in the Teaser, or you could choose to reveal it in the middle of the second act as a pivotal turning point in the story.

Because genre elements are often atmospheric in nature, they can frequently be placed just about anywhere without greatly affecting the essential flow of the plot or the pace of character growth.

As you look at your timeline, you can see and control the reader's first impressions of the story genre. And you can anticipate the ongoing mood changes in your story's feel as additional elements in its personality are revealed, scene by scene or chapter by chapter.

What about Re-writes?

Not everyone wants to start a story with genre development. In fact, you might want to go through an entire draft and then determine what genre elements you'd like to add to what you already have.

The process is the same. Just list the genres that have elements you might wish to include. List the elements in each that intrigue you. Select the ones that would fit nicely into your story. Cross-Pollinate where you can. Pepper them into your existing timeline to fill gaps where the story bogs down and to reveal your story as a unique personality.

Summing Up the Sum of the Parts

Genre is part setting, part action, part character, and part story-telling style. Trying to follow a fixed template turns your story into just another clone. But by recognizing that genre is really a story's personality type, you can make it as individual as you like. And by peppering your elements throughout your story's timeline, you will create first impressions that will capture your reader or audience and then hold their interest as your story's one-of-a-kind personality reveals itself.

Coming Apart at the Themes

Even when a story has memorable characters, a riveting plot and a fully developed genre, it may still be coming apart at the themes. *core concepts* → *central theme* / *my perspective(s) to share* *our story to tell*

Theme is perhaps the most powerful, yet least understood element of story structure. It is powerful because theme is an emotional argument: It speaks directly to the heart of the reader or audience. It is least understood because of its intangible nature, working behind the scenes, and between the lines.

When misused, theme can become a ham-handed moral statement in black and white, alienating the reader/audience with its dogmatic pontifications. When properly used, theme can add richness, nuance, and meaning to a story that would otherwise be no more than a series of events.

In this article, we'll separate the elements of theme by their dramatic functions so we can understand the parts. Then we'll learn how to combine them together into a strong message that is greater than the sum of the parts.

What do we really mean by the word, "theme?" In fact, "theme" has two meanings. The first meaning is not unlike that of a teacher telling a class to write a theme paper. We've all received assignments in school requiring us to express our thoughts about "how we spent our summer vacation," or "the impact of industrialization on 19th century culture morality," or "death." Each of these "themes" is a topic, nothing more, and nothing less. It functions to describe the subject matter that will be explored in the work, be it a paper, novel, stage play, teleplay, or movie.

Every story needs a thematic topic to help hold the overall content of the story together, to act as a unifying element through which the plot unfolds and the characters grow. In fact, you might look at the thematic topic as the growth medium in which the story develops. Although an interesting area to explore, the real focus of this article is on the other element of theme. → *matrix?*

This second aspect of theme is the message or premise of your story. A premise is a moral statement about the value of or troubles caused by an element of human character. For example, some common premises include, "Greed leads to Self-Destruction," and "True love overcomes all obstacles."

A story without a premise seems pointless, but a story with an overstated message comes off as preachy. While a premise is a good way to understand what a story is trying to prove, it provides precious little help on how to go about proving it. Let's begin by examining the components of "premise" and then laying out a sure-fire method for developing an emotional argument that will lead your reader or audience to the moral conclusions of your story without hitting them over the head.

All premises grow from character. Usually, the premise revolves around the Main Character. In fact, we might define the Main Character as the one who grapples with the story's moral dilemma.

A Main Character's moral dilemma may be a huge issue, such as the ultimate change in Scrooge when he leaves behind his greedy ways and becomes a generous, giving person. Or, the dilemma may be small, as when Luke Skywalker finally gains enough faith in himself to turn off the targeting computer and trust

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his own instincts in the original Star Wars (Episode IV). Either way, if the premise isn't there at all, the Main Character will seem more like some guy dealing with issues, than an example in human development from whom we can learn.

Traditionally, premises such as these are stated in the form, "This leads to That." In the examples above, the premises would be "Greed leads to Self Destruction," and "Trusting in Oneself leads to Success." The Point of each premise is the human quality being explored: "Greed" in the case of Scrooge and "Self Trust" with Luke.

We can easily see these premises in A Christmas Carol and Star Wars, but what if you were simply given either of them and told to write a story around them? Premises are great for boiling a story's message down to its essence, but are not at all useful for figuring out how to develop a message in the first place.

Arguing to your audience that Greed is Bad creates a one-sided argument. But arguing the relative merits of Greed vs. Generosity provides both sides of the argument and lets your audience decide for itself. Crafting such an argument will lead your reader or audience to your conclusions without forcing it upon them. Therefore, you will be more likely to convince them rather than having them reject your premise as a matter of principle, making themselves impervious to your message rather than swallowing it whole.

To create such an argument, follow these steps:

1. Determine what you want your story's message to be

We all have human qualities we admire and others we despise. Some might be as large as putting oneself first no matter how much damage it does to others. Some might be as small as someone who borrows things and never gets around to returning them. Regardless, your message at this stage will simply take the form, "Human Quality X is Bad," or "Human Quality Y is Good."

If you are going to create a message that is passionate, look to what truly irks you, or truly inspires you, and select that human quality to give to your Main Character. Then, you'll find it far easier to come up with specific examples of that quality to include in your story, and you will write about it with vigor.

This is your chance to get up on the soapbox. Don't waste it on some grand classic human trait that really means nothing to you personally. Pick something you really care about and sound off by showing how that trait ennobles or undermines your Main Character.

As a last resort, look to your characters and plot and let them suggest your thematic point. See what kinds of situations are going to arise in your story; what kinds of obstacles will be faced. Think of the human qualities that would make the effort to achieve the story's goal the most difficult, exacerbate the obstacles, and gum up the works. Give that trait to your Main Character, and you'll be pleasantly surprised to see it take on a life of its own.

Of course, you may already know your message before you even get started. You may, in fact, have as your primary purpose in creating the story the intent to make a point about a particular human quality.

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No matter how you come up with your message, once you have it, move on to step 2.

2. Determine your Counterpoint

As described earlier, the Counterpoint is the opposite of the Point. So, if your story's message is "Being Closed-Minded is Bad," then your Point is "Being Closed Minded," and your Counterpoint is "Being Open Minded."

Similarly, if your message is "Borrowing things from others and not returning them is Bad," then your counter point is "Borrowing things from other and returning them."

