



Course Description:

Have problems with opening hooks, sagging middles, weak conflict, or tying up loose ends? What about just getting motivated to start that book? Plotting For Un-Dummies is a two week workshop filled with guidance, help, advice, and suggestions. Learn how to plot and follow a simple outline without stifling your creativity, beef up your Hero, or develop your kick-ass Heroine. We will discuss the difference between a complex plot and a convoluted one, and how to clarify problems, how to stay on track using Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey as a guide, and the importance of a strong Goal, Motivation, and Conflict (GMC).

About the Instructor:

Growing up around ghosts and having written stories since her teens, native Texan and RWA award-winning contest winner Ann Jones-Rodriguez is used to things that go "bump" 24/7. With a passion for Science Fiction, anything paranormal, Space Opera, and writing romance, Ann blends these elements in her stories with a twist of action and suspense. She has written many parapsychology articles, had an Astrology column, and had her artwork and short stories published. Ann's personal motto is, "Never give up, never surrender!" (from GalaxyQuest), and currently she is working on a futuristic romance and a vampire romance.

To learn more about Ann, please visit her at www.AnnJonesRodriguez.com.

NOTE: All worksheets linked to in this document will open in a **NEW WINDOW** for you to save or print as needed.

Lesson 1 - STARTING WITH THE BASICS

You've decided on your next story/project to work on, and it's time to lay out the foundation. For the benefit of this workshop, I'm basing my information on my own experience of how to plot and write a romance story, what works for me, and what traditional print publishers expect for this genre.

Starting with the basics, lets first work on **your title** (or working title if you haven't already got one) and gather some details. Don't worry if everything doesn't come to you at once, because you can always add to it later.

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A title can speak volumes. It tells about your story in a teeny-tiny nutshell, hints at dangers lurking, modern dilemmas, and can even share a humorous situation (example: "Rogue In A Kilt" by Sandy Blair, "Undead and Unemployed" by Mary Janice Davidson). It can thrill you, titillate your interest, and spark a certain familiarity that makes you want to grab that sucker right off the shelf and keep reading until you find out what happens. Besides an enticing cover graphic, a great back blurb, and author name recognition, a title can sell a book.

I love thinking up story titles. I try to keep my titles at 2 to 3 words, or maybe 4 words if it really strikes a cord in me. If a key element in your story is suspense, perhaps one word could be an adjective or adverb "showing" something about the story (example: "Line Of Fire" by Cindy Dees, "Seize the Night" by Sherrilyn Kenyon). Of course the title can be changed by the publisher, but I have the satisfaction of knowing MY title is from my heart and the heart of my story. :-) But please don't knock yourself out trying to come up with the perfect title. A working title is just as good, and most important, YOU know it's a temporary representation of your story until you can find a permanent one.

Also, when does your romance story take place? What is the setting? Determine if your story is contemporary (modern), historical, a romantic suspense or suspense combination with another genre, fantasy, regency, gothic, inspirational, vampire, paranormal or futuristic, etc. This info should help plant a "place" in your mind for your characters to live in. Don't be scared of crossing the genre lines to play with your story elements (example: historical fantasy romance or futuristic suspense romance).

Other basics to establish, and the first things an editor wants to know, are **word count** and **genre**. Genre is easy, as explained in the previous paragraph ("contemporary" romance, "historical" romance, "Fantasy" romance, etc.). This helps you and the publisher target a certain reader market and is beneficial when it comes to promotion and name recognition. (We won't go into the details because this indepth information is best covered in a different workshop.)

First, do you have an idea how long you want your story? Are you targeting a print publisher who has specific word counts and guidelines? I've created a [Book Length Reference Guide](#) (file) using Campbell's and Vogler's Hero's Journey as a primary guide on how to plot and write to your word count.

Okay, so how do you know what your "word count" is? How do you determine it? And, what exactly is a word count? A word count (WC) is how many words make up a story.

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Depending upon if the publisher is traditional print or electronic, the WC is determined either literally from the word processing program a story is written in, or by multiplying the number of pages in a story by 250. There are approximately 250 words on a page based on using Courier 12-point or a similar font that has 10 characters per inch, double spacing to get 25 lines per page, and 1-inch margins all around.

I created the [Book Length Reference Guide](#) and included project outlines from 50K (200 pages) all the way up to 125K (500 pages). After opening the file, scroll down to find your specific outline based on your word count. For example, if you want your story to be 60K (60,000 words), scroll down and find, "Based on a 60K (240 pages) project: . . ." and ending at "THE END." (These outlines are short and very basic, and we'll expand them later.)

If you have a short story or an epic staga requiring a lower or higher WC, please let me know and I'll be glad to calculate the proper outline to fit your need. And if you have problems finding your WC, please let me know.

Beside knowing your word count, the proper manuscript format, including an appropriate font and headers, is imperative. An editor will know if you're a serious writer by how you present yourself and your work, so be professional. Based on print publishers standards, **proper manuscript formatting** is:

- white paper 8 1/2 X 11, American standard (International standard is a slightly different size so check the publisher's guidelines for what is acceptable)
- 1 to 1.25 inch margins all around,
- all text double spaced,
- page numbers on the top right corner,
- header (title/your name -- NOTE: for RWA contest this info will be different!)
- Chapters beginning at 1/3 to 1/2 way down the page (about 7 to 10 lines down from the top header)
- readable fonts, usually Courier 12-point, Courier New 12-point, or Times New Roman 14-point (always check publisher's guidelines for their preference)

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-- BLACK ink (absolutely NO COLORS!)

If you have questions about formatting in Corel Word Perfect, just let me know and we'll find the answer. If you have MS Word or another program, I'll find you an answer. :-)

Next, do you have names for your main characters (hero, heroine, villain)? What about your secondary characters? If so, great! If not, assign a temporary name and consider something more permanent as you research and write. You can always go back and change the name later.

Main characters are part of the backbone of your story, and you want these "people" to be real and multifaceted. What is their Goal in your story? Ideally, the Hero and Heroine's Goals should be contrary to each other to benefit the story and feed each other's Conflicts, thereby forcing them to later make a "choice" in the story. What Motivates that character to WANT that Goal? What EXTERIOR Conflict holds them back from achieving that Goal? What INNER Conflict, or reservation(s), does the character have about the Goal? What is their deepest, darkest fear?

GMC Expanded:

There have been valid points made about using or not using a [GMC worksheet](#) before the first draft. Some folks do know their character's GMC on only a subconscious level and chose not to use the worksheet. This is fine for their writing process. If that process works for you, go for it! And yes, you can overanalyze to the point of losing interest in your story. Everyone has their own comfort zone, and I definitely don't want to bog down creativity. :-) When you use the GMC worksheet, go slowly and consider each question one at a time so you don't get overwhelmed. One or two words or a simple sentence is usually good enough to fog your memory about the character.

Here is a [GMC worksheet](#) for you to use. Fill out 1 worksheet for each main character, and keep it handy for reference.

Let's briefly go over the worksheet. You should have a story TITLE, or a working title, and at least the first names of your CHARACTERS (Hero and Heroine). Next, what is the "theme" of your story -- or does the story even have one? This really isn't necessary, just another point of focus for you, the writer (if you don't want a theme, don't worry about it).

Everyone is familiar with having Goals. We have deadlines (Goals) at work to achieve.

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We have the Goal to pay our bills each month and go to the grocery store. We also have the Goal to write that next book.

A Goal is something you WANT.

Let's consider one of your main characters. What does s/he WANT? What is this character trying to achieve or obtain in life -- materialistically or idealistically? To be a millionaire? To own a lavish home? To even have a home at all if they're on the street?

So, your character wants (fill in the blank). And this is their GOAL.

WHY do they want it (the Goal)?

The WHY part is their Motivation, or reason they want that Goal. Motivation is what relentlessly pushes this character to go after this Goal. Remember, this does NOT have to be logical to the reader, ONLY the character.

Does the character want to be a millionaire (Goal) because they were poor growing up and never want to be hungry again (Motivation)? To own a lavish home (Goal) because it represents security (Motivation)? To even have a home at all (Goal) because they're on the street (Motivation), and they want some place tangible and permanent to call their own?

If the Motivation is something bad, like a reasoning by the villain to obtain something, that character will have to deal with it later and thus make it logical to the reader so the reader will understand (not "agree" with) why the villain was motivated in that way.

So, the character wants something (Goal) because of a reason (Motivation) that is important to them.

But they can't have it. This is their Conflict.

Conflict is the "But, But . . . !" issue. Conflict is the External or Internal forces that prevent the character from achieving their Goals. Whether imaginary or real, Conflict is the WHY NOT that the character MUST overcome to "grow" in your story. Conflicts are the obstacles the character faces along the way through your story.

The difference between INNER and OUTER Conflict is literal. Inner Conflict is what's inside the character's mind (indecision, change of heart, a moral or ethical dilemma, etc.),

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what they must deal with if they want to achieve their Goal. Outer Conflict is what's external to the character, what they face in the physical world (job, car trouble, divorce court, etc.).

Conflict can be 1.) man against man, 2.) man against nature, or 3.) man against himself. Whatever the issue, the character must deal with it in a logical and plausible way.

Conflict is what drives the story and makes the reader keep reading. A dull story usually lacks plausible/substantial Conflict. And a convoluted (versus complicated) story has too much undefined or muddy conflict.

Hopefully walking through the [GMC worksheet](#) has helped, and if not, your questions will be answered.

Okay, you have a lot to consider and decide upon. If you get stuck or have problems, please let me know. I'll be glad to help you through the rough spots. And remember, please don't stress -- I want this plotting workshop to be fun as well as productive for you. :-)

Now for the moment you'e been waiting for . . .

Lesson 1 Assignment 1 -- Chose your book length (word count), genre, time period and place (story setting), story title (or working title), your characters names, and fill out a [GMC worksheet](#) (keep it simple!) for each of your main characters (you will probably only need one for your Hero, one for your Heroine, and one for your Villain).

Good luck, and remember, you CAN write that book, so have fun and get started!

Lesson 1 Part 2 - DEVELOPING CHARACTERS

The [Character Sketch](#) and [Character Interview](#) worksheets have a few similar questions, however they are each geared a little differently towards understanding your main characters. And please remember . . .

. . . ALL these worksheets are OPTIONAL.

The worksheets are provided to assist you, not hinder or stifle your creative process. If you get bogged down with a questions and frustrated, stop working on that question. Period. Don't force yourself or your answers. If the Interview and Sketch help, then great!

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Any time when learning something new, the bottom line is: do what works best for your creative process and what helps you most.

For those of us who like to write FF&P romance, I've provided a [Worldbuilding Worksheet](#) for your use. Again, this worksheet is optional, however think about utilizing the information and your wonderful imagination, and use the questions to launch yourself into vibrant alternate Universes or "otherworld" realities. :-)

The [Character Development Chart](#) is strictly an FYI for you to track the progress of your character throughout your story. Over the years I've heard it mentioned many times on several different email lists and in brainstorming sessions how important it is to plan your Hero and Heroine's "growth." On the Development worksheet, you only have to keep 3 things in mind:

1. your character's BEGINNING state of emotions, mentality, and attitude
2. where your character is in the MIDDLE of your story (what happens to jar him/her into wanting to change?)
3. your character's END state of emotions, mentality, and attitude (how they changed themselves through the course of the story).

All this info will be on the worksheet in a short format. I've read and heard it said by other professionals that writing a romance story is one of the most difficult genres to express successfully. I believe what works in a romance story is that we as writers get into our Hero and Heroine's heads and hearts. We actually relate those characters' emotional FEELINGS to our reader and SHOW the characters as they grow. By seeing through your words, the reader will be able to "relate" to your Hero and Heroine, gain sympathy for those characters (which is what we want), and enjoy your story instead of tossing the book across the room into the trash can.

And the bottom line is, a reader wants is to be entertained. So, HOOK her! Make that very first sentence (and paragraph) count as much as possible. Weave in your Goal, why the character wants that Goal and the reason, as soon as possible. Give the "why" the character "cannot" have the Goal by introducing the OUTER Conflict. We will talk about Opening Hooks and Chapter Cliffhangers (one of my personal favorites :-)) more in another lesson.

Now, think about the very first life-changing event you wrote for your Hero and/or

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Heroine. Pick one event, and make that event your opening chapter hook. No backstory to clutter the first pages of your story -- save that information for later. Using the life-changing "event" hooks your reader and hopefully makes them want to continue reading. It makes them ask "but, why???" (as in "why did that have to happen, and what are the characters going to do about it?") A good rule of thumb I follow (based on a 90 to 100K story) is NOT put any backstory at all into the first 20 pages. For a 50K story, no backstory would be added for the first 10 pages, etc. If you're interested, I've written a ["no Backstory Guide."](#)

Back to your story. Think about contrasts. Consider having your character forced to face their worst nightmare or fear (not necessarily successfully), or that "life-changing" event. Due to copyright, the following example are from my own stories. As one example, in my futuristic vampire romance, I chose to open with a dialogue line:

"He's an unlawful, impertinent Rouster, my lady. You don't want that one." (DANGER FOR HIRE)

By this one line, the reader knows there are at least 3 characters (the speaker, the lady, and the Rouster), there's a situation involving a decision, and there's the introduction of conflict because the speaker obviously thinks the "lady" shouldn't "want" the Rouster.

You may also use introspection to spark your reader's interest. Here are two examples from my other stories:

A telepathic warning tingled down the nape of her chafed neck. Had the Elite detectives found her? (THE STAR TALISMAN, SF suspense romance)

Patience of a Saint? Ha! Lord Sabastaani D'vlyn's disapproval of the young woman lying face down beneath him stared back from the mirrored-wall's reflection. (SECRET SUCCESSION, Medieval fantasy romance)

These are just a few ways of using a hook to draw in your reader. I'm not implying this is the best or only way, just some ways you can effectively use your life-changing event.

