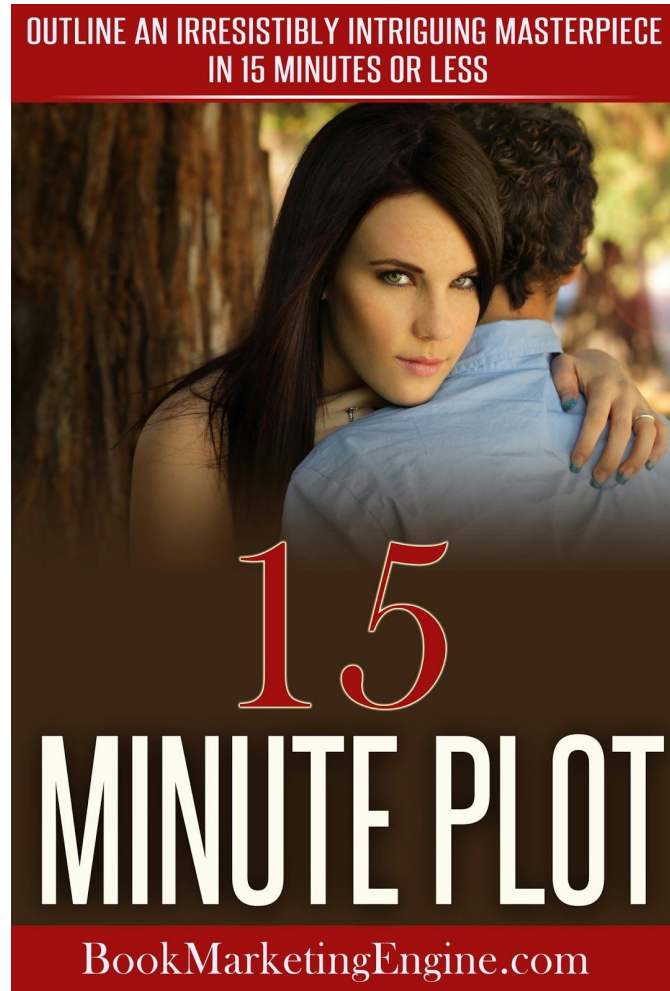


KD 15-Minute Plot:



From Idea to Outline.

In 15 Minutes or Less.

Table Of Contents:

- [Module1: To Plot or Not to Plot?](#)
- [Module 2: The Most Powerful Definition of Story in the World.](#)
- [Module 3: The 15-Minute Plot Template.](#)
- [Module 4: How to Write a Killer Premise.](#)
- [Module 5: The 7 Universal Master Plots.](#)
- [Module 6: The Fun Starts With Your Inciting Incident.](#)
- [Module 7: How to Shape Every Story You'll Ever Write as a Bestseller.](#)
 - [The 8 Phases of a Good Story Arc](#)
 - [The Killer Secret to Designing Rising Conflict in Your Story Arc:](#)
 - [Cast and Event Design within the Story Arc:](#)
 - [How to Design Surprises Into Your Story Arc:](#)
 - [How to Think Through your Climax, ahead of Time.](#)
- [Module 8: The Three Words You MUST Use to Connect Your Scenes.](#)
- [Module 9: Three Story Plots... Decoded.](#)
- [Module 10: What to Do Next:](#)
- [More Resources on Plotting?](#)
 - [Story Engineering](#)
 - [Save The Cat!](#)
 - [Snowflake Method](#)
 - [Story](#)
 - [Scrivener Tutorial on Plotting](#)
- [Bonus #1: Pixar's 22 Rules of Storytelling](#)
- [Bonus #2: Andrew Stanton on Story \(TED talk\)](#)
- [Conclusion.](#)

Module1: To Plot or Not to Plot?

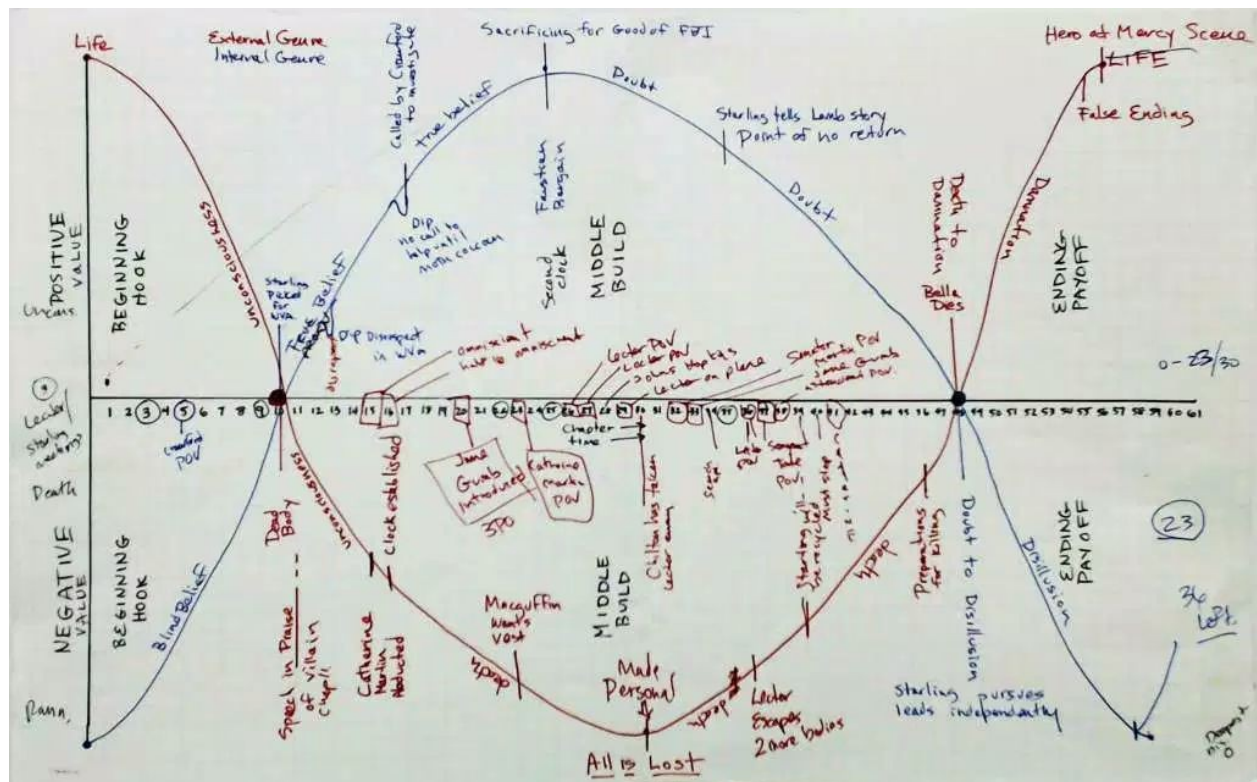
Each writer does it differently.

Many believe in the dichotomy of “PLOTTERS” and “PANTSTERS”:

“Some do plot. Others do not.”

Plotters are described as people who map everything out before they start writing the book.

Here's an example of an UBER-PLOTTER, from StoryGrid.com:



(Ahem. That's not me. *cough*. But I admire writers who have the attention to detail to do what you see above!)

Pantsters are described as people who “fly by the seat of their pants”, not planning anything out, but rather starting with a good idea, and pouring out as much of the idea as they can narrate.

In reality, we all have a little of both (plotter and pantster).

Just more one than the other.

We all do some level of planning -

- but some do it before the writing starts,
- others do it during the writing, and
- others still do it at the end - after their good idea runs out of gas, and then they step back to make sense of it al.

A PURE PLOTTER would be someone who plans every single detail, character trait, plot twist, sub-plot, dialog element, setting detail, character interaction, cliffhanger and so on, out up-front.

You can see us virtually never STARTING the actual story - because not every single detail had been plotted out...

A PURE PANTSTER would be someone who refuses to make any background notes, jump from one genre to the next, and ends up with a completely nonsensical spaghetti-inspired jumble of stream of consciousness.

You can see us never finishing a story, because of all the loose ends, logical jumps, inconsistencies, and coincidences they would find in their structure-less story.

The fact of the matter is - we all need a little room for **plotting**...AND a little room for **creativity**.

But here's the challenge.

SOME OF US SIMPLY HATE TO PLAN / PLOT THINGS OUT UP-FRONT!

(I fit into that camp,by the way.) :)

I started writing as a pre-teen. And I was a pantstser.

I'd finish reading books like Enid Blyton's "Famous Five", or the Hardy Boys, or C.S. Lewis'

"The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe",or even Hans Christian Andersen's "Snow Queen"...

and immediately grab up a notebook and furiously write for hours. Inspired.

I ended up with a lot of great story ideas that died a slow death in the "swampy middle".

You know - that point where your good idea runs out, and you don't know how to tie all the loose ends together, so that the story has a logical, satisfying, and surprising conclusion?

Yeah. That swampy middle.

