



Novel Writing Playbook

Brainstorm, outline, and write a one-of-a-kind
novel that connects with readers

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DavidVillalva.com

First edition.

Designed and produced by me, myself, and I.

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Digital edition

Foreward

Forward

At some point, you probably read a novel and thought, “I can do this. Actually, I can do this better.”

So you came up with an idea that nobody wrote about yet. That idea swelled to the point your head would explode if it wasn't unleashed – and you started writing your story because no one else could.

You dreamed it would connect with people.

But one day you got stuck staring at a blank screen or wondering how to connect your ideas and chapters.

Maybe you just got frustrated reading the words you left on the page. Well, it turns out that writing a novel can be a real pain in the azz.

Hello there, I'm David. I create narratives, believe in miracles, and help novelists craft stories that connect with readers.

I love to write. I'm more open with my keyboard, and I permit my strangeness to illuminate the blanks.

You're a writer like me so I'm thinking you're different, too.

If so, thank goodness because that means you're unique.

Your uniqueness helps you create a story no other writer can duplicate. And a one-of-a-kind story has the ability to connect with people.

Your story can inspire people. It may change them. It must entertain them.

Foreward

Forward

But before you can inspire, change, and entertain people, you must transport your imagination onto the page.

Assuming you're open to another perspective, this workbook will help you move forward and finish your one-of-a-kind story.

Uniquely,

David Villalva (Vee-yahl-vah)

Lucid Storyteller (Self-proclaimed)

Post.Script. If you want to stay connected and explore stories about the uni, outer, and innerverses, let's link up at DavidVillalva.com.

Thanks

to the Greats

This workbook exists because of my initial mentors who revealed the storytelling blueprint in novels and movies - so I'd like to thank them.

Thanks to Syd Field (for *Screenplay*) who introduced me to story structure 20+ years ago.

Thanks to James Scott Bell (for *Plot & Structure*) who exposed the big lie and propelled me to keep writing.

Thanks to Larry Brooks (for *Story Engineering*) who reintroduced me to story structure and inspired my first visual guide in 2011.

And thanks to every storyteller who shares their creativity with the world. You showcase how stories and our craft can impact lives.

P.S. Special gratitude for the Creator, fam, friends, dreams, and earth.

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Introduction: Welcome

Promises

Greetings storyteller - and welcome to the *Fast Draft Novel Writing Playbook*.

Let's begin the process with two words... THANK YOU.

I'm compelled to immediately thank you because you've done something special - you've invested in yourself to create your story in a new way.

So yes - thank you. :)

I mean that all the way because countless creative minds wander or daydream for too long without taking meaningful action.

So I encourage you to appreciate this moment and give yourself proper credit. You should be proud for committing to do what it takes to reach "The End."

Of course, you've also put your trust in me to help you reach the last page - so I must honor your trust by giving you a unique storytelling experience.

So you have my word that I'll provide the best I have to offer.

I promise.

Next, I'd like to reinforce how this process is designed to help your creative journey on the page, but we must first insure your mindset is in the best possible place before you brainstorm, outline, and write your story (fast).

Promises

Because I feel compelled to remind you that this process is not a magic bullet novel writing system.

The *Fast Draft Novel Writing Playbook* is a creative - proactive - embrace the intricacies of storytelling - get your one-of-a-kind story onto the page - kind of process.

Of course, I'm going to show you how to do the upfront work so you can build an outline that you should be excited to write.

Because once you put in the upfront work - and once you build a strong foundation - and once you understand how to connect the right kinds of pieces - that's when it will be time for you to actually write your story.

And you should be able to write your well-designed draft - fast - and then you'll have a story worth revising and improving to take toward whichever form of publication is right for you.

Okay, now let's move on to our first irregularly scheduled action step.

Yes, I've already got a quick request for you to complete.

But please don't think twice, storyteller - because this action step is super simple - and you'll find it on the next page.

Promises – Action Step #1

This shouldn't take more than ninety-seconds.

Please grab a pen or pencil along with anything to write on - and then write down the five words listed below:

I - promise - to - have - fun.

Yes, write down, “I promise to have fun.”

We both know that finishing a novel is a rare achievement, and this process will help you finish your story because you'll be able to use this approach to brainstorm, outline, and write stories for years to come, but there will still be times when you feel like the whole process is simply not fun.

That happens. It happens with a lot of things in life.

Except I'm thinking that finishing your novel right now is kind of your purpose, and fulfilling your purpose can be hard and not fun at times.

But we both know it's worth it, so the best you can do to ground yourself in having fun throughout the process, the better you'll be able to serve your purpose.

Your promise

Please write down the requested words along with any other positive thoughts you feel compelled to write. :)

Why

Thank you once again for committing to having some fun during this process.

Simply put, I want to help you root your creativity inside the fun aspects of your storytelling journey - because I believe it can help you keep moving forward in the long run.

So I've got an important question for you to consider. The question is: **Why are you writing your story?**

You should know that I believe every single person is unique - and every story is unique - and every person's reason(s) behind telling their story is unique.

And I've found it's helpful for storytellers to better understand why they're willing to commit so much time and energy into writing a story.

Because a core understanding of your "Why?" will better focus your story's purpose.

So again: **Why are you writing your story?**

Maybe you've asked yourself this question before?

If that's the case, completing the action step on the following page will be pretty straightforward.

Why – Action Step #2

Why are you writing your story?

Please write down your reason(s).

Please remain open and true to your motives as you explore your “Why?”

Of course, you can write a sentence, a paragraph or fill pages with your thoughts and feelings regarding this question.

Bottom line, please just answer the question before moving on because your answer is an important piece connected to the overarching story you want to tell.

Your why

Why are you writing your story?

What

One last step before moving onto Chapter 1.

So you just answered why you're writing your story, and that's important for you to know deep down.

Knowing why you're writing your novel focuses **your story's purpose**, and understanding why you're creating your story focuses **your purpose**.

This next question is a component that must co-exist with your purpose - and I'm hoping we can just put it on your radar if it isn't already there.

It's another question. (Yes, I'm a curious cat as we begin this process together - except I'll help you answer the question in this case.)

In fact, this is a question I heard over a decade ago during a pro writer lecture series.

When I heard this question, it made me freeze and think twice so I want to make sure you're exposed to it.

The question is: **What's the number one thing your readers want from your story?**

Do they want to be changed? Educated? Inspired?

What about the last novel you read? What did you want from it?

I'm thinking you wanted to be transported into the storyworld the author created on the page.

You wanted a form of escapism while reading.

What

Simply put, you wanted to be entertained.

Guess what?

That's what all readers will want when they pick up your novel.

They want to leave their busy and stressful lives - flee the realities related to their day jobs - depart their monotonous drama.

And they're willing to forgo sleep and pay for it in the morning if you can help them escape into your story.

Entertainment is what your readers want first and foremost.

But if readers end up being changed, educated, inspired, and more - then wow - you've over-delivered and connected with them in an extraordinary way.

Actually, you've probably earned a rabid fan for life.

But the basic truth behind what readers want = **“Your story + entertainment = satisfied readers”**

I'm simply requesting that you keep this basic truth in the back of your mind as you begin to focus on your core ideas in Chapter 1.

Hmmm - maybe you already understood this simple concept.

That just means you're sharper and farther along than I was when I began my storytelling journey - and that's a good thing. :)

Now let's jump into Chapter 1.

Chapter 1: Core Ideas

Story Ideas

Let's focus on the fundamentals.

Here's what happened the first time I considered writing a book:

I put down the novel I was reading at the time and thought, "Hmm, I can do this. Actually, I can do this better."

That's when I started spinning a bunch of ideas around inside my head.

I'd be mowing the lawn and think, "Yeah, that would be a fun idea for a story."

Or I'd be driving and think, "Hmm, that idea could have legs."

Ideas swam throughout the different dimensions of my mind for some time before I started writing my story - and I'd write down my ideas - or I'd put them into my phone to review later.

Maybe you've already documented some of your ideas? Maybe they've stacked up over time? Better yet, maybe you started writing a draft or two? Or you wrote several drafts like me over the years?

Well, it's time we figure out what kind of ideas you have.

Because maybe you've got a concept?

Maybe you've got a premise?

And what's the difference between a concept and premise?

Story Ideas

A lot of people ask that last question and they spend a lot of time trying to answer it.

Simply put, a concept is an undeveloped story idea.

With a concept, you know that you want to tell a story - and you've started brainstorming ideas for a story - but you're not exactly sure what the story will be yet - or exactly where the story is going.

When it comes to a premise, it's like having a more focused idea or a plot hypothesis.

With a premise, you've started to center your ideas around a potential character and specifically, where that character may go within a storyline.

But let's step back here - because while I can see some value in differentiating a concept vs. a premise, I'd like to present this question:

As long as you're building a story that matters to you, and it gives readers what they want, isn't that all that really matters? Especially at this point in the creation process?

So that's why we won't drill down any further on the definitions of concept and premise.

Instead, we're going to focus on simply fleshing out your story ideas.

Because the most important thing right now is that you have an idea worth taking all the way to "The End". I mean a "wow" story idea that's worth telling for 200 or 300 or more pages.

And that often means brainstorming a lot of good ideas - and bad ideas. (Yikes!)

Story Ideas

Because it often takes a lot of good and bad ideas to discover a knock-out, best-selling, big league story idea.

Because... **What if...** Your current idea was just okay - or pretty good?

And... **What if...** You could develop that good idea into a really good idea?

Better yet... **What if...** You could upgrade that really good idea into a really special one?

So how do you develop and evolve your ideas from okay to good to something special?

All it takes is additional upfront time, and you must invest in this upfront time by taking yourself through a line of questioning that you may already be doing in life.

Have you ever sat at a stop light and wondered, “What if... that car ran the red light?”

Or have you ever sat outside and looked up to the sky and wondered, “What if... that airplane started falling out of the sky?”

That’s where all great ideas start. They begin as something super simple, and then they’re developed into something special.

So now it’s time for you to look at your story ideas - either fresh ideas or ideas being explored in a current draft - and consider if your story ideas are special enough to take all the way to “The End.”

Also, I’ve included several examples on the following pages - once you’re done reviewing them, please complete the action steps.

Story Ideas – Examples

Let's brainstorm examples and take them from simple to special.

Please keep in mind that I often use examples from both novels and films. I like to use movies because they're easy to digest, and they've often been watched by a wider audience. So let's use the "What if?" approach to develop some example ideas.

Example #1:

What if... A guy hunted treasures in his spare time?

Better yet... What if... A history teacher hunted treasures in his spare time, and he also searched for mythical artifacts?

Wait... Better yet... What if... A professor of archeology discovered the Ark of the Covenant, and he had to prevent it from falling into the hands of Nazis?

That's *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Example #2:

What if... Someone bought a car that was really an alien?

Better yet... What if... A teenager bought a car that was an alien, and it could transform?

Wait... Better yet... What if... A geeky high school boy bought a car which turned out to be a peaceful alien that could transform, and the high school kid held the key to stop the evil aliens?

Of course, that's *Transformers*.

Story Ideas – Examples

Example #3:

What if... Someone came home to a possible murder scene in their living room?

Better yet.... What if... A husband came home to a possible murder scene in his home and his wife's missing?

Wait... Better yet... What if... A cheating husband came home to a possible murder scene in his home, his wife's missing, and he has to prove his wife framed him?

That's *Gone Girl*.

Example #4:

What if... A kid discovered he had magical powers?

Better yet... What if... A boy discovered he was a wizard, and he was summoned to attend a special school for wizards?

Wait... Better yet... What if... An orphan boy discovered he was a wizard, attended a special school for wizards, and he had to defeat the same powerful wizard that killed his parents?

Yep, that's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

Example #5:

What if... A person was forced to fight in a battle to the death?

Better yet... What if... A girl volunteered herself to save her little sister from a death game?

Story Ideas – Examples

Example #5 cont.

Wait... Better yet... What if... A teenage girl volunteered herself to save her little sister from a death game, and the death game was televised as entertainment by a corrupt government?

Of course, that's *The Hunger Games*.

Ideas can be easily improved by gradually introducing and layering new elements into each previous idea.

Because in the first examples of the pure “**What if?**” scenarios, I included a potential protagonist along with a situation.

Next, in the examples of “**Better yet... What if?**” scenarios, I refined the protagonist, but took the idea to the next level by complicating the original situation.

Last, in the examples of “**Wait... Better yet... What if?**” scenarios, I specified the role of the protagonist, further complicated the previous situation, but took it to the next level by adding an antagonistic force.

That's how ideas can go from okay - to good - to great.

Now it's time to for you to develop a few of your current ideas using the next action step.

Remember though, you want to keep taking your ideas to the next level.

Enhance them. Evolve them.

Story Ideas – Examples

Keep pushing your ideas more and more - especially after each time you think you've got it.

Because maybe the next idea is the one that you can take and love all the way.

And if you get hung up after your first few ideas, I encourage you to go pick up your favorite novels or watch your favorite flicks, and run a bunch of **What if?** scenarios against those stories.

Because it's okay to innovate using your favorite stories. So just take an idea someone else had and make it new, fresh and different in your special way.

Storytellers do the all the time because special ideas are often refined ideas, and they often include elements from proven story frameworks.

Because Indiana Jones in *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* wasn't the first treasure hunter in a story.

Because Sam Witwicky in *Transformers* wasn't the first kid to have an alien show up at his home.

Nick Dunne and Amy Dunne battling in *Gone Girl* wasn't the first twisted love story.

Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* wasn't the first kid wizard / savior story.

The Hunger Games wasn't the first story about kids fighting to the death. A Japanese novel, *Battle Royale*, was published about 10 years before *The Hunger Games*, and they're eerily similar to each other.

Story Ideas – Examples

So please do your best to become open - or stay open - to letting other people's stories inspire your ideas.

Because maybe your next special idea will come from someone else?

And then maybe someone else's next special idea will come from one of your stories?

Wouldn't that be something special? :)

Now please complete the action steps found on the following pages.

Story Ideas – Action Step #1

Practice the “What if?” process using 3 of your favorite stories

Please practice developing some of your favorite stories by using the following formulas. (Review previous examples as needed.)

Questions to get you thinking about your stories: What movie do you never get tired of watching? What novel have you read more than once? What story inspired you to write your own story?

Reminder: Investing additional upfront time helps you create special story ideas - and practicing within successful stories helps you develop your own story ideas.

Story Ideas – Action Step #1

Your favorite stories

“What if?” (Potential protagonist + a simple situation)

“Better yet... What if?” (Refined protagonist + more complicated situation)

“Wait... Better yet... What if?” (Focused protagonist + complicated situation + one potential antagonistic force)

Story Ideas – Action Step #1

Your favorite stories

“What if?” (Potential protagonist + a simple situation)

“Better yet... What if?” (Refined protagonist + more complicated situation)

“Wait... Better yet... What if?” (Focused protagonist + complicated situation + one potential antagonistic force)

Story Ideas – **Action Step #1**

Your favorite stories

“What if?” (Potential protagonist + a simple situation)

“Better yet... What if?” (Refined protagonist + more complicated situation)

“Wait... Better yet... What if?” (Focused protagonist + complicated situation + one potential antagonistic force)

Story Ideas – Action Step #2

Practice the “What if?” process using 3 of your story ideas

The next step is to develop your own story ideas and improve them to the best of your ability.

You can enter completely new story ideas into each of the areas on the following page - or you can take the same idea and refine it three times to try and make it as compelling as possible.

Note: This brainstorming process can help you even if you’ve already started writing your story. In fact, it should help you simplify your story to its core.

Story Ideas – Action Step #2

Your story ideas

“What if?” (Potential protagonist + a simple situation)

“Better yet... What if?” (Refined protagonist + more complicated situation)

“Wait... Better yet... What if?” (Focused protagonist + complicated situation + one potential antagonistic force)

Story Ideas – Action Step #2

Your story ideas

“What if?” (Potential protagonist + a simple situation)

“Better yet... What if?” (Refined protagonist + more complicated situation)

“Wait... Better yet... What if?” (Focused protagonist + complicated situation + one potential antagonistic force)

Story Ideas – **Action Step #2**

Your story ideas

“What if?” (Potential protagonist + a simple situation)

“Better yet... What if?” (Refined protagonist + more complicated situation)

“Wait... Better yet... What if?” (Focused protagonist + complicated situation + one potential antagonistic force)

Story Ideas – Action Step #3

Select one story idea you're going to explore for now

The last step is to choose *one* story idea you want to keep expanding.