Lesson 1 Assignment 2 -- Fill out the worksheets in as much or as little detail as you wish. Then, expand the brief paragraph you wrote about your character's First life-changing event in your story into a short full scene by adding details. Try and keep it to no more than 2 pages using proper manuscript format. Utilize all the 5 physical senses and if appropriate, their mental/psychic sense. Think about colors if your scene is during

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the day or how dark and eerie the night can be. Use surrounding objects in the setting if necessary to anchor your reader. Close your eyes and imagine the place where your character is, and go from there.

Remember, the worksheets are to assist you and are optional.

BACKSTORY GUIDE

Try not to add an significant amount of backstory for the first X pages, based on the length of your book (1 or 2 sentences as hints is fine, just not dumps.)

The [No Back Story Guide](#) is available as a separate file to print or download. (c) Ann Jones-Rodriguez

As a rule of thumb in a fiction story, try not to add any backstory for at least the first 20% of the book. This will assist in hooking your reader and not bog down the platform moving forward.

Lesson 1 Part 3 - WORLDBUILDING BASICS

Aside from writing your story, building a "world" or specific "universe" can be both an exciting and daunting prospect because of the magnitude of the project itself. The key is to work one step at a time, think logically, and keep a basis in facts for a strong solid foundation. And it's often the "little" things that add so much depth and dimension to a story, turning cardboard characters into brilliant 3-D complex people and dull situations into stories readers can relate to.

I learned early to keep a complete record (alphabetical) so I could reference literally everything I created for consistency and continuity. This reference manual for the universe/place you have worked so hard to achieve is called your "Bible." It will grow with each story you write in that universe. Let me repeat: write everything down in your Worldbuilding Bible, and include necessary details. You'd be surprised what you might forget from one chapter to the next, and it's much easier and quicker to look up the item in question in your WB Bible than to search it out in previous chapters. Trust me on this point.

To begin, what type of world/universe is your story set in?

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An "Altered" Earth type can be set in the future or "changed" by an apocalyptic or dramatic event. The basics we are most familiar with are pretty much the same, though characters must deal with doing things in new inventive ways. Physical science as we know it remains the same, having weathered the storm of environmental "change." Characters understand and deal with the way their "new" reality works in a plausible, believable manner. Earth and nature as we know it is the same, yet changed (possibly very difficult) conditions require updated thought processes. The popular MATRIX movie is an altered world where "reality" is continually in question and the villains must be eliminated. The movie TERMINATOR is a classic example of an altered world where time travel with the intent to change the future in the basis of the story, and PLUTO NASH expresses how loyalty and friendship (with several comical twists) are still a solid foundation for "good triumphing over evil." Susan Grant's action romance BANZAI MACGUIRE and all the "2176" series books are also great examples.

A Parallel or "Alternate" Earth is similar to the Altered Earth Universe because the story is set on Earth or an Earth-like place. These Alternate Universes frequently include intrigue and elements of sorcery and magic (mostly a simple primitive or Medieval type) that do not exist in SF/futuristic stories. Think of fantasy stories with dominant Medieval elements and tone. The Arthurian legends and the Merlin tales are a great inspiration for stories on Alternate Earth worlds.

Next is the pre-hi-technology or Medieval Universe, which is popular with fantasy writers like J. R. Tolkien (LORD OF THE RINGS books), Robert Asprin (MYTH-ADVENTURE books), Andre Norton's books, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. Low-tech societies with similar familiar Earth elements and magic prevail, sometimes in barbaric ways. This type of story can include dragons, unicorns, warriors, wise mages, elves, dwarfs, ogres, goblins, fairies, and other characters that normally populate fantasy stories.

The forth type is the "Alien" world or OtherWorld Universe. As there are so many variables to consider, this universe is the most difficult to create and takes more time than the other three because the writer begins from scratch. Alien World stories that deal with space travel are also considered "Space Opera." Originally coined in 1941, the term Space Opera was once used derogatorily to describe action-oriented adventure stories on a grand scale that didn't conform to "respectable" Science Fiction. Now, it has become a subgenre unto itself (sometimes referred to as "New Space Opera"), mostly for television and film, with fine authors and screenwriters. STAR TREK, STAR WARS, GALAXY QUEST, and Frank Herbert's DUNE comes to mind, as does Catherine Asaro and Orson Scott Card (HOW TO WRITE A SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY), C. J. Cherryh,

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Lori McMaster Bujold, Fred Saberhagen, Larry Niven, and Isaac Asimov (FOUNDATION Series).

Though there are four different types of Worlds, they often cross over and share elements from another type (example: a Medieval fantasy story of swords and sorcery could also have space ships that travel from world to world, such as Robin D. Owens' award winning Celta series books). Take into consideration the following questions to base you new world on:

- 1.) Physical appearance of your world, geology, flora and fauna, Astronomy
- 2.) Race(s) of people
- 3.) Cultural structure, entertainment, artistic pursuits, and taboos
- 4.) Language
- 5.) Governing body
- 6.) Climate and Architecture
- 7.) Clothing
- 8.) Philosophy, Spirituality, and Religion
- 9.) Level of technology and/or Magic, including medicine
- 10.) Transportation
- 11.) Commerce, animals, beasts, and creatures
- 12.) Financial exchange and rate

Creating Altered, Alternate, Fantasy or Alien Universes is as challenging as it is rewarding. It takes time and a lot of patience. If an element doesn't work, consider it from a different angle and try reworking it back into your world to make it believable. Do your worldbuilding correctly with a basis in facts, and don't rush because your reader will spot mistakes. Free your wonderful imagination and savor the creative process, even if you must rework the "little" things again and again to get them just right. Keep in mind the

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fundamental rules that give logical viability to your worlds, and maintain a Worldbuilding Bible of your work for reference and continuity.

Enjoy building your new world and writing your Science Fiction, fantasy, or paranormal romance story, and freeing your imagination from the constraints of this world. Your brilliant characters will be complex people that jump off the pages and come alive. Your Universe will have greater depth and dimension that you will enjoy more, and your readers will be loyal to you, your stories, and your future stories because they know you'll deliver a well constructed tale.

Lesson 1 Assignment 3 -- Here's something to get you thinking out of the box. Answer this question in 1 brief paragraph.

-- Of the four different universes (Altered, Alternate, Fantasy or Alien), which one would you be more inclined to write? Why?

You can also download or print the [Worldbuilding Worksheet](#).

Lesson 1 Part 4 - STORY PROGRESS: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

I hope you have gotten the chance to look at the [Book Length Reference Guide](#) after determining how long your book is going to be. Have you found your specific chart and copied it into your favorite word processing program?

A quick review about the Story Progress Chart in the Book Length Reference Guide:

In the Book Length Reference Guide, scroll down the page until you've found your word count (example: 50K (200 pages)). All given page numbers on each chart are approximately where things should happen, so use your chart as a guide. And, if you don't work with the 3-Act system, ignore those references.

Again, the page numbers are all approximately where things should happen.

Example on the chart for a 50K manuscript (200 pages): Your prologue and opening chapters will occur approximately from page 1 to page 17. Don't worry if your writing doesn't land exactly on these pages, it's just a guide. This is your opening hook scene (from the first "life-changing" event in your story), where you introduce the GMC and

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establish the "Ordinary World" where your characters live, and get your reader interested. Remember, on this particular chart, no backstory (info-dump) for the first 10 page, however a line or two for reference and validation is fine.

From page 18 to page 34, you build tension, mystery/suspense, and develop your characters' personalities through Conflicts and scene/sequel interaction (we'll go over scene/sequel in a future lesson). The H/H's (Hero and Heroine) awareness of the "problem" increases, and they are faced with a decision to actually "do" something about it.

Pages 35 to 52 deal with your H/H trying to deal with the problem/Conflict. This attempt should be unsuccessful and will lead to deeper Conflict, forcing the H/H to face the "worst choice" possible for "them" in this situation. Ditto the above for the remaining pages and events on your chart.

Decisions characters must make, specific plot points, should happened around 1/4, halfway, and 3/4 through your story. Major "turning points" in your story should occur a 1/3, the halfway point, and 3/4 through your story. "Pivotal scenes" in your story are the major ones like:

- The initial decision for the H/H to take that journey, reluctant or not.

- When something happens that throws the H/H off balance, usually by the end of the first third of the book and in a romance is often involving caring for the other, which causes problems for them being able to reach their outer goals.

- A scene in a romance, usually in the middle, that involves a deep and often unwanted (conscious or unconscious) commitment.

- Towards the end of your story when the H/H believes they are NOT going to reach their goal and are plunged into the "Black Moment."

- When the H/H, respectively, actually risk it all to obtain their goal. This means, they SACRIFICE their outer goal to their new loyalty -- often involving the other -- which is in actuality, is their internal and "real" goal they've always wanted. (Remember Dorothy in the Wizard Of Oz when she realized at the end her heart's desire was never further then her own back yard?)

Keep these mini-goals in your story in mind. A plotter will be more conscious of these

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areas, while a pantser free-writes without an outline, always aiming for the HEA (Happily Ever After). A "pantser" is a person who writes "by the seat of their pants" versus a "plotter" type who draws up an story outline to follow.

In my stories, I know what's supposed to happen because I plot. I don't plot so much as to pigeonhole myself, but I've also had several surprise scenes that are not in my outline pop up in my stories that I've pantser-ed and run with for many pages. Free-writing can be fun and is a great way to deal with writer's block. I know where and how my romance stories begin, what's supposed to happen in the middle, and of course they must end with an HEA. Minute details I don't plot out, they occur through my character and story development.

I think pantsers also subconsciously "know" where their stories are going because even though they might not do all the preplanning like plotters do, Pantsers have a great instinct for storytelling. Their brains are always working to figure out "what happens" next. They are "unconscious" writers. They might not be literally sitting at their computers pouring out sentences, however the unconscious writer's brain is always writing. Plotters are also unconscious writers but in different ways. They attain the same creative results when they listen to that inner voice that has been hard at work writing. (Best-selling Romance author Catherine Spangler has a fantastic lecture on the "Unconscious Writer," along with her "Just Write" lecture. If you ever have the chance to attend her lecture, you'll enjoy her unique understanding and wonderful writing tips.)

Being writers of "romance," naturally our stories must progress and show emotional growth in our characters. Why are they attracted to each other? Why do they fall in love and ultimately end up being the "right" one for each other? These are the questions our readers want answered and what we strive to achieve with satisfying resolutions and HEAs.

Keeping in mind your story's GMCs, your main character's emotional growth progression should weave around the story through natural and plausible interaction and include the following:

- first attraction

- first kiss

- first almost love scene (can be optional)

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-- love scene

-- realization of "love" (the Hero and Heroine will probably realize this in different scenes)

-- proclamation of "love" (the Hero and Heroine will probably say this in different scenes)

-- the Black Moment (it's also possible to have an optional "gray" moment before this that is not quite as bad)

-- Resolution

Author Ruth D. Kerce wrote an informative article "FIVE STAGES OF LOVE," in which she outlines and details the five levels:

- 1.) attraction,
- 2.) romance,
- 3.) passion,
- 4.) intimacy, and
- 5.) commitment.

To read her article go to: <http://breakups101.com/5stages.html>.

Besides the natural emotional progression, keep in mind you are writing a romance dealing with a physical relationship and not just inner feelings. Your H/H's physical/sexual progression should follow a growth pattern to satisfy your reader (erotic romance writers sometimes follow a different pattern). A reader's heart as well as her/his mind should be engaged. You WANT your reader to CARE about your Hero and Heroine and what happens to them (sympathy!), so you as the writer should be fully aware of your H/H's needs and desires and how to express them.

A number of informative articles have been written about the human sexual nature and how it should naturally (plausibly) develop in a romance story. As Attributed to Linda Howard, the "12 STEPS OF INTIMACY" (and also to Desmond Morris, "THE NAKED APE: A ZOOLOGIST'S STUDY OF THE HUMAN ANIMAL"), basic human instincts are broken down into twelve steps:

1. Eye to Body (the "once over") -- physical attraction is set up, initial response.

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2. Eye to Eye - prolonged staring with a hint of a smile (aggressive step)
3. Voice to Voice - small talk which can lead to intimate statements
4. Hand to Hand - first sign of trust, but both can withdraw if uncomfortable
5. Arm to Shoulder - bodies have not really come in contact (still no threat) threat
6. Arm to Waist - direct statement of sensual intimacy (can move closer or away)
7. Mouth to Mouth - first chance for physical arousal (requires full frontal touch)
8. Head to Head - signal of emotional bonding as we instinctively protect our heads
9. Hand to Body - getting physical, but can still call a halt to lovemaking
10. mouth to breast - partial nudity is involved and interruption would create tension
11. Hand to Genitals - important threshold where bonding is a definite here
12. Genital to Genital - full intercourse which is serious business by now

In the next lessons, we will encounter all these steps, plot points, pivotal points and various areas we need to consider and remember as we write our stories. Don't be overwhelmed and try to remember it all right now. The information will be broken down and further explained, and unconsciously you may even recognize and probably apply it automatically as your story unfolds.

By now, you should have your worksheets (nearly) complete or be familiar with them, and have our first "life-changing" event expanded into a complete scene.

Lesson 2 will include Opening Hooks, scene and chapter end Cliffhangers, Scene and Sequel. We'll continue to lay our story foundation, work on your understanding of your story's major plot and turning points, and how you can make your creative ability as a "plotter" or "pantser" work for you.

Lesson 1 Assignment 4 -- Briefly answer these questions:

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-
- Have you chosen your story chart? What is your story title, word count, and genre?

 - Are you a plotter or pantsers?

 - In 1 to 2 sentences, what is your Black Moment? (Example: The lone riderless horse fell into the quicksand.)

 - What one adverb or adjective can sum up your story? (dangerous, caring, passionate, sweet, explosive, etc.)

 - Write a brief life-changing paragraph.

Use this link to download or print a copy of [Lesson 1 Part 4](#).

Lesson 2 - WHAT'S YOUR ADVENTURE? READY, SET, WRITE!

