

How to Write Flash Fiction

(and the organic writing method)

Jerry Guarino

Imagination
is more important
than knowledge.
Knowledge is limited.

Imagination
encircles the world.

- Albert Einstein -

Class Outline

Week 1- Imagination and overview of the writing process

- Story World
- Characters
- Plot and Structure
- Conflict and Resolution
- Theme

Week 2 - How stories are constructed. Your story world. Learning from the master storytellers.

Week 3 – Conflict and Resolution. Getting in and out of trouble.

Week 4 – Genres and Subgenres

Week 5 – Openings and Endings. The short and winding road.

Week 6 – Characters – Your actors carry the story – pebble people and putty people.

Week 7 – Themes, Plots and Subplots – Theme and the importance of a universal message.

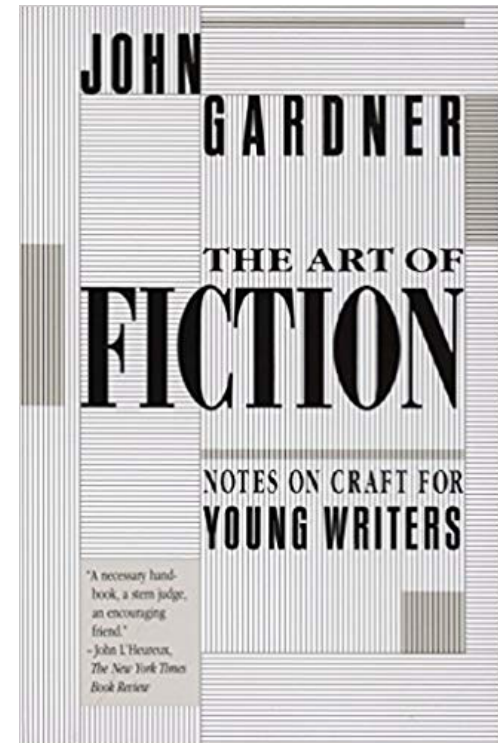
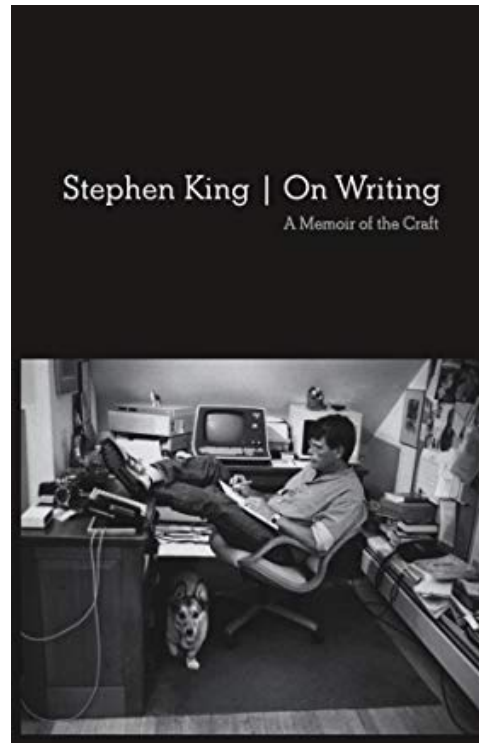
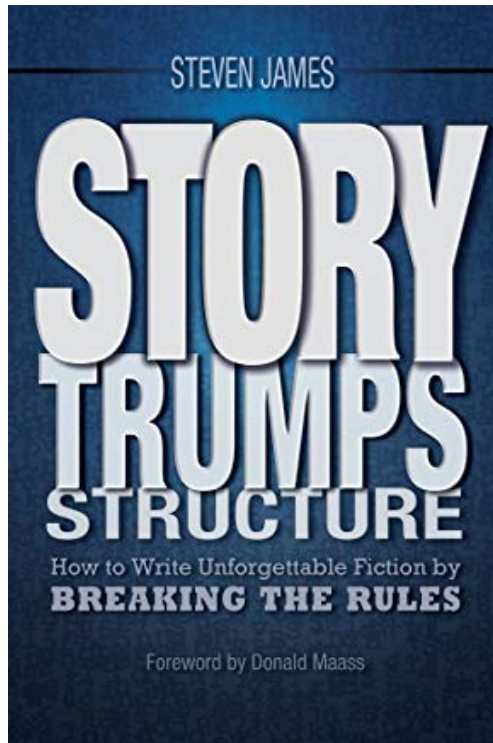
Week 8 – Dialogue and Subtext – What is said, and what is unsaid but understood.

Week 9 – Story vs Discourse – folding and unfolding a story.

Week 10 – Software and Publishing – how to submit for publication.

Resources

- The class is outlined at: <https://cafestories.net/ymca-writing-class-2022> - let's review what is there for you.
- At the end of our course, you will have a flash fiction story completed and ready to submit for publication.
- Follow up questions can be sent to me at: jgauthor@icloud.com
- My website is: <http://cafestories.net> There you can find hundreds of resources for writing fiction.
- Your handouts: Flash Fiction worksheet, Structure Types, Organic Writing (2) pages, Stephen James' "5 Ingredients Every Story Should Have", James Scott Bell's "5 Biggest Fiction Mistakes"

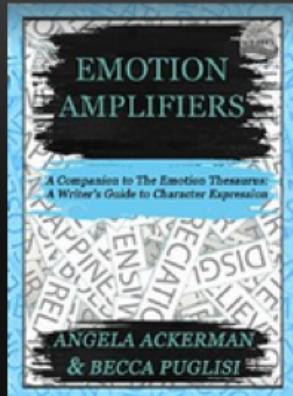


Story Trumps Structure

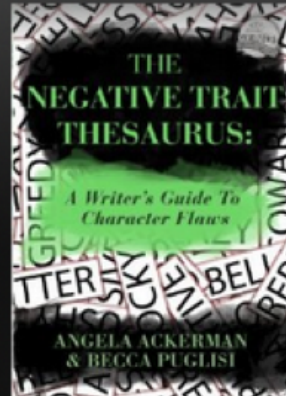
by Steven James

- The Essence of Story
- Secrets to Organic Writing
- Story Progression
- The Narrative Forces that Shape our Stories
- Subtleties of Characterization
- Plot Flaws and How to Fix Them (handout)

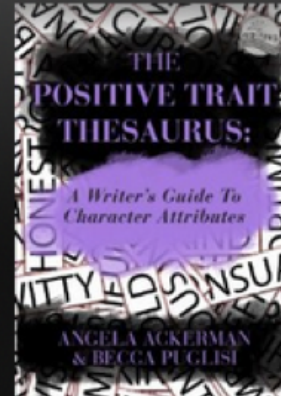
Some excellent books for your toolkit; show in Kindle reader library



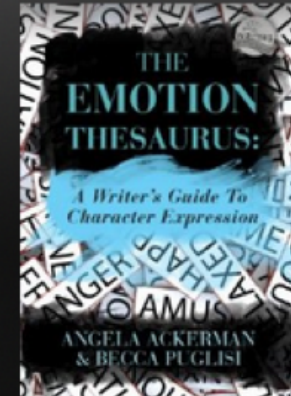
Emotion Amplifiers
Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi



The Negative Trait Thesauru...
Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi



The Positive Trait Thesauru...
Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi



The Emotion Thesaurus: A ...
Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi

https://www.amazon.com/Angela-Ackerman/e/B0081BBQ7Q/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=1523218945&sr=8-2-ent

Week 1 What is Story

- Imagination and the overview of the writing process

Flash Fiction Sections

- A strong beginning paragraph that places the reader into the story world, introduces the main character and sets up the conflict or problem the character will face.
- A middle section which shows how the character faces the conflict and one or more attempts to solve it.
- An ending that resolves the conflict and shows that the character has changed as a result.

