



Mid Michigan Writers, Inc.

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THE INK DROP

Greetings and Salutations:

It has been a year this month since the INK DROP bulletin was born. I hope it has provided needed information to all writers. This month you received a double dose since the INKSPOTS was also delivered, minus a few regular features.

I have tried to follow through on the theme of plot, structure, and story, which all apply to the short story as well as the novel. Hopefully, you all will find something that will help you become better at the craft. As always I am open to suggestions for content.

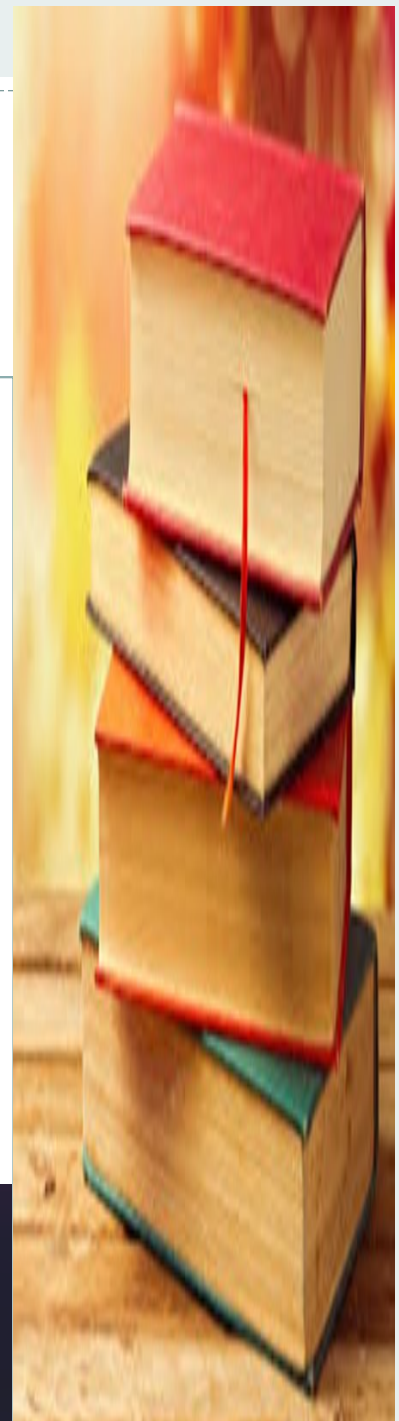
A reminder to all to send me your essay on "Why I write." So far these have been very revealing. Chris and Marylou have sent in articles I plan on printing next month about journaling, if you have something you have learned or want to share, dealing with the writers persuasion, I am all ears. Send it in.

Kudo's to Ken, our moderator for his efforts in keeping us connected and to Rehenna for her contribution of ZOOM. I understand through the grapevine that it has helped the group move forward, and I reiterate Ken's admonition to submit your critiques. I do mine in word and then send it as an attachment, but I would prefer the red pen, so will probably be mailing them snail-mail.

Hope to see all of you soon. Donnie

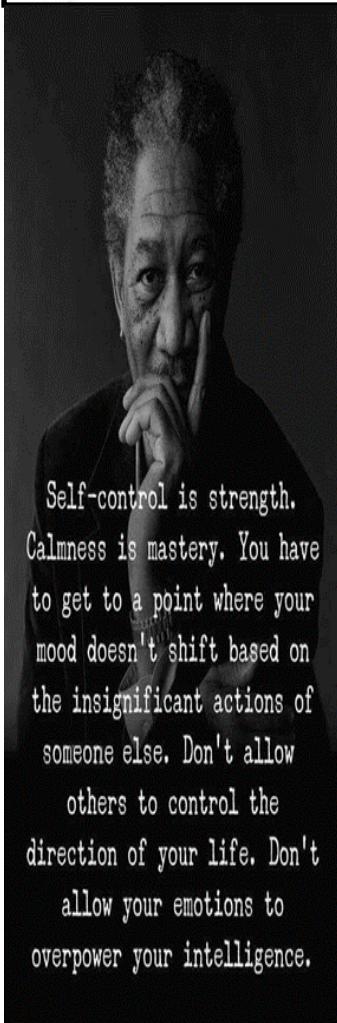


THE FIVE
ELEMENTS
OF A STORY
ARE CHARACTER,
SETTING,
PLOT
CONFLICT &
THEME



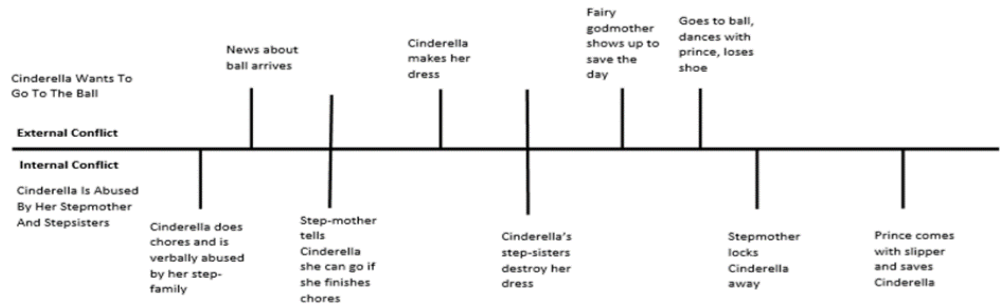
To write well,
express
yourself
like the common
people,
but think
like a wise man.