Let me begin by sharing the basic breakdown of all good stories that follow the Hero's Journey:

--- Once upon a time, something happened to someone, and he decided that he would pursue a goal. So he devised a plan of action, and even though there were forces trying to stop him, he moved forward because there was a lot at stake. And just as things seemed as bad as they could get, he learned an important lesson, and when offered the prize he had sought so strenuously, he had to decide whether or not to take it, and in making that decision he satisfied a need that had been created by something in his past. THE END ---

This little tale was passed on to me many years ago, and I don't even recall who gave it to me. It is a story in it's most basic form, including GMC. The bare bones. Just a simple framework. Totally nekkid. :-)

This is where we all begin our journey to write our stories. Let's look at the tale from another angle:

---Once upon a time (1. Ordinary World), something happened to someone (MOTIVATION) (2. Call To Adventure, 3. Reluctant or Refuses The Call), and he decided that he would pursue a goal (GOAL) (4. Meets The Mentor).

So he devised a plan of action (5. Cross The First Threshold), and even though there were forces trying to stop him (CONFLICT) (6. Tests, Allies, And Enemies), he moved

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forward because there was a lot at stake (added MOTIVATION) (7. Approach The Innermost Cave).

And just as things seemed as bad as they could get (8. The Ordeal), he learned an important lesson (Black Moment), and when offered the prize (GOAL) he had sought so strenuously (9. Reward), he had to decide whether or not to take it (10. The Road Back), and in making that decision (11. Resurrection) he satisfied a need that had been created by something in his past (12. Return With The Elixir - Resolution) (real GOAL satisfied).
THE END ---

Hopefully the story progress makes more sense now that you can see it applied to an actual, though simple, story. It's just another way to look at how to write.

At this point, you should have a good idea about your first chapter and how it should grow from the first "life-changing" event you opened your story with. If you haven't already, for the rest of today concentrate on getting your story's beginning up and running. Utilize all the five senses (and the optional intuitive/psychic 6th sense) to relate what is happening. In regard to your characters, the situation and setting, ask yourself each of these questions:

- What does it LOOK like?
- What does it SOUND like?
- What does it SMELL like?
- What does it TASTE like?
- What does it FEEL like physically? Emotionally?
- What does your character SENSE about it? (optional)

Make sure the questions on this list are integrated at least once in every scene to help ground and define it and help your character development. Not like a proverbial laundry list (answering each and every question one after another up front like a literal list) at the beginning of every scene, but include a sentence of information here and there in your narrative and dialogue. The result will be have more depth and dimension that will bring your scenes to life for your reader.

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Another potential problem to watch out for is "head-hopping" characters (changing character POV--Point Of View, the character who is speaking or thinking--frequently). If you're not careful about POV changes, this can confuse and sometimes frustrate your readers. A good rule of thumb is one POV character for one scene. And if you must change your POV more than once in a scene, make the change very clear, and please don't change POV every other paragraph.

HOOKS

Okay, your opening scene is done, but what about the opening hook? Do you have one? What is a hook, and how do you do it? A reader wants to be "hooked" into a story so they can fully enjoy the journey to the HEA (Happily Ever After). They want to know why the main characters want their Goal(s), and how those characters are going to achieve it.

A "hook" is a sentence that gets your attention.

Your life-changing opening scene must be an attention getting incident about at least one of your main characters (probably your Hero or Heroine, however you can use your Villain because s/he's also a main character). This paragraph is what you draw on for your opening hook. Use a single narrative line or dialogue line showing your character engaged in a dilemma, a sudden activity, a realization of a piece of important information, or something extreme. Threaten your character's comfort zone, call upon their deepest nightmare or darkest fear. Action scenes are good story openers because when done correctly, they immediately capture the readers attention and impart a sense of urgency. Example of an opening narrative line:

Lying prone on the cold wet jungle floor, Jake's entire body ached when he turned his blood-blurred gaze and fired the last bullet from his .45 the second before the black beast leaped towards him.

Or dialogue can be used:

"Crap Jake!" In mid-leap, Devin shape-shifted back into human form and grabbed his right side, landing with a hard painful thud in cold pile of wet leaves. "Don't shoot, it's me!"

From either opening line, your reader knows:

- the characters are in the jungle

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- there is/was a fight or physical conflict
- there is a gun
- the main character in each case is hurt (using one line per story)
- Jake fired his handgun because he is scared and trying to protect himself
- Devin is scared and doesn't want to die

These are only two examples of opening hooks, and wouldn't you be interested (or at least curious) in finding out what is happening to these characters? Use your opening opportunity to bring out the universal appeal (something people can easily relate to) so you will connect with your reader and gain her/his sympathy for your character. Then continue to build your life-changing paragraph and scene.

Let's take a moment to consider "universal appeal." It is a common factor easily identified with by a majority of people. Parents understand the problems and joys of other parents. Abused individuals understand the pain and healing process. A college student can identify with not getting that all-important student loan causing him not to be able to return to school and the burden of paying back all the money he owes. A Hollywood starlet can relate and commiserate with not getting that big movie role. A single father knows the joys of parenthood and difficulty of raising a child alone, and a jilted bride knows the feeling of abandonment and anger. And just consider how frustrating dating can be!

Situations like these strike a chord of familiarity your reader can identify with and will keep them reading. All these scenarios have universal appeal because they touch your reader on a common ground. It's a connection you, the writer, make with your reader, the "oh, that's happened to me and I can identify with this" feeling. Kind of like an epiphany.

The purpose of writing the life-changing paragraph was to get you to think about that event with no backstory. Expanding your paragraph into a scene, you broadened the situation and created avenues where the story might lead. From beginning to end, the paths to get to your HEA are endless, and you, the writer, chose where you want the story to go.

CLIFFHANGERS

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A hook gets your reader reading and a sense of urgency to find out "what happens next" keeps them reading. At the end of scenes and chapters, there should be a sense of immediacy, possible threat, or a drastic change happening to your main character. This is called a "cliffhanger."

A cliffhanger is just that: a statement that leaves the reader wanting more. Threats to your character(s) with no resolution are great cliffhangers. Unanswered questions or surprises or twists are also good to use for cliffhangers. Consider finding a place in a scene that has a question or a turning point or twist, and break the scene at the point. You immediately being the next chapter with the remainder of the scene, thus keeping your reader reading to find out "what happened" or "Why." And, the biggest tension release in a story is a sexual climax (at the end of a love scene), so have something immediately happen to ratchet that tension back up before you end the scene or chapter. To end on a sweet la-la note of relief is nice . . . but what's the pull into the next scene? This is the point where your reader puts the book down because there's a break in the story, and you don't want this to happen.

You want your reader to keep reading!

Adding a sense of urgency ups the stakes in your story and also makes the reader want to know more. Revealing a secret, threatening a character, and the most frequent "time limit," are a few ways to accomplish this. By revealing a secret, another layer is added in your mystery or suspense. Threatening a main character's welfare (not a disposable secondary character) after you've established reader sympathy (to that character) again causes the reader to want to know "why," and the reader keeps reading. Don't add a "red herring" (an unnecessary element put into a story just for the sake of convenience) character to forward your plot. You'll lose the respect of the reader. Make the threat honestly legitimate and grounded in story facts, not contrived. And, make sure to keep your clock ticking by reminding the reader every so often that there's a time limit or something bad will happen to the character(s) they care about.

A writer must impart their story in as active a voice as possible. You've probably heard about Passive versus Active voice. Passive voice "tells" what is happening. Active voice "shows" what is happening. Watch out for "was" followed by a word with "-ing" on the end, which the majority of the time indicated a Passive sentence (the exception is if something is "happening" at the moment, such as an action, which would be a Progressive sentence). Turned around, a Passive "was doing" can be restated as "did." The occasional use of Passive sentences within an Active grammatical structure is

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acceptable, but try to limit them to as few as possible. Show the reader your story, don't just tell them about it.

SCENE & SEQUEL

A hook gets attention, urgency keeps the reader reading, and a cliffhanger makes them want more, hence the writer's strategy of using Scene-Sequel tool. A chapter is usually composed of a progression of scenes, one after another. A "sequel" scene is one that answers a question from the previous "scene" plus asks new questions. Scenes must have Goals of their own (mini-Goals) to move the story plot and Conflict to enhance the situation.

Here's the Scene-Sequel structure utilizing two of my characters:

SCENE -

GOAL: What does the viewpoint character want?

- Will Jack marry Mildred?

CONFLICT: What prevents Jack from marrying Mildred? - Is he too shy to ask? Will Mildred turn him down?

DISASTER: The answer to this scene question: Will Jack marry Mildred?

Only one of these three answers are possible (the answer to your Scene question should **never** be yes):

- NO (Mildred won't marry him.)

- NO, AND FURTHERMORE (Mildred won't marry him, and she never wants to see him again.)

- YES, BUT . . . (Mildred will marry him, but her entire family must live with them, which Jack doesn't want.)

SEQUEL -

EMOTION: Viewpoint character's emotional reaction:

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- The entire family? We'll never have any privacy!

QUANDARY: His thoughts as he decides what to do next:

- There may a way I can help find Mildred's family a new home.

DECISION: He forms a new Goal:

- Jack remembers he has friends in Real Estate who might be willing to help search for budget homes.

ACTION: He takes action towards a new Goal:

- He makes a few phone calls to his friends to inquire about homes for Mildred's family.

The "action" taken by Jack leads to a new Scene, new Goal, more conflict, and another sequel. (This information was passed on to me by author Jane Graves through a wonderful workshop for the DARA chapter of RWA and used with permission.)

Almost every writer knows how difficult it is to turn off their "internal editor" and free their Muse to create that first draft with all the scenes, Conflicts and possibilities. In my entire writing life, I have only had writer's block one time. This is what I call "Muse Vs. Blank Page." That one time after eight months of staring night after night at a plain piece of white paper in my typewriter (back in the 80's before PCs), I finally broke down and wrote an unrelated paragraph to the story I was stuck on. Then I wrote another unrelated line. And another. I kept writing what was in my head, even if it was only "I wish I could finish this chapter!" until the flow of my story came back. Fortunately, I've never had writer's block again.

Part of my difficulty at that time was that I was working on a scene that didn't move the plot forward. When I took out that stuck scene and started again, my Muse focused and sang to me once more, enabling me to finish that story over the next month.

The Muse Vs. Blank Page is my free-writing-for-10-minutes exercise. I set my timer for 10 minutes, and write down everything my Muse tells me, without any editing (that will come later). At first it can be challenging, however repeating the exercise will train your subconscious to allow you that time for creativity.

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Lesson 2 Assignment 5 --

-- Write your 1 line opening hook.

-- Turn OFF your internal editor and try the Muse Vs. Blank Page Free-Writing exercise with your current WIP (work-in-progress) at least once to see what you can produce. Write your thoughts about your creativity (not the actual exercise) in a brief paragraph.

Use this link to download or print a copy of [Lesson 2](#).

Lesson - 3 - ORDINARY DOESN'T MEAN A MUNDANE ADVENTURE

You've read the previous lessons and worksheets, and written that all important life-changing event for your beginning, but now what? How do you put it all together to start your story? How do you know if your opening hook is good enough? How do you know you've got a strong enough motivation and goal to carry your story to the end? And how do you know you've set up your "ordinary world" without too much backstory?

That bare-bones "once upon a time" from our last lesson introduced at least one of your main characters (Hero, Heroine, or Villain) during a life-changing situation in their ordinary world. Situations can be good or bad. The good ones don't really require any action or cause story tension. The characters can sit back, relax and enjoy a good time as things change around them for the better. Yay! But . . .

That can be boring for your reader, because there's no conflict to move the plot forward. The alternative is, of course, a bad situation. And lets make it really, nasty, ugly bad. That bad situation makes for juicy conflict and story tension. It keeps the reader reading to find out what happens next, which is what all writers want. Take your reader on a journey of discovery leading to an HEA, and she'll come back for more and more.

In your life-changing opening scene, the character's security is somehow threatened. A sense of "change" is in the air, possibly causing an internal feeling of being unsafe from injury or harm. Perhaps an emotionally charged situation unfolded and even touched the character's darkest fear or nightmare or darkest desire. Of course that character will fight any change in favor of the comfort of their secure environment where they feel protected. Human nature is curious but also wants to take the path of least resistance and whatever is least stressful. The character's world tilted, and now they are faced with the possibility

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of having to do something about it.

Let's begin our journey -- no wait, I mean let's continue our journey.

That's right. You've already dove into our Plotting Step #1 and created your own "ordinary world," from Christopher Vogler's outline (The Writer's Journey), which was derived and simplified from Joseph Campbell's "world of common day" (Hero's Journey). You've introduced characters and have established the place and setting and tone of your story and defined the story theme/goal. (If you don't have a theme, don't worry about it.) The safe reality of the character's everyday life in your opening scene common world has been upset or even rocked to the core. This is the beginning of the character's departure from everything that is safe and protected where they feel valued. It can be a physical departure such as a change of venue or a departure from the character's everyday spiritual, emotional and/or mental thought process. Hook your readers attention with a line that plays on her emotions, and weave in that universal appeal right NOW. Give your reader that sense of identification and strong connection to your character's plight to grasp and hold on to as she reads. Gain her sympathy, and make her care what happens to those fictional people who are so very real to you (the writer).

From the first scene, your character's limited awareness of problem must grow (arc) and change, and good plausible conflict promotes change. Strong conflict is based firmly in logical fact. Don't throw in a weak excuse for the sake of convenience because you (the writer) need something to happen.

Let's take an example: The Heroine's cat is stuck up in a tree, and the fireman Hero rescues said cat and the characters meet. That's nice. But it's also cliché and can be interpreted as a weak situation, which you don't want. To make this incident stronger, add a couple of plausible details to the Heroine's motivation for wanting the cat out of the tree. What if the animal was an indoor cat unfamiliar with the neighborhood? What if the cat was blind or deaf? Is the Heroine a vet whose patient escaped? Or, the cat could be a prized, pedigree show animal that requires special care. What if the Heroine had lost her job and was on her way to a major cat show, hoping her pet would win because the Heroine needs the first place prize money to help her pay the rent? What if by winning the competition the cat gained in reputation and could be bred for a higher stud fee, thus gaining the Heroine a continual source of income to start her dream of owning a breeding establishment? Or, what if the Heroine deliberately put the cat in the tree so she could meet that cute hunk of a fireman? (Give this deliberate act a strong motivation, and the situation can work.) Or, you could have a villain who deliberately put her cat in the tree so she could meet the Hero fireman. There are a multitude of possibilities to choose from

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for a strong goal and plausible motivation towards that goal.