What is a Story?

Story World + Characters + Obstacles

----- PLOT -----



STORY IS THE ACT OF DREAMING



9:50 / 12:02

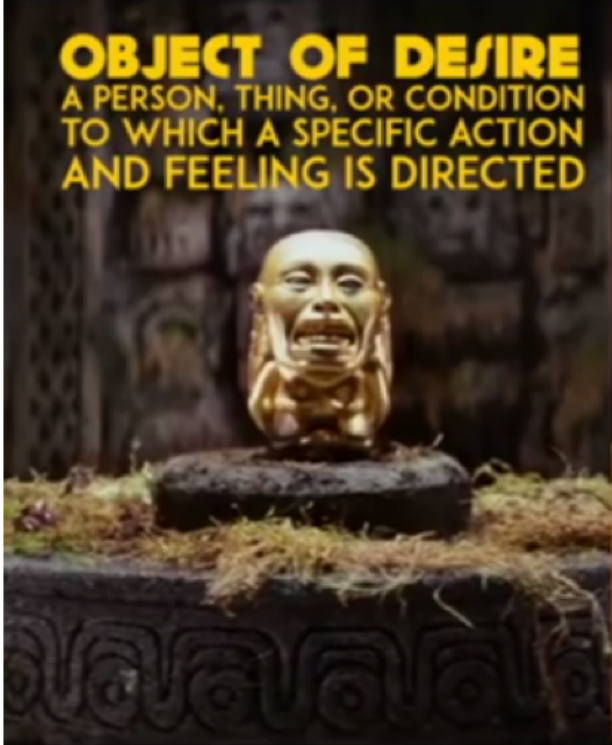


The Essence of Story

- Every story is about a character who wants something but cannot get it. When the character gets it, the story is over.
- A story is a character in tension, trying to meet unmet desires.
- Stories are transformations unveiled – either the transformation of a character or a situation or both.
- If nothing is altered, you do not have a story, just a series of images or chronicle of events.
- You do not have a story until something goes wrong.



OBJECT OF DESIRE
A PERSON, THING, OR CONDITION
TO WHICH A SPECIFIC ACTION
AND FEELING IS DIRECTED



5:32 / 14:38



Flash Fiction Worksheet

Story World (select and describe your story world)

- Present Day
- Future World, science fiction
- Historical Fiction: American Civil War, the wild west, 1960s
- International locations: Paris, London, Rome, Hong Kong, Tokyo
- American vacation spots: NYC, California, Boston, Washington D.C., WDW
- Other _____

Characters (describe one or two characters)

Age, gender, personality, mood, life goals, love interest, work, leisure activity

Flash Fiction Worksheet

Conflicts, Obstacles and Problems (select and describe)

- Internal (the obstacle is in the character)
- External (the obstacle is outside the character)
- Interpersonal (the obstacle is between two or more characters)
- Combination (multiple conflicts, problems or obstacles)

Themes (select one or two that interest you)

Alienation, ambition, betrayal, death, deception, escape, fear, freedom, good vs evil, jealousy, justice, loss, love, lust, power, prejudice, survival, spirituality and God

Flash Fiction Worksheet

Premises (what if questions)

- What if aliens contacted you in a dream?
- What if your love suddenly left you without explanation?
- What if a bad person won the lottery?
- What if you met your soul mate after you got married?
- What if you woke up and your personality had drastically changed?

The One Sentence Story Concept (complete the sentence)

My story is about _____

Premises

- Premises are “What if” questions
- What if a boy finds a treasure buried in his backyard?
- What if a woman falls in love with a bad guy?
- What if a man loses his job and then wins a lottery?
- Worksheet: write a premise for your story.

One Sentence Story Concept

- A key to writing flash fiction is conveying ideas in a story with less than 1000 words.
- A one sentence story concept will help you focus and tighten your work; it also serves as a way to describe your story to editors and readers.
- The one sentence story pairs well with a good premise.
- <https://www.livewritethrive.com/2016/06/13/understanding-premise-and-the-one-sentence-story-concept/> (play video clip)
- Worksheet: write a one sentence story concept.

Story World

- A story world is more than the setting; although it includes the time and place of your story, it is so much more.
- How does it effect the senses; what smells, sounds, touches can you describe? Immerse yourself there.
- Not just a beach. Is the sand fine or coarse? What do you smell? What sounds do you hear? What is the temperature?
- Maybe it's in another country, another planet or sometime in the past or future.
- Worksheet: describe one or two story worlds.

Types of Short Stories

- **Slice of Life Stories** are short, capture big ideas, provide little conflict and features characters that have epiphanies or discoveries. They are often set in contemporary times and recognizable places. Anton Chekhov was a master of the slice of life story.
- **Well-made Short Stories** are formal, literary stories that follow certain conventions, rules and sequencing. Edgar Allen Poe was a master of the detective story and associated with the well-made story.
- Stories are also defined by their length. We will write one flash fiction story (300-1000 words).
- Short stories are 1000-7500 words. Novelettes, novellas and novels range from 7500 words to 80,000 words and longer.
- No matter how long your story is, you can get it published. Quality, not quantity is the key to publication.

The Art of Story

by Adam Skelter

- The Anatomy of Chaos: <http://www.losttribeentertainment.com/anatomy-of-chaos.html>
- Plot and Structure: <http://bit.ly/2zN78tw>
- Character and theme: <http://bit.ly/2j4ADwE>
- Scene dynamics: <http://bit.ly/2zSbrmO>
- Dialogue and Subtext: <http://bit.ly/2zUKDRa>
- Dialogue and Rhetoric: <http://bit.ly/2zOhPvz>
- Mining for meaning: <http://bit.ly/2zV9Pae>
- Story and the Mind: <http://bit.ly/2jBfJJp>
- The Art of Entertainment: <http://bit.ly/2hBIFO7>

Elements

- A good flash fiction story will have a beginning, middle and ending.
- Word count between 300 to 1000 words.
- Your first paragraph should set up the story world (setting), main character(s) and the problem (conflict).
- Your character(s) must be changed in some significant way by the end of the story.
- Flash fiction is not a '*slice of life story*' without any conflict or structure.

5 Biggest Fiction Mistakes

<http://bit.ly/1dKvAci> James Scott Bell

1. Happy People in Happy Land - Readers engage with a story when the characters have trouble, threat, change or challenge.
2. A World Without Fear - Readers are engaged when death hangs over the characters (either physical, psychological or professional death).
3. Marshmallow Dialogue - Create tension filled dialogue, with conflict. Make sure each character has a distinct voice.
4. Predictability - Put something unexpected in every scene.
5. Lost Love - Go deep into your characters, showing their emotions, fears and desires.

Week 2 Story Structure

- The Story World and how stories are constructed.

Structure

- There are two ways to write: with detailed planning and structure or from the gut (also called organic writing).
- Make sure the first paragraph of your story is compelling and paints a picture.
- Make sure your story is advancing. Most instructors say avoid going down rabbit holes or you may lose the reader. But Steven James says follow all rabbit trails for unexpected results.
- If you must use flashbacks, distinguish them with *italics* or another visual or wording cue. Foreshadowing is a technique that provides clues to the reader on what is to happen later in the story. It is often used in mystery/crime stories.

Traditional Structure

- Research, and several drafts before submitting
- Detailed character profiles and outlining
- Follows traditional structure, 3 act formula
- Preferred method for novelists and screenwriters
- Avoids rabbit trails, digressions and stream of consciousness

Organic Writing

ref: “Story Trumps Structure” by Steven James

- To get started, you don't need an outline; you just need a premise.
- Stop trying to decide whether your story is plot driven or character driven, and focus instead on your protagonist's unmet desires regarding his internal questions, external problems and interpersonal relationships.
- Steven James, a proponent of organic writing, offers three questions to solve any plot problem: 1. What would this character do naturally in this situation? 2. How can I make things worse? 3. How can I end this in a way that is unexpected and inevitable? and two more questions: 1. How can I include a twist? 2. What promises have I made as a writer that I have not yet kept?
- All stories are tension driven. A character in tension, caught between his present condition and his unmet desire for things to be different.
- Vital questions: What does your character want? and What should go wrong? Characters must take on a life of their own.

Organic Writing

ref: “Story Trumps Structure” by Steven James

- To uncover the plot of your story, don't ask what should happen, but what should go wrong. To uncover the meaning, don't ask what the theme is, but what is discovered. Characters making choices to resolve tension, that's your plot.
- Readers want to be surprised, but they want that surprise to be logical and not come out of nowhere.
- Four things keep readers flipping pages: concern, curiosity, escalation and enjoyment.
- Follow rabbit trails.
- “You don't have to see where you're going, you don't have to see your destination or everything you will pass along the way. You just have to see two or three feet ahead of you.” - Anne Lamott in Bird by Bird
- No matter which method you choose (outlining vs organic), you have to build a compelling story with engaging characters and a universal theme.

Stephen King is a master of organic writing...



...but most serious writers use outlines and structure.

5 Ingredients Every Story Should Have

<http://bit.ly/1jwSrMg> ref: “Story Trumps Structure” by Steven James

- Orientation - Orient the reader to the setting, mood and tone of the story, and introduce them to a protagonist she will care about, even worry about, and emotionally invest time and attention into. Reveal a portrait of the main character by giving readers a glimpse of her normal life.
- Crisis - This crisis that tips your character’s world upside down must be one that your protagonist cannot immediately solve. It’s an unavoidable, irrevocable challenge that sets the movement of the story into motion. Life is changed and it will never be the same.
- Escalation - There are two types of characters in every story—pebble people and putty people. If you take a pebble and throw it against a wall, it’ll bounce off the wall unchanged. But if you throw a ball of putty against a wall hard enough, it will change shape. Your main character needs to be a putty person.
- Discovery - At the climax of the story, the protagonist will make a discovery that changes his life. The protagonist’s discovery must come from a choice that she makes. Typically, this discovery will be made through wit (as the character cleverly pieces together clues from earlier in the story) or grit (as the character shows extraordinary perseverance or tenacity) to overcome the crisis event (or meet the calling) he’s been given.
- Change - Think of a caterpillar entering a cocoon. Once he does so, one of two things will happen: He will either transform into a butterfly, or he will die. But no matter what else happens, he will never climb out of the cocoon as a caterpillar. This change marks the resolution of the crisis and the culmination of the story.

Orientation

ref: “Story Trumps Structure” by Steven James

- Orient readers to the world of your story
- Lock in the genre
- Give readers a setting in time and place they can picture
- Set the mood and tone
- Introduce the author’s (or narrator’s) voice
- Introduce a protagonist the reader will care about
- End in a way that is both surprising and satisfying
- Snag readers’ attention

Crisis

ref: “Story Trumps Structure” by Steven James

- Give your protagonist what he desires most and then snatch it away
- Show him what he desires most, and then dangle it in front of him
- Force what he dreads upon him, and make him escape from it

Escalation

ref: “Story Trumps Structure” by Steven James

- Escalate in proximity
- Escalate in magnitude
- Give a countdown to the impending tragedy
- Decrease the amount of time available to solve the problem
- Let readers see impending threats or menace
- Include progressively more difficult moral dilemmas
- Make it personal
- Raise the stakes
- Isolate your protagonist

Discovery

ref: “Story Trumps Structure” by Steven James

- Crafting a satisfying climax
- Protagonist discovers how to resolve his struggle or how to move on from them
- It might be a moment of insight, triumph or despair
- Resolve all promises made or give readers a reason why they aren't solved yet

Change

ref: “Story Trumps Structure” by Steven James

- A new set of circumstances
- A new outlook or attitude
- A new set of skills or abilities
- A new insight or revelation
- A new (or renewed) relationship

The Twelve Archetypes

Goals, Fears and Gifts

by: Carol S. Pearson - *Awakening the Hero Within*

Archetype	Goal	Fear	Gift
Innocent	Remain in Safety	Abandonment	Trust, Optimism
Orphan	Regain Safety	Exploitation	Interdependence, realism
Warrior	Win at all costs	Weakness	Courage, discipline
Caregiver	Help Others	Selfishness	Compassion, generosity
Seeker	Search for a better life	Conformity	Autonomy, ambition
Lover	Bliss	Loss of love	Passion, commitment
Destroyer	Metamorphosis	Annihilation	Humility
Creator	Identity	Inauthenticity	Individuality, vocation
Ruler	Order	Chaos	Responsibility, control
Magician	Transformation	Evil sorcery	Personal Power
Sage	Truth	Deception	Wisdom, nonattachment
Fool	Enjoyment	Nonaliveness	Joy, freedom

What Happens Next?