- Aristotle



The Double Timeline: Cinderella Example

Maybe you have two or more storylines. Maybe you have two characters. This double timeline can help you plan the initial events of your story. Use long lines for events that relate to both conflicts or storylines.



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Plotting Your Novel Down to The Scene

Krystal N. Craiker

The Case for a Scene Chart

When I first started writing, I ran into two common issues. The first problem came from my attempts to discovery-write (panster). My stories were choppy and short. At 10,000 words or so the story was done, and it was not even a decent short story! Secondly, I had too many ideas and no concept how they worked together. Solution: Annie Neugebauer's [novel scenes chart](#). Without a scene chart, I doubt I would have finished my first book. How can a scene chart help you plan your novel?

- Envision the story clearly before you write it
- Fix flow and pacing problems before the first draft
- Find plot holes before they develop
- Figure out where you need to add more detail
- Record notes about details and even dialogue you want to remember later

Neugebauer's scene chart had space for point-of-view, setting, a scene summary, notes, and more. In the last several years, my own scene chart has evolved into something even more detailed. I note character motivations, and which conflict the scene addresses. A few years ago, J.K. Rowling's [plot spreadsheet](#) went viral. She organized her plotting by month in the story and all the subplots. This method helped her keep track of all the various plotlines throughout the entire series. I find I get stuck far less often when using a scene chart. I know where my story is going, but more importantly, I know how to get there. I do offer a disclaimer; the scene chart is a *living document*. As you write, things will change, a new scene idea will pop up or your characters will stop cooperating. In my most recent first draft, a character was supposed to die, and she did not. The next scene was supposed to be her funeral. Oops!

Where Do I Start?

With a big idea. When I first start thinking about my stories, I usually imagine a specific scene or two. I jot those ideas down. Next, I start a timeline. The advantage of using a timeline helps plan the scenes and will help "unstuck" your story when you hit a block. I find creating a scene chart difficult without this step. A regular timeline of events is great, but I created what I call a double timeline. This is a technique used in history classrooms. I turned it into a plotting tool. Most novels have more than one conflict. Start by identifying the major **external** and **internal** conflicts with their multiple aspects. In general, the external conflict is between main characters and external forces and the internal conflict relates to the main characters' personal growth. On top of my timeline, I plot the events that make up the external conflicts. On the bottom, I note the

internal conflict events. This gives me a visual of where these conflicts will merge, and the storylines tie together. Then I pick a side to write the events which usually occurs at or near the climax. Begin with the six to nine biggest events in your story. If I know my story's beginning and resolution, I put those on the timeline first. Then put the climax down and fill in around those. If you have had any other scene ideas, add them where they fit.

Writing a Synopsis

Recently I added another step to my plotting process before my scene chart. I include a synopsis. A synopsis is a rough two-page summary of the entire story. Pitching your book to agents, many times requires a synopsis. I found this a helpful planning tool. I take those big events from my timeline and summarize my story. This synopsis is also helpful in writing that "blurb" for the back cover.

The Scene Chart

Search Google for "novel scene chart," and you will find a lot of different templates. Some are basic while others are color-coded and detailed. I make my own in Google Sheets. Overall, a scene chart is a table or graph that you can easily look at and see what will happen next. A scene chart needs a few basic components:

- Setting
- Characters present
- Summary
- Notes
- Point-of-view, in a multiple POV story

You may also note the expected word count, character goals, timing, and which conflict and themes are being addressed. Revisit your timeline. There will be events that need to occur, and you will be able to connect the dots in a logical order from one event to the next.

Imagine your story playing out in your mind and begin with the opening scene. What do your characters do next? What breadcrumbs do you need to drop early on for later points in the story? Write out a short summary and any notes that come to mind. You do not have to fill in every column right away. It may take several weeks to finalize the scene chart. Once you have plotted the chart, ask yourself:

- Do I see any major plot holes?
- Does the order make sense?
- Where can I add or take away scenes?
- Have I built up every conflict?
- How do my characters grow throughout this story?

Make changes needed and write! My scene chart becomes my "bad first draft." This frees up my editing time for my other weaknesses, like imagery and description, passive voice, and the dreaded accidental point-of-view shifts. The scene chart is your guidebook, not your navigation system. You can make detours and changes. If a major shift occurs early on, edit the chart to reflect this. A scene chart can be added step to your current plotting method.

Ten Mistakes

Aspiring Creative Writers Make

1. Wondering how to find an agent or publisher before completing the project.
2. Waiting for inspiration to hit.
3. Trying to write something "different."
4. Using weak nouns and verbs, and passive voice.
5. Deciding not to read in your genre because you don't want to inadvertently plagiarize.
6. Not outlining.
7. Not setting aside specific times to write.
8. Not knowing what you want to communicate.
9. Never reading a book or taking a class on the craft of fiction (or screenplay) writing.
10. Having an idea for an interesting situation but not an interesting character.

For one more, visit www.lawritersgroup.com



Spring 2020 Short Story Contest

DEADLINE:
June 2, 2020

GRAND PRIZE:
\$1,000 and publication
in our magazine



**The
Writer
CONTEST**