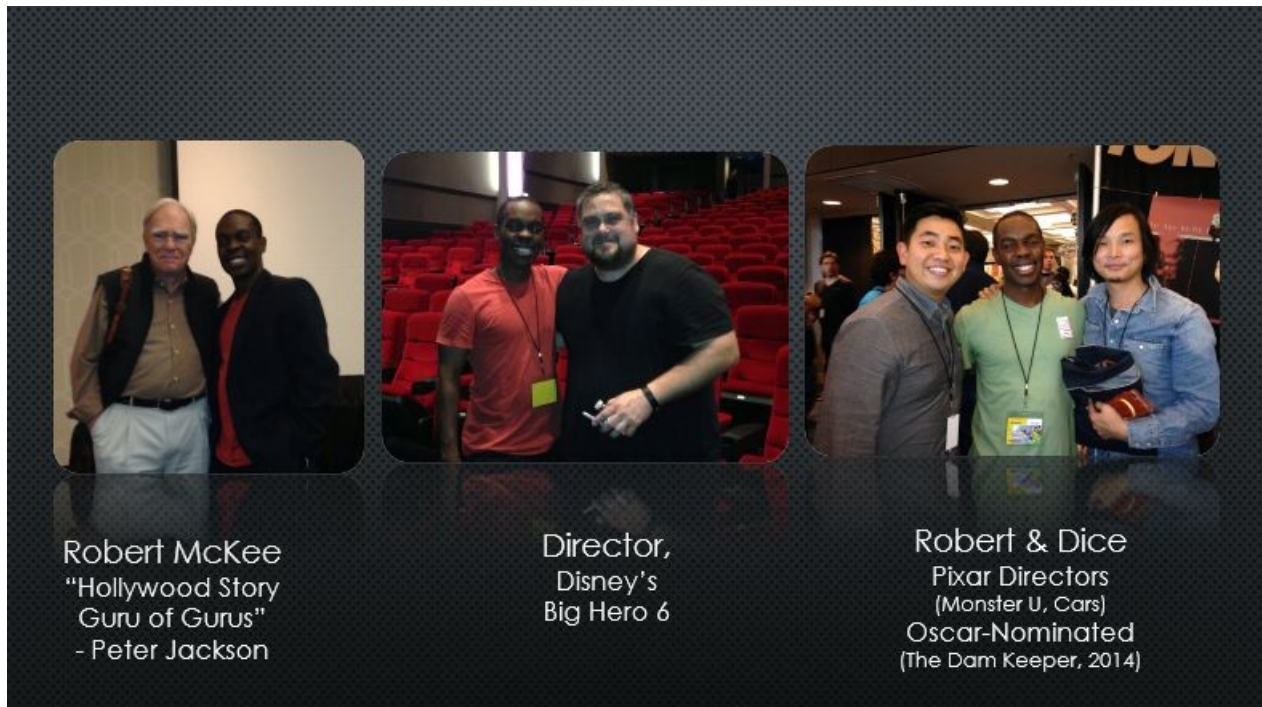
As an adult I still have some of those tendencies I developed as a young writer.

I see myself as a very creative person...

but i get bored with doing a lot of planning up-front.

I soon realized I wasn't alone, though. Lots of writers fall into that same camp.

And so - that's when I started studying with some of the best storytellers around.



Robert McKee
"Hollywood Story
Guru of Gurus"
- Peter Jackson

Director,
Disney's
Big Hero 6

Robert & Dice
Pixar Directors
(Monster U, Cars)
Oscar-Nominated
(The Dam Keeper, 2014)

..Trying to come up with the PERFECT PAINLESS PLOT, essentially. :)

(I particularly learned a lot from [Robert McKee](#).)

It took a lot of persistence, and a lot of adding, subtracting, synthesizing, and simplifying.

But I finally started seeing results in my work.

My idea generation was turning into finished books with amazing alacrity!

I shared my approach with my private coaching author clients

(some of whom had the same writer personality make-up as me).

And they were able to see amazing results as well.

For example - going from 30,000 words/month - to 100,000 PUBLISHED words/month.

That means their great ideas, were turning into published bestselling books.

That's what KD 15-Minute Plot is here for.

To turn your great ideas into published bestselling books. Fast.

Our goal is not to enforce a rigid, creativity-killing structure upon you.

Our goal is to empower you with a way to put a skeleton on your good idea,
that will have you flying straight through the entire writing process.

No writer's block.

No loose ends.

Even better - by modeling the classics, and the modern perennial bestsellers, we're ensuring
that your time spent writing that book isn't wasted.

We're ensuring you can write a bestseller that readers will be left breathless by.

We're talking:

1. Faster writing... (Because you know exactly where to take the story next.)
2. Better writing... (Addictive, riveting storytelling guaranteed to leaves readers breathless.)
3. More fun writing... (No more writer's block! No more getting stuck in the middle!)
4. More books published... (You can more easily outsource your great ideas, knowing
you've put all the right milestones in place to keep the story on the track YOU want.)

So hang on to your hat.

This is going to be a fun ride...

Module 2: The Most Powerful Definition of Story in the World.

Before we get into PLOTTING, which is constructing a good story, we need to agree on what definition of STORY we're working with is.

After all, what's the point of agreeing to talk about blueprints, when we haven't decided what it is we're actually building?

So - what is story?

Why is story so powerful?

Well, according to Lisa Cron's "Wired for Story",
our brains think in story. It's how we make sense of the overwhelming world around us.

Without story, we would need first hand experience for everything.

Stories, instead, allow us to simulate intense experiences, without actually having to live through them.

It's like virtual reality before virtual reality ever existed!

In Lisa Cron's book, Harvard professor Stephen Pinker explains our need for story this way:

"Fictional narratives supply us with a mental catalog of the fatal conundrums we might face someday, and the outcomes of strategies we could deploy in them."

So what does this mean for writers?

It means that we can now decode what the brain is really looking for in every story.

That is craaaazy!

But also very exciting, for writers who are willing to take advantage of what the human brain is already looking for.

Our brains have expectations of what the story is supposed to do:

"Drop someone with a clear goal into an increasingly difficult situation they then have to navigate."

When a story meets our brain's criteria, we relax and slip into the protagonists skin, eager to experience what her struggle feels like, without having to leave the comfort of home.

So what definition of story will those of us writing for profit, find most beneficial?

"Drop someone with a clear goal into an increasingly difficult situation they then have to navigate."

Story is how what happens affects someone who is trying to achieve what turns out to be a difficult goal, and how he or she changes as a result.

Let's break that down:

Story is:

1. How what happens (**plot**)
2. affects someone (**hero**)
3. who is trying to achieve what turns out to be a difficult goal
(**story question, or hero's external goal**)
4. and how he or she changes as a result
(**hero's internal goal, or what the story is really about.**)

STORIES ARE ABOUT HOW WE,
RATHER THAN THE WORLD
AROUND US, CHANGE.

Look. We're all writers and storytellers.

It's not like we need to be reminded of what good story is.

But here's the catch.

This definition is reminding us that **each story must have a PURPOSE.**

A destination.

And for us to begin writing our story, without knowing what the destination is,
is like starting a cross-country road trip, without knowing where you want to end up.

As a writer, you're the driver, and your reader is the passenger.

They go where you drive.

(It doesn't mean they have to like it... LOL! But they go along anyway.)

Our job as writers, is to
get the reader excited about the road trip,
build up the anticipation,
and get them to a final destination they'll be pleased with...
without telling them ahead of time.

They don't know the final destination ahead of time...

but we should.

That way, we can drive them past the exact right milestones, attractions, sights and sounds,
that will make the final destination a wonderful climax and culmination to the trip.

If we don't plan the ending before we start, we're leaving it to chance that such a magical experience will occur at the end.

Sometimes, that works.

Often, it does not.

Let's not leave it to chance.

Let's create something wondrously magical, for our readers.

At the end of the road trip, they should feel satisfied.

They should feel they've learned something about the world...

and have a better sense of how to personally navigate said world.

Now let's go create that amazing vicarious experience for them.

...and design it all in 15 minutes. :)

Module 3: The 15-Minute Plot Template.

(PRINT THIS OUT FOR REFERENCE):

YOUR STORY TITLE HERE.
1. What is your story idea, or premise? <i>(Ask the question: "What would happen if..." This is the idea that inspires you to write the story in the first place.)</i>
2. Which of the 7 master plot types are you going for? <i>(Overcoming the Monster. Rags to Riches. The Quest. Voyage and Return. Comedy. Tragedy. Rebirth.)</i>
3. Who is your protagonist? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Characterization: Physical description, occupation, hobbies, and quirks.</i><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Character: Choice under pressure. Reveals their warts. Opposite from their public face.</i><input type="checkbox"/> <i>The vast majority of stories don't CHANGE character. They REVEAL character.</i>
4. What is your protagonist's external goal?
5. What is the inciting incident? <i>(What event forces the character to take action in pursuit of her external goal?)</i>
6. What is the terrible consequence of failure? <i>What disaster is the protagonist afraid of, if the goal is not achieved?</i>
7. What are the antagonistic forces working to bring about the terrible consequence? <i>(The more powerful the antagonist, the more your protagonist must grow. Make antagonist vastly favored to win.)</i>
8. What is your protagonist's internal issue? <i>(What does (s)he have to overcome internally, to achieve her goal?)</i>
9. What supporting characters will create additional drama for your protagonist?
10. What will your protagonist's crisis decision be? <i>(Choosing between 2 irreconcilable good choices, or lesser of two evils. This happens in the final act.)</i>
11. What type of story climax would thrill and satisfy your readers? The hero: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Succeeds by sticking with a good trait, giving up a bad one, or taking on a good one. <i>(Harry Potter)</i><input type="checkbox"/> Fails by sticking with a bad trait, giving up a good one, or taking on a bad one. <i>(Macbeth) (Tragedy)</i><input type="checkbox"/> Fails, but it turns out to be a good thing because he either stuck with a good trait, or gave up a bad one.<input type="checkbox"/> Succeeds, but it turns out to be a bad thing because he either stuck with a bad trait, gave up a good one, or took on a bad one <i>(-ex- Romeo & Juliet)</i>
12. What is the ultimate meaning of your story, in one sentence (the controlling idea)? <i>-ex- : Justice (VALUE) triumphs (the change) because the hero is smarter (CAUSE)</i> <i>or: Injustice (VALUE) reigns (the change) because the criminal is ruthless (CAUSE)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Through the entire story lead the reader to believe the OPPOSITE of the controlling idea is what will win out... before revealing the real controlling idea in the final climax.</i>
13. What plot twist would you like to insert at the end to throw your readers for a loop?

Module 4: How to Write a Killer Premise.

What is a Premise?

It's an intriguing set-up or a situation that makes people want to read or watch further.

It should inspire the writer to want to create a story and the reader to want to read one.

It's usually an open question in the form of 'what would happen if... ?'

A good premise should be:

1. Brief
2. Provocative
3. Framed as an interesting 'what if...?'
4. Contains a character, a conflict and a hook
5. Gets you passionate about the idea
6. In the present tense
7. 25 or so words. (Do NOT overload your premise!)

Here are some of the most intriguing movie premises out there.

Click the links to watch the movie trailers.

