

The Big Idea

Every story starts with a big idea, but how do you articulate that idea? Well, first, you start with an elevator pitch. Imagine you step into an elevator with a publisher, and they ask you what your book is about in only one to two sentences. That right there is "The Big Idea" of your story.

So let's begin...

Every story has six main elements:

#1 The Main Character

#2 The Inciting Incident

#3 The Mission

#4 The Roadblock

#5 The Disaster

#6 The Resolution

#1) The Main Character

- Every story has either one main character or a set of main characters. Before you do anything, you want to know who your main character is or your set of main characters, that way, the characters constantly drive the story.

- Every character has a defining characteristic that is the basis of that character in the beginning of the story.

For example: in The Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen is the main character of this story, and her defining characteristic is that she is always fighting to survive.

Now write down your main character (or set of main characters) and their **defining characteristic**.

Character/Characters:

Defining characteristic:

#2) The Inciting Incident

- This is when your character or characters find themselves in some form of crisis. Basically, this is when the characters' everyday life is destroyed, and their new reality begins, which is the start of your story's adventure.

For example: the Inciting Incident that happens to Katniss Everdeen in The Hunger Games is that she volunteers as tribute to The Hunger Games to save her sister Prim.

*(Notice something important – there was a **reason** why Katniss volunteered, Prim got picked for The Hunger Games, **so** Katniss volunteered. Essentially this is the **cause** and **effect** portion of the Inciting Incident.)*

Now go right down your **Inciting Incident** and why this changes the character's everyday life from this point on.

Inciting Incident:

Why does this change the character's everyday life:

#3) The Mission

(AKA the goal)

- The mission is the character's greatest desire. Essentially, what do they believe they need to do for their life to go back to normal? What do they think will bring them happiness?

For example: Katniss Everdeen's mission is to survive The Hunger Games so that she can see her sister again.

Now go write your character's **mission**.

Mission:

Why do they believe this will make their life go back to normal? Why do they think this will bring them happiness?

#4) The Roadblock

- The roadblock is the conflict of your entire story. Without conflict, the story is simply boring and feels a bit lost. There can be many roadblocks within a story, but to get The Big Idea of your story, you need to examine the most significant opposition of your entire story; this is typically your story's bad guy, whether that's a person or a situation.

For example: in The Hunger Games, the biggest roadblock is President Snow; this is a theme that actually shows within all of the books of The Hunger Games trilogy.

Now write your story's **roadblock**.

The Roadblock:

#5) The Disaster

- This is when everything starts spiraling. As you write your story, there should be a continual rise up to this moment; essentially, this is the most challenging moment in the character's story. Yep, it's the climax. Most of the time, this disaster is due to the story's bad guy. Now, this doesn't have to be an actual person, maybe your character makes a bad choice in the roadblock portion of

your story, and that choice comes back to haunt them at the climax. Either way, it's when everything all comes together at the height of the tension.

For example: in *The Hunger Games*, the disaster for Katniss is that the rules of the game keep changing due to President Snow pressuring the game makers to get rid of her. Thus just as she believes victory is near, the rules change, and she has to decide whether to kill Peeta or let Peeta kill her.

Now write the **disaster moment**.

The Disaster:

#6) The Resolution

- This is where everything finally comes together, and all the loose ends are finally tied up. The reader doesn't have to question anything else in this story because everything has come to an end; however, if this book is part of a series, you want to add a Cliff hanger that will be the starting point for your next book. But if this

book is a standalone, make sure that the reader is not left with any unanswered questions.

For example: the resolution in *The Hunger Games* is that Katniss tells Peeta to trust her and eat the berries that will kill them both. Just as they are both about to eat the berries, the game master tells them to stop and allows them both to be the victors.

(You won't actually add the resolution into your elevator pitch, but you will want to know this for the next part of developing your story.)

Now write the **resolution**.

The Resolution:

Now let's put it all together:

- Now that you have an idea of all of the major elements within your story, you can go ahead and put them all together into a single sentence summary that delivers The Big Idea of your book!

Example:

Katniss Everdeen has been a survivalist her entire life, but when her sister Prim is chosen as tribute for a fight-to-the-death game

show, Katniss sacrifices herself and volunteers to take her sister's place. Just as victory is near, the game makers change the rules forcing Katniss to choose between killing her closest ally – the boy she has grown to love – or being killed by him.

Now write your **Big Idea**:

The Big Idea: