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Dynamic Story Creation

Part One – The Philosophy of Story Creation

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The Big Question

What does this do for my story?

In everything you learn in this industry, always test it before you follow others blindly and change your entire manuscript. Even if something works for another writer, it doesn't mean it'll work for you. Remember, creativity is subjective. - DRAKE

Inspiration of a Writer

“Books aren't written - they're rewritten. Including your own. It is one of the hardest things to accept, especially after the seventh rewrite hasn't quite done it.”

- Michael Crichton 1942 – 2008
(*Jurassic Park*)

Many people have this impression that writers drink tons of booze, and in a morose depressed state hook an I.V. directly into a vein, and using their own blood as ink, write the next great American novel.



Personally, I think this is bovine scatology!

Not in Quiet nor Without Pain

The truth that no one in today’s instant-gratification world of ours wants to hear is that becoming a professional writer does not come easy. Sure, there are a few who have won the lottery. But for the most part, anyone who is anyone has busted their behinds to become proficient as a writer.

Writing is not only a Talent

Writing is also a Skill, plain and simple. As with all skills, it takes about 10,000 hours to become a professional.

Years of Schooling
Years of Practice

Ten Years, in fact

“The truth that no one in today’s instant-gratification world of ours wants to hear is that becoming a professional writer does not come easy. Sure, there are a few who have won the lottery. But for the most part, anyone who is anyone has busted their behinds to become proficient as a writer.”

- David Eddings 1931 – 2009
(*Belgariad*)

You know who else said this?

Terry Brooks
Ray Bradbury
Robert Heinlein

And the list of big-name professionals who feel this way goes on.

Study and Practice

The only way you can become a good, professional story creator is to learn what elements make a good story, then practice implementing them.

Time &
Effort

What do you get from those years?

Understand The Job

The first step to becoming a professional story creator is understanding what it means to make a professional story.

Fans
Critics
Professionals
Fans VS Critics
Batman v Superman
Fans – 71%, Critics – 26%

Why Critics Differ from Fans

Critics differ from fans in two main ways.

Exposure
They understand the Code

Basically, Fans just want to enjoy the ride. Critics need a deeper understanding of story structure.

Professional Story Creators can't afford a Fan's Mentality

Fans don't know why they like or do not like a story. All they know is that they either liked the story, or they disliked it.

Finding Nemo

Why did you like that movie?
What elements were included that made you love it?
What resonated with you as the audience?

Flip the Coin

Think about a book or movie you disliked. Why did you dislike it?

Writers Need More

If you want to become a professional story creator, you must be able to see the "Code" that is used to create those story.

The Invisible Layer.

You're on the path to become a professional story creator. The first step must be understanding what makes a good story and what causes stories to be bad.

If you don't understand what makes a good story, and what makes a bad story, how the heck do you think you can write a story people will enjoy?

A Story is Two Layers

The Invisible Layer – what the reader unknowingly consumes - the message of the story. This is the **ONLY** thing the reader takes away with them once the story is over.

The Physical Layer – the vehicle that delivers the Invisible Layer.

Understanding Story Creation is Understanding Storytelling

Just as a surgeon must study anatomy before they can operate on a patient, you need to understand how stories are created and why they are read if you are going to be a successful story creator.

This is a vital concept to buy into, because the more knowledgeable you are as an story creator, the more enjoyment the reader will get from the stories you create.

Why Stories are Read

People read fiction not to learn new things, but to experience the ideas and feelings the story inspires inside them.

This can take many forms...

- Learn a moral lesson
- The thrill of an impossible experience
- Living through a historical time, or alternate history
- Playing out “if only” or “what if” scenarios
- Escaping their reality

The reality is – It’s **ALWAYS** Emotional!

Returning to the fact that a Story is Two Layers

The Invisible Layer – very formulaic, and always follows very similar patterns.

The Physical Layer – what makes your story feel unique from all other stories.

Plot = Events ≠ Story

It’s easy to think the plot is the story. Why? Because “events” take center stage. They are right in your face from page one to the end of the book. But “events” don’t make a story.

The Story is the Invisible Elements that are underneath your Events that the reader consumes without knowing it.

Your Events Don't Matter

Everything you create for your story is worthless...

Your plot. Your setting. Your characters and their struggles against the conflict. The words you use and how you craft your prose...

It's all absolutely worthless if you forget the most important thing about storytelling...

It's all about the emotional gratification of the reader.

The Character = The Reader

You create a character to be affected by the events of your plot, but the reader does not care about any of that.

In speculative fiction, what you're really doing is creating a shell that the reader BECOMES. And they want to be affected by the journey they take as your character.

It's Why and the Affect, not How or What

In other words, readers don't care about the details of how a character goes about overcoming the obstacles of your plot nor what they do next. They care about WHY they are doing what they are doing, and the AFFECT it will have upon them and the world around them.

If a reader can't relate to the WHY, or if they aren't moved by the AFFECT, they will not enjoy reading your story.