Examples:

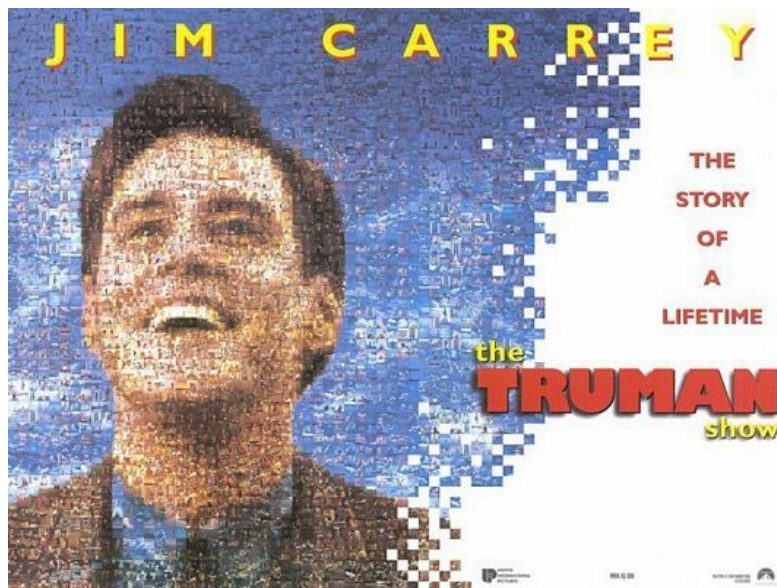
[Groundhog Day \(1993\):](#)

"What if you lived the same day over and over again?"



[The Truman Show \(1998\):](#)

"What if our taste for trivia and voyeurism led to the purgatory of a whole life lived as show-biz illusion?"



[Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind \(2004\):](#)

"What if there existed a medical lab which could enable you to blot out particularly unpleasant memories? Joel Barish discovers his girlfriend Clementine has done just that--to him. He soon realizes that a medical technician has stolen Clementine's data and taken his place in her life.



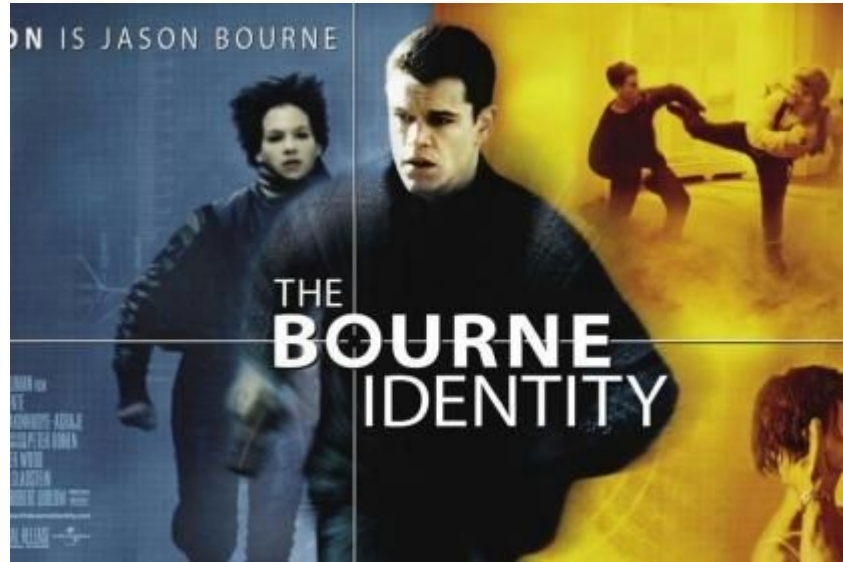
Minority Report (2002):

“What if in a future where a special police unit is able to arrest murderers before they commit their crimes, an officer from that unit is himself accused of a future murder?”



Bourne Identity (2002):

“What if a man with amnesia has forgotten he’s the world’s most dangerous assassin?”



[Another Earth \(2011\):](#)

“What if one day an identical Earth appears on the horizon... and is so identical, it has an identical you?”



[In Time \(2011\):](#)

“What if in the future, everyone stops aging at 25, and are rationed only a single year to live, which is counted down on a display on their arm?”



Module 5: The 7 Universal Master Plots.

Storytelling is universal.

There are 6,500 spoken languages in the world today.

And a million and one ways to tell a story.

So if you feel that there's no encompassing formula for all storytelling - you're right. :)

But we're not looking for something that captures every possible variation of storytelling.

We're going to take an 80/20 approach:

Find the 20% of inputs that give you at least 80% of your desired results.

Christopher Booker's 2004 book, "The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories" is a Jungian-influenced analysis of stories and their psychological meaning.

He worked on the book for a whopping THIRTY-FOUR YEARS!

(Please don't spend that long working on your next book.) :)

There are certain general shapes to stories.

For example - the hero and heroine being finally brought together in love.

From Homer's Odyssey, to Hollywood.

From Jane Austen, to Mills and Boone.

This image of a couple at least blissfully unite.

There are general shapes to stories.

And that is the quirk that KD 15-Minute Plot takes advantage of.

The 7 master plots you're seeing here, have been used in thousands and thousands of stories over the millennia. Use them as an 80/20 lens... to figure out what type of story you're telling.

I've provided movie trailer examples for each master plot.

You'll be familiar with a lot of these movies referenced.

Click to watch the trailers and reminisce.

Plus - each plot has its own set of guidelines.

Look for the patterns.

This'll help you flesh out the shape of your own story.

1. Master Plot 1: Overcoming the Monster.



This is the most basic of the 7 plots.

The protagonist sets out to defeat an antagonistic force which threatens the protagonist and/or his homeland.

Whether a giant, or a dragon, or a witch, or a supernatural bad guy the monster is always **malevolent, heartless, cunning, and cruel.**

Above all, it is totally self-centered. Totally

egocentric. It always has a blind spot, which is why the hero is always able to eventually sneak into that blind spot.

The hero on the other hand, is selfless, acting to save a larger community.

The monster represents a dark power in the world.

That dark power is centered on the ego. The inability to feel for others, or to feel hope.

On the other side, the hero represents light in the world.

we see true selfless feeling for others, and the world around us.

This is a central conflict between darkness and light, or what we would call as kids to be

“baddies vs goodies”. It’s death versus life.

The first such story? The Epic of Gilgamesh

(the oldest written Greek epic recorded... from about 2500 BC.)

Below are some other brilliant examples of “Overcoming the Monster” master plot.

Note that in each of these movie previews you not only get the sense of good versus evil that the Overcoming the Monster story represents (the Hero’s EXTERNAL goal)...

you also get a glimpse into the internal struggle of the hero, and how (s)he will have to grow to overcome that internal struggle (the Hero’s INTERNAL goal, or what the story is really about.)

- a. [The Epic of Gilgamesh](#),
- b. [Dracula Untold](#),
- c. [War of the Worlds](#),
- d. [The James Bond franchise](#),
- e. [Star Wars: A New Hope](#),
- f. [The Hunger Games](#),
- g. [Braveheart](#),
- h. [Aliens](#),
- i. [Jaws](#)

2. Master Plot 2: Rags to Riches.



The poor protagonist acquires things such as power, wealth, and a mate, before losing it all and gaining it back upon growing as a person.

In a “*Rags to Riches*” story, the young hero begins in the shadows, being scorned.

The dark forces are those who oppress, abuse, and scorn our young hero or heroine.

The hero emerges from the shadows, and are revealed to the world as someone exceptional.

They end up being united with some perfect other half (prince or princess), which makes them whole. Thus allowing them to succeed and rule over a kingdom.

Examples:

- a. Cinderella ([2015](#) | [1950](#)),
- b. [Aladdin](#),
- c. Annie ([2014](#) | [1982](#)),
- d. [Slumdog Millionaire](#),
- e. [Romy & Michele’s High School Reunion](#),
- f. [Limitless](#),
- g. [The Pursuit of Happyness](#).

3. Master Plot 3: The Quest.



There is some distant, hugely important goal, worth everything in the world, to arrive at.

We know the story will not feel complete, until the hero and his friends have reached it.

But first they have to go on a long

perilous journey.

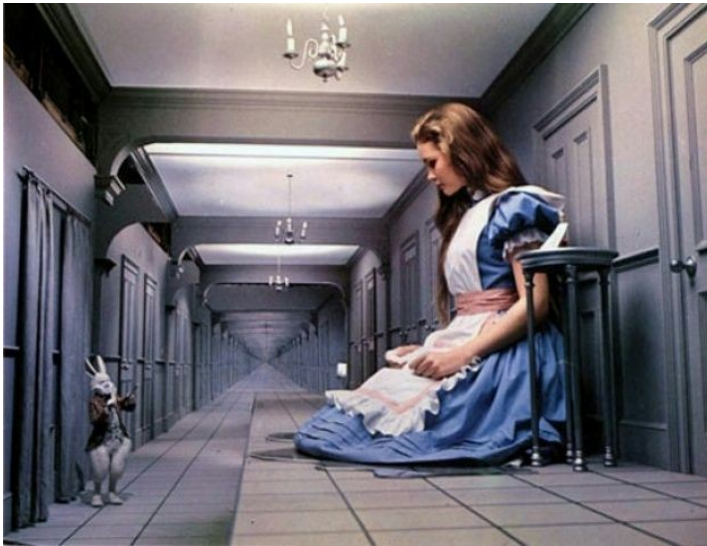
Their ordeals along the way include battles with monsters, temptresses, and so on. Even when the journey is complete, and they're in sight of the goal, the whole second half of the story may be taken up by figuring out how the goal is secured. But finally, even after the goal reaches its climax, and the dark figures are overcome, the hero returns to his kingdom, seizes his castle back from the dark forces, and frees his queen.

Examples:

- a. [The Wizard of Oz, 1939](#) | [The Wiz - 1978](#),
- b. [The Lord of the Rings Series](#),
- c. [Harry Potter & the Deathly Hallows](#),
- d. [Indiana Jones Movie Series](#),
- e. [The Voyage of the Dawn Treader](#) (Chronicles of Narnia series),
- f. [There Will Be Blood](#),
- g. [Taxi Driver](#),

- h. [Flash Gordon](#),
- i. [Weird Science](#),
- j. [The Goonies](#)

4. Master Plot 4: Voyage and Return.



The hero begins in a normal world, then they plunge into a strange and abnormal world. It usually starts out seeming fun, but then starts to appear more dark and threatening.