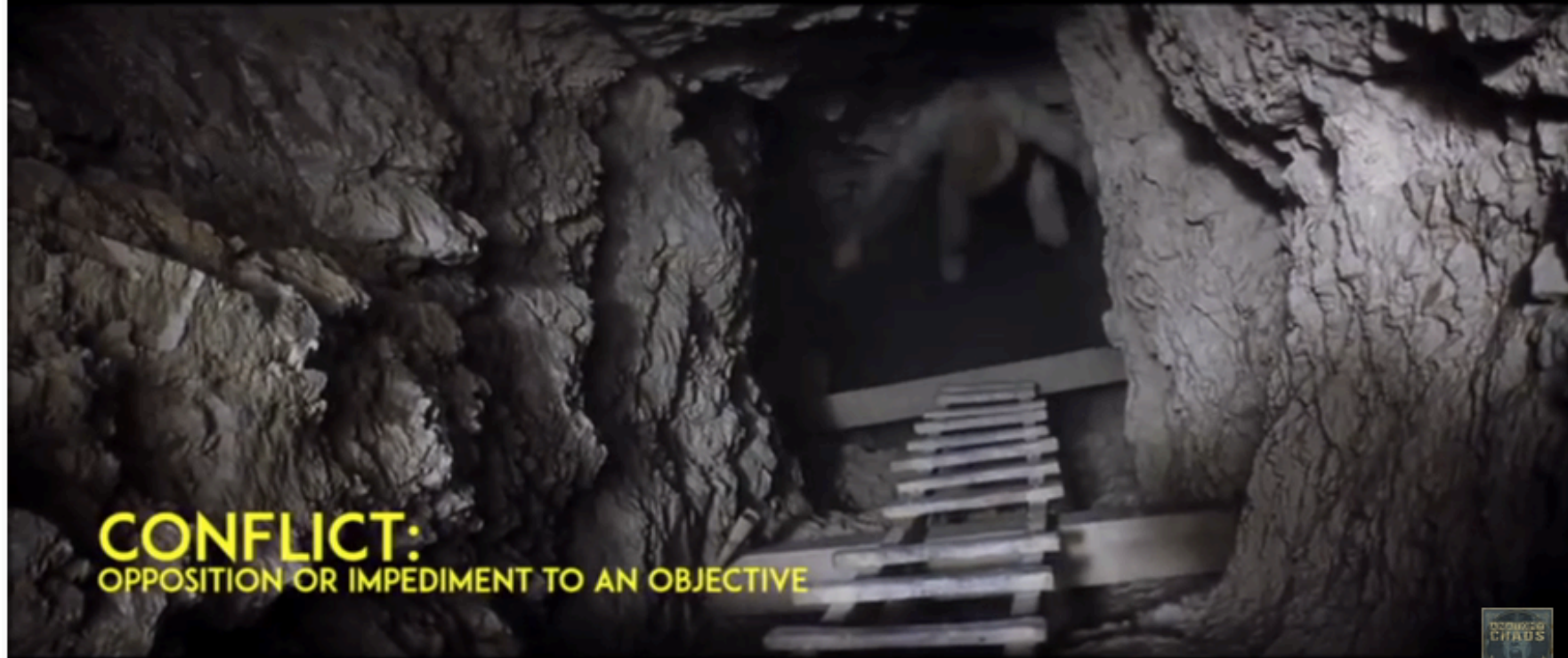
- I prefer *Organic Writing* to hours of planning, outlines, character profiles and plot graphs
- Sometimes I begin a story with a situation, character or story world that I like and ask “what happens next?”
- Some of my best stories have happened by accident, without an outline or any idea how they should unfold
- All writers should read Story Trumps Structure by Steven James, On Writing by Stephen King and The Art of Fiction by John Gardner.

Week 3 Conflict and Resolution

- How to get in and out of trouble

Conflict and Resolution

- Virtually all stories are built around conflicts and resolutions. To find out what the conflict is, ask yourself “What is the problem?”
- Conflicts can involve ‘man vs man’, ‘man vs society’, ‘man vs nature’, ‘man vs self’ and even ‘man vs technology’.
- Resolution occurs when the protagonist overcomes the conflict and achieves their goal or desire. You can have multiple conflicts and resolutions in a story.
- In many stories, the conflict is built up and made more intense before the resolution occurs.



CONFLICT:
OPPOSITION OR IMPEDIMENT TO AN OBJECTIVE



⏪ ⏩ 🔊 1:32 / 12:02



Types of Conflict

- Internal - the character is fighting some internal pain or anxiety that prevents them from their goal.
- External - the character is confronted with an external force or person that is preventing them from their goal.
- Interpersonal - the character is involved in an emotional battle with another character(s).
- Man vs man, man vs technology, man vs environment, man vs law,
- You can also think of conflicts as problems or obstacles.
- Worksheet: describe one or two conflicts for your story.

What's the Problem?

- Write down what conflicts you have in your story(ies); how does the character resolve or overcome the conflict?
- Write an example of a person discovering a conflict blocking his goal or needs.
- Write an example for each of these types of conflicts: 1) internal, 2) external and 3) interpersonal.

Week 4 Genres

- Romance, Horror, Science Fiction and what is Steampunk?

Story Genres

- Genres are categories of stories: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_writing_genres
- Action/Adventure
- Fantasy
- Mystery/Crime
- Romance
- Science Fiction
- Horror
- Suspense/Thriller
- Historical Fiction
- Steampunk <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-steampunk-definition/>

Week 5 Openings and Endings

- Beginnings and endings - the short and winding road.

Openings

Tommy was a happy man. Tall, athletic and with surfer looks, the sophomore was breezing through college in the carefree San Diego lifestyle. He thought he had it all, until he met Hannah. Hannah was gorgeous, perhaps the woman of his dreams, except for one fact. Hannah didn't like the Beatles. (from "Can't Buy Me Love")

Hanging out near a pond in the Pacific Northwest, Marley and Jeri were commiserating about how their life had changed, and not for the better. While their owners were living the progressive lifestyle, the pets were suffering. Marley's owners were vegans and Jeri's owners were stoners.

(from "Vegan Dog and Stoned Cat")

Mario and Luigi worked from five until ten, twice a day in a brand name hotel in San Diego. First, they worked from 5:00am until 10:00am making breakfast and then they worked secretly from 5:00pm until 10:00pm making take out for guests in the hotel and others. I need to explain.

(from "Buon Cibo")

Alex was suave and polished, the type of man women long for. Prepped and pampered since he was a child, he grew up in a fine New England home to parents of distinction. He attended the finest private schools and vacationed in Europe. His hobbies were magic and tennis, in fact he was professionally acclaimed at both of them. Alex was just about perfect for any refined woman looking for a mate, except for one fact. Alex was a thief.

*(from *The Cat Burglar*)*

Ending the Story

- A good ending for your flash fiction shows how the main character has been changed by resolving the conflict or problem they have confronted.
- A good ending can be ironic, funny, uplifting or dramatic.
- A twist, or surprise ending can be very effective.
- Positive endings are usually more publishable than sad or negative ones.
- An ending may solve one problem and introduce another problem the character has to face next.

EXAMPLES OF NARRATIVE ENDINGS

Circular Ending

The story circles back to the beginning. Sometimes an author will end with the same idea or similar or exact words as the beginning of the story.

Surprise Ending

The story takes you where you didn't expect it to go. Sometimes this ending is called a twist ending because the story takes an exciting turn.

Lesson or Moral Ending

The main character in the story grows, changes, or learns something at the end of the story.

Warm Fuzzy / Capturing Emotion Ending

The story ends leaving you feeling emotional or good inside. A good writer tugs at the heart strings to make the reader feel something.

Reflection Ending

The narrator of the story steps back and reflects on what just happened. He or she often looks back on an experience and determines the importance of that experience, what was learned, etc.

Cliffhanger Ending

The story ends by leaving the reader hanging or wanting more. Writers use this strategy to tease readers or excite them into reading more (the next chapter or the next book in a series).

Question Ending

The story ends with a question to keep the reader thinking. The question usually involves the reader, and writers use this strategy to make their writing memorable.

Funny Thought / Humor Ending

The story ends with a funny thought or something that makes the reader laugh. This helps to make the ending more memorable to the reader.

Image Ending

The story ends with an important scene that the writer shows the reader through vivid details. By showing and not telling, the writer touches the reader's emotions and conveys a mood.

Dialogue Ending

The story ends with an important conversation or quote. By ending with a quote, the writer captivates the audience by making the characters more realistic and revealing their personalities.

