



Writing Your Narrative

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Make It Read Like a Compelling Novel

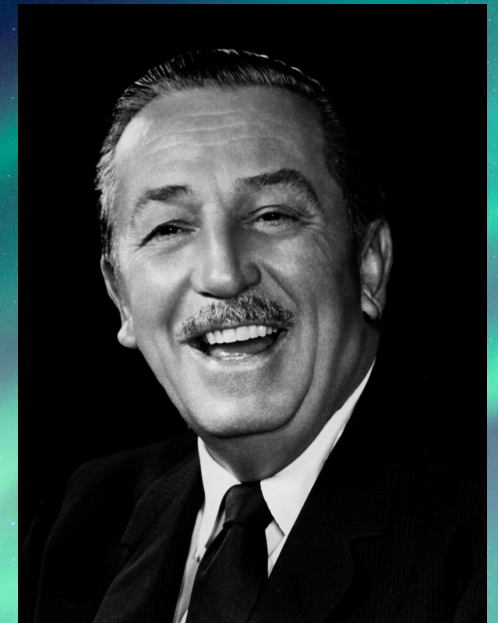
The Elements of Fiction

- Plot Line
- Character Studies
- Setting
- Scenes
- Dialogue
- Imagery



“The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.”

—Walt Disney





Does Your Life Have a Plot?

- The literary definition of plot: a sequence of events in a story, characterized by conflict or tension.
- A typical plot line involves complication, rising action, climax, and resolution. This is chronological, but you can vary it as needed to fulfill your purpose or to make your story more interesting.
- Identify your plot line by tracking the most significant events in your life so far. Use symbols to show loss or sorrow, rage or pain, accomplishment and victory. (For instance, you could use crosses for loss, lightening for rage or pain, stars for victory) Make a quick note next to each symbol so that you know what it stands for.
- Now draw a path from one like symbol to another. Do you have a plot line? Develop a parallel plot line by tracking another set of symbols.

Characterization:

Identify the main characters and the lesser characters. Determine three prevailing character traits for each main character. Give each character a name, a talisman, and a quirk.



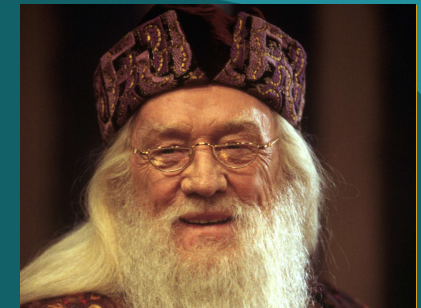
You are the protagonist, right?
Prevailing traits?
What's your purpose?
Name



Who is your antagonist? Why?
What is at stake in the conflict between you?
Name



Who comes to your rescue or tutors you?
How does this happen and how does it affect plot?
Name



Who is the authority figure or big picture character?
How does he/she catalyze events?
Name

Scene Development

SETTING

- Establish the setting. Are we outside or inside? Did you describe the landscape or interior- scape? What tone it set by setting?
- Time of day? Light? Shadows? Tone?
- Content? (furnishings, drapes, wilderness, trees, mountains, beach, flowers?) As you explore content, you may find imagery that is necessary to your narrative.
- Setting can contribute to unity.

DIALOGUE & ACTION

- What do the characters do?
- How does the conflict manifest in action (of characters, community, nature, house, etc.)?
- What do the characters say to each other?
- Do you reveal character through dialogue? Can we tell who is talking by the words given to each character/
- How does the dialogue incite conflict, raise tension, and later, resolve it? What internal dialogue is going on?

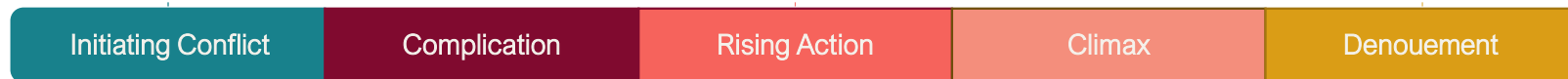
Plotline and Scene Development

This catalyzes the plot by threatening the protagonist or main character (you) and requires that you take action. Where does this happen? What actions are taken?