Note that we didn't include the value judgment part of the message (i.e. "Good" or "Bad") as part of the point or counterpoint. The idea is to let the audience arrive at that conclusion for themselves. The point and counterpoint simply show both sides of the argument. Our next step will be to work out how we are going to lead the audience to come to the conclusion we want them to have.

3. Show how well the Point does vs. the Counterpoint

The idea here is to see each of the two human qualities (point and counterpoint) in action in your story to illustrate how well each one fares. To this end, come up with as many illustrations as you can of each.

For example, in A Christmas Carol, we see Scrooge deny an extension on a loan, refuse to allow Cratchit a piece of coal, decline to make a donation to the poor. Each of these moments fully illustrates the impact of the thematic point of "Greed."

Similarly, in the same story, we see Fezziwig spending his money for a Christmas Party for his employees, Scrooge's nephew inviting him to dinner, and Cratchit giving of his time to Tiny Tim. Generosity is seen in action as well.

Each instance of Greed propagates ill feelings. Each instance of Generosity propagates positive feelings. As the illustrations layer upon one another over the course of the story, the emotional argument is made that Greed is not a positive trait, whereas Generosity is.

4. Avoid comparing the Point and Counterpoint directly

Perhaps the greatest mistake in making a thematic argument is to directly compare the relative value of the point and counterpoint. If this is done, it takes all decision away from the audience and puts it right in the hands of the author.

The effect is to have the author repeatedly saying, "Generosity is better than Greed, Generosity is better than Greed," like a sound loop.

A better way is to show Greed at work in its own scenes, and Generosity at work in completely different scenes. In this manner, the audience is left to draw its own conclusions. And while showing Greed as always wholly bad and Generosity as always wholly good may create a rather melodramatic message, at least the audience won't feel as if you've crammed it down its throat!

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5. Shade the degree that Point and Counterpoint are Good or Bad

Because you are going to include multiple instances or illustrations of the goodness or badness or your point and counter point, you don't have to try to prove your message completely in each individual scene.

Rather, let the point be really bad sometimes, and just a little negative others. In this manner, Greed may start out just appearing to be irritating, but by the end of the story, may affect life and death issues. Or Greed may have devastating effects, but ultimately only be a minor thorn in people's sides. And, of course, you may choose to jump around, showing some examples of major problems with Greed and others that see it in not so dark a light. Similarly, not every illustration of your Counterpoint has to carry the same weight.

In the end, the audience will subconsciously average together all of the illustrations of the point, and also average together all the illustrations of the counterpoint, and arrive at a relative value of one to the other.

For example, if you create an arbitrary scale of +5 down to -5 to assign a value of being REALLY Good (+5) or REALLY Bad (-5), Greed might start out at -2 in one scene, be -4 in other, and -1 in a third. The statement here is that Greed is always bad, but not totally AWFUL, just bad.

Then, you do the same with the counterpoint. Generosity starts out as a +4, then shows up as a +1, and finally ends up as a +3. This makes the statement that Generosity is Good. Not the end-all of the Greatest Good, but pretty darn good!

At the end of such a story, instead of making the blanket statement that Greed is Bad and Generosity is Good, you are simply stating that Generosity is better than Greed. That is a lot easier for an audience to accept, since human qualities in real life are seldom all good or all bad.

But there is more you can do with this. What if Generosity is mostly good, but occasionally has negative effects? Suppose you show several scenes illustrating the impact of Generosity, but in one of them, someone is going to share his meal, but in the process, drops the plate, the food is ruined, and no one gets to eat. Well, in that particular case, Greed would have at least fed one of them! So, you might rate that scene on your arbitrary scale as a -2 for Generosity.

Similarly, Greed might actually be shown as slightly Good in a scene. But at the end of the day, all of the instances of Greed still add up to a negative. For example, scene one of Greed might be a -4, scene two a +2 and scene three a -5. Add them together and Greed comes out to be a -7 overall. And that is how the audience will see it as well.

This approach gives us the opportunity to do some really intriguing things in our thematic argument. What if both Greed and Generosity were shown to be bad, overall? By adding up the numbers of the arbitrary scale, you could argue that every time Greed is used, it causes problems, but ever time Generosity is used, it also causes problems. But in the end, Greed is a -12 and Generosity is only a -3, proving that Generosity, in this case, is the lesser of two evils.

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Or what if they both added up Good in the end? Then your message might be that Generosity is the greater of two goods! But they could also end up equally bad, or equally good (Greed at -3 and Generosity at -3, for example). This would be a message that in this story's particular situations, being Greedy or Generous doesn't really matter, either way, you'll make the situation worse.

In fact, both might end up with a rating of zero, making the statement that neither Greed nor Generosity has any real impact on the situation, in the end.

Now, you have the opportunity to create dilemmas for your Main Character that are far more realistic and far less moralistic. And by having both point and counterpoint spend some time in the Good column and some time in the Bad column over the course of your story, you are able to mirror the real life values of our human qualities and their impact on those around us.

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Do you want only simple, specific tips, or something wider and deeper?

The Who, What, When, Where, How, and Why Approach...

It's a very old journalistic cliché that stories should always contain answers to these six questions: What? Who? Where? When? How? Why? For example, a story about a murder could accomplish all of this in a single sentence: "Jones was murdered in his own home last evening by a neighbor using a shotgun in revenge for Jones' insults to the neighbor's wife."

It seems to me that more and more articles on the web are leaving aside this pattern to move to the "x simple tips on how to do y" format. There's nothing wrong with such an approach — indeed, it's clearly popular — but it implies that you already know the answers to the other five questions. Only the "how?" item remains, since that is all such articles address.

In my own experience, this is rarely the case. Most often, people do *not* know the answers to the other questions. They are either ignored or blithely assumed to be obvious.

Questions for a New Year

With a New Year upon us, you may be thinking about resolutions. Will it be enough to address only the "how?" issues? I think that one of the reasons why so many resolutions fail to last beyond January is that they assume you have indeed answered all the other questions, when the reality is that none of them have been tackled.