To move the plot with conflict, threaten your character's sense of secure familiarity, and that character will (should!) balk. From that ordinary world and everyday common existence where you laid the story foundation, something happened to awaken the character and "call" to them. Usually the Hero and Heroine meet quickly in the story, and their limited awareness is expanded. Sparks should fly right away between the H/H showing interest and/or tension between them. Ideally, they can have opposing goals and motivations (great for continual conflict). It's okay if they don't even like each other at first. They should have real, life and/or security-threatening problems that change the way the H/H sees and deals with the world around them. Immediately after their introduction, the character's perspective should shift and broaden. They should deny the problem exists and run away from it. Build on the existing conflict by adding more conflict, and the story will move.

If you don't know what your Black Moment is yet, consider what is the worst thing that could happen to your main character(s)? Now, what's twice as bad as that? Double it again, and hold that thought. I'm bringing up the Black Moment early because you must keep this point in the back of your mind as you develop the characters, add layers for interest and write towards that scene. All conflicts need to progress steadily and guide the reader towards the Black Moment and story climax. These two plot points are not the same. Either one can occur first, or they can happen at the same time.

Examples: In the Wizard of Oz, the climax occurs first when Dorothy defeats the wicked witch and gets the required broomstick, and the Black Moment when all seems lost is when Dorothy misses the wizard's balloon to take her home. In Ladyhawke, the Black Moment when Navarre hears the church bell ring and he thinks Isabeau (in her bird form) will be killed happens before the climax where he actually achieves his goal and kills the evil Bishop. Both story endings are correct and continue to the HEAs. Both have plausible conflicts established early and that expand and lead to the Black Moments and story climaxes. No matter if you put the climax before or after the Black Moment, in a romance always keep them close together.

Dealing with the main character's change of attitude and amplified awareness as they are "called" to their adventure is Plot Point #2 on our outline. What does that character do? How do they react? Are they emotionally involved in the situation, thus prompting your reader to begin an emotional investment in your story?

With increased awareness comes the challenge out of the character's everyday life. In a

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romance story, this is also a good place for the H/H's attraction for each other to blossom into their first kiss (keep in mind Linda Howard's intimacy steps where the H/H's physical attraction leads to more contact between them and the first signs of trust). The characters are also forced to make a decision to go and/or do something and act on the new problem/adventure. Having made that decision, there is NO turning back.

At this point make clear what is at stake. Establish a sense of urgency by introducing a time limit or "ticking clock." This will ratchet up the story tension and lead to added conflict due to the pressure on the H/H (and even the villain) to succeed. Use the Scene-Sequel exercise and the 10-Minute Free Writing exercise to help your creativity flow. Use all 5 senses plus (optional) intuition at least once in every scene to create/sustain the mood you want to achieve.

Sink your reader's attention so far into the story that she won't want to put down the book until she reads "The End." If you have to take out that backstory (info-dump) from the beginning, create a special file and cut out what you need to so you can add it back into your story later if necessary or so you can go back a 'visit' it once in a while. :-) Ditching a chunk of backstory or completely starting over again is okay in order to streamline the beginning event(s). Further the developing rapport between the reader and your story by strengthening the reasoning behind the motivation for the character's goal through a balance of dialogue and narrative. Be careful of exposition, and find a creative way of uncovering your backstory by "showing" (active voice) through actions or deeds rather than just "telling" (passive voice) about what happens next.

Your characters have been called to their adventure, so let them grab and run with it!

Lesson 3 Assignment 6 -

-- Turning off your "internal" editor, write a brief paragraph on how your main character feels about making the decision to go on the adventure. (excited, angry, frustrated, sad, etc.)

Use this link to download or print a copy of [Lesson 3](#).

Lesson - 4 - RELUCTANT . . . AT FIRST

The H/H's awareness expanded in the opening situation. The ticking clock added an "or

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else" factor of finality in order to force a decision. But, what should they do? What choices do they have? That's easy: none. The character must answer the call, but they don't know it yet. Now we get to have some fun with Plot Step #3: The Refusal Of The Call.

[Make your heroine sweat bullets before she accepts the adventure, put her through the conflict ringer. :-)]

Why should the H/H risk their personal safety and security to answer the call to adventure and embark on their journey? They know the stakes are high, and they won't be able to turn back. And if they fail, there will be consequences. So, the character refuses to make the decision, and the situation becomes worse. The decision nags at the character so much that they take another look at the problem but still don't like the consequences of failure. The H/H reevaluates all the reasons they should NOT undertake the journey because it's the worst choice possible for them. Yet their conscience is bothering them to "do the right thing." Their involvement is inevitable (or you wouldn't have an interesting story to tell).

Finally accepting they can't just sit and do nothing and hope everything works out, the H/H moves from refusing the call to simply being reluctant to do something about it. Their hesitation should be brief, and the character should choose the easiest solution to the problem. Why? To add story conflict and make things more interesting for the reader. Having taken the easy way out, the character is going to fail and must try again, and perhaps will even have to try a third time in order to progress towards their goal (remember the GMC worksheet?) Let's return to the example of the Heroine (Sandy), her cat (Dickens), and the fireman (Bruce):

Ordinary world (story's first life-changing event) -

-- Sandy's had a great job for years with a good stable company that she loves, and she is offered a big promotion. Yay!

Call to Adventure -

-- The new job involves a transfer to a new city far away.

Refusal of the Call / Reluctance (the situation) -

-- Sandy doesn't want to leave her familiar world and her family and friends, so she

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refuses the transfer and is laid off. She's a good worker and figures she'll get another job quickly. But she also has a dream of starting her own business, and the job hunting doesn't go well. Her savings account is drained. Having already prepaid the entrance fee to a major cat show, Sandy hopes her pedigree Siamese, Dickens, will win the first prize money, which will pay her overdue rent. (The easy solution out of her immediate situation.) While leaving her home to go to the cat show, Dickens has other ideas and escapes his carrier, climbing a tall tree and getting himself stuck. Sandy calls the fire department for help. Fireman Bruce comes to the rescue, gets Dickens down safe from the tree, and enjoys meeting Sandy. But temperamental Dickens not only loses the cat show, he comes in last place, which does not bode well for future shows. Sandy's expectations of getting the quick easy money didn't work. She still has to find a way to pay her rent. She finally accepts that it may take a while to find another job. Instead of entering Dickens in another cat show, she goes back to her job hunting and knows she most likely will have to begin again at the bottom of the proverbial seniority ladder with a grunt position and pay cut. As mentioned in a previous lesson, this is only one example. Recognition of the problem and consequences that effects the H/H personally is tied to the character's life lesson. What does the H/H need to learn so they can change and emotionally grow? They see the danger of being in an unfamiliar situation or set of circumstances. They know the conflict is going to get worse. And, worse is better because the story moves forward towards the goal. The character's perspective at this point shifts as they attempt to solve the problem. But more trouble looms large on the horizon, and you (the writer) should continue adding to the conflict by asking "what if."

I keep bringing up the importance of "conflict" to move the plot. In a story, conflict occurs in a scene when two or more character have opposite goals. Changes occur when the characters all strive to achieve their own scene goal. Scene goals are a set of mini goals (baby steps) leading the reader to the main story goal. If your scene does not have a clearly defined (mini) goal and characters struggling in conflict for their own gain, look at that scene from another angle or change to another point view (POV), or even consider taking the scene out of the story altogether. A perfectly written, fantastic scene without conflict does your story no good if it does NOT do the job of moving the plot forward. And it doesn't do it's job, rewrite it or get rid of it.

Conflict is both internal and external, and both are present in a romance story. Internal, or "inner," conflict is literally inside the character (like mental anxiety or emotional dilemma). It is preexisting baggage present before the story begins and the characters bring into the story. Inner conflicts are unresolved issues inside a character. Most of the time, the character doesn't realize these inner conflicts exist so they have not been confronted with the issue and dealt with the dilemma. External, or "outer," conflict is

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literally something outside the character (like a problem at work or with the car). It is a situation, position, or state of affairs the character is forced into, beyond their control. It must be dealt with so the goal can be achieved. External conflict forces the H/H to cope with their internal conflict, and in turn the internal conflict can effect how the character acts and reacts to external conflicts.

If the main characters don't have opposing goals for creating conflict, make sure they have opposing motivations (reasons) for wanting the same goal. Example: Sandy wants to buy an old building located next door to the fire department and refurbish it for her new breeding business, but fire chief Bruce wants to buy the old building to tear it down for additional parking space. Same goal, opposite motivations. Make sure you (the writer) know and fully understand your main characters, and what makes them tick. Know their most important core attribute and their biggest weakness (a weakness can be endearing to the reader). Weave the H/H's belief system into their conflicts to strengthen their position, but always remember these are fallible people. The H/H should be self-aware, and their conflicts should make them ask questions as they progress through the story on the journey to love and self discovery. (Multi-published author Jane Graves has a great lecture about "Conflict: The Driving Force Of Fiction," and for more information about goals and conflict, Debra Dixon's book "GMC - Goal, Motivation & Conflict, The Building Blocks of Good Fiction" is available online at gryphonbooksforwriters.com.)

So the H/H are threatened by a life defining situation with substantial change from external conflicts that force their inner unresolved issues to the surface. These significant conflicts will signal tension and urgency for the character to do something, and the character is forced to make the worst choice possible. Make sure there is conflict in every scene, on every page, and in every paragraph. The reader will identify with the H/H and become emotionally invested and care what happens to them.

Lesson 4 Assignment 7 -

-- List 5 strengths for your Hero and 5 strengths for your Heroine. (Example: honorable, courageous, caring, etc.)

-- List 5 weaknesses for your Hero and 5 for your Heroine (Example: timid, narrow-minded, over-bearing, invincible etc.)

-- What is your Hero's greatest fear?

-- What is your Heroine's greatest fear?

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-- What is your Hero's core attribute? (loyalty, insight, honor, calm, etc.)

-- What is your Heroine's core attribute?

Use this link to download or print a copy of [Lesson 4](#).

Lesson - 5 - FINDING THE INFORMATION TREASURE

"All conflict is trouble, but not all trouble is conflict." (Jane Graves - "Conflict: The Driving Force of Fiction") You've challenged your main characters to make the worst decision possible and they've take action towards that decision. Always let the reader know what is happening, but NOT the character. By doing this, you sustain the story tension and make the reader worry about the H/H on instinctive and emotional levels. The reader has been touched/moved by the story subconsciously, their brain is engaged and their heart is involved.

And the reader keep reading to find out what happens next.

Wise individuals rely on advisors to impart information so they can make the best decisions possible in a given situation. So it is with your Hero and Heroine. Somewhere in your story there will be a "mentor" for your H/H to meet. This other character can be a main or strong secondary character or the villain. I've even heard that by reasoning out the dilemma, a character can mentor themselves (very rare).

Plot Step #4 is "Meeting The Mentor." It can include Divine enlightenment, advise from a friend, or a profoundly obvious statement from a child to an adult provoking a memory of something once said that points in different direction of thought. This new information will not be what the character expects, and to keep your reader's interest, do NOT give him/her what they expect either. Mentors can be found in unexpected places and at unexpected times. A mentor is on the outside of the situation and can "see" better what is happening. They reiterate the consequences maybe from a new viewpoint and encourages the main character to continue the journey in the correct direction.

Background and specific information to and about the mentor must be included to validate the teacher-student relationship and give credibility in the reader's mind. The mentor can be a ghost and give supernatural aid. An old warrior or business executive

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coming out of retirement to pass on knowledge, or a wise woman or man who has "seen it all before." Whoever the mentor is, their role is simply to advise (even unknowingly) the H/H how to overcome reluctance and deal with the problem. This is the first turning point in the story (usually around the 1/3 point of the story). Example:

Meeting The Mentor -

-- Sandy's friend Margo, who's a fire department dispatcher (secondary character), tells her to follow her heart about the decision of buying the old building, and for Sandy to suggest to Bruce that he utilize part of the fire station's backyard for the parking lot. Margo reasons that if Bruce really cares about Sandy, he'll forgo purchasing the old building and utilize half of the existing 5 acres of the fire station to create the parking lot.

OR

-- Bruce's friend Dick (villain) advises him to purchase the old building, and Sandy will get over being upset by not having a place to start her business and will eventually forgive him. Dick has been smitten with Sandy for years, and he reasons that if Bruce buys the building, Sandy will break up the relationship, and Dick will pounce on the opportunity to move in to comfort Sandy over the loss of her heart's desire of having her own breeding business.

Mentors help build the H/H's motivation for wanting their goals, even if the main character has to figure out the cryptic information given to them. Then the H/H has an epiphany, a moment of clear realization/revelation, when they know what they should do and how to proceed. In a romance story, the H/H's caring for each other is somehow involved with the epiphany, and they are thrown off balance. The imbalance causes difficulties in both their outer goals. (Example: The princess the knight is sent to rescue is really the daughter of the evil outcast sorcerer the knight is supposed to kill.) But mentors have short lifespans. Either they die, are killed, or they leave the story. For whatever valid reason, get the mentor out quickly and refocus the story attention on the main characters and their goals and conflicts.

Now armed with the significant information from the mentor, your main characters dive head-first into the conflict and "Crosses The First Threshold" (Plot Step #5) to face their destiny. The irrevocable "emotional countdown" begins NOW. There is no recovery from failure, and the H/H must forge ahead into the situation. They recommit themselves to achieve their goal.

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Through conflict, this is the time to force the H/H to reveal what is inside them to the outside world. Show their vulnerability through actions and deeds (don't "tell" about it - Passive versus Active voice). The H/H's increased motivation and emotional involvement actually "opens" the proverbial door for them to continue their journey. Increasing the stakes makes the consequences of not doing the right thing extremely obvious. Dedicated to change, the main character devotes themselves more fully towards that change. This character awareness (character perspective shift #3) should occur at about the halfway point in your story.