Brainstorm your story idea one last time on the following page and commit to that idea to keep moving forward.

Remember: It often takes many good ideas (and bad ideas) to generate one special idea worth writing for 200-300+ pages. So if you're not in love with your idea, it's okay! Just keep developing your ideas until you've landed on at least one that you really like.

Story Ideas – Action Step #3

Your one idea

“What if?” (Potential protagonist + a simple situation)

“Better yet... What if?” (Refined protagonist + more complicated situation)

“Wait... Better yet... What if?” (Focused protagonist + complicated situation + one potential antagonistic force)

Why & Theme

Okay, thank you for brainstorming your ideas. :)

You're already doing the work it takes to create a well-designed story.

Now it's time to look at the ideas you generated, and it's all for the sake of your theme.

So please think about (or look over) your story ideas from the previous action steps while you consider this question:

Do you see any thematic trends inside the ideas that you generated and brainstormed?

Of course, no one is grading you - so you can ponder all of your ideas without criticism - but please take a moment to see if you can identify any similar trends or themes.

Just look over the previous action steps and after you're done, please pick up right below...

(Seriously, please scan your story ideas within the previous action steps to try and identify any thematic trends. Once you're done, please move onto the next paragraph.)

First, please do not be alarmed if nothing stood out as you looked over your ideas.

You may simply have a versatile style when it comes to story preferences. But at least you're exploring your ideas and stories with a curious mindset and focus.

And don't worry if you feel like your idea is still just okay or good - but not great right now.

Why & Theme

Yes, it's okay if you feel like your idea is still just okay or good - because most ideas start this way before they're developed into something special.

Remember the blockbuster and bestselling stories I previously provided as examples inside "Story Ideas"? Well, I doubt it took three attempts for the screenwriters and novelists creating those stories to finalize their blockbuster and best-selling ideas.

So please embrace that you may need to generate many more ideas before you land on the right one to tell for 200 to 300+ pages. It's just the way this often works.

Either way, you're already going to be hundreds of pages ahead of my learning curve. Find comfort in my past pain. ;)

Because I wrote several novels and many more drafts before I landed on my current story idea and novel - the one that I've found worthy of finishing and taking to "The End."

But yeah, I wrote in circles for years - so I want to save you those years by being upfront about what's needed to develop a great story idea.

What I'm getting at is this... if you haven't created an idea you love - or at least one you really like - then I recommend you go take another run at the previous action step(s).

Keep working through the previous "What If?" exercise(s) until you land on an idea that you really like and love.

And once you land on that idea, please move onto the next page so we can keep moving forward in this process.

Why & Theme

Now that you've identified some themes or trends inside your story idea(s), let's connect more dots.

Because I want to try and fuse your Why into your core story ideas that you just brainstormed.

Yep, remember when I asked, "Why are you writing your story?" Well, I'm bringing that back up because your Why may be connected to your theme within your story.

Again, your Why is often connected to your purpose - so your Why often bleeds into the story you want to tell.

So I'm wondering if your Why is somehow connected to the story ideas you wrote down on the previous action step(s)?

Because when it comes to my storytelling experiences, I've found this type of analysis helps me more clearly see my Why and theme.

And through this analytical process, I've discovered that I want to show people how light can be discovered inside even the darkest places.

I realized that I want to help people find hope when it looks like all hope is lost.

My purpose is to support people inside stories of faith.

And what do you know? I found that my favorite flicks and novels were embedded with these themes and ideas...

Because I love movie trilogies like *The Matrix* and *The Dark Knight*.

Why & Theme

I love novel series like *The Hunger Games* and *The Vampire Chronicles*.

I love stories with flawed protagonists who must redeem themselves inside broken worlds where dark villains must be enlightened.

My favorite themes revolve around freedom, sacrifice, redemption, salvation, and perseverance.

And I've found that when you combine your Why with your theme, it can ignite your storytelling soul.

I know that's truth for me personally.

Because this alignment compels me to keep moving forward with my story - despite the setbacks - despite the hurdles - despite the passing time - despite the aching doubts...

Because I know it's my purpose to finish my story and release its message into the world.

Because I know it can impact people.

I know it can help encourage people.

I know it can lead people to keep faith.

Yet at the same time, I always remember that I must first and foremost entertain people.

But I also understand that all of these objectives can coexist and thrive when my Why and theme are aligned.

Why & Theme

This harmony between your Why and your theme is why you must solidify your Why. It's why you must clearly see your theme.

Because your Why and your theme will help shape your story on many levels.

So when your Why and your theme unite and merge, “the odds are in your favor.” ;)

That's when you know you've got a story idea powerful enough to propel you to “The End.”

Now it's time for you to focus your theme - or you just need to start with the theme(s) you love the most.

Please use the following action steps to discover or confirm your theme(s).

Why & Theme - Action Step #1

Summarize Why you're writing your story and identify any themes within your Why

Why are you writing your story?

You already answered this question on a previous page, but it's time to solidify your Why and actualize any potential themes seeking to be said within your Why.

Remember: Your Why and your theme(s) may evolve over time. They may have changed since your previous analysis. Please just remain open, clear, and trusting with your motivations during this exercise.

Your Why

Why are you writing your story?

What theme(s) do you see inside your Why?

Why & Theme – Action Step #2

Come up with at least 6 themes living inside your 3 favorite stories

You know your Why and now it's time to discover if it aligns with any of the stories you enjoy and love most.

Using your 3 favorite stories from the Story Ideas Action Step #1 (on pages 17-20), please pull at least 6 themes from those stories.

You can write one word or multiple sentences to summarize the themes. This is not an exact science. In the end, only you will know what your favorite stories mean to you.

Your theme

What are 3 of your favorite stories (films or novels)?

What are the themes living inside these 3 favorite stories? Please list at least 6 themes?

Why & Theme – Action Step #3

Come up with at least 3 themes living inside the story ideas you created

The next step is to pull at least 3 potential themes from your story ideas.

Using your 3 story ideas from the previous Story Ideas Action Step #2 inside this document (on pages 21-26), please do your best to pull at least 3 themes from these/your story ideas.

Reminder: You can write one word or a few sentences to summarize the themes inside your story ideas. Again, this is not an exact science.

Your theme

What are the themes living inside your story ideas? (List at least 3)

Story & Theme

Thank you for working on your Why and taking a deeper look at your theme.

Now let's determine how your theme will affect the core elements inside your story.

Because again, the truth is that your theme will help you shape your story.

That truth is something I learned from studying the works of several master storytellers including the author, Steven Pressfield.

Pressfield's the guy who wrote *The War of Art*, *Turning Pro*, *The Legend of Bagger Vance* and many more books.

He showed me that you don't have to write your entire draft before you discover your theme.

He showed me that you don't have to wing it with theme.

But more importantly, he helped me see how knowing your theme will help you focus elements throughout your story.

Let's begin with your protagonist because it turns out your theme tells you who your protagonist will be.

Of course, your protagonist will be the character leading the charge when it comes to your overarching storyline, but the same goes for your protagonist when it comes to your theme.

Because your protagonist will carry your theme from beginning to end.

Story & Theme

Also, your theme can help you ask yourself focused questions when it comes to your protagonist such as:

Does your protagonist consistently represent your theme?

Does your protagonist speak within the spectrum of your theme?

Does your protagonist make choices that support your theme?

Your theme also tells you who your antagonist must be - because your antagonist must be a mirrored version of your protagonist.

Because your antagonist opposes your protagonist - but your antagonist also opposes your theme.

Plus, your theme tells you how to end your story - because your protagonist and antagonist will meet for an epic showdown at the end of your story - and the winner will either satisfy or deny your theme.

You can also use your theme to clarify your stakes, the setting, the plot points and much more.

You can even use your theme to find your title.

All of these reasons are why you must get to the heart of your theme - because it's better to discover your theme now vs. writing the entire draft and trying to figure it out later - and then having to go back to make sure everything lines up to support your theme.

Bottom line: Knowing your theme will guide your writing.

So what's your theme? (Continue to explore this question inside the following action step(s)).

Story & Theme – Action Step #1

Select one theme that will support your story for now

What theme will your story be rooted inside?

You've already brainstormed themes and your story in multiple ways during the previous action steps.

Now it's time for you to focus how your theme aligns with your one story idea that you previously decided to explore.

Your story's theme

What desired theme do you want your story to support?

What is the theme from your one story idea that you decided to explore?

Is the theme from your one story idea aligned with your desired theme?
(If not, determine if they can be merged inside one similar theme.)

Story & Theme – Action Step #2

Brainstorm how your theme will shape 3 aspects of your story - such as your protagonist, antagonist & story's ending

You've already brainstormed themes in multiple ways so now it's time for you to begin applying it to 3 elements of your story.

Questions and examples to get you thinking:

- How will your protagonist support your theme? (For instance, if your theme is about redemption, where will your protagonist begin in your story and how could your protagonist transform by the end of your story?)
- How will your antagonist challenge the theme that your protagonist is supporting?
- Will your antagonist's actions simply oppose your theme or will your antagonist attempt to prove it false?
- How will your story's ending fulfill your theme?

Remember: This is a brainstorming exercise to help you focus your theme inside a few aspects of your story. Your answers do not need to be perfect. Please just answer the following questions to the best of your ability, then move onto the next page(s).

Story & Theme – Action Step #2

Your story's theme

How will your theme shape or influence your protagonist?

How will your theme shape or influence your antagonist?

How will your theme shape and influence your story's ending?

Chapter 2: Story Heart

Story Heart Intro

Four key elements give life to your overarching storyline.

These four elements create and establish your Story Heart which will serve as your story's foundation.

These four elements will determine your story's backbone which you can go back to time and time again - especially when you're trying to figure out what should happen next in your story.

Your Story Heart includes your:

- Protagonist
- Antagonist
- Stakes
- Setting

By the end of this Chapter, you will thoroughly understand the fundamentals associated with each of these four elements - and you will develop and unite each element to create and solidify your Story Heart.

Then you will harness the elements within your Story Heart to produce your Story Summary which is a comprehensive sentence summarizing your story.

Your ultimate mission inside this Chapter is to establish your Story Summary which will:

- Serve as a cornerstone for the story you want to share with the world.

Story Heart Intro

Your Story Heart will: (cont.)

- Become a foundation that you can return to and access whenever you feel like you're getting off track with the story you want to tell.
- Forever reinforce the overarching storyline you're going to actually write during the fast drafting process.
- Enable you to easily tell the humans about the story you're working on - assuming you're inclined to sharing and talking. ;)

But first, you must begin the process by focusing the elements inside your Story Heart.

So once your Story Heart is established to the best of your abilities, you will create your Story Summary at the end of this Chapter.

Now let's go through each of the four elements so we clarify your story's foundation.

Protagonist

The first element of your Story Heart is your protagonist.

Of course, your protagonist is your lead character.

And of course, your readers will expect your one lead character to take them from the beginning to the end of your story.

Fortunately, you already generated some ideas for a potential protagonist during the Story Idea action steps in the previous Chapter. That's where you started with a simple protagonist and enhanced that protagonist inside an evolving situation.

So you've already put in solid work because we're going to keep using that chosen protagonist inside your Story Heart here, but now you need to give your protagonist a Story Goal.

A Story Goal is one clear-cut, overarching mission for your protagonist.

A Story Goal is one powerful objective that your protagonist wants to accomplish throughout your story.

And for now, you should keep your protagonist's Story Goal super simple.

Are you familiar with the K.I.S.S. acronym?

Well, in this case, it means Keep It Simple Storyteller.

So let's look at a couple examples of protagonists and their Story Goals.

Protagonist

Example #1:

The Lord of the Rings

- The primary **protagonist** is Frodo Baggins.
- Frodo's **Story Goal** is to Destroy the Ring to save Middle-earth.

Yep, we're keeping it that simple at this stage.

Example #2:

Gone Girl

- This is a unique one because there are two competing storylines told from two different point of views.
- However, the **protagonist** is Nick Dunne.
- Nick's **Story Goal** is to prove his innocence.

Again, we're keeping it that simple here, storyteller.

Now please complete the following action step before moving on to the next element inside your Story Heart.

Protagonist – Action Step #1

Focus your one core protagonist

Who is your protagonist and what do they want?

Using the potential protagonist that you chose inside your Story Idea Action Step #3 (found on pages 25-26 inside Chapter 1), please solidify your Protagonist and then choose their one clear-cut mission they will want to accomplish throughout your overarching storyline.

Reminder: Keep It Simple Storyteller.

Example #1:

The Lord of the Rings

Protagonist = Frodo Baggins

Story Goal = Destroy the ring

Example #2:

Gone Girl

Protagonist = Nick Dunne

Story Goal = Prove his innocence

Your protagonist

Who is your protagonist?

What is your protagonist's story goal?

Antagonist

The second component of your Story Heart is your antagonist.

I'm sure you've heard the saying, "Story is conflict"?

Well, that phrase is all about your antagonist - because your antagonist will deliver the primary conflict throughout your storyline.

So your antagonist must challenge your protagonist and their overarching Story Goal.

And just like your protagonist needs a Story Goal, so does your antagonist - because your antagonist thinks the story is all about them.

So he, she or it believes they're the hero in the story and because of that your antagonist will have their own clear-cut mission and overarching objective.

And your antagonist's Story Goal must directly oppose your protagonist's Story Goal.

Now let's pause here for a moment because I'm hoping you've noticed that I'm referring to your antagonist as a singular entity.

That's because you should cast your antagonist as an actual character.

Because I failed to cast one core antagonist in my first couple stories - and it didn't work out so well - because in my initial stories, I positioned the antagonist as an opposing theme or idea, and not a specific character.

Please do not make the same mistakes that I did.

Antagonist

Please do not cast a weather event like a tornado or storm as your core antagonist.

Because an easy solution here would be to cast an immoral person who takes advantage of the surrounding chaos as your core antagonist.

And please do not cast an entire race of aliens as your core antagonist.

Because an easy solution here would be to cast the leader of that alien race as your core antagonist.

Please trust me when I share that your antagonist should be a specific character.

Like a monster.

Or an evil step-mother.

Or a psychotic spouse.

You need an antagonist who can feel, breathe, communicate, etc.

You want an antagonist who can affect your protagonist through their own direct choices and actions.

Okay, I think we're on the same page here - so let's review a couple examples of how an antagonist must challenge the protagonist.

And we'll use the same story examples we looked at when reviewing your protagonist - except now we'll layer the antagonist into the stories.

Antagonist

Example #1:

The Lord of the Rings

- Again, the primary **protagonist** is Frodo Baggins.
- Again, Frodo's **Story Goal** is to destroy the ring to save Middle-earth.
- The primary **antagonist** is Sauron.
- Sauron's **Story Goal** is to obtain the ring to enslave Middle-earth.

I'm hoping you noticed how both Frodo and Sauron have Story Goals connected to the ring - except their motivations surrounding the ring coexist on opposite ends of the spectrum.

This kind of Story Goal opposition is what you want to create between your protagonist and your antagonist. This approach connects them in a special way.

Example #2:

Gone Girl

- Again, the **Protagonist** is Nick Dunne.
- Again, Nick's **Story Goal** is to prove his innocence.
- The primary **Antagonist** is Amy Dunne.
- Amy's **Story Goal** is to frame her husband, Nick, for murder.

Again, both Nick's and Amy's Story Goals are connected, but they oppose each other and give meaning to the phrase "story is conflict."

Got it? Good! Because now you must focus your antagonist by giving him/her/it a Story Goal that will be connected to your protagonist's Story Goal.

Antagonist – Action Step #1

Focus your one core antagonist

Who is your antagonist and what is their one clear-cut mission?

Your antagonist must oppose your protagonist and their story goal. Yet your antagonist needs their own story goal and it must relate to the protagonist's story goal.