My suggestion is this: that you make sure you ask yourself *all* the other questions, deliberately and carefully, before even considering the "how" of anything, whether the ways be simple or not. Try this sequence:

- **What** are the issues facing you in your life? Have you thought about them carefully enough to put them into some order of priority, assuming that tackling them all at once is likely to be more than you can handle? Are you clear about exactly what they are? Do you understand them as fully as possible?
- **Why** does it matter that you should deal with any of them? Is there something you wish to achieve; or something you think you need to change? What is your purpose in taking action? Are you sure that it is a purpose you truly believe in and can stick with long enough?
- **When** should you start? Is now the right time? Are circumstances favorable enough? Would it be better to wait and see how events turn out? Are you in danger of rushing into short-term action when a long-term approach is needed?
- **Where** should you begin? Which aspect of the problem or change should be tackled first? Is it the most important or the most pressing, since these typically refer to *two* aspects of any problem, not one?
- **Who** do you need on your side? Who has to help you — or at least stand aside — if you are going to succeed? Few matters of any real importance can be dealt with without assistance from

others.. . . and, finally . . .

- **How** should you do it? What is the best approach? What skills or techniques will you need? What can you learn from others' experiences to assist you?

Dealing with specifics

As journalists have found for hundreds of years, all six questions are essential. Missing any of them leaves a gap that must be filled by assumptions or imagination. Just so, relying entirely on "x simple tips on how to do y" is likely to leave you guessing on such key questions as whether it's worth doing anyway, or worth doing right now.

Best of all, the six questions can be adapted easily to cover almost any situation. Considering a change of job or career? Try this sequence:

- **What** would suit you better than what you have now?
- **Why** do you want to change? Is it a good enough reason?
- **When** is the best time to make a move? Should you wait to seek how things turn out in a few months? Is this the right time for your long-term career hopes to make a move?
- **Where** might offer you a better position? Another company? Another location? Another type of work altogether?
- **Who** else do you need to consider? Partner? Family? Friends? Colleagues? Who might be able to help you or put in a good word with a prospective employer?
- **How** should you go about it, taking into account the answers to all the previous questions?

If you think through the sequence carefully, you'll not only make a better career moves, you will have already prepared the answers to maybe 90% of interview questions.

Avoiding sound-bites and clichés

Don't be seduced by attractive sound-bites or simple-sounding, ready-made answers, when what you need are time to consider your situation fully and thoughtful questions to help you do so.

Don't jump to trying the "x simple ways" before you have spent sufficient time on deciding what you need to accomplish and why it matters.

There will be opportunity enough to work on the (purely tactical) "how?" after you have first dealt with the (strategic) issues the other five questions will raise for you. Time spent in reconnaissance, as the saying goes, is never wasted — especially if you want to come out on the winning side.

Turning-points

Turning-points ∧

A turning-point leads the plot into a new, different and unexpected direction. This can be caused by a decision, a piece of information, an incident or an understanding. It closes one <u>narrative unit</u> and creates a new narrative situation at the same time.
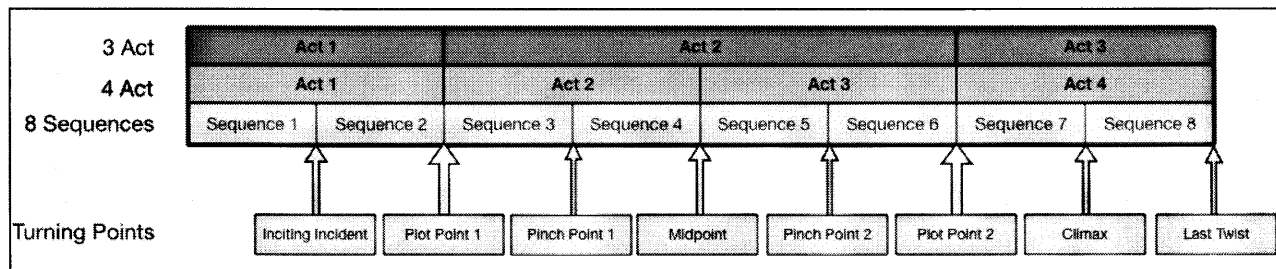
The function of turning-points is to break up linear plot development and to cement the audience's interest. To make sure that a story doesn't become predictable it is important that it doesn't move forward and end in a direct and straight forward way but that it moves along circuitously toward its resolution.

Each turn sets up a new question which needs to be answered by the following development: What are their effects on the subsequent progress of the film?

The time period between the set up of a question and its resolution depends on the change. While the dramatic arc of a small change my span over just one scene, the resolution of the <u>central question</u> lasts until the end of second <u>act</u>.

Major turning-points ∧

A <u>storyline</u> has up to five central turning points. These points redirect the plot in such a powerful way that it changes its course: a positive development becomes negative and a negative development turns positive. The most extreme form of a turning point is called a <u>reversal</u>.

3 Act	Act 1		Act 2				Act 3	
4 Act	Act 1		Act 2		Act 3		Act 4	
8 Sequences	Sequence 1	Sequence 2	Sequence 3	Sequence 4	Sequence 5	Sequence 6	Sequence 7	Sequence 8
Turning Points	Inciting Incident	Plot Point 1	Pinch Point 1	Midpoint	Pinch Point 2	Plot Point 2	Climax	Last Twist

The major turning-points are clearly defined and structurally fixed: <u>inciting incident</u>, <u>plot point 1</u>, <u>pinch point 1</u>, <u>midpoint</u>, <u>pinch point 2</u>, <u>plot point 2</u>, <u>climax</u> and <u>last twist</u>. The two plot points divide the three <u>acts</u>. Therefore they always cause a major change within the plot. Midpoint and climax, on the other hand, do not necessarily need to set off a major change. They merely offer the chance for a change/turn. This means that a story depending on its individual development passes through two to four major turns. The breakdown of the plot through the use of five key turning-points produces different <u>structural styles</u> of a film story.

Each storyline contains its own turning-points. The <u>A-storyline's</u> turning point defines the structure of the entire plot. The other storylines' turning-points connect the different story strands. This way the turning-point of one storyline has an effect on another storyline. The turning-point of a secondary storyline can cause a change/turn within the main storyline. The turning-points of various storylines

are clustered even without direct links to create a structural and dramatic unity of the story. Yet by placing them slightly apart they are linked without having their transitions blurred.

Micro turning-points ∧

Besides the <u>major turning points</u> a story also possesses a number of micro-turning-points representing merely gradual change. In principle it is possible and desirable to end each <u>sequence</u>, <u>scene</u>, <u>situation</u> and <u>action</u> with a change and therewith carry over into the next part of the film. The number of micro-turning-points is variable and their position is flexible.

Internal and external change point ∧

Generally a turn is composed of two parts: a break of an internal action (internal change point) and consequential new focus of the external course of action (external change point). A change, a revelation or disclosure may, for example, cause the main character to change their plan.