Week 6 Characters

- Putty people and Pebble people - your actors carry the story



**CHARACTERS ARE
COMPLEX EMOTIONAL
CONSTRUCTIONS
THAT REPRESENT
THEMATIC VALUES**



2:01 / 14:38

FATCAT Pro

Character Types

- Types of characters in fiction at: <http://learn.lexiconic.net/characters.htm>
- Archetypal characters at: <http://bit.ly/1eBYZ9v>
- **Flat characters** are two-dimensional in that they are relatively uncomplicated and do not change throughout the course of a work. By contrast, **round characters** are complex and undergo development, sometimes sufficiently to surprise the reader.
- Stock characters: A **stock character** is a stereotypical fictional **character** in a work of art such as a novel, play, or film, whom audiences recognize from frequent recurrences in a particular literary tradition. **Stock characters** are archetypal **characters** distinguished by their flatness.
- Character <http://bit.ly/2hKkEHd> An excellent video about the highly structured method of screenwriting and how characters are created. Watch this at home.
- **Pebble people** do not change in response to circumstances (they are flat characters). **Putty people** change in response to circumstances. You want to create putty people. They are round characters
- Worksheet: describe one or two characters for your story.

Characters

- Your characters are the actors in your story. The two main types of characters are the protagonist and antagonist.
- Protagonists are characters that drive the action of the story. They are often a hero, or positive force and have a goal or desire to achieve. They can be male or female.
- Antagonists block the action of the protagonist. Antagonists can be a person, idea, situation or circumstance.
- To make your characters come alive, the writer must describe the actions, motives, desires and thoughts in detail. This is done by showing and sometimes telling what they are doing to accomplish their goal.
- Characters move through three forms of struggle: internal, external and interpersonal. These struggles provide drama and engage the reader.



**THE BETTER WE IDENTIFY
WITH THE MAIN CHARACTER
THE MORE WE EMOTIONALLY
INVEST IN THE OUTCOME OF
THE DRAMATIC QUESTION!**



Character Development

- Some writers build a detailed character profile before writing their story. This is especially true for novels and screenplays. You may not need an exhaustive study of your characters, but you should understand what kind of person they are in broad strokes.
- A character's personality is shown by their actions, reactions and speech. Characters can be simple or complex. Complex characters are more interesting.
- An important aspect of character development is their dialogue. Speaking reveals their ideas, motivations and goals. It can show where a character lives and their level of education.



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHARACTERS?

BASICS

- Character's Name
- Character's Nicknames
- Sex and/or Gender
- Right or Lefty
- Age
- Height
- Weight
- Eye Color
- Hair Color
- Distinguishing marks (tattoos, piercings, scars)
- Describe physical traits in one passage

FAMILY/RELIGION

- Parents
- Siblings
- Marital Status
- Significant Other/s
- Children
- Other Relatives
- Pets
- Friends
- Enemies
- Relationships (other)
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Beliefs
- Superstitions
- Diction, Accent, Etc.

SCHOOL/WORK/HOME

- Education (Highest)
- Degrees
- Vocation/Occupation
- Employment History
- Salary
- Status and Money

- Own or Rent
- Living Space (describe)
- Work Space (describe)
- Main Mode of Transportation

PSYCHOLOGY

- Fears
- Secrets
- IQ
- Eating Habits
- Food Preferences
- Sleeping Habits
- Book Preferences
- Music Preferences
- Groups or Alone
- Leader or Follower
- Planned Out or Spontaneous
- Journal Entries (Do they keep one?)
- Hobbies, Recreation
- How Do They Relax
- What Excites Them
- Pet Peeves
- Prejudices
- Attitudes
- Stressors
- Obsessions
- Addictions
- Ambitions
- As Seen by Others
- As Seen by Self

ASTROLOGY/PHYSIOLOGY

- Birth Date
- Time of Birth (Morning, Afternoon, Evening)
- Western Astrological Sign
- Traits Associated with Western Sign
- Chinese Zodiac Sign

- Traits Associated with Chinese Zodiac
- Handwriting
- Sexual History
- General Health
- Medical History
- Allergies
- Chronic Illnesses
- Handicaps

OBJECTS KEPT IN:

- Purse / bag
- Wallet
- Fridge
- Medicine Cabinet
- Glove Compartment
- Junk Drawer
- Bedroom Hiding Place
- Kitchen Cabinets
- Closets
- Backpack
- Locker
- Desk
- Clothes Pockets (Jackets, Pants, etc.)

OTHER

- Halloween Costumes
- Tricks
- Talents
- Politics
- Flaws
- Strengths
- Drugs / Alcohol
- Passwords
- Email Address, Home Page, Blogs, etc.
- Prize Possessions
- Time and Place (Era, Genre, etc.)
- Special Places
- Special Memories

Detailed Character Profile



Runa

Manager – Finance and Accounts

Age: 34 Years

- Runa's strengths lie in her creative and imaginative ability
- A very deep thinker, Runa's questions revolve around the "Why...?" of any issue
- Her favourite approach to training is to begin from the minutest detail, and slowly work up the big picture, diverging any given information into multiple possibilities
- Runa is very much a 'people' person – always striving to achieve consensus within the group, she frets over the slightest disagreements, and is deeply influenced by other people's feedback to her

Learning Style	Attitude	Information Gathering	Decision Making	Action Orientation
Diverging	Introverted	Intuitive	Feeling	Judging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaginative and emotional • Looks at issues from different perspectives • Prefers to watch rather than act • Performs best in situations that require idea generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinks/reflects first, acts later • Motivated internally, mind is sometimes so active it is "closed" to outside world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentally lives in the future, attending to future possibilities • Comfortable with ambiguous, fuzzy data and with guessing its meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decides by weighing the situation to achieve, on balance, the greatest harmony, considering the needs of the people involved • Sensitive to people needs and reactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers reaching closure / completion of a task before moving on • Appears to the world as abstract

Character Profile Sheet (Blank)

BASIC

Name

Age

Birthplace

Gender

Nationality

APPEARANCE

Hair color

Eye color

Height

Weight

Tattoo(s)

Piercing(s)

Mole(s)

Scar(s)

Makeup

PERSONALITY

Best Trait(s)

Worst Trait(s)