Reminder: Your antagonist should be an actual character and not a natural disaster, general idea or opposing theme.

Example #1:

The Lord of the Rings

Protagonist = Frodo Baggins

Protag. Story Goal = Destroy the ring

Antagonist = Sauron

Antag. Story Goal = Obtain the ring

Story Goal connection = The ring

Example #2:

Gone Girl

Protagonist = Nick Dunne

Protag. Story Goal = Prove his innocence

Antagonist = Amy Dunne

Antag. Story Goal = Frame Nick for murder

Story Goal connection = Nick's freedom

Your antagonist

Who is your antagonist?

Antagonist–Action Step #1

Your antagonist

What is your antagonist's Story Goal? (Remember to K.I.S.S.)

How does your antagonist's Story Goal relate to your protagonist's Story Goal?

Setting

The third element of your Story Heart is your setting.

Your setting is not an actual character like your protagonist or your antagonist - but it's still just as important as one of these characters who anchor your story.

Because your setting influences and impacts every single character within your storyline.

Your setting is the backdrop that your story takes place - and this backdrop can include geography, time, weather, mood, culture and much more.

All of these layers can affect the development of your characters because your characters must live inside your setting - so that means you must know where your story will take place along with its conditions.

But on top of that simple truth, your setting is the landscape that your readers will touch, see, smell, taste and hear - so you must prevent your readers from ever doubting the reality within your setting.

Your setting must transport your characters and readers into your created storyworld.

Whether your story occurs in a true to life city or a location based in fantasy, you must help your reader escape to the backdrop that your story takes place.

That's why I recommend you get to know several of the key layers within your setting (early in the creation process).

Setting

Now let's look at a couple examples.

Example #1

The Lord of the Rings:

- The place is Middle-earth - and its geography, terrain, weather and mood affected, challenged and shaped its characters for hundreds of pages.
- Detailed maps of Middle-earth's expansive setting can be found all over the internet.
- Readers love Middle-earth, and it's become its own character inside *The Lord of the Rings* universe.
- You must strive for this result, but please recognize that it takes a master storyteller to craft a massive setting like Middle-earth

Example #2

Gone Girl

- The place is a quiet, suburban, fictitious city known as North Carthage, Missouri.
- The time is roughly 2009, 2010.
- The weather is sunny most days, but often cloudy with a sign of psycho.
- The mood is calculated deceit.

Next, we're going to solidify just a few layers of where your story will take place - so please complete the next action step.

But remember that during this stage of the creation process, we're still Keeping It Simple Storyteller.

Setting – Action Step #1

What is your story's setting?

What is the backdrop that your story takes place?

Your characters must live inside your setting, and your readers want to escape there. That means you must begin to know at least a few layers of your setting to make sure you're on the right track to transport your readers into your storyworld.

Note: Your setting can include many layers such as geography, time, weather, mood, culture, and more.

Questions to help you begin solidifying your setting: What kind of setting can help communicate your story's chosen theme? Which setting could emotionally impact or physically challenge your protagonist while also playing to the strengths of your antagonist? What setting are you comfortable writing about that readers may find interesting?

Your setting

Describe your setting including at least 3 layers?

Stakes

The fourth and final element of your Story Heart is your stakes.

Readers demand reasons to stay on the page.

Because they're constantly asking themselves why they should care about your story.

That may be challenging to absorb, but we know it's true - because we know a weak story can propel readers to check out - or check Facebook - or check any of the countless outlets available to them with the swipe of a finger.

So it turns out the stakes are high for this last element inside your Story Heart.

Your stakes are the reason your protagonist has a Story Goal.

Simply put, your stakes are an Either-Or scenario for your protagonist such as:

- Life or death
- Freedom or imprisonment
- Love or loneliness

Basically, your stakes are the possible outcomes directly tied to your protagonist's Story Goal.

And just like the Story Goal of your protagonist, your stakes must also be clear-cut and unmistakable.

Don't think twice here though - because I've got an easy formula to help you clarify your stakes.

Stakes

Stakes Formula:

- “If (protagonist) does not (achieve protagonist’s Story Goal), then (antagonist) will (achieve antagonist’s Story Goal).”

Of course, you’ll need to fill in the blanks above, but this simple approach should help you drill down on the stakes inside your overarching storyline.

But let’s make sure we’re on the same page by considering a couple examples using the same stories we’ve been looking at.

Example #1

The Lord of the Rings

- If (Frodo Baggins) does not (destroy the ring),
- then (Sauron) will (use the ring to enslave Middle-earth).

Example #2

Gone Girl

- If (Nick Dunne) does not (prove his innocence), then (Amy Dunn) will (live free and clear while Nick’s in prison).

I’m hoping you see how your Stakes Formula can help you connect your protagonist, antagonist, and their respective Story Goals.

I’m also hoping you see how your stakes will reinforce the core reason your audience will continue to turn the page.

Now it’s time to use the next action step to solidify your stakes for your overarching storyline.

Stakes – Action Step #1

What's at stake inside your story?

Readers need a solid reason to stay inside your story, and your stakes give them a clear and critical reason to stick around to “The End.”

Now you must solidify your stakes which will act as your Either/Or scenario and compel readers to wait to learn the outcome of your story.

Note: If you don't find your stakes compelling enough, your readers may not either.

Stakes formula:

If (your protagonist) does not (achieve their Story Goal), then (your antagonist) will (achieve their Story Goal).

The Lord of the Rings

If (Frodo Baggins) does not (destroy the ring), then (Sauron will use the ring to enslave Middle-earth).

Gone Girl

If (Nick Dunne) does not (prove his innocence), then (Amy Dunne remains free while Nick goes to prison).

Your stakes

What are your story's stakes? (Please use the above stakes formula)

Story Summary

Well done, storyteller, you've focused the most important elements that will help you tell your overarching storyline.

Now you must work on further simplifying what you've created - because you've likely been asked, "What's your story about?"

We all get that question at some point, and your Story Summary will help you easily share what your story is about.

More importantly, your Story Summary will help you continue drilling down to the very core of your overarching storyline.

So you must see exactly what you've created so far - because then you'll be ready to take the next step.

But for now, please keep in mind that at this stage, your Story Summary does not have to sell your idea, story or book - we're still in the creation process so K.I.S.S.(!)

Okay, so there are a few main ingredients that will help you form your Story Summary.

First, your Story Summary should be just one sentence (or two tops).

Second, your Story Summary contains four essential components.

Fortunately, you've already created these four elements which include your protagonist, your antagonist, your setting and your stakes.

So now all you have to do is combine the elements within your Story Heart - in a specific order - to generate your Story Summary.

Story Summary

Your Story Summary =

- Your protagonist in a complicated situation
- +
- The core conflict of your story (related to antagonist's Story Goal)
- +
- At least one element of your setting (e.g. time, place, etc.)
- +
- The Story Goal of your protagonist

Again, you've already done the heavy lifting and created these necessary components.

Now it's just time to summarize them into one (or two) sentence(s).

Please use the following action step to create your Story Summary.

You'll also find a couple examples using the previous stories we've been breaking down.

Story Summary

Simplify your story into one sentence

Focus your story at its core.

Breaking down your story into its simplest form solidifies exactly what your story is all about, and it helps you share it with others (if desired).

Here is where you will take four components that you've already created and organize them in a specific order to generate your Story Summary.

Review the examples, then place your components into the provided formula.

Story Summary = Your protagonist in a complicated situation
+ the core conflict (related to antagonist's story goal)
+ one primary layer of the setting (time, place, etc.)
+ the story goal of your protagonist

Examples:

The Lord of the Rings A simple hobbit is hunted by a Dark Lord seeking a powerful ring, and the hobbit is forced to flee his peaceful Shire to destroy the ring and save Middle-earth.

Gone Girl A cheating husband is suspected of murder when his wife goes missing in the quaint town of North Carthage, Missouri, and he must uncover the truth to prove his innocence.

Please create your Story Summary using the formula in the next action step.

Chapter 2: Story Heart

Story Summary – Action Step #1

Protagonist in a
complicated situation -----

+

Core conflict (related to
antagonist's story goal) -----

+

One layer of setting (time,
place, etc.) -----

+

The story goal of
protagonist -----

=

Story Summary

Your Story Summary

Your story summary

What is your one-sentence Story Summary?

Request

Has the *Fast Draft Novel Writing Playbook* helped you create your story in a new way?

If so, would you be open to sharing this process with a fellow fiction writer? Maybe share a quick message via email, text, social media post, inside a writing group or any way you believe makes sense?

Maybe you'll be helping someone create the story they've always wanted to write?

- **Link** to Share: <https://davidvillalva.com/fast-draft>
 - Share on **Facebook**
 - Share on **Twitter**
 - Share on **LinkedIn**
-

Also, please subscribe at [DavidVillalva.com](https://davidvillalva.com) so we can stay connected and I can send you the latest on storytelling and more. :)

Chapter 3: Feedback Loop

Feedback Intro

Feedback will help you become the storyteller you're meant to be.

So inside this Chapter, we'll cover three areas surrounding feedback.

First, I'll share why I've found welcoming feedback can be one of the most important commitments you will ever make as a storyteller.

Second, I'm going to help you develop a process for gathering feedback - without you worrying about stuff like criticism - or someone stealing your idea and story.

Last, I'm going to share what you can do with feedback when it's good, challenging or just plain neutral.

But I'm also going to be up front with you right now because you deserve the truth.

Actually, I owe you the truth because it's my job to tell you what it takes to create a one-of-a-kind story worth taking to "The End."

And the truth is that this section about feedback may be the hardest piece for you to overcome.

Because inside this Chapter, you will feel challenged.

Or exposed.

Or scared.

Feedback Intro

You may even have a strong or unique opinion about the action steps within this Chapter - because they're going to ask you to do things that may be new to you.

Because the action step(s) inside this Chapter will ask you share elements of your story.

Yes, you're going to be asked to share some of your ideas - with people.

Yes, the humans sometimes scare me, too.

At my blog, more than once, I have self-diagnosed myself with a case of agoraphobia - which is a fear of crowded spaces or public places.

Also at my blog, I've claimed to be your friendly neighborhood alien dressed in a human costume - because I usually feel pretty darn uncomfortable when I'm interacting with the indigenous population on earth.

And for these reasons and more, I seek the least amount of human contact possible.

But let's take a deep breath together as we move into this next stage - because if a recovering agoraphobic, alien-human hybrid introvert like me can learn to request and process feedback - so can you. :)

Significance

Now would be a good time to share the first time I ever received feedback on one of my stories.

Many years ago, I'd been following a particular novelist who was also a story coach - and I saw that this guy offered critiques for a reasonable price.

So I invested in getting his feedback.

He provided a questionnaire which I used to reveal many details surrounding my story.

I disclosed my core characters. I gave him their histories. I offered him the heart of my story including my passion for storytelling.

He eventually sent me his feedback via email.

And that's when my first story coach offered me a refund.

He offered a full refund - or partial. He just wanted me to feel "whole."

He was generous enough to explain his rationale in his email. These lines are direct quotes:

"I couldn't tell you the main storyline."

"I can't tell you, with confidence, what anybody in this story was trying to accomplish."

"I can't coach what I can't comprehend."

Ouch.

After I read that story coach's email, I fell face first onto my bed.

I'll never forget that moment because I was devastated.

Significance

Because before I got his feedback, I thought that I'd finally figured out how to tell a story. Actually, I thought I was on the verge of hitting my story out of the park.

But then that story coach offered me a refund. He pretty much said that my story was a hopeless opus.

Of course, it's become much easier to take feedback since then - but I suppose most situations are easier after you've been offered a refund from someone you paid to help develop your story.

I bet you won't be able to top that one.

I pray you won't ever be able to touch that one.

But I want you to know that putting my work out there was worth it - because despite the devastation - his feedback was valuable.

Because that feedback told me there was more work to do. It told me I needed to further develop my ideas to make my story something special.

Of course, I wanted nothing but praise from that story coach.

Like everyone, I wanted cheers, high fives, and accolades.

Instead, I learned how I'd been writing in my rabbit hole for years without knowing my story would be considered a steaming pile of prose by a published professional.

So straight up, it turns out that story coach was spot on about my work-in-progress.

Obviously, I learned getting feedback can be tough - but I've also learned that a lack of feedback can really hold back a story.

Significance

Because all that time I spent writing alone without feedback, it stunted my creative growth and my isolation prevented my story from reaching it's full potential.

But beyond all of that, I actualized that the story coach's feedback wasn't about me personally - so you must begin to accept that the feedback you receive about your story won't be about you.

That may sound like a no-brainer right now, but it's easy to forget in the moment when you feel like all your hard work is being stepped on and trampled upon.

So it's critical that you process that while it's you who creates your story, your story also lives outside of you.

Because criticism and challenging feedback are not a reflection of you as a person.

** This is really important so please imprint this truth into your consciousness as we continue this Chapter. **

Yep, we're kind of jumping into some psychology stuff here, but again, I believe this core truth is significant and necessary to review.

Because you're a creative person and you may take criticism personally.

So I'm reinforcing that the right approach here will help you process feedback - both the good and not so good.

Getting feedback helped me make it this far - so I'm confident it will help you get where you want to go - and I bet you'll even get used to receiving feedback.

Significance

I've grown to the point where I typically ask for feedback on nearly everything.

I ask for feedback during the creation process of many special projects these days: stories, videos, blog posts and more. I even gathered feedback to develop the structure of *The Fast Draft Novel Writing Playbook*.

I talked to people for over a year before I determined how to position the chapters inside this process - because I wanted to make sure it helped people to the best of my abilities.

Then I gathered additional feedback after each chapter was completed - and then I delivered the materials to an initial group of storytellers.

And then I received another round of feedback which resulted in this version.

So again, if I can have my heart broken by feedback - and recover to the point that I'm comfy with regular feedback - I'm positive you can get there, too.

Yes, feedback is what's going to help your story reach its full potential - so I'm excited to see where your story will go with it.

As always, I just wanted to make sure we're on the same page - so that means my written monologue is now ending.

Its sole purpose was to make sure you considered why getting feedback will be so important and for you to consider how a healthy approach to feedback can help during the creation process.

Options

You have many paths to gather feedback.

Many of these routes will be rather obvious, but I'd like to make sure everything's on your radar - so let's get started.

Feedback Option #1: The people you know

Of course, these people should be humans who you completely trust - a lot of storytellers rely on friends and family - some even use their spouses.

I've read that Dean Koontz has his wife read all of his novels before they go to his editor - except that wouldn't work in my household because my wife doesn't love my genre - my kind of stories don't excite her.

That doesn't mean she doesn't support me, it's just that my wife's not the right person to give me feedback - so I want you be careful with your choice(s) here.

And keep in mind there can be other issues at play when you ask friends and family for feedback.

Because they may censor their feedback.

They do this because maybe they don't want to hurt your feelings - so they water down their words.

Or maybe they can't articulate what they like - or don't like about your story - because while they may fall into your potential audience - maybe they're not storytellers - so they may not have the expertise to help you even if they wanted to support you.

Options

Feedback Option #2: Your blog

I'm aware that everyone doesn't have a blog - so I'll make this one as quick as possible.

At your blog, you can either post your story idea or an excerpt of your story on the blog itself.

I've done something like this.

I tested a past story by sharing it with thousands of people.

I wrote about how I was trunking an entire draft of my work-in-progress - and then I published the trunked first chapter which captured the essence of my story.

Readers offered many positive comments while one person gave more challenging feedback.

Visit DavidVillalva.com/trunked-1st-chapter to read this example.

Feedback Option #3: Writers' Group (in-person)

In-person writers' groups typically offer opportunities where attendees can share who they are and what they're writing about.

I've tried this option as well by sharing my story summary with people at a writers group.

At one point, someone asked me if my story was finished because they wanted to check it out.

Small comments like that can let you know if you're on track.

Options

Feedback Option #4: Critique Websites and Online Writing Forums

There are a lot of these out there and they're mostly free - free in the sense that you're usually expected to critique someone else's story in exchange for your own opportunity to receive feedback.

Fortunately, giving other people feedback on their stories is actually a mini-feedback option inside of itself.