[handwritten: excite to activity / stir up, spur on / to move to action / to put in motion] *[handwritten: to seize, make fast, or correct, to strike or pierce]* *[handwritten: impact imparts excitation... we get stirred up...]* *[handwritten: impact]* *[handwritten: the veil of complexity]*

Inciting Incident ∧

The inciting incident (also called: **inciting event, hook, call to adventure, point of attack, catalyst**) gets the action rolling and sets up the <u>first plot point</u>. It is linked to the first plot point by showing its negative and positive prefix and thereby dividing the first <u>act</u> into two halves. The protagonist receives her impulse through the inciting incident. Here she is forced to deal with a specific task. She is dragged out of her habitual day to day life and pushed into alert.

Plot Point 1 ∧

The plot point 1 (also called: **break into act II, first revelation, point of no return**) separates the first from the second <u>act</u>. It leads the plot into an ascending positive or into a descending negative development. Ideally it embodies the best or worst case scenario for the <u>protagonist</u> depending on his exposition. By doing this the plot point 1 sets up the <u>central question</u> of the film which will affect the entire second act.

[handwritten: Choice of 1ST Magnitude... Standard of Measure... Choose Your Treasure!... I.F.F. willful intent]

Pinch Point 1 ∧

The first pinch point occurs after the first quarter of the second <u>act</u> – i.e. after approx. 3/8 of the story. It provides the protagonist with new clues and reveals the <u>main</u> <u>conflict</u> of the story. At the same time it serves as a reminder of the antagonist's power by making the protagonist feel the "pinch" of the antagonistic force. Thus it sets up the next 1/8th of the story.

[handwritten: Conflict of Forces... Sustainability vs. Extinction]

Midpoint ∧

As its name points out the midpoint is in the middle of the second <u>act</u> and divides the entire story into two halves. It offers a possible turning-point. This means that at this point of the story a change/turn may occur but doesn't have to. It is also possible that the positive ascending or the negative descending development progresses until the <u>plot point 2</u>.

Pinch Point 2 ∧

[handwritten bottom right: TP 2 of 4]

The second pinch point mirrors the first pinch-scene – in its content as well as structure. It takes place after the third quarter of the second act – after approx. 5/8 of the story – and recalls the central conflict once again. At the same time, the second "pinch" foreshadows the confrontations that are yet to come, reminding both the protagonist and the audience what is at stake. Together the two pinch scenes act as the film's structural 'pliers'.

Plot Point 2 ^

Just like the plot point 1 the plot point 2 (also called: **break into act III**, **third revelation**) represents an obligatory turning-point of the overall story. It separates the second from the third act and constitutes the end of the central tension. It delivers the (preliminary) solution to the central question set up by the plot point 1.

Climax ^

The final tension of the film culminates in the climax (also called: **showdown**, **battle**, **resolution**). It divides the third act into two halves. The climax may confirm or reverse the result of the second plot point. Therefore the climax is a moment when the plot is ultimately determined. *The Apocalypse...*
the humility of (self) discovery... CONVERSION CASCADE
Unlike the other turning-points the climax is not only structurally defined. As the moment of highest tension in the film it also contains a substantial dimension: it is the result of the showdown in which the protagonist is tested existentially. *having. being in time and space : concerned with or involving an individual as radically free and responsible... command!...*
Here the protagonist has to prove what she's learned: it is the ultimate chokepoint she has to pass to achieve her 'want'. The climax is the funnel where all characters and storylines are brought together. Here is where all energies are clustered, where all incompatible objectives, interests and values of the conflicting parties clash. Everything that has been planted during the entire film is now paid off. The protagonist is challenged in her very own nature, mind and body at the same time. Her consciousness and perception are heightened. The audience's attention is increased through the use of suspense by withholding information from the protagonist.
hidden from view or lost to notice!...
Being confronted with his own mortality and fragility the protagonist feels the meaning and value of *exaltation;* life. He has to employ his sharpened senses as well as his newly accumulated knowledge of himself and *non-ordinary* the world. Now all his previous understanding and experience have to prove themselves in the real *intensification of a mental* world. At this point the protagonist and antagonist are most alike and yet this conflict of values exposes *competing* *state or the* their crucial difference. The film's theme and its truth are promptly revealed to the audience. Now the *ideologies* *power of* *a function...* story grows beyond its narrative – i.e. temporal, spatial and individual – limitations and offers universal connections. *enduring and endearing principles and practices...*

When it is said that the end of a movie is the most crucial element what is really meant is the climax. It is the concentric point of the film – this is where everything radiates from: forwards and backwards.
to cleanse, purge, pure redeem
The climax passes over to the catharsis of the protagonist and the audience.
An 'anti-climax' occurs when the expectations regarding the climax are not met and the climax simply doesn't happen.
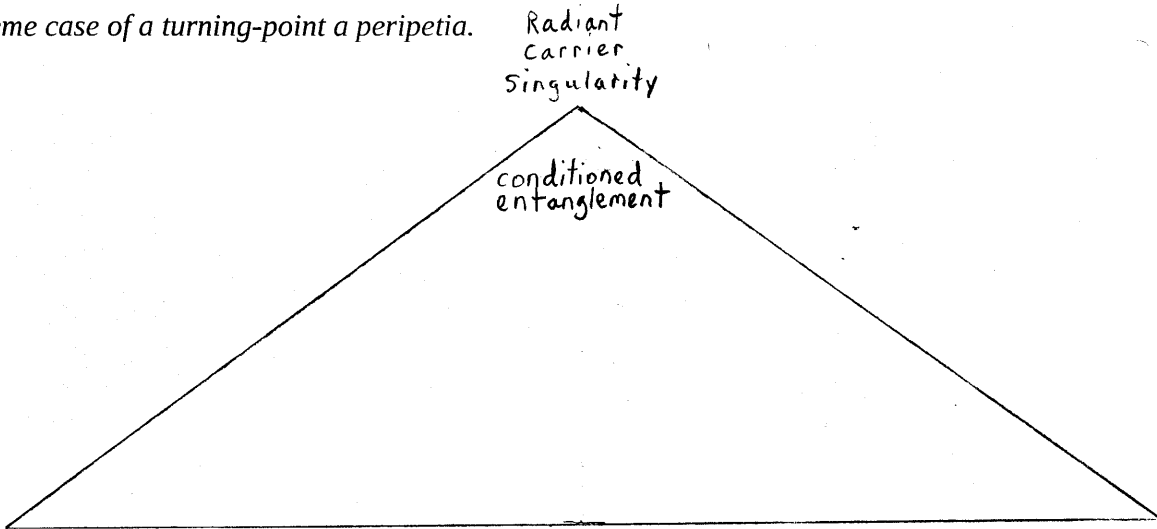
Last Twist ^

Instead of the apparent ending of the story there may be a completely unexpected turn of events right at the very end, often in the last scene or in the very last shots: the last twist.
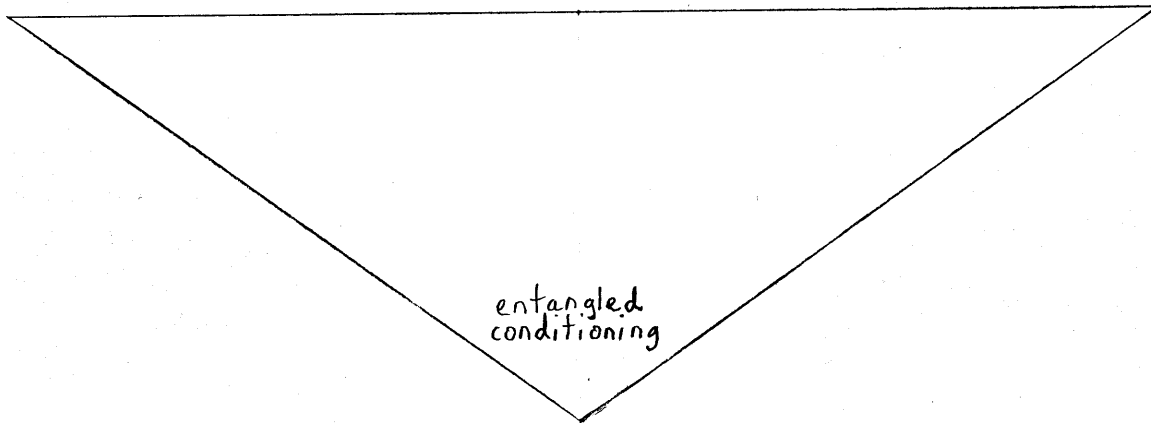*A prime example of a last twist is that the supposedly dead monster is not dead...*

Reversal ∧

When at the end of <u>act</u> two resp. in act three the events start culminating towards a resolution turning-points become reversals. That's how the plot can suddenly reverse into its opposite at the <u>plot point 2</u>, the <u>climax</u> or the <u>last twist</u> so that the protagonist is on an emotional roller coaster. Aristotle called this extreme case of a turning-point a peripetia.

Radiant
Carrier
Singularity

conditioned
entanglement

———————————— Macrocosm ————————————

entangled
conditioning

Microcosm
Signal
Reflector
Resonant
Vessel
Resonant
Ring
of
Truth
Exaltation

The 5 Movie Plot Points that Matter Most

Even when you're humming along toward pro-level screenwriter, it's still a useful exercise to <u>analyze stories</u>. Keep the skills sharp. Learn something new from the work of others.

So let's talk about one easy analysis exercise to keep your head in the game, even when you're not writing.

Analyzing a story's shape

Satisfying stories tend to have a natural shape: beginning, middle, and end. Setup, escalation, resolution.

What defines a shape are the turning points. (Without turning points, you'd just have a straight line.)

Every story (movie or screenplay) has turning points that define its shape. So if we look at those turning points, we'll be able to see the shape of the whole represented.

The turning points that define a story's shape are its major plot points. pivotal

So the easy exercise to keep your skills sharp is this: make it a practice to analyze the major plot points. Take a real look at the shape of every movie you see. Become adept at recognizing how they work.

What is a plot point?
time line vs. event line   sustainability vs.   enduring chain of custody   many bit
                            extinction...   current cast of characters parts...

The plot is the <u>sequence of events</u> in your story, in which we track a <u>character's pursuit of a goal</u> or   fewer
our story to tell   ↳consciousness –
objective. A plot point is an event that changes the character's orientation to that objective. At each plot   central
point, the character is either closer to or farther from the goal.   relative goals   roles...
           tele logical purpose   ↳ultimate goal (materialized   the part
                                    creative consciousness...)   of...
Very basically, when you're watching a movie, you're watching a character try to make progress   is being
toward his or her goal.   recreated
                          by...
                          Acting

The 5 important movie plot points

Not all plot points are created equal. Some plot points are the big turning points that define the shape of Captain
the story. If you know these important plot points, you know the story. Not every detail, but a sense of the whole.

What makes these five plot points so important? How do they define the shape of the story?
                                                                      /materialized
You get a sense of the whole in these plot points because they relate back to the story goal.< creative
   \consciousness
These are the essential points in the life cycle of the story goal. When you get down to it, these points show the birth, life, and death of the story goal. The beginning, middle, and end. The whole story of that goal, which is the whole story of that movie.

So what are the five most important plot points? They're actually four turning points and the outcome. How the whole thing shakes out. Here they are:

[handwritten: a glimpse] *[handwritten: Impact Imparts Excitation... we get stirred up..."True power is.."]*

1. Inciting Incident *[handwritten: If... cardinal awakening... Then... divine discontentment]*

2. Break (or turn) into Act 2

3. <u>Midpoint</u>

4. Break (or turn) into Act 3

5. Climax

Here's approximately how they line up, proportion-wise, in your movie:

|———-1———-2———————3———————4———-5>>>>—|
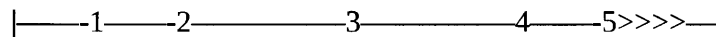
How do the major movie plot points relate to the story goal?

If the reason these five plot points are important is their relationship to the story goal, then we should probably look at how each of them relates to the goal.

[handwritten: cardinal awakening... catalytic conversion... conversion cascade...]

