

Master Plot Construction Cheat Sheet



Here are seven key take-aways from this course:

1. To start off your story, set up and drop the hammer by introducing your hero. Then construct an event that alters their existence and reveals their object of desire. The object of desire is what your hero needs to feel whole. It could be to find a person, win the game, land a job, kill the monster -- whatever it is make it *clear*. This settles in your reader. This tells them what your story is about.
2. The Central Dramatic Question is the question that fuels the entire story. State it simply by filling in the blanks: Will (your hero) acquire (their object of desire)?
3. Think of your story like a train ride that can only end in one of four "stations:"
 - a. Hero acquires object of desire.
 - b. Hero acquires object of desire but pays high price.
 - c. Hero fails to acquire object of desire but gains something of profound value.
 - d. Hero fails to acquire object of desire.
4. Your story is on track if your hero is pursuing their object of desire, off track if not.
5. The success of your story depends on how deeply your reader cares about your hero's quest to obtain their object of desire. Every moment you write prior to dropping the hammer is specifically written to increase the emotional power of the hammer coming down. You want your reader to feel "this thing, happening to this person, at this time would be a massive deal."
6. The beginning of the end takes place when your hero makes -- and confirms -- a decision to take one final action that leads to their definitively acquiring or failing to acquire their object of desire.
7. The simplest way to think about story is this: ask a dramatic question, answer it. Will Hamlet kill the King? Yes.
8. Bonus bullet: A well constructed plot facilitates the successful integration of *all* the principles. For example, consider the collective impact of an active and decisive hero, operating at the top of their intelligence, struggling through dilemmas in pursuit of the object of desire. You get into flow states by focusing on executing principles, by getting lost in creative problem solving.