The H/H have entered a special world and gained inner strength and confidence. They are determination to succeed and have a new sense of dedication. Likewise, your villain (antagonist) MUST have a strong GMC to balance the main character (protagonist). The H/H must face the new set of story questions in order to proceed. This is sometimes where a "sagging middle" occurs, and shaping it up isn't difficult.

A wise published author once said about avoiding sagging middles, "Throw in a dead body or a love scene--it works every time!" Of course, the requisite laughter rippled through the full to the capacity 250-seat lecture room, assuring all present would remember this interesting piece of advice. I certainly have. And, when faced with potential dragging pages, this adage has helped me on a few occasions.

Now, I don't usually throw in dead bodies or full blown love scenes every time I have a slow down in my stories. However, there is one tried and true way that always helps when I'm confronted with flashing red lights suddenly going off in my head indicating a scene problem. Being the creative writer I am,

- 1.) I dutifully open a blank page on my computer monitor,
- 2.) prepare to quickly jot down notes that I'm sure will bombard me in rapid succession when I discover the answer, and
- 3.) approach the problematic section of my prose by first defining the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the situation, and
- 4.) extrapolate an answer.

For the answers to the six questions, I'll use my characters Mildred and Jack (you should substitute your characters, information and situation to find a solution).

-- WHO are the characters in your problem scene?

Main characters only. If you're stuck on minor characters, throw out that scene. Put your

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time into pages that will move your plot. Utilize your H/H's GMC worksheet that you created. Have a good understanding of the H/H's personalities, flaws, quirks, and personal histories. Really get to know your characters.

-- WHAT is happening in the situation with these characters?

This is the situation in your problem scene. If nothing is happening, why not? You should be able to define this with one sentence such as: Mildred wants to marry long-time boyfriend Jack, and he said he's not ready for a commitment.

-- WHEN is the situation happening?

This is the time of your setting. Be it day, afternoon, night, or seasonal. The "when" can also be a sequel scene to a dramatic scene in which an important decision and/or change took place. Is the timing important to your problem scene? It would be if your hero mistook the time and missed the Caribbean cruise that he is to be married on. Or, your heroine might have gotten on the wrong airplane and is bound for Alaska instead of Aspen where she is supposed to meet her fiancé's family for the first time. Or perhaps a character missed a business meeting, or mistook a message for 9 AM instead of 9 PM. I think you get the idea.

-- WHERE is it happening?

Location, location, and finally the all important, location! Obviously, this is where your characters are in the problem scene. They could be in Tahiti, Dallas, Chicago, or even floating on a barge down the Nile River. Enough said.

-- WHY has this situation occurred?

This may be a little more difficult to define. Look to your characters' motivation for insight. Motivation must be plausible, not weak. If motivation is convenient, coincidental, cliché, or contrived, this may be the problematic stumbling block you need to correct. If it is, correct it. If not, keep going. Why is Jack not ready for a marriage commitment to Mildred? Maybe he's a playboy at heart, or a free spirit. He could fear commitment because of a past experience or a present fact of life or piece of information. Also, what happened in the previous scene leading up to the problem scene? Not all scenes need to be dramatic, but they MUST move the plot. Example:

-- Scene: Mildred has afternoon tea with her charming but frail mother, who tells Mildred

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she's updated her will because she feels like "her time is coming soon," and Mildred's not allowed to tell anyone about the change.

-- Sequel: The next day, after their hot date, Jack comes to the coffee shop where Mildred works and nonchalantly tells her he's not ready for a marriage commitment. (Don't think of him as a jerk just yet.)

-- Situation: What happens to Jack and Mildred now that he doesn't want to marry, her mother's health is failing and she has changed her will? Will Jack and Mildred break up? Will they see each other again?

HOW do your characters feel, and what do they think about their situation?

Knowing your characters' personalities and backgrounds, define their emotions and feelings in the problem scene. Mildred is probably hurt, tearful, and distracted from her job at the coffee shop. Note: Watch out for "misunderstandings," which you don't want because it's a weak motivation. Make her feelings real and logical. Jack is probably relieved because of his decision not to marry, but sad because he actually does love Mildred. Note: Also watch out here for "misunderstandings" that will add to this weak motivation of "convenience." Give him a good logical reason to make and announce his decision publically.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER . . .

-- Scene: Jack and Mildred (WHO) are at an impasse because he's finally revealed he's not ready for a commitment (WHAT). But, in the middle of a busy lunch rush (WHEN) at the coffee shop where she works (WHERE) isn't the best choice of places to voice an important decision concerning the rest of both their lives.

Mildred knows Jack's two-timing ex-girlfriend ran off with another man (WHY - HEROINE), but still does not understand why Jack doesn't trust her when she has repeatedly proven she loves him, and he can rely on her. Jack is desperately in love with Mildred, but since he works as a common laborer, he fears her rich mother will think he's a gold-digger and will cut Mildred out of her will (WHY - HERO).

Though Mildred's feelings are hurt, and she is torn between breaking up or having faith Jack will change his mind (HOW/EMOTIONS - HEROINE), she resolves to again prove she won't betray his trust by not pushing him into a permanent relationship. Jack wants to have faith in Mildred and the patience to wait for her to tell him she's an heiress, but he

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feels guilty (HOW/EMOTIONS - HERO) about knowing her secret and having lied to her in order to save her inheritance.

-- Problem: Too much introspection, not enough action and dialogue to move the stalled plot.

-- Solution: Focus on Jack's and Mildred's Outer Conflict to illuminate their Inner Conflict and include secondary characters to progress the story plot. Does Jack have a work deadline he must deal with? Are there consequences if he misses that deadline? Perhaps Mildred's boss is the husband of a nosey, gossiping hairdresser who fixes Mildred's mother's hair twice a week. The hairdresser can repeat the information to the mother about Mildred and Jack. Are there consequences because of this gossip? Or, maybe Mildred's mother really does like Jack and respects his choice of blue-collar work because her own late husband was a self-made millionaire.

Keep in mind, this is only one way you can remedy a problematic scene. Write what you feel is correct for your story, and what works best for you. Play "what if" with your characters, and challenge yourself to create different scenarios as possible solutions. You will find the perfect answer. And, when faced with a sagging middle, and throwing in a dead body or a love scene isn't appropriate, try asking my Story Aerobics questions, and the possibilities will appear. May your middle never sag, but if it does, but if you're having trouble, try using my [Story Aerobic\(c\) worksheet](#) to help get back on track.

Lesson 5 Assignment 8 -

-- Who is you Hero's mentor, and what relationship do they have, and how can the mentor help?

-- Who is you Heroine's mentor, and what relationship do they have, and how can the mentor help?

Use this link to download or print a copy of [Lesson 5](#).

Lesson - 6 - INTO THE ROAD OF TRIALS

Crossing over the first threshold, the main characters have now grasped the courage

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within themselves to descend into their destiny. In Plotting Step #6, the H/H encounter Tests, Allies, and Enemies. If you are working in script form, this is the beginning of Act Two.

Confrontation gives the H/H hope to overcome their foe/obstacle and win over adversity in the situation. From the mentor's advice, the character's comprehension of the full scope of their journey allows them the patience to weigh and balance their choices and decisions. The H/H are fully initiated (usually by a dramatic encounter or disclosed pertinent fact) onto their "road of trials," as J. Campbell termed it originally.

Fraught with various questionable individuals and/or circumstances, the H/H must choose their alliances and enemies wisely as they progress. Penetrating into possibly unknown territory -- be it emotional, physical, spiritual, or mental -- the main characters must pass a set of trials. The H/H experiment with the first change, reject or savor it, and always grow from their positive and negative experiences.

They must keep striving and be tested repeatedly, be it a test of performance, qualities, or suitability to continue. They will encounter setbacks that conflict with their personal desires, which makes them more determined. They pass and fail, building the relationships/bonds with others (and within themselves) in order to attain each additional step closer to their goal. Taking one step forward, Fate pushes the H/H two steps back as they try and fail, and try again.

Their endurance and/or tolerance is pushed to the limit to assess their worthiness for their ultimate reward. They undergo scrutiny, learn from mistakes, and become wiser, experimenting with various methods until the most successful method to proceed is found. Have the main character keep trying new avenues and possibilities. Keep mounting the conflicts and emotional concerns, and again ask "what's the worse thing that can happen?" And keep making the worst happen. Your H/H should work for their rewards so the reader will better respect, appreciate and be more satisfied with the characters' successes.

From your [GMC chart](#), have an exterior action/occurrence happen to the main character that magnifies their inner conflict. Whatever the event, it MUST impact the H/H on an emotional level. Show how they cope -- or does the character deal with their inner conflict at this point? If not, emotional anxiety will compile to make the inner issue seem unsurmountable. But coming to the foreground, the inner issue will not be ignored. Have the H/H face the issue quickly and be forced to deal with this inner conflict (successfully or unsuccessfully to be revisited later) before they can continue their journey. Each

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opportunity for the H/H to succeed and fail through conflict brings movement to the story plot.

The main character's knowledge will grow and skills will develop and/or be enhanced as mounting conflict is faced and overcome, thus adding to characterization and depth. The physical and emotional "trials" the H/H achieve in every scene (the mini goals) progress the plot development closer to the story climax and move the H/H closer to attaining their ultimate goal. (Use the Scene-Sequel exercise in Lesson 2 if your conflict needs refining or if you need more conflict.)

At this point in a romance story, why do the Hero and Heroine fall in love? Go back to your character "strengths" list and work with these qualities. Examples: Does the Heroine gain a deep respect for the Hero's knowledge because he's displayed it in a positive manner to help? Perhaps the Hero's trust in the Heroine's physical abilities is realized because he's seen her in action? Whatever the qualities, show each step of the process of "falling in love." Tell what the main characters are feeling and why (have a solid motivation for these steps). And whatever situation or crisis arises from these deeply emotional revelations, be sure to always solve it by the end of the story.

The H/H will most likely have different goals with ups and downs, so have each individual journey entwine with the other. Example: When the Hero achieves a (good) mini scene goal, at the same time have the Heroine face a small disaster, and visa versa. This will keep your story on track, always showing conflict for one or the other character. Work the "romance" in your story first, then the issues and problems. Will love overcome the story conflict? Don't be afraid to write outlandish ideas, and refine it during your editing. Outlandish is acceptable as long as the main characters have a personal stake in the final outcome. Your Hero and Heroine deserve to be together, or you wouldn't have have those two people together in your mind. Listen to your Muse, and write from your feelings.

In Plot Step #7, the Approach To The Inmost Cave, the main characters reach a point of realization that the conflicts keeping them from reaching their goals ARE conquerable. This is the main characters' point of crossing over a second threshold. More character development and plot advancement occur with the deeper exposure of the inner person the H/H really are. By understanding, the reader better connects with the characters and worries as though she is actually facing the journey also through the unexpected dangers and uncertainty. This added urgency promotes a strong sense of peril that things will not turn out as they should.

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But, remember the H/H's strengths, and combat the conflict through these character traits. In a romance story, this is usually when the first love scene occurs (if it hasn't already). The deep feelings the H/H have for each other must be clearly conveyed, not that it's just time for a sex scene. This added bond between the characters will help solidify their relationship in the reader's mind, that those two individuals really and truly belong together. And having the added connection, the H/H also now know they must change to achieve their goal.

Both the H/H's motivation needs to be strong enough as they prepare to meet the forthcoming conflicts. Reassess why each character wants their goal, if necessary. This is the second turning point in a romance story and usually occurs around the middle of the story or a bit afterwards. The H/H will also be faced with a deeply emotional commitment, conscious or unconscious, whether they want it or not. The H/H also have an opportunity to make a decision about how to proceed on their journey, and they must keep practicing and hone their skills as they prepare for the big change ahead.

Lesson 6 Assignment 9 -

- What exterior event causes the Hero's inner conflict to surface? What is that conflict?
- What exterior event causes the Heroine's inner conflict to surface? What is that conflict?
- What surprise test/trial must the Hero face?
- What surprise test/trial must the Heroine face?

Use this link to download or print a copy of [Lesson 6](#).

Lesson - 7 - DEAL WITH IT

As if all the emotional upheaval isn't bad enough, the main characters now come face-to-face with the consequences of their actions or attempts in Plot Step #8, The Supreme Ordeal. An exploration of the different avenues through trials and errors to achieve the main character's goal brings us to approximately the 2/3 point of your romance story. If the main characters are still contemplating their allies, enemies and approach to the

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"innermost cave" or are tempted by a development that seems an easier way to what they want, you may explore this thread logically but don't meander, then quickly get the H/H back on the worst track towards the story climax.

In the race for the goal, all the so-called cards are laid out for the main characters. They see their path through the brambles of obstacles, and fight to reach it. There can be a true reconciliation within themselves, or with a strong secondary character, the H/H has been at odds with. Newfound hope for success leads the H/H to face their greatest fear and to an optional "gray" moment, which is not quite as bad as the big Black Moment where all seems lost. But, having built on strong solid conflict, this supreme ordeal brings into existence the very real opportunity for the main characters to lose their goals. This big "if" should make the reader wonder if the story goal actually can be achieved, and if the main characters succeed, make their progress towards the goal clear.

This "ordeal" is not the climax of the story. It is another stepping stone in your plot and an opportunity for conflict/story growth and for your reader's worries to escalate. The ordeal can occur on any level (emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, intuitive), then trigger a chain reaction through the remainder of the levels. According to the dictionary (Oxford University Press), a simplified explanation of each level is as follows:

-- Emotions are "strong feelings, such as joy or anger ... instinctive feeling as distinguished from reasoning or knowledge." This level encompasses internal disturbances (positive or negative/good or bad) in the character, and it is the most involved level in a romance story. Example: In the H/H's relationship perhaps one character could unexpectedly need to deal with an ex-lover, leading to feeling of betrayal from the current lover.

-- Physical refers to "relating to the body as opposed to the mind ... relating to things perceived through the senses as opposed to the mind ... involving bodily contact or activity ... relating to physics or the operation of natural forces." As explained, this level involves anything having to do with literally physical instances. Example: A physical imperfection or difficulty could be disclosed -- does the Hero want children and the Heroine finally tells him she can't have any? (This also immediately chain reacts to the emotional level having a double effect.)

-- Mental is "of, done by, or occurring in the mind. 2 relating to disorders or illnesses of the mind. 3 informal mad." This level covers the thought process. Example: Is there a breaking point or break through for one of the main characters that their potential mate is uncertain or distrustful about, such as disclosure about telepathy (not to be confused with

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the actual practice of or display) ?

-- Spiritual pertains to "relating to or affecting the human spirit as opposed to material or physical things. 2 relating to religion or religious belief." This level involves the intangible personal believe system in regard to a "higher" power/deity/God/Goddess/Force and the relationship with that power/deity/God/Goddess/Force. Example: Is there a change of faith or heart leading to a change of mind about a decision?

-- Intuitive refers to "instinctive. the ability to understand or know something immediately, without conscious reasoning." This level is closely related to the Emotional level and can be interconnected when dealing with a situation such as a character using and/or following their intuition, allowing this intangible "sense" to guide them (such as in making a decision based upon a good or bad feeling). Example: The Hero somehow knows something, senses it, about the Heroine though she hasn't told him.

The main characters must endure whatever obstacle/crisis/situation is set before them, meeting it head on with courage and determination whether they feel hesitant or not. In having the character cope, their flaws can become badges of honor, their sacrifices testament to their merit.

By 3/4 of your story, this is when the loose ends begin to be tied up. If you've been keeping a "loose ends" list from the beginning, start with the least important thread and work towards the most critical, which will be dealt with last. If you're using a plotting board or notecards, mark the progress and end of the thread. Space out all the loose ends so they won't be concluded all at once.

Lesson 7 Assignment 10 -

-- What ordeal must your Hero face, and on what level does it reside?

(Example: Hero decides to help a rival businessman rebuild his failing company (physical level) instead of buying out his company and destroying the other man's reputation. Mental level (decision), physical level (rebuild), emotional level (professional gratification).)

-- What ordeal must your Heroine face, and on what level does it reside?

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Use this link to download or print a copy of [Lesson 7](#).

Lesson - 8 - OUT OF THE POT INTO THE FIRE

Do you feel like your Hero and Heroine have been put through the proverbial ringer? You should. Your main characters have been bashed and trashed, pushed around, endured hardships of all kinds on probably every level, and they have had enough!

Not quite. But your H/H are ready for a bit of a reprieve in the form of a special "Reward" in Plot Step #9. The "ultimate boon" to be granted is upon them, and your H/H have learned their lessons well. Ready to take possession of their reward, the main characters feel like they've won the day . . . and they have won the battle. Allow them to firmly grasp the benefits of their efforts and bask in the glory they have wanted so badly. Give them their due so they can face the last part of the story with confidence and determination.

As the main characters enjoy the fruits of their labors, do they realize it is perhaps better to give than receive? The H/H's hard work has paid off, however an unsettling sense of something incomplete remains. Some consequence has slipped by unnoticed, and the H/H don't want to constantly be looking over their shoulder for the rest of their lives for that loose end to unexpectedly show up to bite them in the butt. Shoving away that unfinished feeling, the main characters are sure this achievement is what they want. So, how do they emotionally feel about winning? Do the main characters' attitudes change?

This short reprieve period prefaces a new decision and brings the H/H to the final leg of their journey. Their physical rewards have emotional consequences either reinforcing their motivation or causing the main characters to reevaluate and change their reasoning. They might have won the battle, but the H/H realize the war is still going on.

Plot Step #10, The Road Back, is also the beginning of Act Three. In script form, this is also the point of the "Reversal," made popular by action/adventure movies. From that magic moment of clarity the main characters reevaluate their original world and their place in it, and the rewards for their suffering make them want to keep trying. What they thought they wanted isn't what they really and truly want. Though their accomplishments are very real, they have rescued themselves from a false sense of finality/closure and an existence that eventually would have fallen apart. Thus, this original goal they thought

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they wanted turns out to be another mini goal.

The H/H see that there is a more important goal ahead for them and again rededicate themselves to change. This conscious decision brings about a retreat in the story pacing. Beginning on the road back to return to their ordinary world and complete the story circle, the H/H realize they must have the answer or solution to the situation/problems. This is character perspective shift #4, the main character's resolution from their decision and actions to change, overcome adversity and succeed. Gladly the H/H accept the challenge to face the obstacle, knowing it is for the greater good.

But the best things in life are never easy. The external situation/conflict (from GMC chart) is now consciously connected to the main characters' emotional state. The H/H make important, confident choices based upon the life lessons learned due to the conflicts they have encountered. They forge ahead, ready for whatever Fate throws in their path, knowing things can't possibly get any worse.

And something horrible happen. The H/H are full of dread as they face their ultimate obstacle/challenge, the big "Black Moment" in your romance story where all seems lost, and the main characters cannot win. With no hope of possibly defeating their foe and overcoming the problem, they accept their destiny anyway because it's the right thing to do.

Make the main characters suffer. Make them hurt deep in their heart. And make them so full of doubt they don't know what's up and what's down . . . until they take a good look at what has been right in front of them all the time. They cope with their deepest dread or darkest fear/nightmare, and successfully overcome whatever has been holding them back the entire time. Through their love for this other special person in their life, there is a revelation, a reconciliation. In this new awareness, they see for the first time how important their relationship and their lover is to them and the positive attributes (the worth and value) the other person has inside. In the character's heart, they know s/he is their perfect mate, the right one. With every fiber of their being, the H/H continue their journey and strive towards their new goal to make things come out correct even if they can't achieve their HEA.

The Hero and Heroine might not be able to have their heart's desire, however there is always hope . . .

Lesson 8 Assignment 11 -

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-- What is something your Hero would never do? Did you put him in a situation where he must do this thing? Did it provide the conflict you needed? How did it turn out?

-- What is something your Heroine would never do? Did you put her in a situation where she must do this thing? Did it provide the conflict you needed? How did it turn out? Take some time to reflect on your charts and worksheets, and in our last lesson we will briefly review how to easily create a synopsis as well as complete our plotting journey.

Lesson - 9 - FROM DOUBT, IT ALL WORKS OUT

The big Black Moment allows the Hero and Heroine a catharsis, a release of the pent-up emotions and purge of the tension inside them. In forgiving themselves, the main characters are revitalized as they cross over the third threshold. They are transformed by their experience in Plot Step #11, the Resurrection, and are better individuals because of their experience.

To achieve the ultimate emotional high of winning over adversity in a romance story (the HEA where everything works out), the Hero and Heroine must first experience the ultimate low (the big Black Moment of doubt). This opposite spectrum end balance makes for better story satisfaction because the reader's emotions and heart have felt the depths of despair and hopelessness right along with your main characters.

You've tortured your H/H, left them bruised and broken to drag themselves out of the dust, and it's all coming to a head. They've had it with the evil villain and/or problems (External Conflict) and one way or another, the H/H going to do something about it. This final attempt at change is the third major turning point in the romance story.

Don't be afraid to back your H/H into a corner where they're forced to fight to the death if necessary for what they believe. Taking risks creates conflicts that provide natural/believable reactions. Make the unexpected occur so your H/H must act on their new self worth. Give the answers to your story questions and continue to tie up all the loose ends, and show how the Hero and Heroine have changed. Remember that inner conflict (from Lesson 6) the H/H perhaps chose not to deal with? If it wasn't part of the big Black Moment, they must deal with it NOW by overcoming their fear so they can clearly see the new path to their ultimate goal and forge ahead with a renewed spirit/sense of worth and confidence.

Everything has boiled to a head and the conflict has finally brought the main characters to

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the point where they have their big fight scene or quiet emotional epiphany. They win the day, and everyone goes home happy and hunky-dory. In non-romance stories where an HEA isn't a prerequisite, this is the "linear" end of the story, and it's time to literally write "The End."

But in a romance, not only do the Hero and Heroine deal with the conflict to physically win the day and see justice done, they are emotionally transformed. Clearly there is also the irrevokable possibility of losing their new goal, and only through change and understanding of the inner conflict (critical) can success be assured.

The fourth and final turning point in the romance story is when the Hero and Heroine risk everything. They sacrifice their own goal for something more important (usually involving their lover), which is really their true heart's desire/their "inner" goal.

Plot Step #12, "The Return With The Elixir," comes quickly after the climax to wrap up the story (don't dwell on this last step). The Hero and Heroine become masters of their own destiny and return with the treasure, information or other valuable to their ordinary world, which isn't so ordinary after all. The effects of their struggles are evident, their scars plain. The H/H are stronger individuals, but what did they learn? They have the freedom to live life as they choose and not be afraid or anxious. They receive honor, rewards and distinction for their efforts, and the H/H realize the life lessons they have learned. In a positive way, they reflect on where they started, the journey they took, their sacrifices and accomplishments, and the place where they ended up. The main characters look at the world and their place in it in a different light.

And the Hero and Heroine reconcile any remaining differences and receive the "Happily Ever After" (their reward) they so completely deserve thus completing the "circular" ending to your romance story.

You may now officially write "The End."

But this isn't really the end of your project -- there's still the synopsis to write. So, if you think you aren't a know-it-all, you should be! With your beginning life-changing event, all the middle changes of venue and continually occurring conflicts, GMC, main characters defined, and your HEA ending, this is a good time to put it all together.

From your [GMC worksheet](#) and the 12-step story outline, simply plug in the facts of your main characters (Hero, Heroine, Villain), your story's turning points, and the character's emotional turning points for the growth of their relationship and the reasons why that

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growth occurs. When a character first appears, capitalize their name that one time only, then use lower case as usual throughout the remaining synopsis. Example: (header: "Synopsis - Story Title/Author name" -- if for an RWA contest, always check the contest rules)

STORY TITLE <------(centered on page)

paragraph 1 - Heroine's name, what she wants (Goal) and why she wants her goal (Motivation), but what's holding her back from achieving it (External Conflict).

paragraph 2 - Hero's name, what he wants (Goal) and why he wants his goal (Motivation), but what's holding him back from achieving it (External Conflict).

paragraph 3 - The opening situation from your outline: the Ordinary World surrounding the H/H and their Call To Adventure, but the Refusal/Reluctance about their journey because of the external conflict. Make sure you tell what happens, why, how it effects the characters, and their internal conflicts.

further paragraphs - The first story turning point that throws the H/H off balance, and their emotional beginning. The meeting with the Mentor and the results, which bring the H/H to Cross their first Threshold, and the "no turning back" emotional point. The road of trials where the H/H meet allies and enemies, encounter tests. The second story turning point when they approach the Innermost Cave where the characters cross a second threshold and realize they must change to achieve their goal. The Supreme Ordeal and the consequences (optional gray moment) of the H/H's attempt to achieve their goals. Real conflict leading to doubt that the story goal will be achieved. H/H's Reward for their suffering (a boon), the Road Back, the Resurrection, and the Return with the Elixir (HEA).

The End. The synopsis is where you tell all of the key points of your story about the main characters in a nutshell (not the tiny details like the Hero's eye color, that he has huge pecs, or the Heroine's height and tone of voice, etc.). Do NOT leave anything important out. Also, tell when the first attraction occurs, the first kiss, the first love scene, the big Black Moment, and their reconciliation. When you submit a chapter or three, all this synopsis information is what tempts editors and agents to want to know more, and it helps them make a decision whether or not to continue reading and request further chapters.

Your story and synopsis are completed and polished. But don't feel let down because the

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Plotting for Undummies

Ann Jones-Rodriguez

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story's over -- fight that blue feeling by continuing to write. This is the perfect time to begin all over again and plot out your next story! After all, there readers who want to read more about your world and the characters in it. :-)

Good luck to you all with plotting out your Hero and Heroine's Journey.

Happy writing!

Ann JR Ann Jones-Rodriguez

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GOAL, MOTIVATION, & CONFLICT

WORKSHEET

Title -

Character -

Life Theme (optional): -

Answer the questions below with a few words or one sentence. Keep it simple.

GOAL

What does your character want?

MOTIVATION

Why (the reason) does your character want it?

CONFLICT

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But your character cannot have it because?

Internal reason (thoughts or feelings inside the character) -

External reason (physical, tangible obstacles outside the character) -



Lesson 5 - STORY AEROBICS WORKSHEET : SHAPING UP SAGGING

MIDDLES

by Ann Jones-Rodriguez,

© Aug. 04, 2005

WHO are the characters in your problem scene? (If there are more than 4 characters, choose the main character/Hero/Heroine to focus on.)

WHAT is happening in the situation with these characters? (Write only 1 sentence)

WHEN is the situation happening? (Day, afternoon, night, or seasonal)

WHERE is the situation happening? (The setting location)

WHY has this situation occurred? (For insight, check for weak motivation: convenience, coincidence, cliché's, or contrived info)

--Situation Occurred Because:

--Previous Scene:

--Sequel:

--Problem Situation:

HOW do your characters feel, and what do they think about their situation? (Watch out for "misunderstandings," which you don't want because that's also weak motivation. Make sure character's feelings are REAL.)

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PUTTING THE INFO TOGETHER:

Scene:

WHO =

WHAT =

WHEN =

WHERE =

WHY/reason the situation occurred (Heroine's POV) =

WHY/reason the situation occurred (Hero's POV) =

HOW does the HEROINE feel =

HOW does the HERO feel =

Write one line for the Problem:

List Solutions:

1.

2.

3.

Good luck, and may your middle never sag!

Ann Jones-Rodriguez

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WORLDBUILDING BASICS

Worksheet

by Ann Jones-Rodriguez, © 2004

- 1.) What is the physical appearance of your world and the geology like? What is the weather? Are there seasons?

- 2.) What is the primary he flora and fauna? Are any sentient or have Magical properties? Poisonous?

