

GET PLOTTED

Inspiration is free
Perspiration is better than exasperation

This workshop teaches how to find stories, where to find stories, how to build a plot and how to layer the plot.

Most people dream their stories and gradually build their characters into the tale. Some start with a character and create a story around the imagined character. Some take their stories from real life experiences, or their own experience, and those around them.

The easiest way to start is with newspaper cuttings.

Whenever you see a potential story line, past it in a notebook.

Films are currently being made about Monica Lewinsky.

Lady Di had not been buried when film scripts were being written and documentaries started.

Crime writers go to the courts and Crime Watcher programs and Judge Judy on television provide great meaty stories for authors.

Everyone sits in cafes, coffee lounges, pubs and restaurants and imagines the lives of those around them.

Airports are ideal places to dream up stories about all the characters saying their farewells.

A dramatic moment in a person's life is the starting point for a great story.

There is a story in every human being.

Some stories would only fill a chapter some stories about great lives are written over and over and fill bookshelves of their exploits.

A newspaper example from this week-

The wife and daughter plot to kill the husband.

That is the base line...but what if something else happened????

What if.....the daughter falls in love with the investigating policeman

What if..... the husband learns of the plan and kidnaps the young daughter

What ifthe husband on learning of the plot...kills the wife.

What if....????? Stories start in an author's mind with...What If?

Keep a notebook. You will find you can plot a basic story line every day.

A card system is a good way to keep a record of your plot.

A card for each character, listing all features and history of each person.

A card for the time frame.

Research cards

Chapter cards.

This ensures your story stays on track

Plot your story as you would a three act play.

| | |
|------------|---|
| First Act | Set the scene. Choose the characters. Set the problem Reveal the conflict. |
| Second Act | Battle through the conflicts Make your reader wonder how it can be solved? |
| Third Act | Solve their problem Wrap up the story. |

CREATING THE SKELETON OF THE STORY.

Some people do it in chapters...some do it like a graph with the high points and lows to ensure they have balance and tension in the tale.

Start with a hook. Start with the very best opening you can craft to catch the reader and editor and draw them into your story. Then keep them hooked. Each chapter should end with a hook to make them start reading the next.

Know your characters. Draw up a character chart if it will help with all the main features of each major person in your book.

Apart from color of eyes and hair, write down what they love, what they hate, how they eat, sleep think. All the things that have moulded them, past hurts, past triumphs, past tragedies and include their hopes and dreams. This helps you create a rounded personality.

Create a unique setting.

They can stay within a jail cell or be in the tropics, but wherever it is you have to know that setting intimately in your mind's eye.

Even if you don't write every details of the setting into your book, your imagination will plot and reveal the story better if you know where exactly your characters are at any given time.

If the story is set in the tropics, where in the tropics, how did they get there, are they deep in the rainforest, or near the coast, or both.

Know, in your mind, the sounds, smells, temperature and total setting of your scene.

If there is music playing...know the piece...know if it is jazz, swing, classical and the tempo and mood it sets for the scene.

Know the perfumes: the smell of disease in a hospital room, the smell of a nursing home, the smell of a classroom.

Know how your characters would react to the sensual mood of the setting. How their ears, eyes, nose and skin would sense the atmosphere.

Research if necessary. Ensure your book is accurate for the time period and setting and historically correct.

Time Frame If the story starts in the morning, make sure the readers knows the time frame as the events occur. Even if the characters are only talking, the reader needs to know the time elapsed. If the story spans years, the time frame must be evident in the writing to enable the reader to travel with the characters.

Don't knock the reader around the head with the timing, let the characters show what is happening. Melancholy evening, romantic moon, start to the day with breakfast, dawn, showering are a few examples.

Clothing, food, transport attitudes all set the times historically.

Make your story dramatic, different, and memorable.

Your book stands or falls on the plotting

Think of the great films you have seen and assess what made them memorable.