What is said?
What is the result?

Tensions develop through loss and acquisition, through attempts at success and increased confusion, etc. As the protagonist, you struggle and emerge with the decision to get what you want. This changes your world—not necessarily for the better.

You make the necessary change to fulfill your purpose. You are transformed. Your conflict is resolved—whether tragically, comically or tragicomically.



Subsequent scenes or passages show the complications arising from the initial conflict, the way they affect the protagonist, and what events increase tension in the story. Somewhere in this area, your theme is embedded. How does the antagonist present him/herself as a complicator?

As tensions grow, the protagonist finds everything that matters in jeopardy. As tensions increase, you feel that all is lost. You must dig deep to find the change necessary to fulfilling your purpose.

Great Dialogue Reveals Character and (Invisibly) Moves the Plot Along

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

- “The Killers”
- “Hills Like White Elephants”

JOYCE CAROL OATES

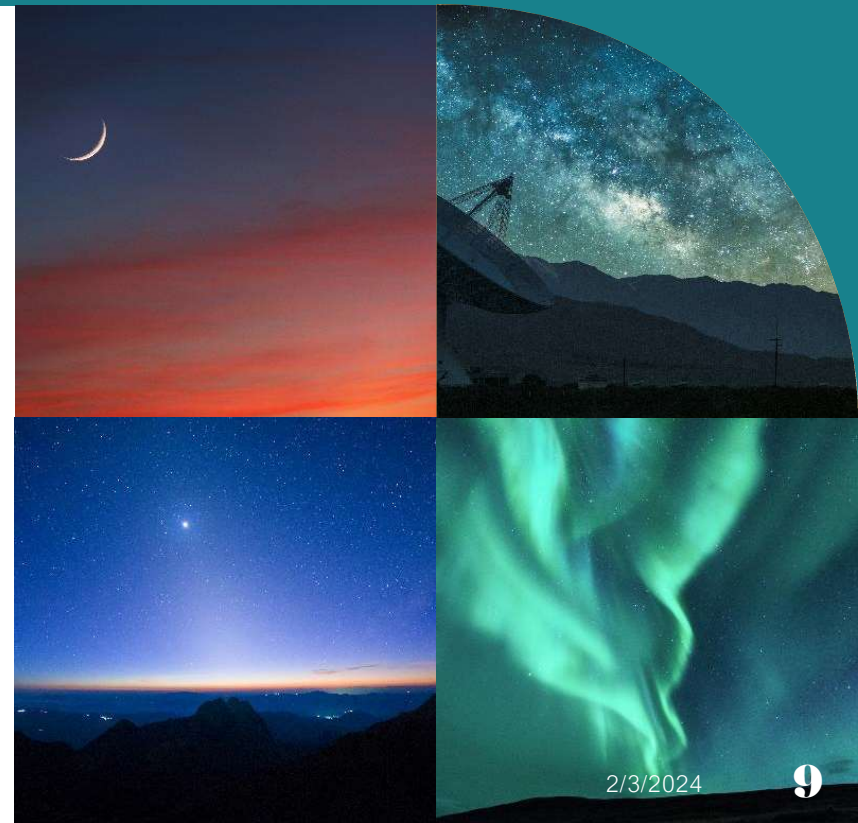
- “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”
(*Smooth Talk*)
- “We Are the Mulvaney’s”

TIM O’BRIEN

- “The Things They Carried”
- “In the Lake of the Woods”