Just when they seem to be hopelessly lost in this abnormal world, the hero

makes a harrowing escape, and returns to the normal world with nothing but experience.

At the end of a “Voyage and Return” story, the central question we ask is: “Have they learned anything from their experience?” Like Robinson Crusoe, the Prodigal Son?

Or have they learned nothing at all (like Alice, who feels her entire experience was just an oddity.)

Examples:

- a. [Alice in Wonderland](#),
- b. [Gone with the Wind](#),
- c. [The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe](#) (Chronicles of Narnia),
- d. [Apollo 13](#),
- e. [Finding Nemo](#),
- f. [Gulliver's Travels](#),

- g. [Peter Pan](#),
- h. [Robinson Crusoe](#)

5. Master Plot 5: Comedy.



A comedy is a dramatic work in which the central motif is the **triumph over adverse circumstance**, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion.

Or put another way - a comedy is a **love story** in which two people must overcome many obstacles to find love and live happily ever after.

Most of the well-known musicals of the 20th century, Meet the Fockers, Four Weddings and a Funeral, and most romance novels, are comedies. (In this sense, think, not necessarily laughs, but happy ending.)

The basic pattern is a group of people caught up in a fog of confusion and misunderstanding. The story shows us a hero and a heroine, and the suspense centers on whether they can finally get together.

Usually there is some big obstacle to their getting together. The key to the happy ending is that there is recognition - eyes are finally opened. Even the characters that have been dark and opposed, see the light. All disguises are thrown off and everyone is able to get together with the people they are supposed to be with. The material covered in comedies doesn't always have to

be funny. It can be serious material, covered in an ironic way.

Such Shakespeare plays as “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “As You Like It” have complicated comedy plots in which sets of couples struggle to find love. Examples include:

- a. [Love Actually](#),
- b. [Bridget Jones Diary](#),
- c. [Office Space](#),
- d. [Clueless](#),
- e. [The Jerk](#),

6. Master Plot 6: Tragedy.



Tragedy describes what happens when a hero falls under the spell of the dark power, and cannot escape from it.

The hero becomes blind to ego and succumbs to the dark power.

Pursuing some selfish fantasy of power or love under the influence of the dark power, the hero may initially enjoy dreamlike success.

But gradually they become frustrated, the dream turns to nightmare, and finally they are brought to destruction. They go through these five phases:

- 1 - Initial anticipation
- 2 - Dream state (everything going right)
- 3 - Frustration state (things beginning to go wrong)
- 4 - Nightmare state (everything going wrong)
- 5 - Destruction

In the end, the power of darkness is overthrown, and the power of light prevails.

In the Brothers Grimm tale of Snow White, the wicked stepmother attempts to kill Snow White with a poisoned apple but succeeds only in making her sleep. A prince awakens the girl with a kiss while the villainous stepmother meets her death.

Examples:

- a. [Macbeth](#),
- b. [Bonnie and Clyde](#),
- c. [Romeo and Juliet](#),
- d. [Julius Caesar](#),
- e. [Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace](#) (Darth Vader)
- f. [Snow White](#),

7. Master Plot 7: Rebirth

A hero or heroine that gets trapped in a state of imprisonment, but is eventually brought back to life. What imprisons them is the same ol dark power.

Sometimes this is outside the hero. Other times, like in the Sound of Music, the hero is imprisoned by what is inside. The darkness within. Making them cold, heartless, and blind. (Think: Captain Von Trapp.)

As they move from the darkness of the ego, to that deeper center within them, they become whole.

Think of Hans Christian Andersen's 1845 fairy tale, "The Snow Queen". It epitomizes this rebirth.

An evil troll has made a magic mirror that distorts the appearance of everything it reflects. It fails to reflect the good and beautiful aspects of people and things, while magnifying their bad and ugly aspects. The troll, who is headmaster at a troll school, takes the mirror and his pupils throughout the world, delighting in using it to distort everyone and everything.

They try to carry the mirror into heaven with the idea of making fools of the angels and God, but the higher they lift it, the more the mirror shakes with laughter, and it slips from their grasp and falls back to earth, shattering into billions of pieces, some no larger than a grain of sand.

These splinters are blown by the wind all over the Earth and got into people's hearts and eyes, freezing their hearts like blocks of ice and making their eyes like the troll-mirror itself, seeing only the bad and ugly in people and things.

One such sliver gets into the eye of Kai, Gerda's best friend, making him see only ugliness in his friend, and in everyone else. Another sliver gets into his heart, and makes him unable to love.

It's one of my favorite stories of all time. You should read it (again).

Examples:

- a. [The Frog Prince](#),
- b. [Blood Diamond](#),
- c. Beauty and the Beast ([1991](#) | [2014](#)),
- d. [Menace II Society](#),
- e. [Monsters, Inc.](#)
- f. [The Snow Queen](#),
- g. [A Christmas Carol](#),
- h. [Despicable Me](#),
- i. [Megamind](#)
- j. [Sleeping Beauty](#),
- k. [Sound of Music](#)

Bonus: A One-Hour Audio Interview featuring Christopher Booker, on The 7 Master Plots!



Stop all else and listen to this. It will change the way you see story, and you'll get a much richer understanding of the 7 master plots.

Module 6: The Fun Starts With Your Inciting Incident.

The inciting incident is the first premonition of impending trouble that will create the main tension of the story. It's the event or decision that begins a story's problem.

Before this moment there is an equilibrium, a relative peace that the characters in a story have grown accustomed to. This incisive moment, or plot point occurs and upsets the balance of things. Suddenly there is a problem to be solved.

The inciting incident, also known as the catalyst, tilts the story from order to chaos, from complacency to combat. It's the point of no return. In this moment, you answer two questions:

- What do your characters want?
- What might prevent them from getting it?

Okay - you know I love examples. Let's get some inspiration from

[The Top 50 Inciting Incident Movie Moments.](#)

Module 7: How to Shape Every Story You'll Ever Write as a Bestseller.

In this module, we're going to talk about STORY ARCS.

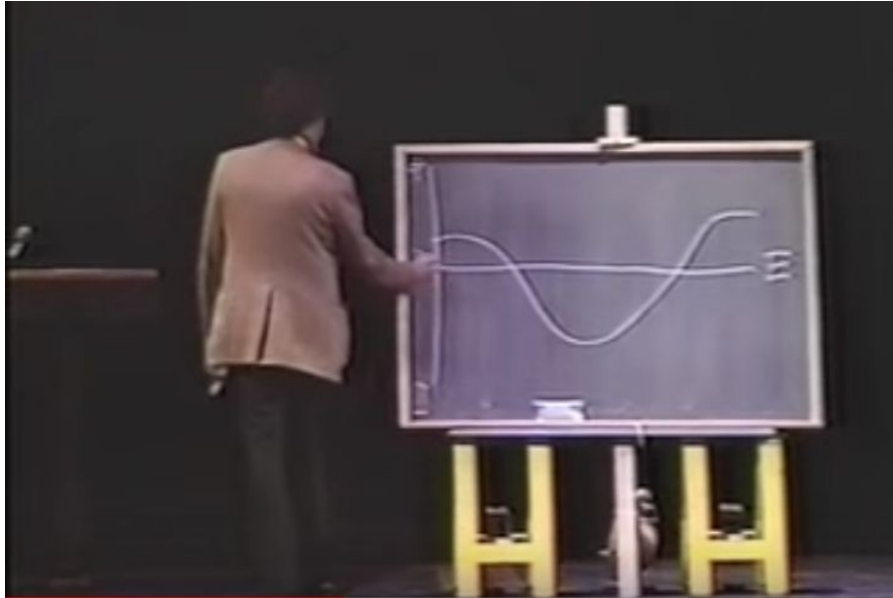
The purpose of a story arc is to move a character or a situation from one state to another.

In other words, to effect change. In a story arc, a character undergoes substantial growth or change.

This change often takes the form of either a tragic fall from grace, or a reversal of that pattern.

The late Kurt Vonnegut, world renowned science fiction author, was famous for claiming that shapes have stories. In fact, the fundamental concept behind Kurt Vonnegut's master's thesis in anthropology at the University of Chicago was, in Vonnegut's words, "that stories have shapes which can be drawn on graph paper."

Watch this short 4-minute video featuring the late Kurt Vonnegut, on "[The Shapes of Stories](#)"... where he demonstrates this very powerful method.



And here, Kurt Vonnegut's 1-minute video on [how to write a short story](#).



Here are some of the story arcs from Kurt Vonnegut's thesis... diagrammed by [visage.co](#):