- 3.) Describe the Astronomy: how many moons or satellite bodies? Suns?

- 4.) What are the race(s) of people? Their coloring?

- 5.) What is the primary cultural structure?

- 6.) What is the society structured/organization? (Tribes, clans, villages, kingdoms, states,etc.)

- 7.) What is the primary entertainment?

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8.) What is the primary artistic pursuits?

9.) What is the primary taboos?

10.) What is the main Language? Are there other languages? (Be careful to not make up names and words that are too difficult to pronounce and that may confuse your reader and overwhelm your story. Also, watch for silly or similar sounding names.)

11.) Describe Governing body and political system: how are the people governed? Is the governing system area specific or planet wide?

12.) What is the climate like?

13.) What is the Architecture like?

14.) What are the types of Clothing? Is it gender specific? Is there a clothing difference between the economic levels of people?

15.) What is the primary Philosophy/Spirituality/Religion? One or several belief systems? Is there a leader? Is the leader position a birth-rite or elected? Is there one? One or multiple Deities? Are there specific written rites and/or doctrines? What are the people's attitudes?

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16.) What is the level of technology and/or Magic? How does it work, hi-tech or low-tech? How strongly is it mixed into the cultures(s)?

17.) What is the primary mode of transportation? Secondary or other? Who can travel? Any time? (Include space travel and accessibility)

18.) What is the primary commerce/trade item/commodity?

19.) What are the primary types of domestic animals/beasts, and creatures? Secondary? (Keep in mind the planet's evolution and evolution of the animal its use, survival ability, etc. Give them a reason to exist and exist on *this* particular planet.)

20.) What are the primary types of wild animals/beasts, and creatures? Secondary? (Keep in mind the planet's evolution and evolution of the animal its use, survival ability, etc. Give them a reason to exist and exist on *this* particular planet.)

21.) What is primarily used for currency? If your story included planet to planet contact by space travel, what is the Universal financial exchange and rate?

22.) Describe anything else that may be important in your Universe:



No Back Story Guide:

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As a rule of thumb in a fiction story, try not to add any backstory for at least the first 20% of the book. This will assist in hooking your reader and not bog down the plot from moving forward.

On this following list, find your story's word count (ie: 75K or 75,000 words), and next to it is the page number that is 5% of your story. So, if I were writing a 75,000 word story, I would look down and find 75K, and next to it is 15 pages. On these beginning pages, I should try not to add any backstory (if possible) and engage the reader into my story before I begin dropping in background and character info.

50K - 10 pages
55K - 11 pgs
60K - 12 pgs
65K - 13 pgs
70K - 14 pgs
75K - 15 pgs
80K - 16 pgs
85K - 17 pgs
90K - 18 pgs
95K - 19 pgs
100K - 20 pgs
105K - 21 pgs
110K - 22 pgs
115K - 23 pgs
120K - 24 pgs
125K - 25 pgs

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CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Worksheet

Story Title:

Character:

In one sentence, answer the following as you progress in your story. (This worksheet should take you the entire MSS to complete because you only answer the questions as you get to that point in your story.)

BEGINNING

(What is your character's BEGINNING state of emotions, mentality, and attitude?)

How does s/he feel about the Goal?

Is there plausible Motivation?

Introduction of strong Outer Conflict?

Introduction of strong Inner Conflict?

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MIDDLE

(Where is your character in the MIDDLE of your story, and what happens to jar him/her into wanting to change? Remember, the Conflict MUST get more difficult as the story progresses.)

How does s/he feel about the Goal? What does s/he change in order to achieve the Goal?

How does her/his Motivation change so s/he can achieve the Goal?

What changes about their Outer Conflict?

What changes about their Inner Conflict?

END

(What is your character's END state of emotions, mentality, and attitude?)

Did s/he achieve the Goal?

Did s/he follow plausible Motivation?

Did s/he conquer their Outer Conflict?

Did s/he conquer their Inner Conflict?

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21.) What is primarily used for currency? If your story included planet to planet contact by space travel, what is the Universal financial exchange and rate?

22.) Describe anything else that may be important in your Universe:



CHARACTER INTERVIEW

Worksheet

(NOTE: I lost the info on who originally wrote this Interview sheet and where I got it from, so if anyone recognizes it, please let me know so I can give proper credit. Thanks so much!)

Regarding the story, what sort of person would get involved in events like this?

Having become involved, what would this person do?

How would these actions change the trajectory of the events?

Then what changes or choices does this person have to make?

Interview 1:

1. Why are *you* in this story? Why YOU? What about *you* uniquely qualifies you to be the Hero/Heroine/Villain of THIS story?
2. How do you enter the story? Can you make it fit the unique qualification you qualified above? Does the plot choose the protagonist, or visa versa?
3. What is the protagonist's goal at the start of the book? What is s/he willing to do for it? What is s/he unwilling to do?

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-
4. What quality sets this protagonist apart from anyone else?

 5. How can this same quality get the protagonist into trouble? How can it trip the character up during the course of the story?

 6. What other effects might this quality have on the protagonist's life?

 7. What other talents, gifts, or qualities can help the protagonist overcome the obstacles ahead?

 8. Keep in mind the special quality/tragic flaw you have identified. How can that be used in a climactic scene where the goal is achieved/sacrificed/abandoned?

 9. How are the events of the plot going to change the protagonist? What has s/he learned during the obstacle course? What was accomplished? How was life changed?

Character from Inside Out:

How did you get to be this way?

Why do you stay this way?

What happens because of this? (What next?)

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Interview 2: Character In-Depth:

Requirements – Author in the Plot

1. What does the plot *require* you to be? How does this requirement limit you? Why do you continue to be this even if it limits you?
2. What physical attributes does the plot require of you?
3. What talent or skill will you need to survive this plot? How did you acquire this? How do you use it?
4. What is your quest? What do you hope to accomplish, find, or become during the course of this book? Why? What outside obstacle might prevent this? What *inside* yourself will get in the way? What will have to happen for you to overcome these obstacles? What will happen if you can't?

Perception – You in Your Mind:

5. How do you learn best? Observation? Participation? Trial and error? Cogitation? Consulting experts? Writing?

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6. How open are you to new ideas and information? Do you change your mind frequently, based on what people have told you? Are you a traditionalist, deciding on the basis of “what’s always been”? If someone is arguing with you, are you more likely to change your mind or dig in your heels? What if the arguer is right?
7. When you walk into a party, what do you notice first? The mood? The people? The decorating? The things needing to be fixed? The background music? The food on the buffet table? Whether you fit in?
8. Is one ‘sense’ more highly developed than another? Do you primarily take in the world through vision? Are you more auditory? Do you determine if a person is lying by the tone of voice? Do you love to talk on the phone? Don’t forget the 6th sense: intuition. Is your character very visual? Very touchy-feely? What effect does that have on the way you interact with your environment? Are you always watching people’s eyes to discover what they’re thinking? Do you like to work with your hands because solid things make you feel more rooted?
9. Do you usually notice problems around you? What is your response? Do you write an energy letter? Shrug and move on? Analyze what’s wrong and how to fix it? What about problems within yourself?
10. Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Would your friends agree? How would you react if your life suddenly took a turn for the worst? Are you prepared for that? Do you notice when your life is going well? Does that make you happy?
11. Are you more interested in the past or the future, or do you live in the now? Do you keep track of holiday traditions? Do you reminisce about days gone by? Are you sentimental about objects? How hard would it be to move from your present home? How

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long would you keep in touch with your friends back in the old town? How long would it take you to make new friends?

12. How do you decide if you can trust someone? Experience with others? First impressions? Intuition? Do you test the other person somehow? Are you generally disposed to trust or not to trust?

Self-Concept – You in Yourself:

13. How would a casual acquaintance describe your personality? How would this description be wrong? Why? What if your mother were doing the describing? Your spouse?

14. How well do you know yourself? How well do you *want* to know yourself? Do you like to analyze yourself? Do you usually know what motivates you to do things? What do you do that you consider to be ‘out of character’ for you? When you do that, what do you think of yourself?

15. In what situation is your self-esteem at most risk? When is it most enhanced? Ex: does asking for help make you feel like a beggar? Does giving make you feel like an angel? When someone insults you, what do you do?

16. In what situation are you most afraid? Most brave? When are you likely to behave in a way you would describe as cowardly? How would you deal with thinking yourself a coward? In what situation would you behave with disregard for your own safety?

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17. What are you keeping secret? Who is it secret from? Yourself? How long has it been a secret? What do you *think* will happen if it becomes known? What will *really happen* if it becomes known?

18. What are you lying about, if only to yourself? Are you good at deception? How about self-deception? Why are you lying? Who doesn't fall for it? What will happen if the truth gets out?

19. What is your special power? (Doesn't have to be supernatural.) What ability, skill, talent, sensitivity, value, and/or belief, sets you apart from others? What do you do with this power? How does it get you into trouble? How does it get you out of trouble?

Conjunctions – You in the World:

20. Do you live in the right world? (Are you at home in your boarding school/big city/16th cent. Italian village?) If you fit in, what would you do if something happened to make you leave, or to make you un-fit? If you don't fit in, why should you stay? Is there a 'right' world for you, or do you think you will always be an outsider? How necessary are you to your world? What would you do if you couldn't leave? What would you have to change, in the world or yourself, to fit?

21. Is this the right *time* for you? Were you born too late or too soon? Can you keep up with the pace of the time you live in? Are the things valued in this time, valued to you? Are you satisfied with your world's technology and knowledge? Do you read history or sci-fi? If a time-travel journey was offered to you, would you take it? Where/when?

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22. What is your role in this setting? (Native? Alien? Saint? Loser? Secret rebel? Mover and shaker? Nobody?) Do you want your role to change? What happens then?

23. What characteristic action or attitude always gets you in trouble? Why do you keep doing it? What do you do to get out of trouble?

24. What personal value is at odds with society's values? Are you open about it? (Ex: Amishh person wears plain cloths.) How does that get you into trouble? If you keep it hidden, does your conscious bother you? How much longer can you hide it? What will you do if you must choose between this value and your life in this society?

Connections – You in Others:

25. Are you easy to get to know? Do you want to be? Do others think you're easy to know? Are you likely to let people get to know you? Are you easy to understand?

26. What's your initial reaction to a stranger? Potential friend? Potential enemy? Rival? Someone to charm? To deceive?

27. How are you different when you are with your family? What *role* do you play in your family? Does it still fit? What would happen if you stopped?

28. Did you have a happy childhood? How has that effected your adulthood?

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29. Were you anyone's favorite when you were a child? Why, or why not? What happened because of this?

30. Did you turn out the way you expected? The way your parents predicted?

31. Do you love easily? Why, or why not? How does that mess up your life? Do you *fall* in love or is it a gradual process? Do you notice it is happening? Do you try to stop it?

32. Are you easy to love? Why, or why not? How does that mess up your life? When someone falls in love with you, what do you do?

33. What's your blind spot? What person, idea, institution, do you delude yourself about? How does this endanger you?

34. Do you trust most people? Do you reserve judgement until they pass some test? When were you wrong about whether someone was trustworthy?

35. Whom have you betrayed lately? Did you mean to? What happened? Did you try to make amends?

36. Who has betrayed you lately? Did you expect it? What did it do to you? Is anyone likely to betray you in the future? What will you do to prevent it?

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Interview 3: Family Dynamics

How aware are you of your role in the family, and how might it be affecting you today?

Your Character:

1. Name -

DOB -

Age at opening-

Describe looks, especially keynote features (that you will refer to in the book) -

How does C's appearance reflect the deeper self?

2. Describe C's projected personality – the self shown to the world.

3. Describe C's perceived personality – how C sees his/herself.

4. Now describe C's actual personality as you, the creator, see it.

5. If there are disparities in these selves, what accounts for them? What problems do these disparities cause in C's life?

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6. What is the 'keynote' feature, or theme, to C's personality – the one that is going to be highlighted in this story? (Impetuosity? Cool under fire? Risk-taking? Modesty? Serenity?) How is this shown in C's motions and behavior? How does this feature drive C's actions, and thus the plot?

7. What is C's greatest talent? How does it enhance C's life? How does it influence the plot?

8. What does C secretly love about him/herself? What one aspect is C most proud of?

9. What is C's secret? Does C know it consciously? What does the secret signify? If C has none, why?

10. How important is friendship to C? How can C's friendships be categorized? (Brief but intense? One best friend and a horde of hang-ons?) What role does C usually play in the friendships? How is it limiting?

11. What would C change about him/herself if C got the chance?

12. How much control does C have over C's own life? How much does C want? What conflicts does this cause?

13. What in C's life has caused guilt? How does C deal with this?

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14. How self-aware is C? What doesn't C understand about him/herself?

15. What excites C's sympathy? Anger? Unease?

16. Summarize quickly the major events of C's life up to the opening of the story. Just list them. Be thinking of how they effect C's personality.

FAMILY

Character's Parents:

17. Is father alive at the time of the story? If not, how and when did he die? What was C's reaction?

18. Did he love C? How did he show it? Was this mostly a damaging or sustaining love? What problems has this love caused in C's life?

19. What was C's role in father's life? The apple of his eye? The disappointment? One of a number of little nuisances?

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20. Does C admire and respect father? Does C love him? What illusions does C have about him?

21. What characteristics did C inherit from father? What trait does C regret inheriting?

22. What unfinished business does C have with father? Can C resolve it? How?

Siblings:

23. Names, genders, DOB of all siblings. What number is C in the family? What effect has the birth order had on C?

24. What is C's role with the siblings? (Mimi-mom? Baby? Peacemaker? Troublemaker?) Explain.

25. Does C have a favorite sibling? What brings them together? How has the pairing effected the rest of the family?

26. Does C have a least favorite sibling? Why don't they get along? How is C at fault?

27. Who is the most important sibling in the family? Why? How does C feel about that? Which sibling did dad like best? Mom? What conflict does this cause?

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Family As A Whole:

28. What economic class was the family in C's childhood? Has that changed? How did that effect C?

29. Where did they live? Describe the house and town.

30. What is the family implicit 'motto'? (You can never be too careful? We try harder? United we stand? Father knows best? The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing?)