Because when you think about what may be challenged in other people's stories, it usually helps you learn faster and find clarity with what may be off inside your own story.

Either way, people have experienced success with critique websites and online writing forums - so they may be the right fit for you.

And they can come with additional benefits you weren't expecting.

Feedback Option #5: Facebook Writing Groups

You've probably already joined one of the countless Facebook writing groups out there.

Of course, all of these Facebook groups basically serve as online writers groups/forums - but they're on the Facebook platform - and they're worth singling out because they continue to grow in popularity - and they're easily accessible - especially when you're already visiting Facebook for other social reasons.

And many of these groups allow you to post your story or ideas.

Please just remember that it's common courtesy to support others with feedback if you're asking for feedback on your story. :)

Options

Feedback Option #6: Pay someone to evaluate your story

As you know, there are a lot of story coaches and editors out there.

And I contend the person you pay doesn't need to write novels to understand how storytelling works.

But they must be in the game.

That means they need to know stories through and through - so they could be an editor, writing coach, novelist, etc.

They just need to be equipped to offer directional insight that will resonate with the story you want to share with the world.

They must see how to better connect your ideas throughout a cohesive plotline.

They must be capable of guiding a story without compromising the writer's creativity.

Of course, I've gone this route, and you already know what happened - but it wasn't my final experience paying someone.

I have enjoyed working with the pros - but it hasn't always been affordable - so if you choose to pay someone, please just make sure you trust their expertise without question before making that first payment.

So now that we've reviewed the six feedback options, it's time for you to use the following action step to brainstorm which option(s) make the most sense for you.

Options – Action Step #1

Brainstorm your potential outreach opportunities within the 6 feedback options

The first step is to consider each of your paths to feedback.

Evaluate each option and list all potential resources that may be able to help your story.

Note: Even if you don't think you'll be comfortable using a specific option, complete the fields so you have them for future reference.

Questions to get you thinking about your options: Which option(s) can help your story evolve the fastest? Which option(s) will help you receive the most responses? What option(s) will help you get the quickest turnaround?

Your feedback options

Option #1: **The people you know**

Who are the people you trust that could help your story?

(e.g. One-on-one chats with local or long-distant family, friends, colleagues, etc.)

Options – Action Step #1

Your feedback options

Option #2: **Your blog**

Don't have a blog? What social media outlets could you use?

(e.g., Specifically, your personal profile on Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

Blog link showing how I shared my story: DavidVillalva.com/trunked-1st-chapter

Option #3: **Writers' group (in-person)**

What local writers' groups are available in your area?

(If unsure, conduct an online search using the words “Writers group” or “Writer meet-ups”

+ (your geographical location) to discover potential local gatherings.

Options – **Action Step #1**

Your feedback options

Option #4: Critique websites & online forums

What are 2 websites or forums you're willing to explore?

(Conduct another online search or start with this solid post from 2015 which shares 40 potential outlets: TheWriteLife.com/find-a-critique-partner)

Option #5: Join a Facebook Group

What are 2 groups where you can receive critiques?

If you already belong to one or multiple Facebook Groups, have you ever participated, contributed or brought value to the group? Have you ever shared any of your work?

Options – Action Step #1

Your feedback options

Option #6: Pay a pro story coach

Who have you followed long enough to know their value?

Note: This option must be carefully considered. Hiring someone without a referral or proper evaluation of value is not recommended.

Gather

Let's dive a little deeper before you actually go out and ask for feedback.

And I'd like to offer a line that one of my past writing mentors shared.

Jeff Goins said, "When you make it about them, they'll make it about you."

Of course, he also said you must be sincere - and I've discovered it often takes an open mind and giving approach to ask for and receive quality feedback.

I understand you're probably not looking for another therapy session here - I just want to share my experience when it comes to asking someone else for something that you want or need.

Because in addition to the actual feedback that you're requesting from people - you're also asking for their trust.

Because when you're gathering feedback, you must trust that the one providing feedback will not steal your idea. ;)

Come on, we both know plenty of storytellers worry about their ideas being stolen.

This is common, but you as a storyteller must remain uncommon in order to write "The End."

You must also find confidence that even if someone tried to steal your idea, they could never create it in the way that you will - because when your story is told by you, it is one-of-a-kind.

So please recognize that only you can craft and write your special story, and others cannot duplicate your uniqueness on the page.

Gather

Next, when it comes to gathering feedback, you must trust that people will be honest with you and tell you the truth.

Because as I previously mentioned, you do not want censored feedback.

It doesn't help you move forward when you're getting watered down words.

Also, you're trusting that they won't break your heart - because up to this point, you've put a piece of yourself into your working piece - and they're just getting to see a glimmer of what you've done to get there.

But that's your side in this situation. What about the people you're asking? What could they be thinking?

Most of the time, they're just hoping you don't take advantage of them.

Because they don't want to give you their time and energy in the form of feedback, and end up interacting with a defensive storyteller who dismisses their ideas without deliberation.

Most people will want to help you - they just want their feedback to be valued - so you must honor and trust their time invested in your story.

A few additional considerations remain when it comes to actually asking for feedback at this stage in the creation process - so let's touch on those starting now.

First, at this point, you should only be asking for feedback on your focused Story Heart and Story Summary.

Gather

Straight up, people are much more willing to take the time to give you feedback when it's just one focused idea vs. a mess of ideas - or a finished draft - or hundreds of pages.

Second, sometimes it makes sense to include a deadline with your feedback request. (Especially in situations that aren't face to face.)

But you really don't want your stuff out there forever anyway. Plus, if you don't politely suggest a deadline, people may not take your story seriously.

Third, proactively tell people the level of honesty you can handle.

Even if you know the person really well, give them your comfort rating when it comes to feedback.

Are you a 6 out of 10 on the blunt scale? Are you a 4? Definitely share what you're capable of receiving to help them help you.

Fourth, do your best to access as many feedback options as possible.

I encourage you to use a bare minimum of two options - because the more feedback you gather, the more info you'll have to find out what will make your story even better.

Last, thank people before you get their feedback. And thank them when they commit to give you feedback. And thank them once they actually give you feedback.

Be kind. Be open. Be grateful all the way.

That's enough preaching about feedback - because now it's time for you to explore the next series of action steps.

Gather – Action Step #1

Choose at least 2-4 options where you will ask for feedback

Keep in mind that you will only be asking for feedback on your Story Heart and/or Story Summary at this point.

Here is where you'll begin to discover how the market may view your story ideas, and you'll jumpstart the process of getting regular feedback.

Note: Choose at least one feedback option where you may not be totally comfortable. This exercise may challenge you, but this experience will help you develop a stronger story that better connects with readers.

Feedback Options: People you know, your blog, writers group, critique websites/online forums, Facebook group, pay a story coach.

Your feedback options

Which 2-4 options will you use to gather more feedback to further develop your story?

Gather – Action Step #2

Ask for feedback

Remember, you are only asking for feedback on your Story Heart and/or Story Summary.

Of course, your request will differ if it's in person or online. If you're sharing in person, share your Story Summary and ask an open ended question. Wait to drill down on more focused questions after they've shared their initial answer.

Also, please remember how you're asking people to give you their time and energy - so please be considerate of how much information you provide when asking for their feedback.

Additional considerations:

- Your ask should be clear and concise.
- Suggest a deadline, if appropriate.
- Share your comfort level with feedback such as - "Please understand that I'm a 7 out of 10 on the rip-my-heart-out-with-honesty scale."
- Always thank the person, even if their feedback opposes your viewpoint.
- Take quality notes if receiving feedback in person.

Gather – Action Step #2

Your feedback options

Write a draft of how you will ask for feedback. Once completed, please use the below verbiage to actually ask for feedback.

(Also include any specific follow up questions you may have for people about your story.)

Gather – Action Step #3

What was the feedback?

Yes, feedback can be rough and tough on this storytelling turf.

So take some time (if necessary) to process the feedback so you can make a grounded decision about your story.

Then continue the chapter once the proper excitement or grieving period has passed. ;)

Your feedback options

Summarize the feedback you received.

Close

Welcome back to the facts about feedback.

It appears you're still intact after seeking, receiving, and processing feedback. Well done.

Because you're still here - and it looks like your mind and heart have survived the experience.

If it helps at all, please recognize that you've barely touched the surface of the market - and that means the minimal feedback you've received thus far hasn't destined your story one way or another.

It's just given you some good experience and initial direction - because the market will never own your story - because you must always recognize that only you can tell your one-of-a-kind story.

And please remember the feedback is never about you - the feedback is about your story.

But now I feel compelled to share that I took a few days to process the refund that my first story coach offered me.

So no worries if you took some time on your end.

But once you've distanced yourself from the personal side of what people said about your story, I recommend you start analyzing that feedback.

For instance, did most people challenge or focus on one particular element that you hadn't considered? Did someone share something that resonated with you?

Close

Just get all of the feedback organized, look at everything and see how it all fits inside your theme, your Story Idea and your Story Summary.

Is the feedback capable of changing the story you want to tell?

Is the feedback worthy of changing the message you want to share?

Is the feedback evolving the story and messaging into something new and original?

Here's where you must be honest with yourself - because you need to decide what to do and how to keep moving forward in the process.

And I'm hoping you thanked the people all around - because that recommendation is going to help you right now.

Because next, I recommend you get more feedback - and if possible - I recommend you get more feedback from the same people who helped you before.

But here's where things change a bit. Here's where you share what you actually did with the feedback that they gave you.

Did someone suggest that you improve the setting? Did someone mention your antagonist needed additional layers of deceit or darkness?

Well, I recommend you go back to the same people and share how you processed their feedback. Even if you didn't use it, share how you at least considered it.

Because revisiting the people who gave you feedback helps everyone become part of the creation process.

Close

Most people enjoy creating - and they find happiness in other people taking their ideas into account.

And straight up, your Feedback Loop would be a pretty weak loop if it didn't make a full circle and re-connect with its beginning.

So please solidify the trust with the people who helped you - because maybe they'll be open to helping you again throughout your current storytelling journey?

Plus, people may be more comfortable the second time around and share new feedback that helps you take your story to another level?

Maybe one of their ideas will spawn your own idea and that's what becomes the home run element inside your entire story?

Obviously, you're the storyteller from beginning to ending - and it's your creation so you make the final decision on everything.

But if you see similar feedback coming from more than one direction on a particular element, that typically means it's something that should be considered.

Now please use the following action steps to put the finishing touches on your Feedback Loop to make sure it connects and resonates with you all around.

Close – Action Step #1

Analyze the feedback and determine what you should apply to your story

Determine which suggestions make sense for your story.

Of course, look for any trends inside the feedback, and determine if implementing them would change the story you want to tell.

Remember: Feedback is supposed to help improve and refine your story - but you're the creative director - so only you can ultimately decide how to move forward with your story.

Red Flag Note: If you don't have any contrasting, intriguing or helpful feedback, then it likely means you need more feedback. If this is the case, please tap into more feedback options.

Your feedback options

What trends do you see that may help your story?

What feedback will you integrate into your story?

Close – Action Step #2

Solidify your story choices and share it with your feedback outlets

Now it's time to close the loop with the people willing to give you their time. Restate your Story Summary and then draft how you will share it with the people who originally gave you feedback.

Short example of closing the loop with a friend via text: “Hey there, I just wanted to follow up regarding the solid feedback you provided regarding my story (a few days ago). I considered all of your suggestions and thought about the different ways to make my story better. After looking at everything, I decided to continue moving forward with the story summary below. What do you think? And thanks - assuming you're open to sharing your thoughts again! :)”

Your feedback options

Restate your Story Summary after integrating the feedback.

(If necessary, return to your Story Heart and Story Summary Action Steps for help.)

Close – Action Step #2

Your feedback options

Write a draft of how you will share your Story Summary.

(Then share your Story Summary and keep refining it until you're satisfied.)

Chapter 4: Cast of Characters

Character Intro

Welcome back - now let's meet, greet, and embrace your cast of characters.

Because your characters act as the core communicators of your story.

Because your audience will live your story through your characters - and since your characters come to life through your creative consciousness - that means you must know your characters on levels your audience cannot fathom.

Fortunately, all you have to do is properly transfer your characters from your creative mind to the page.

And you must direct your characters with precision throughout your story to insure they maintain the message you want to share with the world.

Of course, all storytellers have opinions about people - and their stories express these opinions.

Even if it's on a subconscious level, storytellers end up offering their opinions about people through the characters they integrate into their stories.

So instead of that truth being buried in the back of your mind, I'd like you to try and keep it at the forefront of your psyche.

Because you may have to make decisions based on what's best for your readers vs. your opinions about people (good or bad).

Character Intro

But the most important thing I want to show you inside this chapter is how to create and cast characters that connect with readers - internally and externally.

Remember - your audience wants to escape their current environment and enter your story - and they want to be entertained - so you must ensure your characters accomplish this task while also carrying your message.

So I'll share multiple approaches to create and develop your characters throughout this chapter.

We'll also brainstorm and add layers of depth to your characters using straightforward exercises.

And you'll be challenged to consider some of the common character types you should cast.

Yes, we're going to cover a good amount of character development topics here - but let's stop with the intros and jump into the first approach on the next page.

Creation

Several critical aspects should be recognized when breathing life into your characters on the page.

We're going to review each of these aspects right now - and regardless of whether they're obvious or new to you - I'm requesting you thoroughly consider all of these aspects while casting your characters.

First, all characters must make first impressions.

Think about when you first meet someone in real life. I bet they make a first impression? There's often one thing or a specific something that you remember about them, right?

Maybe their clothing style - or linguistic delivery - or big smile - or lack of smile?

Each person you meet leaves you with a different and unique impression - so remember your characters must do the same when entering your story.

Second, your story will have major and minor characters - but regardless of how major or minor their roles are to the story - both major and minor characters are always important - and they're often equally important to the scenes they share.

Because all characters influence each other inside your story.

And they all influence your reader's experience - so that means no character gets left behind.

So every character deserves some degree of importance - at least in your mind, the storyteller's mind.

Creation

Third, all characters - major and minor - have goals and stakes.

Of course, major characters have overarching story goals and stakes, but even minor characters who appear in just one scene will want something, too.

Because that's how real life works. Every person - real or not - wants something - and the outcome of getting it (or not getting it) affects them.

Fourth, your characters will be made up of the most dramatic moments of their lives.

Let's put that another way, you will only share your characters' most dramatic moments inside your story.

Of course, it's your job to know all of the mundane and ordinary things about your characters, but it's also your duty as the storyteller to leave out all of those potentially tedious moments from your story to protect readers from boredom.

Fifth, there are a few simple ways you'll get to know your characters and they're pretty similar to how you get to know people in your everyday real life.

To begin with, you get to know people by what they do. Actions always say a lot about someone's character.

Next, you observe what they say. Actual words speak volumes about character.

And then there's also what other people say about them - because other people's words say a lot about their character.

Creation

And with characters on the page, you discover what they think and how they think.

Yes, you have the luxury of entering your characters' heads and evaluating what they think - and how they think.

That's a pretty wicked gift for a storyteller to wield.

Sixth, all characters have dark truths living inside them.

Dark truths are secrets that your characters do not want anyone else to see. They could even be inner demons and things the character isn't aware of.

And the last thing your characters want to do is view their dark truths - or have another character put their dark truths in front of them.

These dark truths can be goldmines for storytellers.

Because when you know your characters' dark truths - and you can expose those dark truths inside your story - all of your characters will become more memorable, impactful, and entertaining.

Seventh (and last), all characters inside your story will experience some type of change or evolution.

They start out one way and end a different way.

This will be much more pronounced for your major characters - but it will also be true for minor characters.

Even the waiter who does nothing but serve coffee to your protagonist will experience change.

Creation

For instance, the waiter may be frowning when he pours coffee for your protagonist, but maybe your protagonist cracks a joke so the waiter leaves smiling.

Or the waiter leaves annoyed because the joke didn't land.

Either way, every character - major or minor - should always experience transformation - big or small.

Because that's how real life works. Our experiences shape our actions and reactions from moment to moment.

Okay, now you know the critical aspects you should consider when it comes to your characters.