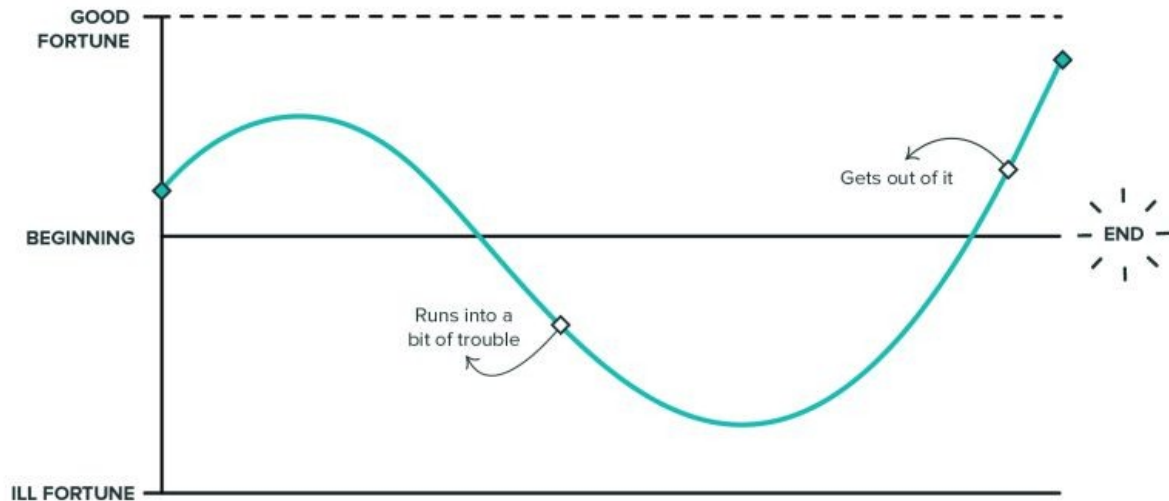
1

KURT VONNEGUT DATA VISUALIZATION



VISAGE

MAN IN HOLE



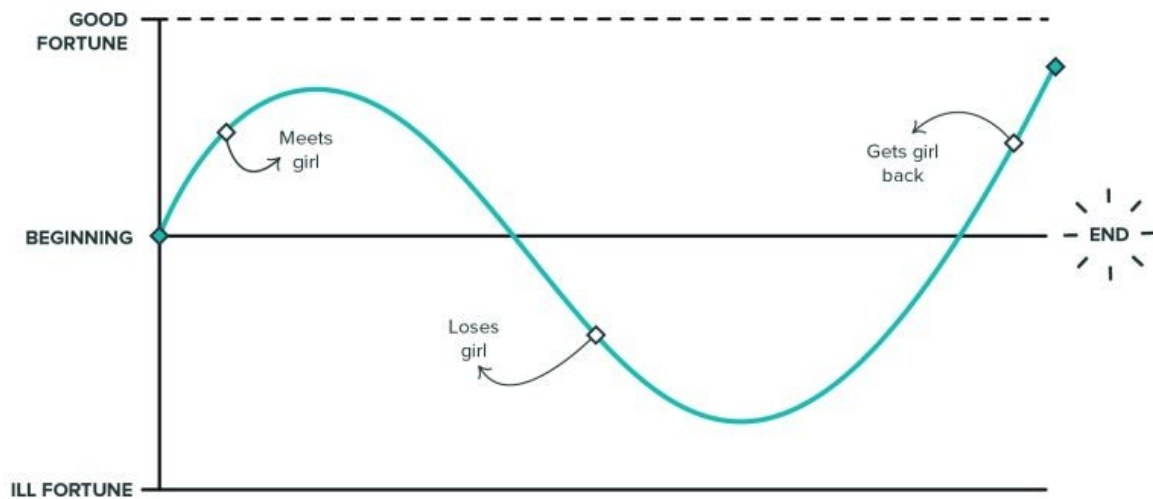
2

KURT VONNEGUT DATA VISUALIZATION

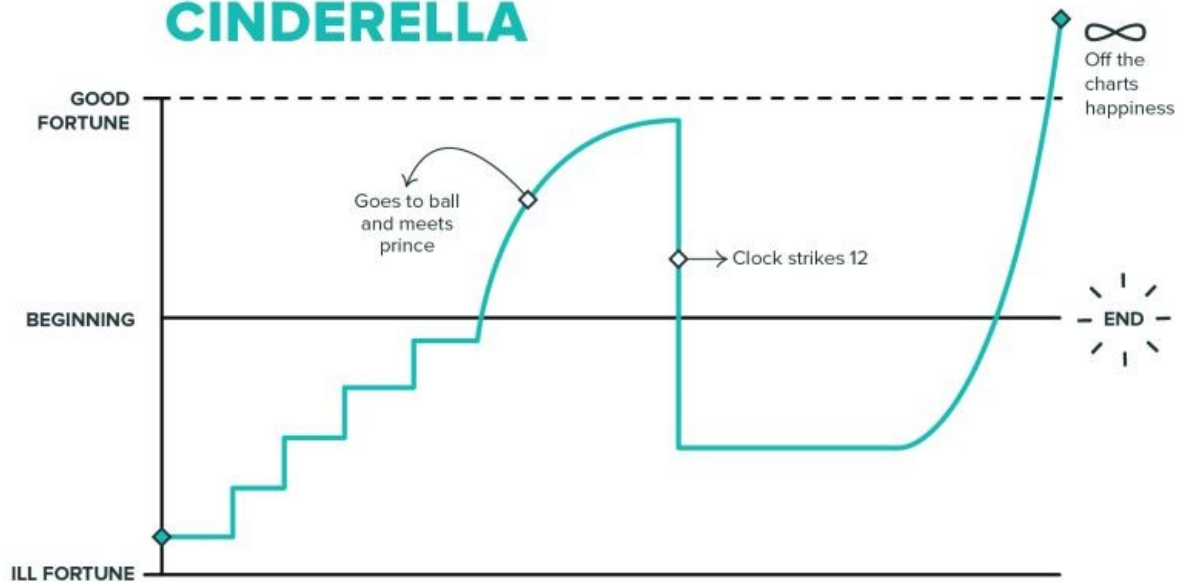


VISAGE

BOY GETS GIRL



CINDERELLA



The 8 Phases of a Good Story Arc

1. Everyday Life.

-ex- Cinderella sweeping the ashes.

2. The Inciting Incident.

-ex- A fairy godmother arrives, offering a chance to go to the ball.

3. The Quest.

-ex- Cinderella goes to the ball, and lives it up!

4. The Surprise.

Unexpected but plausible obstacles, complications, conflict and trouble.

Reader should think: "I should have seen that coming!"

-ex- The clock strikes 12!

5. The Critical Choice.

This is when the hero's true character is revealed. The hero tries to choose the lesser of two evils, or a good (but hard) versus bad (but easy) choice. In tragedies, the unhappy ending stems from the hero making the wrong choice.

-ex- Romeo poisoning himself on seeing Juliet supposedly dead.

6. Climax.

The highest peak of tension in the story.

7. Reversal.

The consequence of the critical choice and climax. It should change the status of your hero. (-ex- Cinderella is recognized by the Prince, and the slipper fits!) It must be inevitable and probable. No deus ex machina (no coincidences!)

8. Resolution.

The new status quo. The new normal. The hero is changed, and the story is complete.

As you step back and look at your 15-minute plot, you can now start imagining and brainstorming on that next level of detail. That's basically the **EVENT DESIGN**, to move your hero through the phases above.

You'll also want to start brainstorming on **CHARACTER DESIGN** as well.

What will the supporting characters look like?

What conflict will they add, to keep the hero moving along to discover her inner challenge and desire?

The Killer Secret to Designing Rising Conflict in Your Story Arc:

Okay - so we know that the calling card of the middle of the story arc is RISING CONFLICT, right?

But how do we pull that off?

It's quite simple. I learned this from Robert McKee's STORY SEMINAR, in Los Angeles.

And the way he explained it was BRILLIANT.

A: Protagonist takes action #1 toward the object of desire. The external goal.

B: They receive immediate and unexpected push-back from 1 or more of these:

1. Inner Self.
2. Personal Relationships.
3. Social conflict
4. Physical World.

C: Character realizes the minimal conservative action was not enough.

So (s)he takes action #2. Bigger, more risk.

They now stand to lose something they have, in order to get what they want.

D: They receive even bigger and more unexpected push-back from 1 or more of these:

1. Inner Self.
2. Personal Relationships.

3. Social conflict
4. Physical World.

So they have to take an even bigger, riskier action.

And so the cycle continues until your ultimate climax... where the hero risks EVERYTHING.

Cast and Event Design within the Story Arc:

CAST DESIGN:

Polarize your cast so that every cast member has a separate and distinct attitude toward life. If they're not polarized, the opportunities for conflict are minimized.

EVENT DESIGN:

The purpose of event design is to build pressure that reveals true character that is in contrast to their characterization. Alternate your events, or scenes, between positive value charges, and negative value charges.

Note: The vast majority of stories don't CHANGE the character... they REVEAL the character.

How to Design Surprises Into Your Story Arc:

The best cliffhangers are game-changers in some way, which reveal something terrible and startling - so that even if our heroes survive the immediate peril, you are left wondering how this new status quo will play out.

Build at least three “surprises” into your story

A surprise is an especially dramatic event that occurs in the “failure” phase of sections in these three places:

- ☐ At the end of the Beginning (Act One) (or one-quarter of the way through your story)
- ☐ In the middle of the Middle (Act Two) (or halfway through your story)
- ☐ At the end of the Middle (Act Two) (or three-quarters of the way through your story)

How to Think Through your Climax, ahead of Time.

Here’s what Christopher Vogler of “The Writer’s Journey” had to see about the essence of a story:

“[The most important part is] **staging a scene of death and rebirth.**

If you've got that, you've got the essence of your powerful story.

That's what people recognize as the heart of the story.

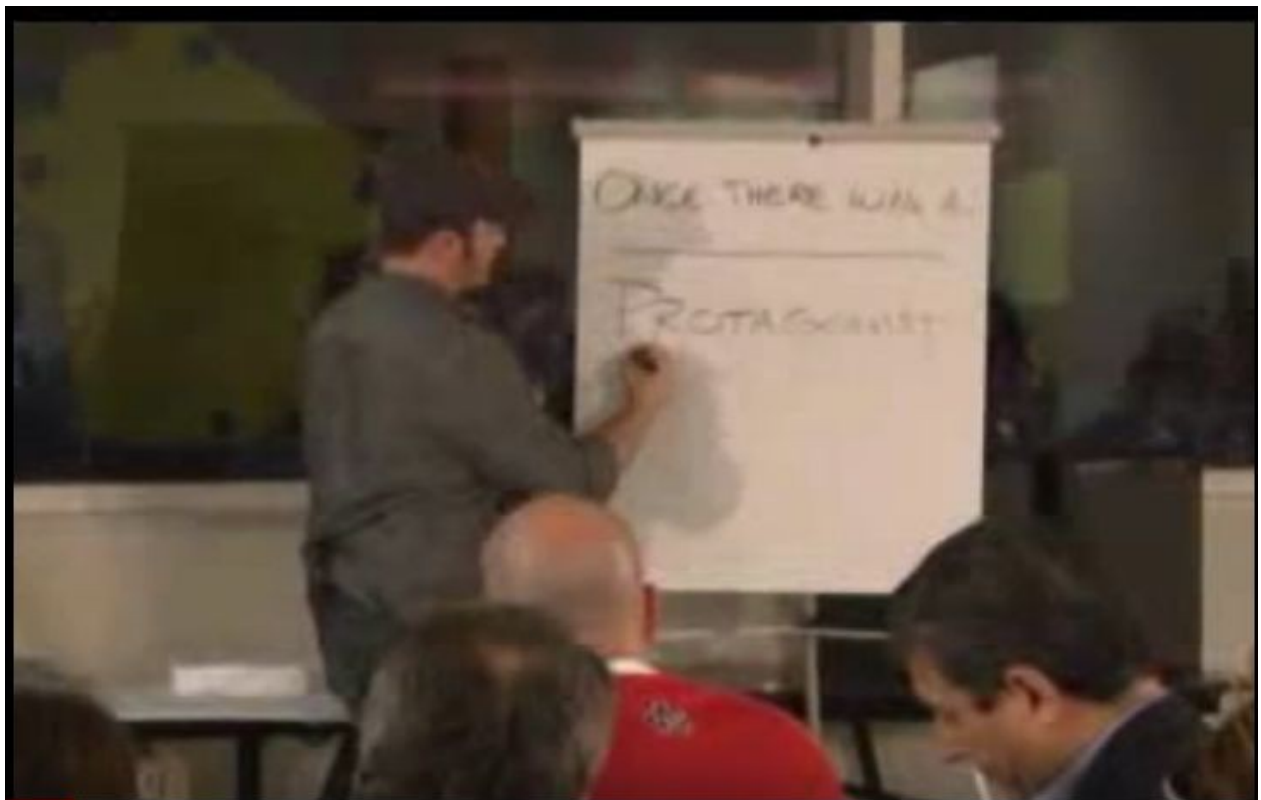
someone has a desire, they seem to be thwarted, you thoroughly convince the audience that [the hero] will never get their wish.

Then against all odds, the hero finds a way.

If you find that, you've got the essence of your story.”

Module 8: The Three Words You MUST Use to Connect Your Scenes.

(...And 2 You Must NOT!)



Okay - you're about to get access to a [one-hour writing course](#) from Pixar's Austin Madison, on how to brainstorm for your new story, and then how to write a very simple but powerful plot for it.

You will LOVE this one-hour video training!

1. Get into creative play mode

- “Three things” exercise, to get your brain working as quickly as possible.

Here’s the Pixar Story Plot:

1. Once There Was A _____ (protagonist with a goal)

-ex- once there was farm boy who wanted to be a star fighter pilot

2. Every Day, _____ (character development)

-ex- every day, he helped out on the farm

3. Until One Day, _____ (inciting incident)

- conflict graph - rises over time, before resolution

-ex- his family is killed

4. Because of that, _____ (every scene must be necessary)

-ex- Because of that... Luke Skywalker goes with OB Wan

Because of that...

Because of that...

Because of that...

5. Until Finally, _____ (crisis, then climax)

-ex- OB-Wan is killed.

Because of that, Luke becomes a Starfighter Pilot, and saves the day

but he doesn't just save the day as a pilot

He saves the day as a Jedi. He's special.

Every scene has conflict, climax, and resolution

6. Ever since then...

You absolutely must use “BECAUSE OF THAT” to connect your scenes.

It ensures that any every scene is direct consequence of a previous one.

And that scenes that “feel like good ideas”, but don’t actively come as a consequence from some prior action... can safely be cut.

Don’t have “AND THEN...” scenes.

“And then... such and such happened.”.

No. Every scene must be a “Because of that” scene.

Watch the Pixar story course, and see how they’ve built a billion-dollar storytelling company on this concept.

Module 9: Three Story Plots... Decoded.

Toy Story 1.



Okay.

We're going to use the 15-Minute Plot system, to break down Toy Story in 15 minutes.

This will show you the DNA of what makes this one of the greatest animated movies ever made.

And will start to give you clues as to how to create your own masterpiece.

	A	B
2	Story Title	Toy Story (1995)
3	Setting	Andy's toy room.
4	Premise (What would happen if...)	...the old faithful toy was scared to death at the prospect of being replaced?
5	Protagonist Characterization	Woody - a pullstring cowboy doll who seems like the Alpha male, but in actuality ends up putting Andy, and Buzz's feelings ahead of his own. As Andy prepares for a family outing at Pizza Planet, his mother allows him to bring only one toy along. Fearing Andy will choose Buzz, Woody tries to trap Buzz behind the closet door, but the plan backfires when Woody accidentally knocks Buzz out the window, resulting in the other toys turning against Woody by accusing him of eliminating Buzz out of jealousy.
6	The Inciting Incident	Don't get replaced by Buzz Lightyear
7	Protagonist's External Goal	A toy being replaced is like death to that toy.
8	The Terrible Consequence of Failure	Sid, the toy abuser.
9	The Antagonistic Force	Is insecure about his worth in the eyes of his owner, Andy.
10	The Protagonist's Internal Issue	Buzz that he can still bring Andy joy... and this re-invigorates Buzz. Woody and Sid's toys rescue Buzz, and scare Sid into no longer abusing toys. Woody and Buzz then rescue Buzz from Sid's house, and climb onto the moving truck that is taking Andy to his new house. They manage to climb onto the moving truck, but Sid chases after them and tries to get them off the truck. Buzz tackles Sid, leaving himself behind. Woody tries rescuing Buzz with Andy's RC car, but the other toys, who still think Woody is eliminating toys, attack Woody and toss him out off of the moving truck onto the road. Having evaded Sid, Buzz and RC pickup Woody and continue after the truck. Upon seeing Woody, Buzz realizes that he isn't a real astronaut, he becomes depressed. Woody could have taken advantage and declared victory. But he decides to convince Buzz that he can still bring Andy joy.
11	The Story Climax	Tragi-Comedy - Hero fails to achieve his goal, but it turns out to be a good thing.
12	The Protagonist's Crisis Decision	Voyage and Return
13	What type of story climax is it?	
14	What Meta-Plot Describes This Story?	
15	The Controlling Idea, or Meaning? (Opposite of the premise)	Real friends make new friends, but keep the old ones.

Setting:

Andy's toy room.

Premise (What would happen if...?)

...the old faithful toy was scared to death at the prospect of being replaced?

Protagonist Characterization:

Woody is a pullstring cowboy doll who seems like the Alpha male. But a nice alpha male - he's actually nice, kind, affable, and plays by the rules... as long as he remains the top toy.

The Inciting Incident:

Woody's owner, Andy, gets a new cool toy. Buzz Lightyear.

As Andy prepares for a family outing at Pizza Planet, his mother allows him to bring only one toy along. Fearing Andy will choose Buzz, Woody tries to trap Buzz behind a desk, but the plan backfires when Woody accidentally knocks Buzz out the window, resulting in the other toys turning against Woody by accusing him of eliminating Buzz out of jealousy.

Protagonist's External Goal:

Woody's external goal is to remain Andy's favorite toy.

Or more specifically: "Don't get replaced by Buzz Lightyear!"

The Terrible Consequence of Failure:

A toy being replaced is like death to that toy. Woody sees his replacement as death...so he feels that he has to do ANYTHING IN HIS POWER to stop Buzz Lightyear from replacing him!

The Antagonistic Force:

One of the main antagonistic forces in this movie, is Sid, the toy abuser.

Now from Woody's point-of-view, another antagonist force is Buzz Lightyear himself!

And finally, perhaps the greatest antagonistic force, is the sheer misunderstanding between Woody and Buzz Lightyear. This is the ultimate driver of all the hijinks that ensue.

(Notice we don't just call it "The Antagonist", because it's not always, or not always only, an individual bad guy.)

The Protagonist's Internal Issue:

Woody is insecure about his worth in the eyes of his owner, Andy.

Notice how even though the protagonist (Woody)'s goal is to solve his external issue, as storytellers, we know that the audience will only truly care about this story because of the protagonist's INTERNAL issue.

The Story Climax:

Sid captures Buzz and Woody. They meet Sid's abused toys, and his vicious bull terrier Scud.

In the process, Buzz realizes he isn't real after all, and becomes depressed.

Because of that, Woody has a change-of-heart, and convinces Buzz that he can still bring Andy joy.

This re-invigorates Buzz.

Woody and Sid's toys rescue Buzz, and scare Sid into no longer abusing toys.

Woody and Buzz then leave Sid's house, and get back to Andy's house just in time to see Andy and his Mom drive off in a moving truck. They're too late!

Woody and Buzz manage to climb onto the moving truck, but Scud the terrier chases after them and tries to pull Woody off the truck!

Buzz tackles Scud, leaving himself behind.

Woody tries rescuing Buzz with Andy's RC car, but the other toys, who still think Woody is eliminating fellow toys, attack Woody and toss him out off of the moving truck onto the road.

Having evaded Scud, Buzz and RC pickup Woody and continue after the truck.

Upon seeing Woody and Buzz together on RC (the toy car), the other toys realize their mistake and try to help them get back in the truck but RC's batteries become depleted, stranding them.

Woody then ignites the rocket on Buzz's back and manages to throw RC into the moving truck before they soar into the air. Buzz opens his wings to free himself from the rocket before it explodes, gliding with Woody to land safely into a box in the van, right next to Andy.

WHEW!!!! (Now THAT'S a climax!!)

The Protagonist's Crisis Decision:

When Buzz realizes that he isn't a real astronaut, he becomes depressed.

Woody could have taken advantage and declared victory.

But he decides instead to convince Buzz that he can still bring Andy joy.

What type of story climax is it?

In this case, Toy Story 1 is Tragi-Comedy:

The hero fails to achieve his goal, but it turns out to be a good thing.

This is an IRONIC ending - meaning - it's not a simple COMEDY (The protagonist succeeds), or a simple TRAGEDY (the protagonist fails.)

Ironic endings are the most memorable.

Because life is ironic.

Life is not neat.

Life is messy.

But sometimes... sometimes we can find some semblance of meaning, in that messiness.

And that's what an ironic ending does for you.

As much as possible, use IRONIC climaxes in your stories.

Either the hero succeeds with his external goal (but fails with his internal goal... which is bad),

or the hero fails with his external goal (but succeeds with his internal goal... which is good).

Woody failed with his external goal. There was a new alpha in town. But internally, he became a better toy. And we love him for it.

What Meta-Plot Describes This Story?

Voyage and Return: The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses to them, returns with nothing but experience. (A lot of the Pixar movies use this meta-plot.)

The Controlling Idea, or Meaning? (Opposite of the premise)

Real friends make new friends, but keep the old ones.

Notice that this is the opposite of the original premise.

2: A Bug's Life (Pixar, 1998).



A		C	
2	Story Title	A Bug's Life (1998)	
3	Setting	Ant Island, a small island in the middle of a dried creek.	
4	Premise (What would happen if...)	... an ant didn't need to follow colony rules to survive?	
5	Protagonist Characterization	Flik, an individualist misfit and would-be inventor, lives in a colony of ants.	
6	The Inciting Incident	when the annual offering is inadvertently knocked into a stream by Flik's latest invention, a grain-harvesting device, the grasshoppers demand twice as much food as compensation. Given a temporary reprieve by the grasshoppers, the ants trick Flik into accepting his plan to recruit "warrior bugs" to fight off the grasshoppers. While Flik actually believes in the plan, the other ants see it as an opportunity to get rid of Flik and save themselves trouble.	
7	Protagonist's External Goal	To scare off the grasshoppers.	
8	The Terrible Consequence of Failure	Punishment (and possible destruction) at the hands of the grasshoppers.	
9	The Antagonistic Force	gang of marauding grasshoppers, led by Hopper, that arrive every season demanding food from the ants	
10	The Protagonist's Internal Issue	Doesn't respect the traditions and usefulness of structured colony life.	
11	The Story Climax	After overhearing Hopper's plan to kill the Queen, Princess Atta's younger sister Dot leaves in search of Flik and the circus bugs to convince them to return and save the colony with the bird model, even though they were told to never come back. The bird nearly works, but P.T. Flea, also mistaking it for a real bird, lights it on fire, exposing it as a decoy. Hopper beats Flik in retaliation, and proclaims that the ants are lowly life forms and live to serve the grasshoppers.	
12	The Protagonist's Crisis Decision	The bird nearly works, but P.T. Flea, also mistaking it for a real bird, lights it on fire, exposing it as a decoy. Hopper beats Flik in retaliation, and proclaims that the ants are lowly life forms and live to serve the grasshoppers. Faced with defeat and likely death, the independent Flik rallies the ants to work in unison. This	
13	What type of story climax is it?	Comedy - Hero succeeds	
14	What Meta-Plot Describes This Story?	Overcoming the Monster: The protagonist sets out to defeat an antagonistic force which threatens the protagonist and/or protagonist's homeland.	

Story Title: A Bug's Life (1998)

Setting: Ant Island, a small island in the middle of a dried creek.

Premise: "What would happen if...":

... an ant didn't need to follow colony rules to survive?

Protagonist Characterization:

Flik, an individualist misfit and would-be inventor, lives in a colony of ants.

The Inciting Incident:

when the annual offering is inadvertently knocked into a stream by Flik's latest invention, a grain-harvesting device, the grasshoppers demand twice as much food as compensation.

Given a temporary reprieve by the grasshoppers, the ants trick Flik into accepting his plan to recruit "warrior bugs" to fight off the grasshoppers. While Flik actually believes in the plan, the other ants see it as an opportunity to get rid of Flik and save themselves trouble.

Protagonist's External Goal:

To scare off the grasshoppers.

The Terrible Consequence of Failure:

Punishment (and possible destruction) at the hands of the grasshoppers.

The Antagonistic Force:

A gang of marauding grasshoppers, led by Hopper, that arrive every season demanding food from the ants

The Protagonist's Internal Issue:

Doesn't respect the traditions and usefulness of structured colony life.

The Story Climax:

After overhearing Hopper's plan to kill the Queen, Princess Atta's younger sister Dot leaves in search of Flik and the circus bugs to convince them to return and save the colony with the bird model, even though they were told to never come back. The bird nearly works, but P.T. Flea, also mistaking it for a real bird, lights it on fire, exposing it as a decoy. Hopper beats Flik in retaliation, and proclaims that the ants are lowly life forms and live to serve the grasshoppers.

The Crisis Decision:

The bird nearly works, but P.T. Flea, also mistaking it for a real bird, lights it on fire, exposing it as a decoy. Hopper beats Flik in retaliation, and proclaims that the ants are lowly life forms and live to serve the grasshoppers. Faced with defeat and likely death, the independent Flik rallies the ants to work in unison. This inspires the entire colony along with the circus bugs to force the grasshoppers out of Ant Island.

What Type of Climax Is It?

Comedy - Hero succeeds

What Meta-Plot Describes This Story?

Overcoming the Monster: The protagonist sets out to defeat an antagonistic force which threatens the protagonist and/or protagonist's homeland.

The Controlling Idea, or Meaning? (Opposite of Premise)

You can be an individual and inventor, but don't discount the power of tradition, and the power of working together. Use your individual abilities to serve the group, not exist separate from the group.

Inside Out (2015).



A	P
2 Story Title	Inside Out (2015)
3 Setting	12-year old Riley's mind.
4 Premise (What would happen if...)	Sadness was a hindrance in our lives, and all we needed was joy?
5 Protagonist Characterization	Joy is cute, fun-loving, energetic, and the very first emotion to have existed in Riley's head. On Riley's first day at her new school, Sadness accidentally makes her cry in front of her class, creating a new, sad core memory. Joy attempts to dispose of the new memory before it reaches the central hub, but she accidentally knocks the other core memories loose in her struggle with Sadness, shutting down the personality islands and making them unstable. Before Joy can put them back, she, Sadness, and the core memories are sucked out of Headquarters through the memory tube leading to the rest of Riley's mind. They end up in the labyrinthine storage area of Riley's long-term memories and set out to return to Headquarters.
6 The Inciting Incident	
7 Protagonist's External Goal	Protect Riley's core memories from Sadness, get the core memories back to HQ, and get Joy back in charge of Riley's mind again.
8 The Terrible Consequence of Failure	Riley mind will destroy all the emotional islands of personality, and eventually will run away from home.
9 The Antagonistic Force	
10 The Protagonist's Internal Issue	Joy thinks she is the most important emotion. And that Sadness is nothing but a hindrance.
11 The Story Climax	Joy is on the bus bound for Minnesota, and her emotions console has been rendered disabled... making her depressed and apathetic. She feels no emotions. Her parents have called the police and are looking for her, frantic with worry. It seems that all is lost!
12 The Protagonist's Crisis Decision	Joy discovers a sad moment in Riley's life that becomes happy when her parents and friends come to comfort her over losing a hockey game, which causes Joy to realize Sadness's true importance. Joy decides to seek out Sadness, and get her back to HQ. At this point, Riley is depressed and apathetic, and on a bus bound for
13 What type of story climax is it?	Tragi-Comedy - Hero fails to achieve his goal, but it turns out to be a good thing.
14 What Meta-Plot Describes This Story?	Voyage and Return: The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses to them, returns with nothing but experience.

Okay - spoiler alert! Pixar's latest movie, Inside Out, came out recently.

if you haven't seen the movie yet, but plan to, skip this analysis!

Otherwise, delve in. You'll love this story...

Story Title: Inside Out (2015).

Setting: 12-year old Riley's mind.

Premise (What would happen if...?):

Sadness was a hindrance in our lives, and all we needed was joy?

Protagonist Characterization:

Joy is cute, fun-loving, energetic, and the very first emotion to have existed in Riley's head.

The Inciting Incident:

on Riley's first day at her new school, Sadness accidentally makes her cry in front of her class, creating a new, sad core memory. Joy attempts to dispose of the new memory before it reaches the central hub, but she accidentally knocks the other core memories loose in her struggle with Sadness, shutting down the personality islands and making them unstable. Before Joy can put them back, she, Sadness, and the core memories are sucked out of Headquarters through the memory tube leading to the rest of Riley's mind. They end up in the labyrinthine storage area of Riley's long-term memories and set out to return to Headquarters.

Protagonist's External Goal:

Protect Riley's core memories from Sadness, get the core memories back to HQ, and get Joy back in charge of Riley's mind again.

The Terrible Consequence of Failure:

Riley mind will destroy all the emotional islands of personality, and eventually will run away from home.

The Protagonist's Internal Issue:

Joy thinks she is the most important emotion. And that Sadness is nothing but a hindrance.

The Story Climax:

Joy is on the bus bound for Minnesota, and her emotions console has been rendered disabled... making her depressed and apathetic. She feels no emotions. Her parents have called the police and are looking for her, frantic with worry. It seems that all is lost!

The Protagonist's Crisis Decision:

Joy discovers a sad moment in Riley's life that becomes happy when her parents and friends come to comfort her over losing a hockey game, which causes Joy to realize Sadness' true importance. Joy decides to seek out Sadness, and get her back to HQ. At this point, Riley is depressed and apathetic, and on a bus bound for Minnesota. The emotions control board has been rendered disabled, and none of the emotions, not even Joy, can dislodge Anger's idea for Riley to run away. At Joy's urging, Sadness takes control and successfully removes the idea, re-activating the console and prompting Riley to return home.

What Type of Story Climax Is It?

Tragi-Comedy - Hero fails to achieve her goal, but it turns out to be a good thing.

What Meta-Plot Describes this Story?

Voyage and Return: The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses to them, returns with nothing but experience.

The Controlling Idea, or Meaning? (Opposite of the Premise).

Sadness is just as important as Joy, just for different occasions and purposes.

Without sadness, we lose the ability to process emotionally painful experiences. We lose the ability to grieve and move on. We become emotionally "dead". We need our emotions to work TOGETHER, and sadness is crucial to RENEWAL.

Module 10: What to Do Next:

A great way to transition from your 15-minute plot, into your actual writing, is “The Snowflake Method”.

Randy Ingermanson's "Snowflake Method" is simple and straightforward.

Step 1) Write a one-sentence summary of your novel.

Step 2) Expand that sentence to a full paragraph describing the story setup, 3 major disasters, and ending of the novel.

If you believe in the Three-Act structure, then the first disaster corresponds to the end of Act 1. The second disaster is the mid-point of Act 2. The third disaster is the end of Act 2, and forces Act 3 which wraps things up. It is OK to have the first disaster be caused by external circumstances, but I think that the second and third disasters should be caused by the protagonist's attempts to “fix things”. Things just get worse and worse.