1. The **Inciting Incident** (or Catalyst, if you prefer) introduces a problem (or opportunity) the *[handwritten: you can't unring a bell]* protagonist must contend with, setting the story in motion by creating circumstances in which the *[handwritten: a glimpse... a flash of insight: DISCERNMENT]* protagonist will need to form the story goal. *[handwritten: a glimpse...]* *[handwritten: If... cardinal awakening (conversion)... Then...]*

[handwritten: sustainability... materialized creative consciousness... divine discontentment... Impact Imparts Excitation... We]

2. By the **Break Into Act 2** the main conflict is clear and the story goal is established, which the *[handwritten: get stirred up!...]* protagonist believes will address the problem/opportunity. It's his preferred or only solution to the *[handwritten: sustainability vs. extinction]* *[handwritten: conflict of forces...]* problem. *[handwritten: ... affect the course of events by affecting the course of thought... human conflict]*

[handwritten: -maintain status quo-]

3. The **Midpoint** raises the stakes and/or creates greater opposition to achieving the story goal, and as a *[handwritten: equal human rights... fair class privilege... competing ideologies...]* result injects new energy into the story and sometimes drastically changes the direction it's headed. *[handwritten: -course corrections-]*

[handwritten: awakening awareness/- the big picture emerges...]

4. The **Break Into Act 3** shows the protagonist's new "growth"/way of addressing the problem – now *[handwritten: ... the]* that he or she has been through the transformative events of this story. *[handwritten: (catalytic conversion..) (conversion cascades..) (emergence!..) casting of spells... the casting of roles...]* *[handwritten: current cast of characters enduring chain of custody]*

5. The **Climax** shows whether the goal is achieved or not, whether the problem is successfully addressed or not (aka how it all shakes out). *[handwritten: temporal cast of characters...]*

[handwritten: conversion cascade... Affect the course of events by affecting the course of thought... enduring chain of custody...]

Movie plot point examples

Die Hard

1. Inciting: Hans Gruber and the terrorists arrive at Nakatomi Plaza, where John McClane is trying to reconcile with his wife, Holly, during her company Christmas party. The terrorists are the problem, even though John isn't aware of them yet (though he will be shortly).

2. Break into 2: John has learned the terrorists are ruthless killers, and he's the only one who's not being held hostage at gunpoint, so he's the only one who can save them all. His story goal is to save the hostages from the terrorists.

[handwritten bottom right: 5PP 2 of 3]

3. Midpoint: Even though it looks like outside help is on the way and John thinks he can hand over responsibility, the terrorists are listening in so they have an advantage. And they're coming for John so they can get their detonators back in order to complete their plan. That's an increase in stakes and opposition.

4. Break into 3: The first time they come face to face, Hans pretends to be a hostage and John gives him a gun. A fatal misstep? No! John's two steps ahead of Hans this time. Their battle continues into Act 3, with John a bit wiser, a bit more insightful.

5. Climax: John realizes what Hans's real plan is, uses that info to save the hostages, and then faces off with Hans to save wife Holly. When the movie ends, we know John has solved his problem and saved his marriage.

Bridesmaids

1. Inciting: Annie's best friend, Lillian, announces her engagement and asks Annie to be her Maid of Honor. Annie's new problem is wanting/needing to be there for her best friend's celebration of happiness, while struggling with her own current trashfire of a life.

2. Break into 2: By the end of the engagement party, Annie has met rival Helen and the other bridesmaids and can see the challenge coming her way. Annie's story goal is to "win" as MoH, which means fending off Helen's attempts to show her up and take over as best friend.

3. Midpoint: Annie accidentally ruins the bachelorette party and Lillian tells her Helen will take over as MoH. Annie has lost her MoH position, and is now desperate to hold onto her place as Lillian's best friend (raising the stakes).

4. Break into 3: Annie has just tanked her friendship and been disinvited from Lillian's wedding altogether, as well as gotten in a fight with potential love interest Officer Rhodes. That was her rock bottom. Here we see her begin to change her ways: she says goodbye to her booty-call Ted. It's the start of her "growth" way of navigating the story.

5. Climax: Annie learns Lillian, the bride, is missing. Annie tracks her down and gives her the pep talk (and dress re-design) Lillian needs in order to walk down the aisle, and Annie is back in the wedding party. When the movie ends we know Annie has solved her problem – she's pulled off being Lillian's MoH and best friend, and she's made changes to put her own life back on the right track.

Studying screenwriting theory is great, but seeing how that theory shows up in actual movies (or screenplays) can drive the concepts home – and show you variations on the "rules." So the next time you're in research mode (aka bingeing movies), make sure to also look at them with an analytical eye. Note what happens at these important movie plot points and how they tell you the whole story.

What is a Plot Point?

We've all read a book without a plot point, or, should I say, without a point to the plot. Every story needs a <u>beginning, middle, and end</u> — we've known that for about two thousand years, thanks to good old Aristotle. But it doesn't stop there.

In this article, we'll show how plot points are used to move organically from the beginning to the middle to the end. Then, we'll cover the difference between a plot point and plot and why it's important to identify plot points. Finally, we'll map two popular books by only their plot points.

So…

What is a plot point? *If ... cardinal awakenings... Then ... divine discontentment.*

(k   an action ~ HAPPENING   impact imparts excitation... we get stirred up ... "True power is..."

A **plot point** is an incident that directly impacts what happens next in a story. In other words, it gives a point to the plot, forcing the story in a different direction, where otherwise it would've just meandered.

"draw a distinction" significant?,, ignore less!... due portion... infinite potential...

Any event in a story can be significant, but if it does not move the story forward, it is just a point in the plot— not a plot point. The latter must: *change the course of thought... conversion   see: Conversion #3 cascades*

change the course of events: cardinal awakenings...

1. Move the story in a different direction. *Course Corrections [hinge] to be contingent on a single consideration...conversion*
   Pivotal

2. Impact character development. *Impact Imparts Excitation... We Get Stirred Up...*
   "True power is..." recursive conversion cascade

3. Close a door behind a character, *forcing* them forward. *[divine discontentment*
   Cardinal Awakenings ... you can't unring a bell |most intense form of discontentment]

Think of it like a bolt, holding your story together: without it, you just have separate pieces of scrap metal. But connect them together and they form a whole, each piece informing the event before it and after it.

What's the difference between a plot point and plot?

Plot points are big and exciting moments, and if you think back on a book you read a while ago, they're likely the moments you'll remember. Because of this, it's easy to think of every event in a book as a plot point. But that's not always true.   *event line vs. time line*

chain of custody   odisclosure of what is known - to reveal [veil]

The <u>plot</u> is a chain of connected events that comprises <u>the narrative</u>. If one of those events does not *IMPACT   grid or mesh* have a concrete effect on the protagonist — and by extension, the trajectory of the plot — it is not a plot point. *cardinal awakenings - resonate ... excitation imparts impact...*
catalytic conversion... emergence... embodiment... soul = a properly clothed spirit

An advisor might berate a prince for mourning the death of his father, but this isn't a plot point because it isn't necessarily pivotal — it doesn't convince Hamlet to keep a stiff upper lip for the rest of his life, after all.