Mannerisms

What they hate most

What's most important to them

Secrets

Do they get along with or avoid other people

FAMILY

Parents/guardian

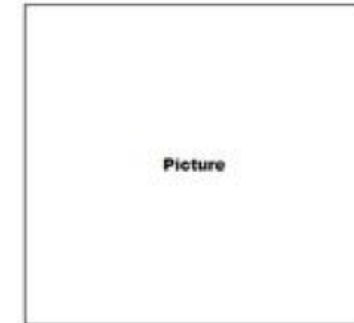
Siblings

Spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend

Children

Pets

Other



OTHER

Friends

Best friend

Enemies

Worst enemy/rival

Acquaintances

Occupation

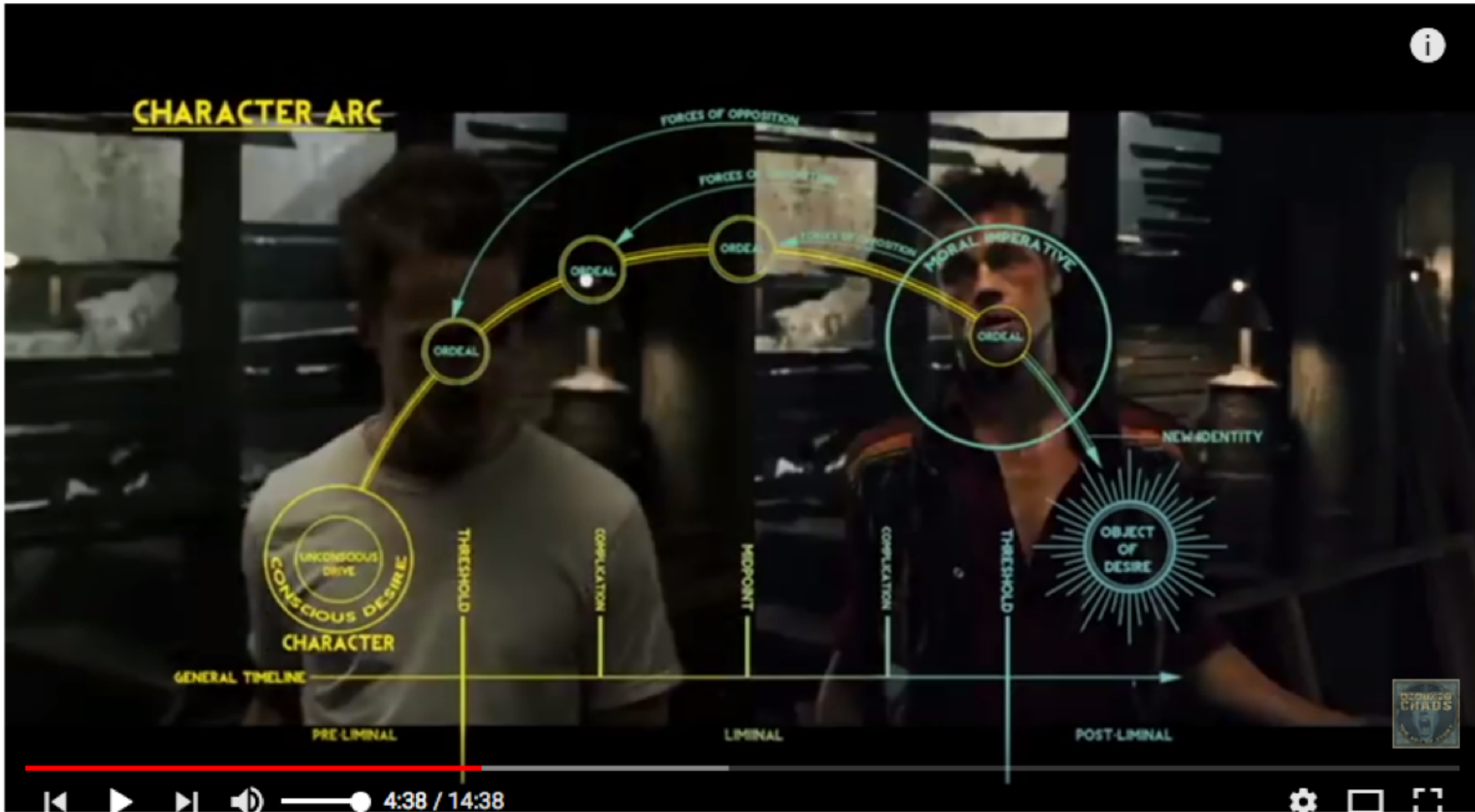
Salary

How do they feel about their occupation

Reputation at work



CHARACTER ARC



4:38 / 14:38



The Art of Story

by Adam Skelter

- The Anatomy of Chaos: <http://www.lostribentertainment.com/anatomy-of-chaos.html>
- Plot and Structure: <http://bit.ly/2zN78tw>
- Character and theme: <http://bit.ly/2j4ADwE>
- Scene dynamics: <http://bit.ly/2zSbrmO>
- Dialogue and Subtext: <http://bit.ly/2zUKDRa>
- Dialogue and Rhetoric: <http://bit.ly/2zOhPvz>
- Mining for meaning: <http://bit.ly/2zV9Pae>
- Story and the Mind: <http://bit.ly/2jBfJJp>
- The Art of Entertainment: <http://bit.ly/2hBIFO7>

Visualization

- See the story unfold in your mind
- Watch it like a television show
- Give your characters distinct voices
- Follow rabbit trails
- Add a twist to the ending
- Make sure you fulfill all promises and setups

What's the Problem?

- Write down what conflicts you have in your story(ies); how does the character resolve or overcome the conflict?
- Write an example of a person discovering a conflict blocking his goal or needs.
- Write an example for each of these types of conflicts: 1) internal, 2) external and 3) interpersonal.

Week 7 Themes, Plots and Subplots

- Theme and the importance of a universal message.



THEME
A RULE OF THE UNIVERSE
WHICH EXPRESSES
MORAL VALUE



Theme

- The theme in a story is the big idea, or underlying message. What critical belief is the author trying to convey? It is usually universal, not specific to any person or culture.
- Some themes you might like include: *alienation, ambition, betrayal, death, deception, escape, fear, freedom, good vs evil, jealousy, justice, loss, love, lust, power, prejudice, survival, spirituality and God.*
- Try to find the themes in the stories you like. A good theme will help you get your story published.
- Worksheet: circle one or two of these themes for your story.



MORALITY

A SET OF RULES FOR

SURVIVAL



⏪ ⏩ 🔊 3:09 / 14:38



Plot

- On screen demo: Ronald Tobias' 20 basic plots: <http://bit.ly/22hzpi7> and George Polti's 36 Story Plots <http://bit.ly/1TJYfVK>
- On screen demo: The 7 basic story archetypes <http://bit.ly/2zD3FLD>
- Plot and Structure <http://bit.ly/2zN78tw> from The Art of Story video series
- Plot Perfect: creating unforgettable stories scene by scene by Paula Munier



PLOT POINT

EVENT THAT MOVES THE STORY FORWARD



⏪ ⏩ 🔊 3:47 / 8:34



The foundation of all story: Desire, Conflict and Resolution

PHASE 1
A CHARACTER WANTS SOMETHING

PHASE 2
SOMETHING IMPEDES HIM

PHASE 3
CONFRONTS
SUCCEEDS OR FAILS

SCENE
PLOT POINT
SEQUENCE
ACT
STORY

3:23 / 8:34

CC ⚙️ 📺 🗉

INDIANA JONES

Literary Devices and Themes

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jf4zrnnFGkc>
- https://youtube.com/watch?v=P_0g-7PSPn8
- Literary themes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqkuxT2kBY4>
- Irony: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgV4Bj8U0Mo>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aTDsMEI0nY>
- Literary devices: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYMnD3Vs_yo
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7k53iYCwrFk>

Week 8 Dialogue and Subtext

- What is said, and unsaid, but understood.

Dialogue

It's important that your dialogue paints a picture.

Instead of "he said" or "Jim said", my dialogue is more interactive. After I introduce the characters, I let their dialogue reveal who is speaking. Look at the opening of this story and see if you can understand where it is going.

"Marry me."

"No!"

"I'm not giving up Anna."

"David. We've been through this how many times?"

"Apparently not enough."

"Why me?"

"Love."

I'll bet you can write the rest of this story yourself.