The story starts at a dramatic, life-changing or life-threatening point of the hero or heroine's life.

Will they die, will they live, will they lose their child, their business, will they be saved, will they be crippled for life, will they be imprisoned, will people believe their story against their enemies.

The book starts with tension and a problem or crisis to overcome.

The span of the event can take years or hours. Hemmingway wrote a totally memorable book about an old man and the sea, which took place in a small boat on one fishing excursion.

The author must know the time span to know the pacing and tensions of the story.

Where to find plots

Fantasise Really let yourself go. Imagination is free. You can go wherever you want.

Read everything, poetry, newspapers, magazines, unusual books all give new plots.

Television Ads Television stories. Study images...look at the latest types of stories and what the market is showing. Remember most television is planned a year before and written even earlier.

Eavesdrop in cafes, restaurants, pubs, race tracks. Phone calls, elevators...where ever people gather, listen to what they are saying. Listen to dialogue and hear how people speak in verbal shorthand...make your dialogue natural. Listen to kids talking, Keep your notebook handy.

Talk to strangers...talk to anyone, talk to people you wouldn't usually meet and listen to their tone, to different social attitudes, language structures. Tune your ears to hear.

Check out, astrology charts, read Tarot, go down the East End of Rundle Street and watch from a sidewalk café, go down Hindley Street and go into a shop you normally wouldn't frequent. Go to a different type of pub. Sit on a bench at Glenelg foreshore.

Dream and record your dreams. Train yourself to recall your dreams and hold them in the front of your mind on waking. This is your unconscious mind at work, work with it.

Train your subconscious mind to speak to you...Treat your mind like a computer and know how it works and how it records information. Your mind is a treasure trove of great dramas. That is why you are writers. You know that.

Talk Back Radio A great place for stories because you hear the tone, sense the passion and get a great insight into the personalities as they interact with the announcer.

This is also a great place to hear dialogue.

You really need a notebook beside you when listening.

While we "Show not tell" the story, dialogue on talk-back radio shows how some words are anger words and how they can be used to lift tension and reveal passion.

Race tracks, whether horses, dogs or cars are great places for stories. People reveal a great deal about themselves when they are betting, and if you are writing a story involving people in racing you have to hear the call of the bookie, feel the tension as the horses race. The Casino is also fabulous for drama and seeing meaty stories evolving.

If you plan your writing around a theme, frequent the type of places your characters would visit.

Learn to structure your plot. And put texture into the story. Layer the characters and the tension. You do this by knowing your setting, your atmosphere and your plot because it is alive in your mind.

20 Plots

- 1 The Quest
- 2 Adventure
- 3 Pursuit
- 4 Escape
- 5 Revenge
- 6 The Riddle
- 7 Rivalry
- 8 Underdog
- 9 Temptation
- 10 Metamorphosis (physical)
- 11 Transformation
- 12 Maturation
- 13 Love
- 14 Forbidden Love
- 15 Sacrifice
- 16 Discovery
- 17 Wretched Excess
- 18 Ascension
- 19 Descention
- 20 Power

Plotting Checklist

- 1 Is the plot different?
- 2 Is the plot strong enough?
- 3 Are the characters strong enough?
- 4 Is the conflict believable?
- 5 Is the conflict strong enough?
- 6 Is the work aimed at the right market or written for the right market?
- 7 Does the plot flow from scene to scene?
- 8 Does the story start at the right place (not a boring lead-up)?
- 9 Is the pace holding strong interest throughout?
- 10 Does the pace keep the reader turning pages?
- 11 Is the premise right?
- 12 Does the conflict point to the climax?
- 13 Does the story have a satisfying end.

Exercise.....

Write a plot from newspaper cuttings.

Using the basic line of the headline or the story itself ask yourself “What if?” – and change the story, create a different plot and develop the characters slightly. If the story is too long don’t bother reading it through, the cutting is merely a diving board to get you into the plotting.

Or, if you prefer, write down a plot you are already working on.