But, when the prince sees his father's ghost with his own eyes (and the ghost bids him to avenge its death), the prince has no choice but to act. There, you can see a plot point in motion, determining the story's course moving forward.   *♦ reveal vt [to uncover, reveal - re + to cover, veil]*

known ... know... discern   *1: to make known through divine inspiration*
discern vb [to separate, distinguish   *2: to make (something secret or hidden) publicly or*
between, apart + to sift - more   *generally known*
at DIS - CERTAIN] -
DISCRIMINATE   *-DAB: hidden or lost to notice*

Why is it important to identify plot points?

Mapping a story by its plot points illuminates why some books are page turners, while others never get turned past the first page.

awareness... function... structure

First and foremost, plot points show you how a story works. Remember how plot points are like bolts? That's not just because they hold the story together. It's also because they're tiny and significant. Once you link them together, you can understand how the whole story is built. *coordinate differences (distinctions)... correlated (connection, bonds that bind us in a shared experience)...*

*the big picture emerges*

Stories are not complicated at heart.

The good ones are a series of: *If → Then - juxtaposition relational statements-*

> *This* happened, *so* this happened, *but then* this happened, *therefore* this happened.

The bad ones are simply just:

> *This* happened, *and then* this happened, *and then* this happened... with nothing connecting the events organically.

Understanding when plot points occur in a story will give insight into whether any particular structure is being used. Some people argue that there only needs to be two plot points in a story, while others suggest much more, such as the Seven Point Story Structure we'll use as a model here.

Seven-point story structure
Focuses specifically on the highs and lows of a narrative.
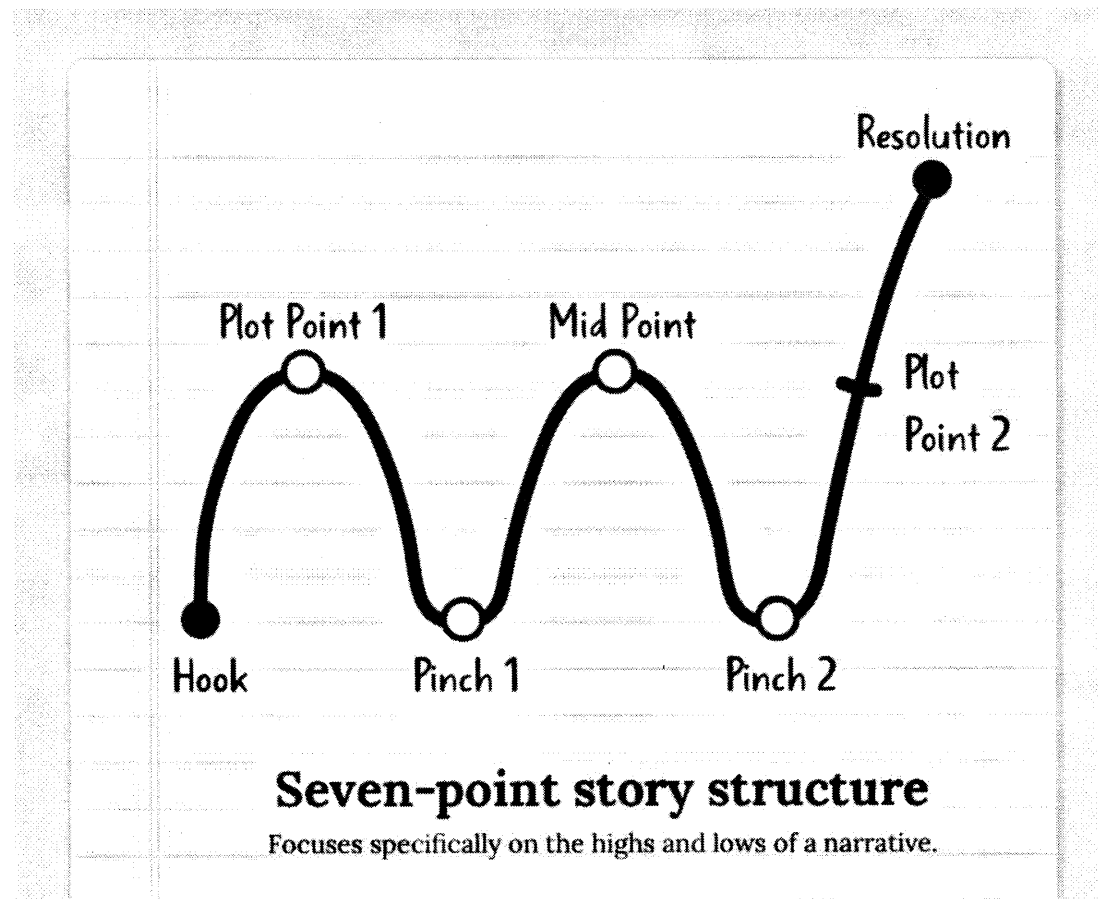
Let's look at two vastly different but equally classic books — Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* — to see how well-structured stories often work with similar plot points.

The Plot Points of *The Handmaid's Tale*

On the surface, the plot of Atwood's 1985 dystopian novel is thoroughly unique: a cocktail of historical precedence, futuristic speculation, unreliable narration, and a necessarily passive protagonist (as a woman living under a oppressive and sexist regime). All this might account for why it remains so popular to this day — in 2017, its TV adaptation swept the Emmys, and it was the most read book of that year <u>according to Amazon</u>.

However, dig a little deeper and you'll find that its structure is comparable to other great stories.

Hook

A story must <u>start off strong enough</u> to keep the reader, you know, actually reading. Many refer to this feature as the **Hook**, or the Back Story — the point that pushes ~~a novel into motion and automatically~~ ~~sets it apart from the millions of others out there.~~ *the novel premise into full view*

A great story can do this <u>off the strength</u> of its premise alone. From the start, Atwood <u>hooks us in</u> by introducing readers to the primary <u>conflict</u> of Offred's story: she is a woman in a world where women have no agency. We see <u>how</u> this conflict fits into ~~her~~ <u>day-to-day</u> life as Offred attends a Ceremony with her oppressor, The Commander. For her, <u>this is a horrible</u> but commonplace <u>routine</u>. But to the reader, it is new, and it hooks them with the desire to learn more.