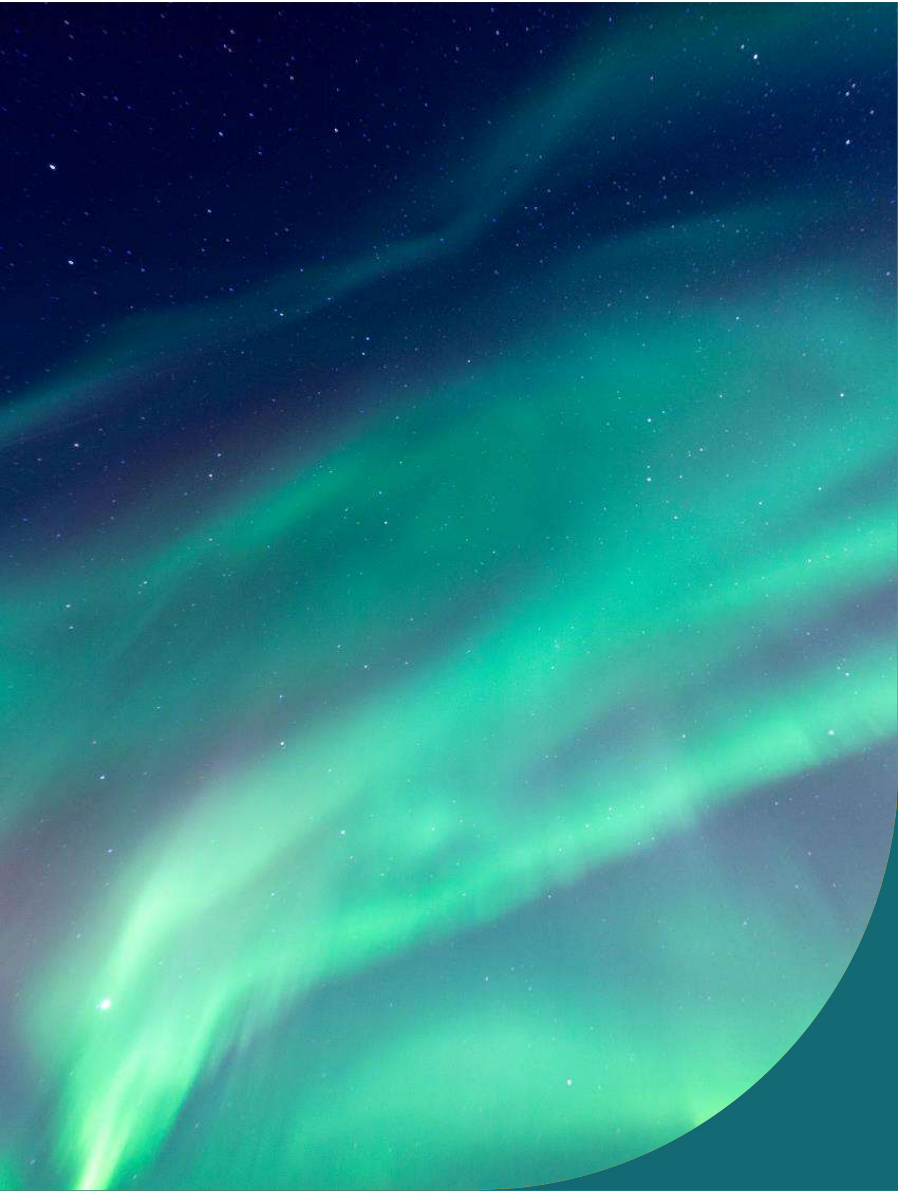
Imagery

- Images, like music, speak directly to the body.
- Using images—not in a heavy-handed way, but in ways that enhance your narrative—can reach readers in ways that the other elements of creative writing can't.
- What examples of images are powerful in your narrative?
- *Homefires*
- *In My Father's House*
- You can often find the Imagery in the title and vice versa.



Voice

- Your voice represents you as surely as your fingerprint or your DNA.
- Voice shows up in style—word choices, sentence structures, rhythm, tone.
- It reflects who you are and what you bring to the family, the community, and the world.



Thank You

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