Now please review the character creation cheat sheet on the next page.

7 Quick Tips to Consider When Creating Characters

There are many layers and aspects to consider when creating characters on the page. These quick tips will help you jumpstart and strengthen your characters.

1) All characters must make first impressions.

First impressions compel you to create unique traits and attributes for each character. First impressions also help readers differentiate your characters.

2) All characters bring value to the page.

All characters influence each other and the reader's experience. So all characters must be given depth regardless of how major or minor a character's role may be.

3) All characters have goals and stakes.

All characters, real or fictional, major or minor, want something in life. And if they get what they want or do not, it affects them.

4) Characters are made up of dramatic moments.

You must leave out all of their mundane, ordinary, and boring parts because readers only want their most dramatic, extraordinary, and exciting moments.

5) Get to know your characters through observations.

Get to know your characters by observing: **a)** What they do. **b)** What they say. **c)** What other people say about them. **d)** What they think.

6) All characters have dark truths.

Dark truths are the secrets living inside your characters that they don't want to see or share. These dark truths must be exposed to your characters (and readers).

7) All characters experience change.

All characters start one way and finish another way. This will be greatly pronounced for major characters, but it must also be true for minor characters.

Roles

Inside different genres, there are typically common characters who fulfill specific roles.

And I want to help you discover your common character roles inside your story's genre.

That means you should know your genre.

Many storytellers find it challenging to place their one-of-a-kind story inside one genre - but we will do exactly that for this exercise, and ultimately, for the sake of your story.

Your story can house many elements from many genres - but there will be one overarching genre.

And only you can know and choose it.

Please visit this link for a quick hit review of genres:

- wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_writing_genres

Okay, now let's go through a few of the common character roles so you'll know what to look for.

To begin, we all know stories must have a protagonist roles and an antagonist role - pretty obvious so no need to drill down there.

But on top of that, there's often a victim role.

This role relates to someone who has to be saved.

Maybe it's the princess - or maybe a loved one being held for ransom.

But the victim role is often the driving force behind the protagonist's mission to accomplish their story goal.

Roles

Next, there's usually a mentor role.

For most of *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo has Gandalf - and Batman usually has his butler, Alfred.

Then there's the sidekick role.

Frodo has Samwise. Batman typically has Robin but in *The Dark Knight* trilogy, Batman has Lucius Fox at Wayne Enterprises.

Also, there can be other subtle roles based on the genre.

For example, romance stories will always have a love interest role - and often, this role is intertwined with the victim role.

There can also be a secondary or sleeper antagonist role.

The Lord of the Rings had a few secondary antagonists with Saruman serving as one example. *The Dark Knight* (film) had Harvey Dent who became Two-Face.

There can also be a skeptic role.

That's someone who showcases the stakes - and almost mirrors the sidekick role - and challenges the theme at almost every turn.

So those examples are the most common character roles that I've identified in most genres. Just keep in mind that some characters can have overlapping roles.

Most important is that you find out which roles may be best for the kind of story you're creating - and now you'll explore your potential common characters inside the following action step.

Roles – Action Step #1

Brainstorm the common character roles inside stories of your genre

One of the best ways to focus your cast of characters is to look at common character roles.

Begin by looking at your favorite stories inside your genre and identify the common character roles appearing in those stories.

Note: Every story may not have each common character role. Also, each character may not fall under one exact role and some characters may have overlapping roles. Just do your best to place characters from your favorites stories under the most applicable roles.

Here is a quick snapshot of some of the most common character roles:

- **Protagonist** role
- **Secondary Protagonist** role
- **Victim** role
- **Sidekick** role
- **Love Interest** role
- **Antagonist** role
- **Secondary/Sleeper Antagonist** role
- **Mentor** role
- **Skeptic** role

Chapter 4: Cast of Characters

Roles – Action Step #1

Your common characters

List 2 stories (novels or films) inside your genre that are similar to the kind of story you want to write

Identify, list, and briefly describe the 2 protagonist roles inside each of your 2 favorite stories

Identify, list, and briefly describe the 2 antagonist roles inside each of your 2 favorite stories

Roles – Action Step #1

Your common characters

Identify, list, and briefly describe the 2 victim roles inside each of your 2 favorite stories

Identify, list, and briefly describe the 2 mentor roles inside each of your 2 favorite stories

Identify, list, and briefly describe the 2 sidekick roles inside each of your 2 favorite stories

Chapter 4: Cast of Characters

Roles – Action Step #1

Your common characters

Identify, list, and briefly describe the 2 skeptic roles inside each of your 2 favorite stories

Identify, list, and briefly describe the 2 love interest roles inside each of your 2 favorite stories (if applicable)

Identify, list, and briefly describe any additional roles inside each of your 2 favorite stories

(Secondary/sleeper protagonists or antagonists or any other possible roles)

Backstory

Now it's time to discover new and surprising elements about your characters.

And I've found the most efficient route to deeply connect with your characters is through the fleshing out of their pasts.

I'm referring to writing thorough backstories.

Except I didn't see the value in writing backstories until one of my storytelling coaches, Kristen Lamb, insisted I try it.

And it was through this process that I discovered the most important moments in my characters' lives.

Backstories showed me their dark truths - and those important moments and dark truths helped me fill in plot holes when outlining my scenes.

So please know that the work you put in here will help you when it comes to outlining your scenes later.

But backstory will help you in other ways, too.

Backstories save you time by discovering and developing your characters before writing their stories.

Backstories empower you with deep knowledge about your characters - so you don't have to get to know them while writing an entire draft.

Knowing a character's backstory before writing the story can be like dating before tying the knot.

You know what you're getting yourself into prior to marriage.

Backstory

Not knowing a character's backstory before writing their story is like a blind date that leads to awkward vows and regrettable decisions.

But writing backstories doesn't mean your characters won't surprise you during the creation process - it's just that you'll better understand what you're getting yourself into with them.

And backstory is less about what happened to your characters - and more about what it means to your characters.

I'll repeat that last line due to its importance... Backstory is less about what happened to your characters and more about what it means to your characters.

And meaning is shaped by the memories of your characters - so knowing their backstories equips you with more of their memories which will shape their actions in believable ways.

Come on, that's how we experience our own lives anyway, right?

We look at what we did inside our past choices - we look at the results from those past choices - and all of these choices help us plan or decide our next move(s) and how we'll make new decisions.

Because you must know why and how your characters are wired. Otherwise, how can you clearly show readers how they think and why they act the way they do?

So if you can tap into the right memories of your characters, then you'll greatly improve your chances of making readers believe in your make-believe characters.

Okay, now it's time for you to start connecting it all - so please complete the following action step to begin writing your backstories.

Backstory – Action Step #1

Write backstories for each of your common character roles listed in the previous action step (on pages 100-103)

Now that you have an idea of the common character roles you need in your story, it's time to mold and develop these characters.

Create your own cast of characters using each of the common character roles diagnosed in the previous action step and write their backstories.

You can also jumpstart your characters using the character creation cheat sheet (on page 99).

Note: All common characters - both major and minor - need backstories. 10-20 pages of backstory for major characters is not unusual. Also, due to the extensive length of backstories, no space to write your answers is included inside this action step. Please use a separate word processing application to write your full backstories for each common character role.

Additional recommendation: Do not focus on the names of your characters. Of course, a name will be important to the story (and character) but securing a character's name can often slow the creation process and even prevent backstories from being written. Please simply focus on creating your characters and writing their backstories - and trust that you'll be able to assign the right name(s) once you've done the most important work related to creating your characters.

Your character backstories

Please use a separate word processing application to write backstories for your cast of characters

Connections

Well done, you should now have some initial backstories for your common characters.

And now that you have an initial foundation in place, I want to share a couple more creation approaches that may help you.

Because right now, you may be really excited about what you've created so far - and you should be - because you're making progress.

But maybe you aren't completely satisfied with your backstories.

Either way, here's where your storytelling abilities will be once again challenged.

Because I believe you must continue to push yourself with your story - because you need to be better than the average storytellers out there.

You need to take second, third, and more runs to create something special.

You must stay committed to creating characters that impact readers beyond the final page.

So you must now go deeper and darker with your characters' backstories.

But what does that mean?

It means that any time you're wondering if you've gone too deep - go deeper.

It means that any time you think you've gone too dark - go darker.

Connections

It means that going deeper and darker will help you find the deep and dark truths inside the memories of your characters.

Because you must know your characters better than your readers could ever imagine.

So your readers may end up seeing just one to five percent of the work you put into your characters' backstories.

But you'll need all one-hundred percent of those character backstories to discover what will help your story remain one-of-a-kind and special from beginning to end.

My last point I'd like to share here is that some characters inside your story should be connected through their backstories in some way - kind of like the six degrees of Kevin Bacon thing.

Because when characters are closely connected or their pasts are related throughout their backstories, a tighter storyline is created.

Maybe you're thinking that having these connections will be too obvious or boring for your readers?

It appears that's not the case - assuming the storyteller does their job.

Just look at the original *Star Wars* movies.

Luke seems to connect with Obi Wan by chance - but it turns out Obi Wan knew Luke's father?

Most movie goers didn't seem to scrutinize those fortuitous circumstances - or they looked past it all due to a love for the story.

Connections

And then in *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*, Darth Vader ends up being revealed as Luke Skywalker's father.

And then in the next *Star Wars* movie (*Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*), Leia ends up being Luke's sister.

That's quite the friendly and family affair of connections from flick to flick.

Of course, none of these connections were revealed in the beginning - but those character connections created compelling storylines.

And most people didn't see them coming.

But few people would say they didn't work.

And it seems just a handful of people didn't watch those movies over - and over - and over again.

That's why I want you to create a couple close character connections.

So here's where I challenge you to return to your backstories to go deeper and darker - and create character connections.

Now please complete the following action step.

Connections - Action Step #1

Take another run at the backstories of your characters

Now that you have written backstories for your common characters, you must push yourself.

You can immediately strengthen backstories by going deeper and darker. Going deeper means reaching farther back in time or digging into specific dramatic moments that shaped core pieces of your characters. Going darker means amplifying or further dramatizing the most important and influential backstory moments.

Another way to improve your backstories is to create connections between your characters. Forming connections means intertwining character backstories which will help you provide twists and surprises to readers (and characters). Many storytellers believe these connections become obvious to readers, but the truth is that readers still want and expect them.

Note: Set yourself apart from the average storytellers and strengthen your characters right here, right now.

Your backstory connections

List your favorite backstory moment that comes to mind for each of your common characters? (Please access your backstories in your separate word processor as needed)

Connections - **Action Step #1**

Evolve your favorite backstory moments that you just reviewed by going deeper and darker inside each of those moments (Please use a separate word processor to enhance and supplement your original backstories)

List 2-5 possible connections you may be able to create between two common characters (Look to your favorite stories if needed)

Choose 1 connection and add it to the backstories of 2 common characters (Brainstorm below and expand inside your original backstories inside a separate work processing application)

Feedback

Hats off to you - because you've done the groundwork to prepare a strong cast of characters.

It seems you trust that all of this upfront work will pay off when it's time to write your story.

And that day is coming soon - I promise.

You've already done more foundation building than countless storytellers out there - so don't be shy when it comes to giving yourself some credit at this point.

You're doing the work to create a one-of-a-kind story that only you can transcribe onto the page.

Except I want you to push yourself one more time before we finish up this chapter - because I want you to run your favorite backstory highlights by your Feedback Loop.

I want you to pick some of your favorite memories, moments, and scenarios from your characters' backstories and share them with your Feedback Loop.

Yes, get more feedback from the humans and absorb their criticism like a proud storyteller.

Maybe you'll share a character's deepest memory or maybe their darkest truth?

Maybe it's the most obvious connection you created between two characters?

Maybe you package a few characters and share them?

Feedback

No matter what, you should be open to hearing what other people think about your cast of characters.

Maybe their feedback will be partially critical.

Maybe it will be mostly positive.

Maybe it won't change anything.

Either way, I just want you to keep putting yourself out there and I want to encourage you to keep looking for feedback.

And I compel you to keep your mind open to anything that will improve your story.

Now please jump into the following action step and when you're done, move onto the next chapter.

Feedback – Action Step #1

Share your core characters or character connections with 1-2 feedback options

You must continue to access your Feedback Loop to help you discover areas to improve - while also getting used to the varying opinions of the market.

So even if it's your favorite character elements packaged into one clear statement, you must challenge yourself to share your characters in some capacity.

Keep in mind: Silence often means indifference. Family and friends don't want to hurt you - so honest feedback often hurts.

Final notes and recommendations: Use your previous process from the Feedback Loop to complete this action step. Also, primarily focus on your protagonist and antagonist inside your Feedback Loop right now because those two common characters will make or break your story.

Your character feedback

What dark truth(s) are you most excited about inside your protagonist's and/or antagonist's backstories?

Feedback – Action Step #1

Your character feedback

Write one clear and concise statement and request feedback summarizing your protagonist's and/or antagonist's dark truths

Summarize the feedback you received (Here or in a word processor)

What feedback will you implement and how will you move forward with your character(s)? (Rewrite your backstories as needed)

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

Parts

Welcome back storyteller, all of your upfront work will continue to pay off inside this chapter.

Because you're getting much closer to actually writing your draft.

And here's where you're actually going to start outlining your story.

And inside this chapter, I'm going to show you a framework that will hold your story together and give readers what they want and need from beginning to end.

Because it's time to examine the plot structure living inside bestselling novels.

Yes, this is the same structure that novelists (and screenwriters) have been using for decades - and as a result, it's the same structure that readers (and movie goers) expect to receive when consuming their fiction (and films).

Of course, I'm not making this stuff up. Everything I show you in this chapter is based on many master storytellers I've studied - from Syd Field's *Screenplay* - to James Scott Bell's *Plot & Structure* - to Larry Brooks *Story Engineering* - to many more books.

Fortunately, you've already studied master storytellers on your end as well.

I'm referring to the novels you've read (and movies you've watched).

Parts

Of course, you've devoured some novels - so you've already experienced this proven framework play out inside written stories - but now we're going to take it beyond the subconscious level of awareness.

And it turns out that plot structure can become a compelling analytical tool for you to use during the creation process of your own story.

So first, we'll conduct a broad overview of plot structure's 4 Parts to begin this chapter.

Then we'll look at each of the seven plot milestones - from the beginning's Hook to the ending's Climax.

And then I'll share strategies that will help you take the plot structure and apply it to the story you want to tell.

Please just keep in mind that outlining is not an exact science.

Yes, the plot structure framework that I show you here is proven - it's valid - it's verifiable - but I just want you to be aware that outlining can often be a wildly creative and organic process of trial and error.

Fortunately, I'm going to help you reduce the errors and save you a lot of time - but in the end - I'm going to ask you to rely on your own unique creativity to outline the story you want to share with the world.

That's the end of this irregularly scheduled episode of outlining insight - so assuming you're ready to get started, please make sure you watch the Plot Overview video at the link below before beginning the action steps beginning on the next page.

Plot Overview video link: DavidVillalva.com/Plot-Overview

Parts – Action Step #1

Study Parts 1-4 by looking at your favorite story inside your genre

Plot structure begins with the 4 Parts shown below (and in “The Storytelling Blueprint”) - and it’s critical you have a basic understanding of the different parts before we move onto the plot milestones inside each of the 4 Parts.

That means it’s time to study each of the 4 Parts by looking at your favorite story inside your genre (novel or film) - and then brainstorm the key elements and moments that occur in each of the 4 Parts.

Note: Simply do your best to answer the questions. You will not be graded - but it’s extremely helpful to explore how the parts work inside your favorite story.

PART 1: Status Quo a.k.a. Setup: Core characters, Setting, Stakes, and story questions are established. Protagonist’s Story Goal is launched at end of Part 1.

PART 2: Reactivity a.k.a. Caution: Protagonist reacts to launched Story Goal with uncertainty while seeking help, learning new info and gaining experience.

PART 3: Proactivity a.k.a. Charge: Protagonist proactively attacks the Story Goal while obtaining additional experience, knowledge and maturity to achieve the Story Goal.