Step 3) For each of your major characters, take an hour and write a one-page summary sheet.

Step 4) Expand each sentence of your summary paragraph into a full paragraph. All but the last paragraph should end in a disaster. The final paragraph should tell how the book ends.

Step 5) Write up a one-page description of each major character and a half-page description of the other important characters. These “character synopses” should tell the story from the point of view of each character.

Step 6) Expand the one-page plot synopsis of the novel to a four-page synopsis. Basically, you will again be expanding each paragraph from step (4) into a full page.

Step 7) Expand your character descriptions into full-fledged character charts detailing everything there is to know about each character.

The standard stuff such as birthdate, description, history, motivation, goal, etc. Most importantly, how will this character change by the end of the novel? This is an expansion of your work in step (3), and it will teach you a lot about your characters. You will probably go back and revise steps (1-6) as your characters become “real” to you and begin making petulant demands on the story.

Step 8) Make a spreadsheet detailing the scenes that emerge from your four-page plot outline. Make just one line for each scene. In one column, list the POV character. In another (wide) column, tell what happens.

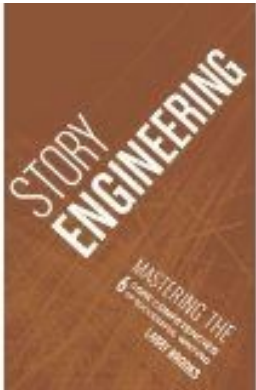

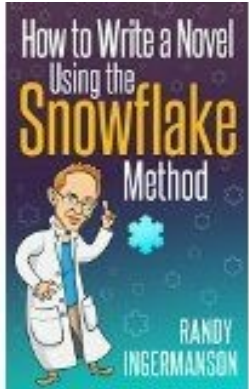
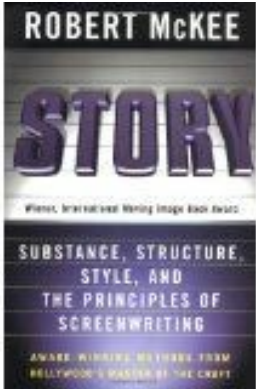
Step 9) Now you can jump in and start writing your first draft!

This approach will save you a LOT of time in rewrites and writer's block down the line!

More Resources on Plotting?

Want to do more detailed plotting?

I've got just the resources for you.

<p>Story Engineering</p> <p>Feb 24, 2011 by Larry Brooks</p> 	<p>Save The Cat!</p> <p>May 25, 2005 by Blake Snyder</p> 	<p>Snowflake Method</p> <p>Jul 16, 2014 Kindle eBook by Randy Ingermanson</p> 
<p>Story</p> <p>Nov 25, 1997 by Robert McKee</p> 	<p><u>Scrivener Tutorial on Plotting</u></p>	

Bonus #1: Pixar's 22 Rules of Storytelling

On the next page you will see Pixar's 22 rules of storytelling.

This is a list compiled a few years ago by a story artist at Pixar.

'Brave' artist Emma Coats shared her storytelling wit and wisdom [on Twitter](#).

So it's an unofficial list, but it has been reformatted and re-presented in various forms over the years. You'll notice that #4 on the list is what we talk about in the previous module - the Pixar story method.

Notice how that one item on this list of 22, was easily expanded into a one-hour interactive teaching course on storytelling. Do not underestimate this Pixar list of 22 rules... they will be invaluable to your writing!



PIXAR's 22 Rules of Storytelling

Copyright by Pixar Studios

#1: Admire characters for attempting more than what their successes have been.

#2: Keep in mind what's interesting to you as an audience, not what's fun to do as a writer.

They can be very different.

#3: Trying for theme is important, however you won't see what the story is about until you're at the end of that story. Got it? Now rewrite.

#4: Once upon a time there was _____. Every day, _____.

One day _____. Because of that, _____. Because of that, _____. Until finally _____.

#5: Simplify. Focus. Combine characters.

Hop over detours. You'll feel like you're losing valuable stuff but it sets you free.

#6: What is your character good at or comfortable with? Throw the polar opposite at him. Challenge him. How does he deal with it?

#7: Come up with your ending before you figure out your middle. Seriously. Endings are hard. Get yours working up front.

#8: Finish your story. Let go even if it's not perfect. In an ideal world you have both, but move on. Do better next time.

#9: When you're stuck, make a list of what wouldn't happen next. More often than not, the material that gets you unstuck appears.

#10: Pull apart the stories you like. What you like in them is a part of you. Recognize it before you use it.

#11: Why must you tell this story in particular? What's the belief burning within you that your story feeds off of? That's the heart of it.



#12: Discount the 1st thing that comes to mind.

And the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th - get the obvious out of the way. Surprise yourself.

#13: Give your characters opinions. A character being passive or malleable is easy for you as a writer, but it's poison to your audience.

#14: What's the essence of your story? What's the most economical way of telling of it? If you know that, you can build out from there.

#15: If you were your character, in this situation, how would you feel? Honesty lends credibility to unbelievable situations.

#16: What are the stakes? Give us reason to root for the character. What happens if he doesn't succeed? Stack the odds against him.

#17: No work is ever wasted. And if it's not working, let go and move on - if it's useful, it'll show up again.

#18: You have to know yourself, and know the difference between doing your best & being fussy. Story is testing, not refining.

#19: Coincidences that get characters into trouble are great. Coincidences that get them out of it is cheating.

#20: Exercise. Take the building blocks of a movie you dislike. How would you rearrange them into what you DO like?

#21: Identify with your situation/characters. Don't write "cool." What would make YOU act that way?

#22: Putting it on paper only allows you to start fixing it. If a perfect idea stays in your head, you'll never share it with anyone.

Bonus #2: Andrew Stanton on Story (TED talk)

This 18-minute TED Talk from Andrew Stanton of Pixar has the FUNNIEST definition of storytelling I've EVER heard!



“Storytelling is joke-telling.

It's knowing your punchline, your ending.

Knowing that everything you're saying from beginning to ending is leading toward a singular goal. And ideally confirming some truth that deepens our understanding of who we are as human beings.

- Andrew Stanton, Pixar.

Now - watch the TEDtalk to hear the definition of storytelling he gives [BEFORE](#) this explanation.

It'll be worth your time.

Conclusion.

Okay. You're now ready to totally blow your readers' minds...

Whether you see yourself as a PLOTTER, or as a PANTSTER,

(In reality, we all have a little of both...)

The KD 15-Minute Plot method will help you get from creative idea to bestselling book..

FASTER.

Our goal is to empower you with a way to put a skeleton on your good idea,

that will have you flying straight through the entire writing process.

No writer's block.

No loose ends.

We're ensuring you can write a bestseller that readers will be left breathless by.

We're talking:

1. Faster writing... (Because you know exactly where to take the story next.)
2. Better writing... (Addictive, riveting storytelling guaranteed to leave readers breathless.)
3. More fun writing... (No more writer's block! No more getting stuck in the middle!)
4. More books published... (You can more easily outsource your great ideas, knowing you've put all the right milestones in place to keep the story on the track YOU want.)

Now, it's your turn.

Time to put this into action.

Remember - just as with any other skill, you'll get better, and faster, as you apply this more.

So grab that next story idea out of your head,
set your timer,
and start filling out the KD 15-Minute Plot template.

This is going to be a fun ride...

Go get it. You go this.

And I'm proud of you.

Story is:

1. How what happens (**plot**)

2. affects someone (**hero**)

3. who is trying to achieve what turns out to be a difficult goal

(**story question, or hero's external goal**)

4. and how he or she changes as a result

(**hero's internal goal, or what the story is really about.**)

The KD 15-Minute Plot Template

(PRINT THIS OUT FOR REFERENCE):

YOUR STORY TITLE HERE.
1. What is your story idea, or premise? <i>(This is asking yourself the question: "What would happen if..." A strong premise evokes emotion right away.)</i>
2. Which of the 7 master plot types are you going for? <i>(Overcoming the Monster. Rags to Riches. The Quest. Voyage and Return. Comedy. Tragedy. Rebirth.)</i>
3. Who is your protagonist? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Characterization: Physical description, occupation, hobbies, and quirks.</i><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Character: Choice under pressure. Reveals their warts. Opposite from their public face.</i><input type="checkbox"/> <i>The vast majority of stories don't CHANGE character. They REVEAL character.</i>
4. What is your protagonist's external goal?
5. What is the inciting incident? <i>(What event forces the character to take action in pursuit of her external goal?)</i>
6. What is the terrible consequence of failure? <i>What disaster is the protagonist afraid of, if the goal is not achieved?</i>
7. What are the antagonistic forces working to bring about the terrible consequence? <i>(The more powerful the antagonist, the more your protagonist must grow. Make antagonist vastly favored to win.)</i>
8. What is your protagonist's internal issue? <i>(What does (s)he have to overcome internally, to achieve her goal?)</i>
9. What supporting characters will create additional drama for your protagonist?
10. What will your protagonist's crisis decision be? <i>(Choosing between 2 irreconcilable good choices, or lesser of two evils. This happens in the final act.)</i>
11. What type of story climax would thrill and satisfy your readers? The hero: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Succeeds by sticking with a good trait, giving up a bad one, or taking on a good one. <i>(Harry Potter)</i><input type="checkbox"/> Fails by sticking with a bad trait, giving up a good one, or taking on a bad one. <i>(Macbeth) (Tragedy)</i><input type="checkbox"/> Fails, but it turns out to be a good thing because he either stuck with a good trait, or gave up a bad one.<input type="checkbox"/> Succeeds, but it turns out to be a bad thing because he either stuck with a bad trait, gave up a good one, or took on a bad one <i>(-ex- Romeo & Juliet)</i>
12. What is the ultimate meaning of your story, in one sentence (the controlling idea)? <i>-ex- : Justice (VALUE) triumphs (the change) because the hero is smarter (CAUSE)</i> <i>or: Injustice (VALUE) reigns (the change) because the criminal is ruthless (CAUSE)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Through the entire story lead the reader to believe the OPPOSITE of the controlling idea is what will win out... before revealing the real controlling idea in the final climax.</i>

Bolaji O.



Got questions?

Here's to your success!

Bolaji O.