In his book How to Write Dazzling Dialogue, James Scott Bell says that there are five purposes of dialogue:

1. To reveal story information
2. To reveal character
3. To set the tone
4. To set the scene
5. To reveal theme

You can use dialects to show where a character lives. You can use more formal language or plain language to show a character's education. You can use dialogue to paint a picture, so the reader can visualize your characters. You can use dialogue to show the inner thoughts of characters and what has effected them in the past (backstory).

But **dialogue is not natural speech. Dialogue is stylized speech**, written for a story. While some writers make their characters speak more informally, it still is constructed to be part of a story. Real life is different than stories about real life, and so the words characters speak will sound different than observed in real life.

One more tip from screenwriting consultant Michael Rogan. **Make sure your characters don't all sound the same.** Reveal their personality and feelings through their speech.

Subtext



Subtext

- an effective way to convey feelings, thoughts and reactions without language
- a sigh, an expression, body language, emotion without words
- sprinkle subtext into your stories to enhance your connection with the reader

Subtext

- **Subtext** is the meaning beneath the dialogue; what the speaker really means, even though he's not saying it directly. As humans, we often don't articulate our thoughts exactly.
- play video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EHffsZAWe0>
- More subtext videos at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sN89XJiNLEQ> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUTsh7n18_o and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtanvpwGJXk>
- Dialogue and Subtext in movies: <http://bit.ly/2zUKDRa> begins at 6 minute mark

- Plot includes the events that happen in your story in sequence; you can also include flashbacks and foreshadowing. Structure depends on the plot.
- Structure relates to how the events are layered, sequenced and laid out. Narrative structure includes the plot and the setting. Write answers for these questions.

1. Tell me a little about your plot.
2. Who are the characters?
3. What obstacle(s) are in their way?
4. How will they overcome them?

Week 9 Story vs Discourse

- Are you telling a story or showing a story?

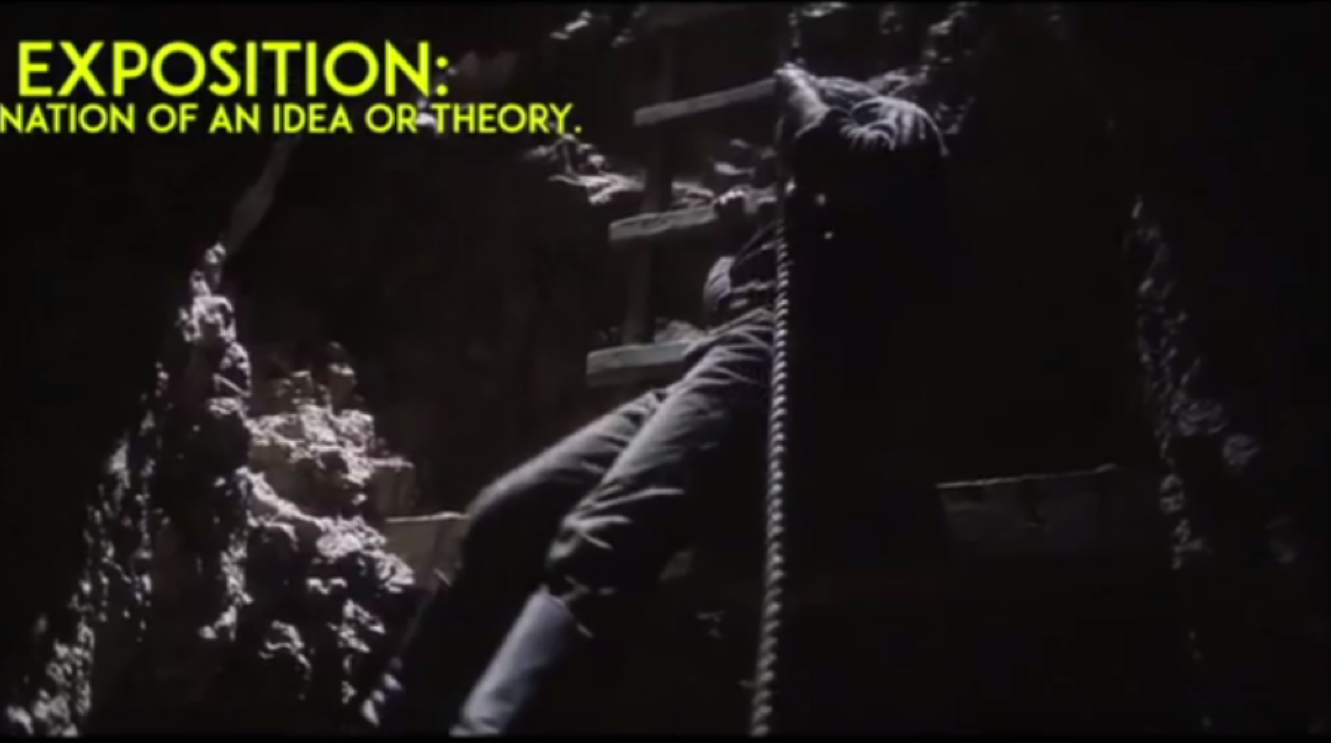
Story vs Discourse

ref: Anna Keeseey's essay "Making a Scene"

- Story is showing, Discourse is telling
- Story is advancing forward
- Discourse is pausing, looking inward
- Unfolding: advancing the story forward
- Infolding: discourse about inner thoughts, commentary, memories and backstory (exposition)
- How much unfolding and infolding is in your story?



EXPOSITION:
EXPLANATION OF AN IDEA OR THEORY.



1:39 / 12:02



Literary Devices

<https://literarydevices.net/>

- Literary Devices refers to the typical structures used by writers in their works to convey his or her messages in a simple manner to the readers. When employed properly, the different literary devices help readers to appreciate, interpret and analyze a literary work.
- Literary Terms - <http://www.dictionary.com/e/s/literary-terms/#metaphor>
- Steampunk - <http://www.dictionary.com/e/pop-culture/steampunk/>

Writing Scenes

- Let's practice a few scenes!

Style

- Style in writing can be defined as the way a writer writes. It is the technique that an individual author uses in his writing. It varies from author to author, and depends upon one's syntax, word choice, and tone. It can also be described as a “voice” that readers listen to when they read the work of a writer.
- For example, my style involves writing scenes, visually revealing the exposition (backstory) and thoughts of characters, showing more than telling.
- Instead of “he said” or “Jim said”, my dialogue is more interactive. I introduce the characters and let their dialogue show who is speaking.
- This style is more modern than classic fiction and is more reminiscent of screenplays, letting action define the dialogue.

Week 10 Software and Publishing

- Scrivener (software)
- Contour (software)
- Write it Now (software)
- Microsoft WORD (word processor)
- Grammarly and ProWriting Aid (for grammar)

The image shows a screenshot of the Scrivener software interface. The title bar at the top reads "YMCA Class Demo - Short Story Format". The interface includes a top toolbar with various icons for editing and navigation. On the left, a "Binder" pane shows a hierarchical structure of folders and documents: "Short Story Format" (selected), "Short Story", "First Page Header", "Story" (containing "Scene"), "Characters", "Places", "Research", "Sample Story MS", "Template Sheets", and "Trash". The main workspace displays the content of the "Short Story Format" document. It features a title "SHORT STORY MANUSCRIPT FORMAT" in a large, serif font. Below the title, there are two sections: "About This Template" and "How To Use This Template". The "About This Template" section contains a paragraph explaining that the project will generate a document in standard manuscript format for short story submissions. The "How To Use This Template" section contains a bulleted list of instructions. The status bar at the bottom shows "100%" zoom, "Words: 648", and "Chars: 3,816".