PART 4: Lucidity a.k.a. Resolution: Protagonist sees what’s necessary to resolve Story Goal, uses Parts 1-3 experience to conclude the story and become the hero.

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

Parts – **Action Step #1**

Your 4 parts overview

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & study its

Part 1: Status Quo a.k.a. Setup (1% - 25%)

Which common characters/roles are introduced?

List any elements of setting, general stakes, and story questions that you noticed being introduced.

Identify and list the Story Goal launched for the protagonist.

(This typically occurs between the 20% to 25% range in the story.)

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

Parts – Action Step #1

Your 4 parts overview

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & study its

Part 2: Reactivity a.k.a. Caution (26% - 50%)

How does the protagonist react to the launched Story Goal?

List any challenges and hurdles the protagonist had to overcome to keep moving forward inside Part 2.

What happens directly at the end of Part 2's Reactivity that helps the protagonist transition into Part 3's Proactivity?

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

Parts – Action Step #1

Your 4 parts overview

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & study its

Part 3: Proactivity a.k.a. Charge (51% - 75%)

How does the protagonist begin attacking the Story Goal?

List any critical elements or moments that the protagonist experienced which impacted you as a reader during Part 3.

What happens directly at the end of Part 3's Proactivity that helps the protagonist transition into Part 4's Lucidity?

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

Parts – Action Step #1

Your 4 parts overview

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & study its

Part 4: Lucidity a.k.a. Resolution (76% - 100%)

How does the protagonist finally resolve the Story Goal?

How are the common characters/roles impacted by the protagonist's resolution to the Story Goal?

List any elements inside your favorite story that you may want to use inside your own story.

Milestones

Let's now drill down further on the plot structure living inside best-selling novels.

Because there are seven Plot Milestones that will represent seven of the most significant moments in your story.

And the best way to show you these plot milestones is a video to illustrate the connections and meanings of each milestone.

So please watch the video at the following link and then move onto the following action steps.

Plot Milestones video link: DavidVillalva.com/Plot-Milestones

Milestones – Action Step #1

Study the 7 Plot Milestones by looking at your favorite story inside your genre

Plot milestones are the most pivotal, game-changing moments for your protagonist because they alter the course of the overarching plotline.

So once again, it's critical that you have a basic understanding of how they work, where they occur, and how they must impact your story - and that means it's time to study each of the 7 Plot Milestones by once again looking at your favorite story inside your genre (novel or movie).

Note: The 7 Plot Milestones are summarized below (and in the provided downloadable “Plot Milestones Summary with Examples” document).

Potential resources: K.M. Weiland's amazing Story Structure Database: www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/story-structures/ and this website may summarize your story: www.shmoop.com/bestsellers/

SEIZE a.k.a. Hook (1%): Captures attention with curiosity or bold question.

STORY GOAL LAUNCH a.k.a. 1st Plot Point (20-25%): Sets into motion the protagonist's one, unshakeable Story Goal.

FACE TIME a.k.a. 1st Pinch (37-38%): Protagonist meets antagonist face to face, and the antagonist's true threat is made clearly visible.

STORY GOAL ILLUMINATION a.k.a. Midpoint (50%): Twist that empowers the protagonist from reacting to attacking the Story Goal.

FACE TIME 2.0 a.k.a. 2nd Pinch (62-63%): Protagonist again meets antagonist face to face, and the antagonist's true, elevated danger is once again on full display.

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

STORY GOAL ENLIGHTENMENT a.k.a. 2nd Plot Point (75%): Protagonist grasps a revelation (one final, missing piece) to go and resolve the Story Goal.

FACE TIME APEX a.k.a. Climax (90%): Protagonist and antagonist meet face to face during one final, epic confrontation where the Story Goal is concluded.

Milestones – Action Step #1

Your plot milestones

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & locate its
SEIZE a.k.a. Hook (Found at the 1% marker)

What is the actual Seize event at the beginning of your favorite story?

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & locate its
STORY GOAL LAUNCH a.k.a. 1st Plot Point (Around 20-25% marker)

What is the actual Story Goal Launch moment? What approximate percentage does it occur in the story?

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

Milestones – Action Step #1

Your plot milestones

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & locate its
FACE TIME a.k.a. 1st Pinch Point (Around 37-38% marker)

**What is the first Face Time moment? What approximate percentage
does it occur in the story?**

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & locate its
STORY GOAL ILLUMINATION a.k.a. Midpoint (Around 50% marker)

**What is the actual Story Goal Illumination moment? What approximate
percentage does it occur in the story?**

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

Milestones – Action Step #1

Your plot milestones

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & locate its
FACE TIME 2.0 a.k.a. 2nd Pinch Point (Around 62-63% marker

**What is the second Face Time moment? What approximate percentage
does it occur in the story?**

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & locate its
STORY GOAL ENLIGHTENMENT a.k.a. 2nd Plot Point (Around 75%)

**What is the Story Goal Enlightenment moment? What approximate
percentage does it occur in the story?**

Chapter 5: Plot Blueprint

Milestones – Action Step #1

Your plot milestones

Look at your favorite story (inside your genre) & locate its

FACE TIME APEX a.k.a. Climax (Around 90% marker)

What is the final Face Time moment? What approximate percentage does it occur in the story?

Approaches

Now you've seen how plot structure is built front beginning to end.

And I'm hoping that you're beginning to grasp it - because the goal is for you to eventually identify the plot milestones in every novel you read or movie you absorb.

But right now, let's just begin to brainstorm your outline so you start thinking about different ways you can create your overarching plotline.

So we'll review a few approaches to help you jumpstart the outlining process.

Keep in mind, we're going to dive deeper into crafting every scene in your outline during the next chapter, but we'll ease into the process by first considering how to approach your outline.

Because as I previously mentioned, creating an outline can be a trial and error experience so the more practice you have - the better everything will turn out - so let's review three approaches.

First, you can jumpstart your outline by creating bookends for the story you want to tell.

That means you simply focus on three important plot milestones inside plot structure - and these three plot milestones would be your Hook, your Story Goal Launch and your Climax.

That means you'd simply brainstorm how you'll launch your story to Hook the reader - then you'll focus on your protagonist's overarching Story Goal - and then you'll come up with a solid Climax.

Approaches

Because if you can create at least these three milestones, you've basically create bookends for the story that you want to tell.

And you will have created an exterior shell because you will know where your protagonist starts and where your protagonist will end.

So you will know who your protagonist is at the onset and who your protagonist must become by the end - and that character evolution must show a clear transformation while entertaining readers.

Second, focus on the primary conflict between your protagonist and your antagonist.

This approach also focuses on three plot milestones - but you will focus on the three plot milestones where your protagonist and antagonist must meet inside plot structure.

These plot milestones would be your three Face Time moments also known as the 1st Pinch Point, 2nd Pinch Point, and the Climax.

Remember your antagonist drives the primary conflict in the story - so getting a head start on these milestones will help support all of the primary conflict you will wield to entertain readers.

Third, this last approach is the hardest one but it can be extremely helpful.

Although, this last approach is the one I recommend most because I've seen people have the most success with it.

Okay, so you can jumpstart your outline by taking all of the plot points from your favorite story inside your genre - and then re-invent them.

Approaches – Action Step #1

Choose one plotting approach to start outlining your story

It's time to start brainstorming your Plot Milestones and begin thinking about different ways you can create your overarching plotline.

So please create at least 3 Plot Milestones to begin solidifying your Plot Structure. (Keep in mind that every scene and Plot Milestone will be outlined in the next chapter).

Choose 1 of these 3 recommended plotting approaches (or your own plotting approach) to jumpstart the outlining process.

1. Create bookends for the story you want to tell.

Focus on the Hook, your Story Goal Launch, and your Climax. Brainstorm how you'll launch your story and Hook the reader, focus on your protagonist's overarching Story Goal, and come up with a cool Climax.

2. Create the primary conflict between your protagonist and antagonist.

Focus on the 3 FACE TIME Plot Milestones including the 1st Pinch Point, 2nd Pinch Point, and Climax. Remember that your antagonist drives the primary conflict in the story so securing these moments will greatly support the rest of your story.

Note: If you choose this 2nd option to begin outlining your story, you should check out the 3 Ways to Create a Villain Infographic at DavidVillalva.com/create-a-villain-infographic. This infographic showcases the primary conflict inside two popular stories.

3. Re-invent the 7 Plot Milestones from your favorite story inside your genre. (This plotting approach is the most strongly recommended option.)

Using Action Step #1 on pages 125-130, take those Plot Milestones and position your characters and setting inside each of them. Then push yourself to evolve and transform these milestones into your own unique moments.

Approaches – Action Step #1

Your plotting approaches

Regardless of which plotting approach you chose, summarize your 3-7 plot milestones below (Use a separate word processor if you exceed the limited space below.)

Approaches – Action Step #2

Share your new plot milestones with at least one Feedback Loop option

It's always a good idea to get feedback throughout the creation process.

So please access at least one of your Feedback Loop options and discover how your potential audience may react to your story.

Your plotting feedback

What feedback did you receive regarding your new plot milestones?

Approaches – Action Step #2

Your plotting feedback

What feedback can you apply to improve your story?

What new ideas did the feedback help you generate? Or did they say your story sounded similar to another popular story? If so, can you pull additional ideas from that popular story?

Chapter 6: Scene Blueprint

Overview

At this point, you should be much more comfortable with plot structure.

Specifically, you've participated in studying the 4 Parts and 7 major Plot Milestones inside plot structure.

Of course, I'm fully aware that this material can be tough to grasp - please just know that if you made it this far, the chances are you're actually going to finish your story.

I mean that all the way.

Because if you've explored plot structure like I recommended in the previous chapter, that means you're committed and you're willing to invest your time to learn what it takes to compose a symphony of orchestrated words. :)

So inside this chapter, we're going to keep putting in the work that matters.

It's not getting easier though - because here's where we're going to dig deeper into one of the most important elements of storytelling and its structure.

The bizarre truth is that this next element is rarely stressed as much as it should be.

Especially when recognizing that this element is absolutely critical to giving your readers exactly what they want and need from chapter to chapter.

Overview

Yes, scene structure is that important to readers - and I bet you've heard people give a lot of advice about scenes.

Maybe you've heard people say that every scene must have conflict.

Or you've probably heard people say every scene must move the story forward.

Or you've likely heard people say every scene needs a beginning, middle, and end.

People say a lot about scenes - except they don't typically show you what any of the cliches really mean.

Well, that's going to end here because I'm going to show you how to add conflict to every scene - how to connect scenes to move the story forward - and how to create a beginning, middle, and end inside every scene.

And this is what you need because well-designed scenes are what will keep your readers up at night.

I want to help you create an outline that gives you confidence - an outline that directs your story so that you know and love exactly what to write during the actual novel writing process.

But you must prepare yourself - because while this is going to be fun - it's going to be challenging.

But you must also accept and believe that these next steps will be satisfying work.

So assuming you're open up to learning all about scene structure and using it to outline your overarching storyline - scene by scene - please move onto the next page.

Pulse

Now it's time for you to actually see the scene structure living inside novels and films.

Because I've created a few videos to show you how scenes flow, move, and connect.

So please watch the videos at the links below to continue your exploration into the world of scenes - and once you're done, please complete the action steps on the following pages.

Scene Overview video link: DavidVillalva.com/Scene-Overview

Scene Pulse video link: DavidVillalva.com/Scene-Pulse

Scene Extras video link: DavidVillalva.com/Scene-Extras

Pulse – Action Step #1

Analyze the Scene Pulse by looking at one of your favorite stories inside your genre (novel or film)

Now that you have witnessed the Cause and Effect pattern living inside scene structure, it's time for you to observe, study, and identify the two scene types living inside one of your favorite stories.

Please dig into your favorite novel - or explore one of your favorite movies - and complete the action step.

Note: Moving forward, you should pay attention to the beginning, middle, and end of all scenes that you absorb in novels or films. Basically, you should look for the Scene Pulse in all fiction and movies from here out to continue to solidify your grasp of scene structure.

Your scene pulse

Read or watch the first 4 scenes of a story inside your genre, and identify each scene's type (Mission or Response).

List your findings below to reinforce the Cause and Effect pattern you witnessed inside these scenes.

Pulse – Action Step #1

Your scene pulse

Now choose another 4 scenes inside the same story, but make sure these scenes are wrapped around one of the 7 major plot milestones, and identify each scene's type (Mission or Response).

Once again list your findings to reinforce the Cause and Effect pattern you witnessed inside these scenes.

Pulse – Action Step #2

Create your own Cause and Effect pattern using the Scene Pulse

Write, summarize or outline 4 scenes using the Scene Pulse from scene structure.

These scenes can be for your current story or you can simply write them for an entirely different story that you make up on the spot. These scenes do not need to be a specific length. They can be short or long. They do not have to be any good!

The simple goal is for you to deliberately practice the Scene Pulse by creating with its Cause and Effect pattern. That means you can free write the scenes without outlining them. Just create using the Scene Pulse. :)

Your scene pulse

Write, summarize or outline 4 scenes for your story using the Scene Pulse from scene structure.

Due to the likely larger word counts of your 4 scenes, please write them in a word processor or separate document.

Approaches

Okay, now you've experienced how scenes must flow, move, and connect.

And I must share that - at this point - you do not need to be a master storyteller when it comes to scene structure.

It's okay to have a simple or basic grasp on it - so the extra intricacies are not required to keep moving forward right now.

You primarily need to understand scene structure's foundation which includes the basic beginning, middle, and end of both scene types - Mission Scenes and Response Scenes - because these two scene types are dependent upon each other in order to continue moving forward.

So please trust me when I share that as long as you see the pace, flow, and beats inside both Mission Scenes and Response Scenes, then you will be able to build your own scene outline.

Because here's where we're going to do exactly that - build your scene outline.

And there are several approaches to building a scene outline which we'll review right now.

However, every approach offered here will require your special blend of creativity - but above all - you must recognize that the most important and immediate task is that you simply create a scene outline.

I'm stating that obvious task because the next action step will be challenging.

But you are so close here!! (Yes, I just used two exclamation points!!)

Approaches

But I know from firsthand experience that the closer we come to reaching our dreams - the farther away we can feel or position ourselves to accomplishing these dreams.

So don't get in your own way here or overthink what needs to be done - because I want to share another important message.

Basically, even after you've created your scene outline - it won't be perfect. :(Because if you're anything like me - you will want your scene outline to be perfect - but there's no way that can happen at this stage.

Your story can be good - and strong - and unique - and wonderful - and more - but it will not be perfect right now - and that's okay!

The truth is that you can't make your story perfect at this stage - because you're always finding it to a certain extent.

Because stories are constantly evolving, changing, and improving in different ways throughout the creation process - and the sooner you see and accept the evolutionary tendencies within the novel writing process - the sooner you will see and accept how you will reach "The End" with your storytelling sanity still intact. :)

So please just commit to keep moving forward by creating a scene outline for now.

But please embrace and find some peace of mind knowing that you'll be creating your scene outline using an informed approach.

Now it's time to review several approaches to creating a scene outline.

Approaches

First, you can create an outline by filling in the gaps between your plot milestone scenes that you brainstormed during the previous action steps related to plot structure.

Taking this approach is kind of similar to writing short stories between each of your plot milestones - because remember, those plot milestones serve as book ends or flagship events and mini-stories are occurring between each of them.

Second, you can look over your Story Summary while considering the core story that you want to tell, and then just free-write your scene outline with your story's foundation resonating throughout your mind.

Don't overthink it - just write out scene ideas and edit them later.

Didn't I mention the most important part would be to simply move forward and get your scene outline onto the page?

Because just getting something or anything out of your mind can sometimes jumpstart progress and ignite momentum.

Because sometimes storytellers just need something to edit later - because some storytellers are better creators during the editing process.

Third, you can map out a similar story inside your genre and then re-invent every scene. (Yep, this is similar to one of the approaches I recommended during the plot structure action steps.)

And this approach can help storytellers come up with fresh ideas including scenes they would have never considered otherwise.

Just start by choosing a story somewhat similar to your story inside your genre - maybe it's a movie - and then you summarize each scene.