Does Structure Limit Creativity?

The biggest misconception about learning story structure is that many writers fear learning this stuff will limit their creativity.

Let's test that...

Invisible Layer

On the Invisible Layer, all cop shows are identical – Justice will be Served.



Physical Layer

But even at the Physical Layer, things can still be pretty identical, and still make the reader feel your story is unique.

Think about *Star Wars – A New Hope* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. Both have similarities, sure. Both are about orphan boys who have to face and defeat a dark evil. But do they “feel” like the same story? Let’s take a look...

- *Star Wars – A New Hope*
- Luke Skywalker is an orphan living with his aunt & uncle on a remote planet
- Luke is rescued from aliens by a wise mentor Obi Wan, who turns out to be a Jedi Knight
- Obi Wan tells Luke that his father was also a Jedi Knight, and was the best pilot ever
- Luke is instructed on how to use the force and Light Saber, so he can become a Jedi Knight as well
- Through a series of mini-adventures in the galaxy, Luke develops his skills and talents and makes two close friends in Han Solo and Princess Leia
- Luke also learns that his real nemesis is Darth Vader, who murdered his father
- Luke shows this new world that he is a top pilot while battling the Death Star by making a direct hit that gives the Rebels victory over the Empire
- It concludes with Luke and his new friends receiving medals of valor

This is the synopsis of *Star Wars – A New Hope*, right? Let’s see how it compares to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*...

- ~~*Star Wars – A New Hope*~~ *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*
- ~~Luke Skywalker~~ Harry Potter is an orphan living with his aunt & uncle on a remote planet Suburbia
- ~~Luke~~ Harry is rescued from ~~aliens~~ muggles by a wise mentor ~~Obi Wan~~ Hagrid, who turns out to be a ~~Jedi Knight~~ Wizard
- ~~Obi Wan~~ Hagrid tells ~~Luke~~ Harry that his father was also a ~~Jedi Knight~~ Wizard, and was the best ~~pilot~~ Quidditch player ever
- ~~Luke~~ Harry is instructed on how to use ~~the force~~ magic and ~~Light Saber~~ a flying broom, so he can become a ~~Jedi Knight~~ Wizard as well
- Through a series of mini-adventures in ~~the galaxy~~ Hogwarts, ~~Luke~~ Harry develops his skills and talents and makes two close friends in ~~Han Solo~~ Ron and ~~Princess Leia~~ Hermione

- ~~Luke~~ Harry also learns that his real nemesis is ~~Darth Vader~~ Voldermort, who murdered his ~~father~~ parents
- ~~Luke~~ Harry shows this new world that he is a top ~~pilot~~ Quidditch player while battling the ~~Death Star~~ Slytherin by making a ~~direct hit~~ catch that gives the ~~Rebels~~ Gryffindor victory over the ~~Empire~~ Slytherin
- It concludes with ~~Luke~~ Harry and his new friends ~~receiving medals of valor~~ winning the House Cup

Now, the cynics out there may be saying, “SEE!!! This is why these movies suck!” But they are wrong. This is why both of these movies were massive successes. Plus, I will bet my last dollar that all those idiots who say things like this would sell their soul to have written either of these stories.

The reality is, stories must be similar to become successful because fans expect stories to deliver things in very specific ways.

The Talent

Once you wrap your mind around the fact that all stories are basically the same, you will find that you are both freed and imprisoned at the same time. You are freed, because you understand the code behind stories, and are able to consistently produce stories people want to read.

Unfortunately, you begin to realize how much talent you need to create stories that “feel” unique to the reader.

I’ll leave you with this...

“Of course, the writer can impose control; It’s just a really crappy idea. Writing controlled fiction is called “plotting.” Buckling your seatbelt and letting the story take over, however... that is called “storytelling.” Storytelling is as natural as breathing; plotting is the literary version of artificial respiration.”

- Stephen King 1947 –
(*The Stand*)

While I agree with this statement, I feel it is incomplete. And while it may be presumptuous of me to rewrite a quote from king, I feel it should be this:

“Of course, the writer can impose control; It’s just a really crappy idea. Writing controlled fiction is called “plotting.” Buckling your seatbelt and letting the story take over, however... that is called “storytelling. **Writers should spend time and effort learning the craft of writing until storytelling becomes** as natural to them as breathing; plotting is the literary version of artificial respiration.”

- Maxwell Alexander Drake 1969 –
(*My Life*)

End

Thank you for your time and attention. I hope you found it informative. I have started a blog dedicated to the discussion of the craft of writing. If you have specific questions, please send them to me at author@maxadrake.com and I will include them on blog.maxwellalexanderdrake.com.

I am on Facebook [/MaxwellAlexanderDrake](https://www.facebook.com/MaxwellAlexanderDrake), Twitter [@MaxwellADrake](https://twitter.com/MaxwellADrake), and Instagram [/maxwellalexanderdrake](https://www.instagram.com/maxwellalexanderdrake). Please look me up.

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