

Master Theme Cheat Sheet



Here are seven key take-aways from this course:

1. You discover the meaning of your story by doing the math. Because A and B happened it means C.
2. Your story will be simpler to write if you have a strong opinion to express. And then structure the story so the math works.
3. Many great writers like Stanley Kubrick told simpler stories earlier in their career. It's easier to define the meaning of the anti-war film *Paths of Glory* (1957) than it is to define the meaning of the character study, *Barry Lyndon* (1975). Early in your career, keep it simple and add complexity to your stories as you develop.
4. To amplify your theme you may allude to it with references that are visual and spoken – a slogan on a passing billboard, a line repeated in different context. Expand your meaning by presenting the idea in different contexts.
5. To express your core idea with integrity, you must express the opposing viewpoint in the best possible light. The harder you attack your theme the better.
6. Some writers tell stories to express an idea. Some write to explore one. The danger of expressing your theme is hitting it too hard. The danger of exploring an idea is the story becomes too vague and confuses your reader. Whether you write to express or to explore, respect the risk inherent in your choice.
7. Fill your well. Research, go to sacred places, spend time with fascinating people, read books, seek transcendent experiences, do weird things. You must stalk great ideas.