31. What image did the family present to the world? How was it untrue? What lies does the family tell itself? (Mom's not drunk, just sick? Dad's the boss around here? We kids are sure lucky?)

32. Was this a happy family? Why, or why not? What would a typical get-together be like? (Chilly? Fractious but fun? Full of nostalgia? Active? Food-filled?)

33. Describe an important family ritual, an in-joke, a story they always tell when they get together, a recurring arguement.

34. What role did C play in the family during childhood? How did that role limit C? Help C?

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-
35. How does C rebel against the family, covertly or overtly?
36. What of this family does C hope to replicate with his/her own children? What will C leave behind (or attempt to)?
37. What does C admire about other families that C didn't see in his/her own? What does C admire about C's family that C didn't see in other families?
38. Is C different in the presence of the family 'on the outside'? How? Why? What hunger does C have that the family doesn't fulfill now?
39. Is the family still extant in any meaningful way as the book opens? What is the family's role in C's adult life? What is C's adult role in the family?
40. What unfinished business does C have with the family? Can it be resolved? How?
41. What message about C does C carry into adulthood? (C isn't old enough? It's all C's fault? C is the favorite?) How does it effect C?
42. Does C have a family substitute now? Other than the actual family? (C's teachers? C's best friends? C's coworkers?) What needs has this family filled the real family hasn't?
43. What sort of family of C's own does C have, or hope to have?



CHARACTER SKETCH

CHART

Title:

Genre:

Word Count:

Character Name:

Reason or meaning of name:

Nickname:

Race:

Traits:

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Age:

How old does s/he appear?

Hair color:

Eye color:

Glasses or contacts:

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Weight:

Height:

Type of body/build:

Skin tone:

Skin type:

Shape of face:

Distinguishing Marks:

Predominant feature:

Looks like:

Is s/he healthy? If not, why not:

FAVORITE THINGS

Character's favorite color:

Music:

Food:

Sport/Activity/Exercise:

Literature:

Expressions:

Expletives:

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HABITS

Smokes (Y/N):

What Brand?

When and how much?

Drinks:

What?

When and how much?

Hobbies:

BACKGROUND

Hometown:

Type of childhood:

First memory:

Most important childhood event that still affects him/her:

Why?

Education:

Religion:

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Finances:

FAMILY

Mother:

Relationship with her:

Father:

Relationship with him:

Siblings:

How many?

Birth order:

Relationship with each:

Children of siblings:

ATTITUDE

Most at ease when:

Ill at ease when:

Priorities:

Philosophy:

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How s/he feels about self:

Past failure s/he would be embarrassed to have people know about and why?

If granted one wish, what would it be and why?

PERSONALITY

Greatest source of strength in character's personality (whether s/he sees it as such or not):

Greatest source of weakness in character's personality (whether s/he sees it as such or not):

Character's soft spot:

Is this soft spot obvious to others?

If not, how does character hide it?

Biggest vulnerability:

TRAITS

Optimist or pessimist? Why?

Introvert or extrovert: Why?

Drives and motivations:

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Talents:

Extremely unskilled at:

Good characteristics:

Character flaws:

Mannerisms:

Peculiarities:

Biggest regret:

Minor regrets:

Biggest accomplishment:

Minor accomplishments:

Character's darkest secret:

Does anyone else know?

If yes, did character tell them?

If no, how did they find out?

SELF-PERCEPTION

One word CHARACTER would use to describe self:

One paragraph description of how CHARACTER would describe self:

What does CHARACTER consider best physical characteristic?

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What does CHARACTER consider worst physical characteristic?

Are these realistic assessments? If not, why not?

How CHARACTER thinks others perceive him/her:

What four things would CHARACTER most like to change about self? Why? (#1 most important, #2 second most important, etc.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

If change #1 was made, would character be as happy as s/he thinks? If not, why not?

INTERRELATION WITH OTHERS

How does character relate to others?

How is s/he perceived by others:

Strangers?

Friends?

Wife/Husband/Lover?

Hero/Heroine?

How does character view hero/heroine?

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First impression, and why?

What happens to change this perception?

What do family/friends like most about character?

What do family/friends like least about character?

GOALS

Immediate goals:

Long range goals:

How does character plan to accomplish these goals?

How will other characters be affected?

PROBLEMS/CRISIS

How character reacts in a crisis:

How character faces problems:

Kinds of problems character usually runs into:

How character reacts to NEW problems:

How character reacts to change:

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GENERAL

Favorite clothing and why?

Least favorite clothing and why?

Jewelry:

Other accessories:

Drives:

Where does character live?

Where does character want to live?

Spending habits (frugal, spendthrift, etc), and why?

What does s/he do too much of?

Too little of?

Most prized possession and why?

OTHER INFO

Person character secretly admires:

Person character was most influenced by and why?

Most important person in character's life before story starts and why?

How does character spend the week before the story starts?

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BOOK LENGTH INFO REFERENCE GUIDE

(compiled by Ann Jones-Rodriguez 2001-2005, with info primarily from C. Vogler's "The Writer's Journey" and J. Campbells' Hero "With A Thousand Faces." The breakdown of "acts" is for those who think more in script form and for reference only.)

How to use:

From this Book Length Info & Reference Guide, scroll down to select the book length you are writing towards and use the information given. The approximate corresponding page numbers on the Guide will assist in writing each step in its proper place.

Based on a 50K (200 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-17, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 18-34

Increased awareness 2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 35-52

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Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

ACT II (p. 67)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 67)

p. 53-69

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

p. 68-86

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

p. 87-103

(1 /2 way point - p. 100,)

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 104-120

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ACT III (p. 134)

(2/3 way & 2 nd TURNING POINT, p. 134)

Consequences of the attempt

p. 121-137

8. **Supreme Ordeal**

p. 138-154

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 155-171

p. 172-188

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 189-200 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem
ends tied up

12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all

THE END

Based on a 55K (220 pages) project:

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ACT I

p.1-18, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 19-37

Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 38-56

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 57-75

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 73)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 73)

p. 76-94

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 95-113

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Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 110,)

p. 114-132

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 133-151

Consequences of the attempt

8. **Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 146)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 146)

p. 152-169

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 170-187

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 188-205

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

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p. 206-220 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem 12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all ends tied up

THE END

Based on a 60K (240 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-20, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 21-40

Increased awareness 2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 41-60

Reluctance to change 3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 61-80

Overcoming reluctance 4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

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ACT II (p. 80)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 80)

p. 81-100

Committing to change **5. Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 101-120

Experimenting with first change **6. Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 120,)

p. 121-140

Preparing for big change **7. Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 141-160

Consequences of the attempt **8. Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 160)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 160)

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p. 161-180

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 181-200

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 201-220

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 221-240 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem
ends tied up

12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all

THE END

Based on a 65K (260 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-21, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 22-43

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Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 44-65

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 66-87

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 86)

(1/3 way & 1 st **TURNING POINT**, p. 86)

p. 88-109

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 110-131

Experimenting with first change

6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 130,)

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p. 132-153

Preparing for big change

7. Approach to the Inmost Cave / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 154-174

Consequences of the attempt

8. Supreme Ordeal

ACT III (p. 172)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 172)

p. 175-195

9. Reward /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 196-216

Rededication to change

10. The Road Back / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 217-237

11. Resurrection / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 238-260 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem
ends tied up

12. Return with the Elixir / solution to all problems applied, all

THE END

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Based on a 70K (280 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-23, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 24-47

Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 48-71

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 72-95

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 93)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 93)

p. 96-119

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Committing to change **5. Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 120-143

Experimenting with first change **6. Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 140,)

p. 144-167

Preparing for big change **7. Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

ACT III (p. 186)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 186)

p. 168-190

Consequences of the attempt **8. Supreme Ordeal**

p. 191-213 **9. Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 214-236

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Rededication to change 10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 237-259 11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 260-280 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem 12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all ends tied up

THE END

Based on a 75K (300 pages) project:

ACT I

p. 1-25, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 26-51

Increased awareness 2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 52-77

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Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 78-103

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 100)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 100)

p. 104-129

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 130-155

Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 150,)

p. 156-181

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

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p. 182-207

Consequences of the attempt 8. **Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 200)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 200)

p. 208-233 9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 234-259

Rededication to change 10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 260-285 11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 286-300 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem 12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all ends tied up

THE END

Based on a **80K** (320 pages) project:

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ACT I

p. 1-26, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 27-53

Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 54-80

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 81-107

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 107)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 107)

p. 108-134

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 135-161

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Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 160,)

p. 162-188

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 189-215

Consequences of the attempt

8. **Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 214)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 214)

p. 216-242

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 243-269

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 270-296

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

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p. 297-320 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem 12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all ends tied up

THE END

Based on a **85K** (340 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-28, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 29-57

Increased awareness 2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 58-86

Reluctance to change 3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 87-115

Overcoming reluctance 4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

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ACT II (p. 114)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 114)

p. 116-144

Committing to change **5. Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 145-173

Experimenting with first change **6. Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 170,)

p. 174-202

Preparing for big change **7. Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 203-231

Consequences of the attempt **8. Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 228)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 228)

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p. 232-260

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 261-289

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 290-318

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 319-340 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem
ends tied up

12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all

THE END

Based on a 90K (360 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-30, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p.31-61

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Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 62-92

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

ACT II (p. 120)

p. 93-123

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p.120)

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

p. 124-154

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

(1 /2 way point - p.180,)

Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

p. 155-185

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Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 186-216

ACT III (p. 240)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p.240)

Consequences of the attempt

p. 217-246

8. **Supreme Ordeal**

p. 247-276

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 277-306

p. 307-336

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

Final mastery of the problem
ends tied up

12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all

p. 337-360 (last chapter/ epilogue)

THE END

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Based on a **95K** (380 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-31, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 32-62

Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 63-94

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

ACT II (p. 127)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 127)

p. 95-126

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

p. 127-158

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Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 159-190

Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 190,)

p. 191-221

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

ACT III (p. 254)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 254)

Consequences of the attempt

p. 222-253

8. **Supreme Ordeal**

p. 254-285

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 286-317

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Rededication to change 10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 318-349 11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 350-360 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem 12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all ends tied up

THE END

Based on a **100K** (400 pages) project:

ACT I

p. 1-33, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 34-66

Increased awareness 2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 67-99

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Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 100-132

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 134)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p.134)

p. 133-165

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 166-198

Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p.200,)

p. 199-231

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

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p. 232-264

Consequences of the attempt 8. **Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 268)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p.268)

p. 265-297 9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 298-330

Rededication to change 10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 331-363 11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 364-400 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem 12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all ends tied up

THE END

Based on a **105K** (420 pages) project:

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ACT I

p.1-35, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 36-71

Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 72-107

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 108-133

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 140)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 140)

p. 134-169

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 170-205

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Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 210,)

p. 206-241

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 242-277

Consequences of the attempt

8. **Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 280)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 280)

p. 278-312

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 313-347

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 348-382

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

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p. 383-420 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem 12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all ends tied up

THE END

Based on a 110K (440 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-36, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 37-73

Increased awareness 2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 74-110

Reluctance to change 3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 111-147

Overcoming reluctance 4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

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ACT II (p. 146)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 146)

p. 148-184

Committing to change **5. Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 185-221

Experimenting with first change **6. Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 220,)

p. 222-258

Preparing for big change **7. Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 259-295

Consequences of the attempt **8. Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 292)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 292)

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p. 296-331

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 332-367

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 368-403

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 404-440 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem
ends tied up

12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all

THE END

Based on a 115K (460 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-38, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 39-77

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Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 78-116

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 117-155

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 153)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 153)

p. 156-194

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 195-233

Experimenting with first change

6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 230,)

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p. 234-272

Preparing for big change

7. Approach to the Inmost Cave / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 273-311

Consequences of the attempt

8. Supreme Ordeal

ACT III (p. 306)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 306)

p. 312-349

9. Reward /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 350-387

Rededication to change

10. The Road Back / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 388-425

11. Resurrection / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 426-460 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem
ends tied up

12. Return with the Elixir / solution to all problems applied, all

THE END

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Based on a 120K (480 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-40, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 41-80

Increased awareness

2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 81-120

Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 121-160

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 160)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 160)

p. 161-200

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Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 201-240

Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 240,)

p. 241-280

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

p. 281-320

Consequences of the attempt

8. **Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 320)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 320)

p. 321-360

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 361-400

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Rededication to change 10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 401-440 11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 441-480 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem 12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all ends tied up

THE END

Based on a **125K** (500 pages) project:

ACT I

p.1-41, prologue & opening chapters

Limited awareness of problem 1. **Ordinary World** /everyday life

p. 42-83

Increased awareness 2. **Call to Adventure** /challenge out of everyday life

p. 84-125

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Reluctance to change

3. **Refusal** /all reasons H/H should NOT do this (worse choice possible!)

p. 126-167

Overcoming reluctance

4. **Meeting the Mentor** / someone/thing does/says to make H/H realize should do

ACT II (p. 166)

(1/3 way & **1 st TURNING POINT**, p. 166)

p. 168-209

Committing to change

5. **Crossing the FIRST Threshold** / H/H takes step towards change

p. 210-251

Experimenting with first change 6. **Tests, Allies, Enemies** / H/H has to try/fail, pass tests, makes enemies/allies

(1 /2 way point - p. 250,)

p. 252-293

Preparing for big change

7. **Approach to the Inmost Cave** / H/H realize must change to achieve goal

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p. 294-335

Consequences of the attempt 8. **Supreme Ordeal**

ACT III (p. 332)

(2/3 way & **2 nd TURNING POINT**, p. 332)

p. 336-377

9. **Reward** /for suffering so H/H want to keep trying

p. 378-418

Rededication to change

10. **The Road Back** / H/H MUST return with answer/solution to problems

p. 419-459

11. **Resurrection** / MUST SHOW how character has changed

p. 460-500 (last chapter/ epilogue)

Final mastery of the problem
ends tied up

12. **Return with the Elixir** / solution to all problems applied, all

THE END

by Ann Jones-Rodriguez, 2001-2005

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