— The Bridge Function —   convey... conveyance... transference [VEHICLE]

A premise itself <u>will</u> never be enough to ~~carry a novel~~. But it needs to be enough to hook the reader's interest long enough to keep them on the line, until the first big reveal comes around and reels them in.

*Margin notes: *conflict of forces, agency... capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power, sustainability vs. extinction... embodiment: soul: a properly clothed spirit... materialized creative consciousness operational) instrumentality mechanism*

First Plot Point

metaphysical big bang — materialized creative consciousness — caught a glimpse —
— Awakening Awareness —

The Hook sets the stage for the first Big Event, also referred to as the Catalyst, the Inciting Incident, or, simply, the **First Plot Point**. This occurs somewhere around the ¼ to ⅓ mark in the story and signals the end of the beginning. *Catalytic Conversion...*

Conflict of Forces... Human Conflict

This First Plot Point should force the protagonist into the conflict. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, it arises in the form of an invitation from The Commander to meet with Offred outside the Ceremony. In this world, such a meeting is expressly forbidden... and yet, so is acting against the wishes of a Commander. Thus, Offred is thrown free from the status quo, and the story changes course.

First Pinch Point   *Human Conflict*   *competing ideologies*

The middle of the story generally consists of the character reacting to the Big Event and its consequences. These are **Pinch Points**, and they put the character under pressure, forcing them to make a choice. *↳ awakening awareness...*

Characters will often spend this part of their story choosing to not act. Offred meets with The Commander. He coerces her into a sort-of affair, meeting with her regularly (albeit only to play Scrabble and read magazines) while hiding it from his Wife. Offred hesitates, but goes along with it. She has little choice in the matter but sees an opportunity to improve her situation if she can curry the Commander's favor.

So, we see her reacting to the jarring call to adventure, but mostly with passivity. It will take a major turning point for her to react to it actively.   conversion cascade(s)

* Midpoint   *Choice of 1ST Magnitude... Standard of Measure... Choose Your Treasure!*

Perhaps the most crucial plot point occurs near the middle of a story. The **Midpoint** is a crucial turning —pivotal— point that forces the protagonist to stop reacting and start acting.   Which house do you choose
proactive   to serve... a querum of a divisive body

Throughout the story, Offred has looked back on the memories of her old friend Moira, a rebellious   disunion...
firebrand who provides her with hope that it's still possible to exist in this world as an independent   dissension...
woman. However, when The Commander takes her to a brothel, Offred discovers Moira there, living   partisan and
freer than her modest counterparts, but still very much under the finger of the patriarchal regime.   contentious
Offred realizes there is no hope for her to operate within the confines of this society and still retain   quarreling...
some independence. Instead, she must take matters into her own hands.   Initiate... Avatar vs.   competing
ideologies
Minion... Troll

Final Pinch Point   the power of suggestion... the casting of spells...   (equal) human rights
vs
For the second half of the middle, the protagonist then experiments with agency, taking different (fair) class privilege
approaches to overcome the conflict. This is another **Pinch Point**: our protagonist reacts to or acts on   conservation
vs.
pressure and conflict, with middling success.   exploitation

Offred tests her boundaries with small acts of rebellion such as refusing breakfast, toying with matches,   "Earth
and even entering an affair with Nick, one of the servants on the property. They offer her no hope of   provides
overthrowing the regime or even attaining personal freedom, but they still give the character an agency   enough
that did not exist before. ... the casting of roles   means, medium, vehicle   to satisfy
supporting roles, supporting cast   INSTRUMENTALITY   every
man's
Final Plot Point   needs,
but not
Going into the third act (or the beginning of the end, so to speak) there is often one **Final Plot Point**.   every
This shows the protagonist at their lowest, having taken a profound misstep among their newfound   man's
actions which drives them directly into the Climax and Resolution.   Crisis... Acting Captain...   greed."
You Have The Bridge... Star Charting... Star to steer by... Individual Gifts... Pitch & Catch...
In this example, The Commander's wife discovers her husband's affair with Offred. This presents   Mahatma
Offred with an unpleasant choice — the terrifying uncertainty of seeking help in a world where she   Gandhi
trusts no one, or the deadly certainty of suicide.   Teamwork makes the dream work...
The bigger the dream, the bigger the team...
Resolution   River Pilot Analogy...

A great story will end on a Climax, Realization, and **Resolution**, a series of events that bring the story and character arc in full circle. Usually, these revolve around a choice presented to the protagonist. No matter the decision they make, it will reveal something important — either they've changed, or they haven't.   Conversion ... acting captain... you have the bridge

Journeyman   awaken ... work... play... rest (conditioned)

Master... A.C.E.   awaken... workplay... rest (emergent)
Wizard... Wiz   conversion cascade...

In Offred's case, she chooses the former and tells Nick that she thinks she's pregnant, reaching out and confiding in someone other than herself for the first time in the novel. This might not be the action-packed ending that comes to mind when you think of a **Climax**. However, it does exactly what it needs to do. It brings the conflict to a head and forces the character to make a crucial decision. At first, we saw Offred living in an oppressive, yet normalized certainty. By the end, she chooses agency over passivity, and uncertainty over certainty, no matter how dangerous it might be. This leads directly to the end, where Nick uses this information to break her out of The Commander's house.

No more <u>plot twists</u> exist here. The function of this point is simple: bring the story to a satisfying (if not necessarily happy) ending. The <u>conclusion of a story</u> doesn't need to be sunshine and roses. But it needs to feel natural, like everything that came before led necessarily to one place.

Thus, the bare bones of *The Handmaid's Tale* would look like such:

1. **Hook**: Offred is forced into a Ceremony with The Commander in a world where women have no agency.

2. **First Plot Point**: The Commander invites Offred to meet with him outside this ceremony, which is forbidden.

3. **First Pinch Point**: She enters into an affair with The Commander hoping to leverage it into independence.

4. **Midpoint**: They go together to a brothel where she finds even the most independent women are oppressed.

5. **Final Pinch Point**: She enters into an affair with Nick as an act of agency.

6. **Final Plot Point**: The Commander's Wife discovers that they have been together, so Offred must choose between certain death (suicide) and uncertain danger (confiding in someone she isn't sure if she can trust).

7. **Resolution**: Offred makes her choice, telling Nick that she's pregnant, so she is rescued.

Presented like so, it becomes apparent that each plot point feels like the natural extension of the last and moves seamlessly to the next. This creates the desired effect of any well structured story: an ending that feels both like a surprise and the only possible outcome when looking back.