Approaches

You're basically looking at outlining a proven storyboard here by mapping a similar story approach - and then you're doing your best to re-invent that storyboard using your own Cast of Characters, Setting, and Theme.

Straight up, this is my favorite and most productive way to come up with ideas and create my story - but I've got one more quick approach for you to consider.

Fourth, it's okay to create your Scene Outline in your way.

Maybe you know what you need to do?

Maybe you mix a couple of my suggestions and outline your scenes in your own special way?

Bottom line, you must finish your scene outline with or without one of my suggested approaches.

But again, it won't be perfect.

But you don't need perfect right now.

You just need to finish a scene outline to keep moving forward.

So you must now avoid your over-thinking and perfectionistic tendencies to string together enough scenes to have something to edit from here out.

Approaches – Action Step #1

Create your Scene Outline using the two basic scene types (Mission and Response) found inside the Scene Pulse

It's time to create your story's foundational scene-by-scene outline.

Reminder: Your Scene Outline will not be perfect!

However, you do not need it to be perfect right now because you're still finding your overarching plotline.

So the critical goal here is to create a basic scene-by-scene foundation using the Cause and Effect pattern.

(Also, the remaining pages inside this chapter will help you improve and refine your scenes.)

In addition, you do not need to break out each scene's beginning, middle, and end at this stage (unless you choose to create those as well).

It's recommended that you strictly focus on the broad strokes by creating a Mission Scene - followed by a Response Scene - followed by a Mission Scene - and so on...

Here are the 4 Scene Outline approaches to help you get started:

1. Fill in the scene gaps between your Plot Milestones that you brainstormed during the previous Plot Milestone Action Step # on pages 125-130.

Taking this approach is similar to writing a short story between each of your Plot Milestones, and those Plot Milestones serve as bookends.

Approaches – Action Step #1

2. Revisit your Story Summary, focus on the core story you want to tell, and free write your scenes.

Don't overthink it. Just write the scenes using the Scene Pulse knowing you will edit them later.

Reminder: Just getting something down onto the page can help because some people are better creators during the editing process.

3. Map out a similar story inside your genre and re-invent each scene.

(This is the most strongly recommended approach).

Choose a story inside your genre (similar to the story you want to tell), summarize each scene (novel or film), and then re-create each scene.

You're basically outlining a proven storyboard inside this approach, and then doing your best to re-invent that storyboard using your own characters, setting and theme.

4. Create your Scene Outline in any way you want!

You are a storyteller so that means you're a creative person. That also means you can design your scenes in any way that works best for you.

Maybe you outline your scenes in reverse by starting at the end and finishing at the beginning? Maybe you blend a couple approaches? Maybe you know your creation process best? Just create!

Your scene outline

Please create your complete Scene Outline in a word processor or separate document.

Analysis

Well done - because you outlined your scenes so you could keep moving forward.

It's not perfect, but you still did it.

You did it.

I know I've said that a couple times already - because you did it!

And that's a significant accomplishment - so thank you for staying committed.

You're actually going to do this. You're going to draft the best story you've ever created.

But before you write your draft, you need to see if your story can be further improved.

And that means it's time to take a couple more runs at your outline before you actually write the scenes you've put onto the page.

Next, you will use the scene analysis document (found on page 157) to help you inspect each of your scenes.

Because I want you to examine what you've created and make sure your scene outline still aligns with the story you want to tell.

Because at this point, you've designed and structured a story using elements outside of yourself.

Straight up, you need to make sure you're still all in and completely committed to the core story that you've just outlined.

Analysis

Because it's truth when I share that analyzing your scene outline right now - before writing an actual draft - will save you time and heartache.

Most people just start writing their story at this point - and that's what I'd want to do if I was you.

Because I've done that - many times.

But I can confidently share that just a little more attention right now - a little more upfront work right now - will save you weeks or months in rewrites and editing.

So please review the scene analysis document on the next page to sift through your scenes - and when you're done - please move onto the next page because I'll offer one more recommendation to help you improve your story at this stage.

7 Questions to Ask Yourself While Reviewing Scenes

There are many variables to consider while analyzing your Scene Outline. Fortunately, you don't need to focus on everything right now - so jumpstart your analysis by asking these questions.

1) Does each scene have just one Point of View (PoV) Character?

If not, update the appropriate scenes because head hopping is not allowed inside a scene. The PoV should only change when a scene transitions to a new scene.

2) Does each scene somehow connect to my original idea and theme?

If not, are you okay with this new story that you've created? Of course, it's critical that you end up writing the core story you want to share with the world.

3) Does each scene somehow connect to my protagonist's Story Goal?

If not, how can you improve each scene in Part 1 to properly set up the protagonist's Story Goal Launch and also update Part 2-4's scenes to fulfill the protagonist's Story Goal?

4) Would my overarching plotline be affected if I cut this scene?

You must leave out your characters' mundane, ordinary, and boring parts because readers only want their most dramatic, extraordinary, and exciting moments.

5) Does each scene have a connection to my antagonistic force?

If not, the primary conflict created by your antagonist may not be felt throughout your overarching story. Your antagonistic force should imprint nearly every scene.

6) Does each scene excite or entertain me in any way?

If not, how will you stay motivated to draft this scene during the writing process? Better yet, how will you expect readers to be excited or entertained if you're not?

7) Do my plot milestone scenes occur at the right percentage markers?

If not, it's okay. They don't have to land directly on the recommended locations. However, staying as close as possible should help pacing and reader expectations.

Feedback

You deserve the title of storyteller. Don't let anyone try and challenge that truth.

Because it's a special thing that you've made it this far.

Because a lot of people give up - because creating an amazing story is really hard work.

But you're still here with your story - and me - inside the *Fast Draft Novel Writing Playbook* - and for that - I am humbled, honored, and motivated to help you make it all the way.

I'm also grateful to connect with someone like you through this process - because you are a storyteller.

Because only a true storyteller would do everything up until this point in the creation process.

So please be encouraged for making it all the way here.

And you should be confident that you'll make it through my next recommendation regarding your scene outline.

Because it's something you've already been through.

Because it's time for you to return to accessing your Feedback Loop one more time before moving onto the next chapter.

Because now it's time to discern how other people can help you further develop your scene outline before you actually start writing your story.

Yes, we're that close.

Feedback

You already know the Feedback Loop process so I'm not going to review it here.

Instead, I'm going to ask you to make it as easy as possible for your Feedback Loop so you can maximize their time.

Because this next thing is going to be a big ask.

Because you're asking someone to look over individual scenes which requires a closer look and much more attention.

So that means it may make sense to break up your story into different pieces depending on which Feedback Option you explore.

Please just appreciate that you're asking for quality time from people's lives.

So maybe you need to look over your scene outline to figure out how you can further simplify your story? Are your scenes a page each? Can you summarize them into half of that? Or cut them down to a couple paragraphs? Or maybe just two to three sentences each? Or maybe you can break up your story into 4 Parts and only offer one individual Part to a Feedback Loop Option?

People are much more open to looking at 10 to 20 scenes at a time than 50 to 70 scenes all at once.

Hey, maybe the feedback from just Part 1 will be enough to help you see something that could dramatically improve your entire story?

Just know that I recommend you take at least one more run at improving your story by getting a third party's outlook - but never forget that you always have the final say.

Feedback – Action Step #1

Simplify and summarize your scenes inside your Scene Outline, and then access your Feedback Loop

It's time for you to gather one last round of feedback before you start drafting your story.

Of course, you must access your Feedback Loop to accomplish this. However, looking at individual scenes takes much more time and attention than looking at story ideas. So you must best position your Scene Outline to make it as easily digestible as possible for people inside your Feedback Loop Options.

That means you must simplify and summarize your Scene Outline to the best of your ability.

Feedback – Action Step #1

Your scene feedback

Please simplify your scenes and access your Feedback Loop using these quick tips

1. Summarize each of your Part 1's Status Quo scenes into just 2-3 sentences

You don't have to summarize every scene yet - so please just begin with your Part 1 scenes. In fact, this simplification process may help you further comprehend exactly what you're trying to set up inside each of your Part 1 scenes.

2. Begin by sharing your Part 1 scenes with your Feedback Loop

Depending on the Feedback Loop Option(s) you choose, it may make sense to talk over the phone or even meet in-person. This approach allows you to read your summarized scenes to the person and receive an immediate reaction from people - because remember, silence can say a lot.

3. Update your Scene Outline as needed

Here's where you will choose what you want to edit inside your scenes. Assuming you received quality feedback, you will have several suggestions to consider.

You must determine if the feedback will improve your story, change your vision of the story, etc.

Feedback – Action Step #1

Your scene feedback

4. Based on how helpful your Feedback Loop proved to be, summarize and simplify your Part 2's scenes, and request more feedback.

(Continue this process for the remaining Parts and scenes or complete all at once depending on how cooperative and helpful your Feedback Loop may be.)

Of course, this will not apply if you cannot access more feedback.

Again, this last feedback request is a big ask. However, you will eventually be asking people to read your full novel before publication so this proves to be great practice for future large-scale feedback requests.

Reminder: If you choose to pay a pro to give you feedback on your scenes, it's recommended you take it one Part at a time (begin by only paying for feedback on your Part 1's scenes) to make sure you and the story coach will be a good fit for each other.

5. Update your entire Scene Outline as needed

Again, please improve and edit your Scene Outline to the best of your abilities - because all that's left to do is create your Writing Plan and establish your Mindset for Success prior to writing your draft!

Chapter 7: Writing Plan

Time

Your scene outline has been completed to the best of your ability and that's quite the accomplishment.

Of course, your new scene outline should give you the most focused and well-designed story you've ever created.

Yes, it's not perfect - but that's okay because your scene outline will not be your final draft - but it will become your fast draft.

And in order to make sure you write your draft as fast and efficiently as possible, you must be prepared to take advantage of your writing time.

That means you're going to need a writing plan - and that's exactly what we're going to go through inside this chapter.

We're going to make sure you focus on what's most important during your free time by creating a writing schedule - and we'll also draft a prewriting checklist to make sure you're ready for progress every time you begin and enter your writing sessions.

This writing plan is serious stuff - because the last thing you want to do is spend a year writing your draft.

Because we all have busy lives - yet when we get free time to write - we often find ways to be unproductive.

So you're going to need to take advantage of your limited free time.

Because free time is a rare thing for most people - at least I find that to be true inside my life - because I have a wonderful wife, two growing kids participating in activities, and a dog, four cats, 5 goats, 6 chickens and more that needs to be loved, watered, fed, walked, scratched, and more.

Time

And I've got more family and friends.

I've got a full-time career loaded with management responsibilities.

I run a blog - and I have many other projects I'm always preparing and working to create and finish.

I bet your life is crazy busy like mine? Or maybe it's crazy and busy in a different way?

Either way, you're going to need to make some tough choices - because you must take inventory of everything happening inside your life and choose how you're going to spend your limited free time.

Straight up, making tough choices will determine how fast you knock out your draft.

And you definitely want to get your story written in record time to keep your momentum going - because once you have that solid story on the page - once you've finished this draft - you'll be able to start refining it into a final draft.

So you're going to have to decide what you're willing to give up and sacrifice to write your draft - fast.

It's that simple - and it's that hard.

I often say that people make time for what's most important to them - so we both know how important this story is to you - because how else could you have made it this far?(!)

Now please move onto the next page and complete the action step.

Time – Action Step #1

Take inventory of your free time and choose how you'll commit the time to finish your draft - fast

I believe you've worked harder than 99%+ of the storytellers out there to create a well-designed scene-by-scene outline - and that means you must insure that you take advantage of your limited free time to draft your story - fast.

So it's critical that you look at your life and consider how you spend your rare free time - and then you must determine what you're willing to sacrifice to write your draft - fast.

Reminder: People make time for what's most important to them.

Your writing time

List the most common ways you spend your free time. Please do not be shy. Speak to the page and confess.

Time – Action Step #1

Your writing time

Now prioritize the most common ways you spend your free time (the same ones from the previous page), and list them in order of their importance in your life.

While considering the ordered list (from above), which activities / listed items are you willing to sacrifice (by simply doing them less or giving them up) to write your draft in record time?

Schedule

Now that you've assessed your free time and how to better utilize it, you must create a writing schedule.

Because winging it does not work well - and you'll find too many days passing without any new words being put onto the page.

But your writing schedule is more than just committing to writing on specific days or at certain times. It's also about setting your short term and long term writing goals.

It's also about rewarding yourself as you hit some goals - and it's also about making sure you don't burn yourself out when life gets in the way - because it doesn't help your story when you start guilting yourself because you didn't stick to your writing schedule.

So you're going to need to pace yourself and the following action steps will help.

But you've got to be honest with yourself about what you can get done every day or week - you've got to be open to adapting to the challenges in life - and you must learn to appreciate the progress you make.

Schedule – Action Step #1

Brainstorm and assess your long-term and short-term writing goals

It's time to establish your writing goals and expectations while writing each scene in your outline.

You probably have a long-term goal in mind of when you hope to finish - but what kind of daily and weekly (short-term) goals do you want to accomplish? Because it's these daily and weekly goals that will help you reach your long-term goal of finishing your fast draft.

Here's where you must organize your goals to make sure you know exactly what you want and how you're going to get there.

Reminder: Be honest with yourself when setting your goals - because this next part will require a delicate balance - because you do not want to set your goals too low (or outside the scope of life's realities).

Your writing schedule

While taking your free time into account, when do you want to finish your draft?

Is it a specific number of days from your writing start date? A specific calendar date? Explain your long-term goal below.

Schedule – Action Step #1

Your writing schedule

Based on your long-term goal to finish your draft, how many scenes would you have to write every week to accomplish that long-term goal (completion date)?

e.g. If your Scene Outline consists of 62 scenes, and your goal is 90 days(13 weeks), you'd need to write 5 scenes per week. $[62 \text{ scenes} \div 13 \text{ weeks (90 days)} = 5 \text{ scenes per week}]$

Based on your weekly writing results above (required scenes per week), roughly how many days per week would you need to actually write those scenes? And how many hours per day?

Breaking down and knowing these figures will help you develop your scheduled writing routine (weekly, daily, hourly, etc.). $[5 \text{ scenes per week} = 1 \text{ scene per day means writing a scene at least 5 days each week.}]$

Schedule – Action Step #1

Your writing schedule

What would be a reasonable weekly writing goal for you regardless of life's interruptions?

Is it 3 or 4 completed scenes per week? Is it a specific word count like 1,000 words per day? Is it just to write new words on the page each day of the week? Explain your weekly goal below.

What would be a reasonable reward for you reaching your weekly writing goal?

It helps to recognize your progress - so small rewards can help you appreciate your weekly accomplishments. Explain your potential weekly rewards below. [Maybe you go fishing when you've reached your goal? Maybe it's watching that new movie or episodes you've got on your Watchlists?]

Schedule – Action Step #2

Create your Writing Schedule and choose the specific days and times that you will write your draft

Now that you've brainstormed your writing goals and considered the required daily and weekly commitments, you must choose the specific days and times that you will actually write your draft inside your long-term goal (completion date).

Also, you'll want to take a second look at your goals and confirm you'll be able to reach them - because if the goals seem unrealistic based on the results of Action Step #1, then give yourself more time to write your draft because the most important goal is to keep moving forward and actually finish.

Next, you do not want to set your goals too high and leave yourself disappointed or guilt-ridden if you miss them. If anything, you should set your goals slightly lower than desired to allow yourself room to grow. (Tackle ambition with a measured approach.)

Last, please be sure to include your daily and weekly writing goal rewards that you brainstormed. These small rewards will also help you keep your momentum going strong during your fast draft.

Your writing schedule

Create your Writing Schedule inside a calendar on your smartphone, laptop or online calendar software, or hard copy planner

You may find that your Writing Schedule evolves as you begin actually writing your draft - so please remember to permit room for growth while pushing yourself in creative yet challenging ways. Do what makes sense, but only you know yourself best. Trust yourself. :)

Checklist

Well, look at you, storyteller, you've got a writing schedule.

Yes, it may evolve - but at least you've committed to putting in the time and organized your life in a way that sets you up to finish your draft inside a specific timeframe.