YMCA Class Demo - Short Story Format

Baskerville Regular 21 B / U abc 1.2

Short Story Format

SHORT STORY MANUSCRIPT FORMAT

About This Template

When compiled (File > Compile), this project will generate a document in the standard manuscript format for short story submissions.

How To Use This Template

- Edit the First Page Header document to ensure it contains the correct information. The text in this document will appear at the top of the first page of the compiled story manuscript.
- Create a new text document for each scene inside the Story folder. (Upon export, scenes will automatically be separated by the "#" character.) Alternatively, you can write your entire story in a single text document if you prefer (in which case you will need to add the "#" character between the scenes in your document yourself).
- Information about characters can be placed in the "Characters" folder, and information about locations can be placed in the "Places" folder. (These are just regular folders that have had custom icons assigned to them using the Documents > Change Icon feature.)
- Character and setting sketch sheets have been provided which can be used for filling out information about the people and places in your novel. These are located in the "Template Sheets" folder. You should not edit the documents in the "Template Sheets" folder directly unless you wish to change the templates (which you are free to do - you may wish to customise the sketch sheets or get rid of them entirely). Instead, to create a new character sheet, click on the Characters

100% Words: 648 Chars: 3,816

Scrivener

Publishing Your Story

- There are hundreds of literary magazines and journals that publish short stories. Thousands of writers submit their stories for consideration.
- Magazines are distributed in print or electronic (i.e. online) form. Print magazines and journals tend to be more exclusive.
- The more selective publications will look for stories from writers who have published extensively. Begin by submitting to smaller, online magazines that match your story type.
- To find those magazines, you can use [Duotrope](#) or [Submittable](#).
- Each magazine has their own submission guidelines; you must submit your story according to their guidelines. Online magazines tend to specialize in one genre (e.g. Science Fiction, Romance or Mystery).

Internet Help

- Plot Generators, Writing Prompts and Character Ideas
- Writing Prompts: <https://dailywritingtips.com/writing-prompts-101>
- <http://www.writersdigest.com/prompts>
- Prompt Generator: <http://bit.ly/2IU0qfu>
- Bookfox list of resources: <http://bit.ly/2zeDRaN>
- Plot generators: <https://www.plot-generator.org.uk/story/> and <https://www.plot-generator.org/uk/>
- Story idea generator: <http://storytoolz.com/generator/idea>
- Twitter hashtags for writers: <http://bit.ly/2zmidkE>

Finding a Publisher

- Duotrope and Submittable are two websites that provide a channel for publishing stories.
- Duotrope <http://duotrope.com> has an extensive search engine so you can find which publishers would accept your story for consideration.
- The time a magazine takes for reading your story can vary from 1 days to a year. The longer a publication takes to consider stories usually relates to how selective they are.
- Although most publications will accept simultaneous submissions, some will only accept your story exclusively
- Most magazines will accept electronic submissions (i.e. by email).

Sources of Inspiration

- Themes (*alienation, ambition, betrayal, death, deception, escape, fear, freedom, good vs evil, jealousy, justice, loss, love, lust, power, prejudice, survival, spirituality and God*)
- English and American Proverbs at: <http://bit.ly/2yyr5EM> and Ben Franklin's Maxims at: <http://bit.ly/2zIWjhh>
- The Deadly Sins (Greed, Lust, Sloth, Gluttony, Pride, Wrath, Vanity and Sorrow/Despair), Scripture and The 8 Beatitudes of Jesus
- Plot, Character and Story Generators online
- Music titles and lyrics (my favorite is Billy Joel)
- Television, Movies, Plays and even Advertising (you know, those annoying commercials)

Writing Links

- Let's look at some of the best websites for writers. You can subscribe to join and get resources for your work.
- 100 best writing websites: <https://thewritelife.com/100-best-websites-for-writers-2018/>
- The Writer's Dig list: <http://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/websites-for-writers-19-sites-with-great-writing-advice>
- 151 Resources for writers: <https://www.nownovel.com/blog/151-important-novel-writing-resources/>
- Scribophile - online writing group at: <https://www.scribophile.com/dashboard/>
- best website for readers - <http://goodreads.com>

Some Extra Points

- Plots and Subplots: Two stories are better than one. A subplot can support or contradict the main plot. Try combining different genres as a subplot (e.g. a romance within a science fiction story).
- Tension: Every scene should show tension between the characters, changes based on their actions and words. Build tension throughout your story and end it with a believable resolution.
- Resolutions: You must resolve every conflict/problem/obstacle in your story. A surprise is an effective way to end your story.

Where to Read Fiction

- Best Short Fiction Writers at: <http://bit.ly/2ySCWcl>
- Classic Short Stories at: <http://www.classicshorts.com/>
- 20 Great American Short Stories at: <http://bit.ly/2pNm6aO>
- 100 Great American Stories at: <http://bit.ly/239SnaP>
- 27 Short Stories at: <http://bit.ly/2ARBysr>
- Literary magazines at: <http://bit.ly/2zK8lvQ> and <http://bit.ly/2hDDiR1>
- The Write Practice list at: <http://bit.ly/1HVuMQJ>
- Magazine search result at: <http://bit.ly/2zmWSYa>

Summary

- Flash Fiction stories have a beginning, middle and ending.
- Flash Fiction stories have between 300 and 1000 words.
- Your first paragraph should introduce the story world (setting), main character(s), and problem(s) or conflict
- Your ending should show the change that the character(s) have made as a result of solving the problem (conflict).

Extra Slides



DRAMA
THE ART OF CREATING EXTREME SCENARIOS
THAT EXPOSE, CHALLENGE, AND TRANSFORM
OUR EMOTIONAL WORLDVIEW.



1:06 / 12:02



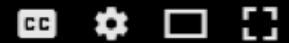


ACT

A STORY UNIT CONTAINING A STRATEGY
FOR THE CHARACTER TO ACHIEVE
AN OBJECTIVE.



4:39 / 8:34





STORY
IS THE PROCESS
OF DRAWING THE
UNCONSCIOUS
TO THE
CONSCIOUS



⏪ ⏩ ⏮ ⏭ 2:44 / 14:38



A four act structure for novels and screenplays



Narrative Forces

- Causality
- Believability
- Expectations
- Continuity
- Fluidity
- Polish
- Dilemmas
- Meaning

Challenge

- Read “The Waiting Room” (handout)
- Figure out the answer to the riddle (Why was she missing?)
- Email me the answer: jgauthor@icloud.com
- The first correct answer wins a paperback.
- Hint: this isn't easy. In all the years, my son is the only one who has figured it out.

Workshop

- Pick a story world (the setting and environment)
- Pick a character(s) (choose a person or two)
- Pick a conflict or problem (what problem will they face?)
- Pick a theme and premise (what ideas will override the story?)
- Write your first paragraph (include the story world, character(s) and problem)
- Write your ending (resolve the problem in some way, a twist?)
- Fill in the middle (do this at home, then get ready to submit)