Now I want to help you prepare for your actual writing sessions.

Because I want you dialed in and ready to go when you click the keyboard inside your scheduled writing performances.

Some people may think this is preparation overkill - but if you don't take into account all of the potential distractions in your life - you may not end up writing during your carefully crafted writing schedule.

So I suggest you use a prewriting checklist.

Yep, this is like pregame warmup for your writing sessions because here's where I'm going to ask you to look at your routine prior to writing.

Because maybe your writing sessions have sometimes gone sideways like many of mine?

And it's often when I finally start getting into a groove and I'm hitting a writing flow that my scheduled writing time seems to suddenly end. :(

Because I have to run to work - or honor a family commitment - or countless other everyday interruptions.

Well, the truth is that during most writing sessions, I had plenty of time to get my writing done - except I took way too long to get started inside those allocated sessions.

Checklist

Straight up, I enjoy cruising the internet before I start writing.

Internet cruising is just a silly habit I fell into - but it kind of became my thing for a while there - so I'm okay with it.

So I just set a timer for 10 or 15 minutes to cruise the internet to fulfill my acceptable habit - and when it goes off - I turn on an internet blocking application called *Freedom* which has a timer that won't let me jump online for a set amount of time of my choosing.

Basically, I know my procrastinating nature and what can potentially distract me - so I do whatever I can to prepare myself for maximum productivity.

Maybe you're not as bad as me - but then again - maybe you're just as bad as me. ;)

Either way, I want to help you create a prewriting checklist to account for your writing routine and help you eliminate any issues that may slow, prevent, or interrupt your writing sessions.

So please complete the following action step and when you're done, move onto the next chapter.

Checklist – Action Step #1

Create a Prewriting Checklist to better prepare yourself for more productive writing sessions

You must actually write during your writing sessions - the entire time.

So it's recommended that you recognize your prewriting routine, and prepare yourself to defeat any potential distractions or interruptions that will cut into your limited writing time.

One simple approach to prepare yourself is a Prewriting Checklist. This checklist will include your regular prewriting routine along with a list of preparations that will help you stay focused.

Note: Once you've created your Prewriting Checklist, please go back to your Writing Schedule and update it as necessary to account for your prewriting routine (assuming it will cut into your writing time).

Your prewriting checklist

Please review the sample Prewriting Checklist on the next page - and then create your own Prewriting Checklist

Or you can simply create your own fresh Prewriting Checklist in any word processing document.

Checklist

- ☐ **iPhone and laptop battery levels acceptable**
You don't want a low battery interrupting your writing flow
- ☐ **Iced coffee poured and water bottle ready**
Take those drinking habits into account
- ☐ **Notepad and pen at writing desk**
What if you get a great idea? Just write it down for later
- ☐ **Headphones at writing desk and music playlist chosen**
Get your regular needs on deck before your writing sessions begin
- ☐ **Cruise internet for 10 minutes using iPhone timer**
Do what relaxes you before hitting the keyboard. Maybe it's reading?
- ☐ **Activate Freedom app after internet cruising session**
Prevent your prewriting routine from affecting your writing session
- ☐ **Activate airplane mode on iPhone**
Don't let the outside world slow or stop your progress
- ☐ **Read personal writing statement (*The Storyteller's Truth*)**
“*The Storyteller's Truth* will be reviewed inside Chapter 8: Mindset for Success”
- ☐ **Set iPhone timer for 45 minute writing session**
Dial in your set time aligned with your Writing Schedule
- ☐ **Grab Kleenex box**
Cold or allergies? Stage your writing session by considering everything
- ☐ **Use bathroom**
Small bladder? It can't hurt to defeat another potential problem
- ☐ **Prepare a snack**
Get the munchies during writing sessions? Keep food on standby
- ☐ **Tell family your writing session is beginning**
Treat writing sessions like a fun job and communicate your commitment

Checklist

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Chapter 8: Mindset for Success

Writer's Block

Your deliberate and intentional work now positions you on the verge of drafting your unique story in record time.

Except before you use your writing plan to draft your story, I'd like to make sure you've got your head on straight.

Because while you write your story, your head may spin a bit with writer's block.

Because even the most experienced storytellers can get lost inside their own minds and experience blockage.

I don't think there's any way around it - unless you're a robot - or you're really an alien from another dimension.

So if we don't take this seriously, you could become your own worst enemy - despite all of the upfront work you've put into your story.

So I want to share a few helpful tips and approaches that I've learned - and that means it's time to strengthen and solidify your mindset to go the distance.

Because your mental game will determine your writing stamina and help you endure the ups and downs of putting your story on the page.

Because the right mindset will help you stop trying to be perfect.

A strong mindset will help you avoid writer's block.

Writer's Block

A determined mindset will help you release your true writing voice and help you overcome fear and self-sabotage - which will empower you to finish your draft - fast.

Because picture this: You have your scene outline on deck and you know exactly what you need to put on the page during your writing session - but then you still freeze up and get writer's block.

Sometimes it's just before you start writing - and other times it will be after you've already started writing.

Writer's block can present itself for many reasons...

Because maybe you're worried you won't be able to create exactly what's designed inside your scene outline?

Maybe you're worried your dialogue won't be so great?

Maybe you're worried your prose will only tell without the show?

Maybe it's self-sabotage or the voice of resistance?

Please just recognize that self-sabotage, resistance, and all that noise creating your writer's block is basically a voice inside your head trying to protect you - from yourself.

Because when you're writing, you're creating something that could leave you exposed and vulnerable.

Because your words could someday be judged or criticized - so a small voice will try to compel you to leave your words unwritten.

Writer's Block

And that small voice screams its loudest during writing sessions because it wants to protect you from being hurt - but one of the best ways to combat this resistance is to first of all - be aware of it.

So just do your best in the moment to recognize that this wicked voice is there to act as a defensive mechanism.

The next step toward establishing a mindset for success is to coexist with the fear trying to feed your writer's block.

Because the fear may never go away.

Yes, the fear may become a rare phenomenon - but it may always want to return to you.

So you must learn to coexist with the voice by disarming it - and I believe that begins when you permit yourself to be imperfect on the page.

So whether it's before you start writing or during an actual writing session when this resistance tries to appear - you must ground yourself in the moment by writing a simple line on your notepad at your side.

During my writing sessions, I write:

"Trust that you can fix the words later."

This simple line grounds my psyche and reminds me that this current draft - this fast draft - is not the final draft.

That simple line reminds me that I can edit later as necessary.

It reminds me that I can fix the words later.

That simple line reminds me that I don't have to be perfect during a writing session or anytime during this fast drafting process.

Writer's Block

So I encourage you to come up with your own simple line.

Because your own simple line can help you ground yourself inside these moments when you're having a hard time getting started.

Your own simple statement can help you when you feel like you're freezing due to writer's block.

Because your simple statement should help bring you back to what's most important inside that writing session - which is to simply keep putting words onto the page.

So please create a simple statement right now because you must prevent any kind of blockage when it comes to your sacred writing time.

Yes, there is no separate action step because this task is super straightforward.

So please write down your simple statement below, but most important, please also imprint this sentence into your mind so you have it on call the moment you need it.

Writer's Block 2.0

There's another form of writer's block out there - and it's one of the best excuses to slow or prevent writing.

I'm referring to research.

Maybe it's research a character's potential name? Or it's research about how a specific location really looks and feels? Or researching anything else that will make your story world feel more real?

Well, this is just another version of resistance trying to come into play.

Except research is one of the worst kinds because it's disguised as something that's completely legitimate - because that research may truly be needed to complete your story.

So you will also need a strong approach that will empower you to keep writing instead of researching during your writing time.

Yet on the other hand, you'll eventually need to go back and actually research all of those topics - especially if they're legitimate for the most part.

Fortunately, there's a straight forward approach to help you keep writing while feeding your desire and need to research.

You just need one unique keyword.

This unique keyword serves as a bookmark - and you'll simply type it into your document while you're writing your story during a session- and you'll also add a short note to your keyword.

Because this unique keyword will help you bookmark all the places you'll need to do later research during the editing process.

Writer's Block 2.0

I use the word of “Roker” - and I don't know where I got it - but it works for me.

Maybe you're going to use “FTL.” for “Fix That Later” - or maybe you'll use “Blah” - because blah, it's more work for later.

No matter what - this is the kind of quick mental hack that should help you keep your momentum going inside your writing sessions.

This approach will help you stay in your flow writing state and maintain a focused mindset.

Because when you type that quick keyword, you're honoring the need to get answers to that potential research - but you're putting that topic on hold so you can fulfill your most immediate goal which is to actually write inside your writing session.

Either way, just make sure your keyword is something unique - so that means it shouldn't be a common word found inside your prose. ;)

And I strongly recommend you wait until you've completely finished your draft before you go back and do all of that research - so please just focus on the writing aspect during the actual fast drafting process.

But when you're done with your draft, just click CONTROL F on a PC or COMMAND F on a Mac - to conduct a word search for your special keyword - because that's when you will go through and research every instance of your keyword - and complete your research.

Chapter 8: Mindset for Success

Now please brainstorm and choose a keyword right now to prevent your curiosity from killing your writing sessions.

Again, there is no separate action step here. Please just create and map this critical keyword to your brain because it's that important.

Writing Voice

Let's cut straight to the chase here - because you must be yourself on the page.

I'm talking about your writing voice.

Because you must let your voice shine on the page.

Don't try and sound like your favorite author when writing.

Don't try to write in the voice that you think your readers want you to write.

Instead, I challenge you to be just plain, old, unique you on the page.

I understand that we're all influenced by other writers - but when it comes to your story - it must be your voice that connects with readers.

Because people will connect with your writing voice.

I bet you've got a family member or friend who you connect with? And I bet they accept and love you for you just being you, right?

Unfortunately, I often see writers changing who they are on the page - because they try to be something or someone else for potential readers.

And that's a huge mistake.

Because readers don't want copycat or wannabe writing voices - because there's already a Stephen King, a Nicholas Sparks, and a J.K. Rowling out there.

Readers need new voices that showcase originality.

They need your writing voice.

Yes, your voice may change, improve, and evolve over time - but it's still yours all the way so you must display it with pride in your prose.

Writing Voice

Maybe your sentences or paragraphs are short and punchy?

Maybe your dialogue is sarcastic and sassy?

Maybe your scenes are thorough and thoughtful?

Wonderful - then simply sing to the page as only you know how - because the resistance will constantly tempt you to stop being yourself on the page.

The resistance will attempt to prevent you from writing in your unique style. It's happened to me way too many times.

I'll write a sentence, look at it, and then begin to delete it - because I'll think it's not what people will want from me.

But guess what? The above sentence was my first instinct - it was me without a filter.

Yes, I may change that sentence later - but a first draft is not the editing stage - so please just write in your original and special way during *The Fast Draft Novel Writing Playbook*.

So please trust your instincts - because they will guide you to the final page - assuming you trust yourself and avoid over-thinking.

Remember - your family and friends like you for who you are.

And your current, true, and original voice connects with them in real life - so the same will be true with your true writing voice in fiction.

So your voice will connect with your future readers - assuming you're the real you on the page.

Make sense all around?

If so, please move onto the next page.

Storyteller's Truth

It's time to reinforce the truth.

I'm referring to the truth inside your writing capabilities.

The truth inside your storytelling potential.

The truth within what you must always remember.

Because your truths are something that you can lose sight of rather quickly.

So you must remind yourself of your truth - every single day.

You must remind yourself about the writer you're meant to be.

You must remind yourself about the storyteller that you already are.

And I've discovered there's a creative way to remember the truth.

In fact, this approach can be a special way to remember your past, present, and future storytelling truths.

This is something I originally tried about a decade ago after reading Napoleon Hill's *The Law of Success*.

It's something I discovered again after reading Seth Godin's *Bootstrapper's Bible*.

I'm talking about a personal declaration that you write to yourself - about yourself - and I'm positioning it as *The Storyteller's Truth*.

Storyteller's Truth

Because you see, inside my truth, I am a storyteller.

I am an original storyteller.

I am a lucid storyteller.

I am a thirsty storyteller.

I am a resilient storyteller.

I am a multi-tasking storyteller.

I am an honorable storyteller.

Again, I am a storyteller, and this is my truth.

So that's the cliff note's version of my storyteller's truth, and you will read my entire version in the next Action Step, but it's not about my truth, it's about yours.

So you need to write your *Storyteller's Truth*, and then read it every day - or at least every day prior to writing - to remember and solidify your personal storytelling truths.

Now please complete the following action step to develop your *Storyteller's Truth*.

Storyteller's Truth – Action Step #1

Write your past, present, and future storytelling truths

You are gifted - so you must remind yourself every day of the writer you've been - the writer you are - and the writer you're meant to be.

So please reference the next page for an example of my *Storyteller's Truth* - and then use the following page (or any separate word processor) to create your own *Storyteller's Truth*.

OR

Simply hand-write your own truth on a single sheet of paper, and then keep it safe so you can read it each morning and evening.

OR

Read it when you brush your teeth.

OR

Read it immediately before you begin each of your writing sessions.

OR

Do whatever makes the most sense for you.

Your storyteller's truth

Please review my *Storyteller's Truth* on the next page - and then create your own *Storyteller's Truth*

Print your truth, read it every day, and do whatever is necessary to remind yourself of your truth on a regular basis.

Storyteller's Truth – Example

I AM AN ORIGINAL STORYTELLER.

I am blessed with creativity, inspiration, and purpose. My gifts enable me to outlast other writers with more free time and resources.

My secret weapon is that no one else can tell my story.

My original ideas, unique persona, and undying commitment empowers me to write a one-of-a-kind story.

I AM A LUCID STORYTELLER.

My eyes are wide open to the proven framework living inside best-selling novels, blockbuster movies, and more.

Shiny objects try to cloud my perspective, but I see what it takes to craft a story that connects with readers.

My clear vision helps me become the writer I'm meant to be.

I AM A THIRSTY STORYTELLER.

I leverage my craving to master the craft.

I feed off the wisdom of experienced storytellers who can show me how to compel the market to take notice.

My natural storytelling abilities grow stronger each day that I practice and partake in the craft.

I AM A RESILIENT STORYTELLER.

Surviving is thriving, and the process is progress.

I will outcreate, outplay, and outlast others because I am a committed storyteller.

Others will “aspire” and “daydream,” but I put in the work required to create a story I'm proud to share with the world.

I AM A MULTI-TASKING STORYTELLER.

I balance my family, friends, day job, and other projects while forging my story.

Everyday life competes for my attention, but I remain loyal to imprinting words onto the page during my limited free time.

I create regardless of the outside influences challenging my storytelling sessions.

I AM AN HONORABLE STORYTELLER.

I understand that I must love people on my path throughout publication.

I realize we're all in this together and while I'm focused on outlasting the "aspiring" and "daydreaming" storytellers, I must appreciate and respect my fellow storytellers.

My reputation will follow me wherever I go, and I will invest in it daily and protect it fiercely.

It is my honor to help those seeking guidance because I'm always a student, and our shared experiences connect us beyond the page.

YES, I AM A STORYTELLER AND THIS IS MY TRUTH.

Storyteller's Truth – Action Step #1

Farewell

Wow, you made it.

Congrats all around!

You've put in the work, prepared the best you can, and set yourself up for success to finish your story.

Now it's time for you to go write your draft.

Yeah, that's it.

No more pep talks and advice.

No more action steps.

Really, that's it.

Go write your story.

Seriously, go knock out your draft - FAST.

Request

Has the *Fast Draft Novel Writing Playbook* helped you create your story in a new way?

If so, would you be open to sharing this process with a fellow fiction writer? Maybe share a quick message via email, text, social media post, inside a writing group or any way you believe makes sense?

Maybe you'll be helping someone create the story they've always wanted to write?

-
- **Link** to Share: <https://davidvillalva.com/fast-draft>
 - Share on **Facebook**
 - Share on **Twitter**
 - Share on **LinkedIn**
-

Also, please subscribe at [DavidVillalva.com](https://davidvillalva.com) so we can stay connected and I can send you the latest on storytelling and more. :)

Thank You

Please move onto the process of drafting your story - fast