

Screenwriting  
Media 22/Media 123

Week 6

Select Slides

# Story Development & Crafting Treatments

@screenplay.tips

I STOPPED WRITING GET  
OUT ABOUT 20 TIMES  
BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT  
WAS IMPOSSIBLE.  
I THOUGHT IT WASN'T  
GOING TO WORK.  
I THOUGHT NO ONE WOULD  
EVER MAKE THIS MOVIE.  
BUT I KEPT COMING BACK  
TO IT BECAUSE I KNEW  
IF SOMEONE LET ME  
MAKE THIS MOVIE,  
PEOPLE WOULD HEAR  
IT AND PEOPLE  
WOULD SEE IT.

JORDAN PEELE



screenwritersutopia

# I find it hard to sit down and write

Start Here



- Give yourself permission to write garbage
- Silence your inner critic
- Create a writing ritual
- Set a goal (# of words or pages not time)
- Be delusional



# I have no clue where to start

Start Here



1. YOUR LIFE
2. DREAMS
3. TWISTS ON EXISTING STORIES
4. JOKES, URBAN LEGENDS
5. CURRENT EVENTS/SOCIAL ISSUES
6. INTERESTING CHARACTERS
7. "WHAT IF" SCENARIOS

# I have an idea but I'm having trouble presenting it.

Start Here



My SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER IS...

...TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH A COMPELLING GOAL  
WHILE BEING OPPOSED BY...

... A POWERFUL AND COMMITTED OPPONENT, OVER...

SIGNIFICANT STAKES...

...And HERE'S WHAT THEY LEARN ALONG THE WAY



# I don't know how it should begin

Start Here



1. Describe your hero's ordinary world
2. Describe your hero's place in that world
3. What changes in that world and why?
4. How does your hero respond?

I can get started but get lost  
when things start happening

Remember...

A plot is a chain of connected events.



Think...

- Action leads to:
- Reaction, which leads to:
- Choice, which leads to:
- Consequence which leads to:
- New Action

...spin and repeat

I get lost in the middle

The Three Act Structure...

...think of it as a trusty **story GPS**



I don't have a sense of who  
my main character is.

Start Here



1. Dark moment story
2. Resulting mistruth they believe
3. Wound they suffered
4. Resulting shame/secret
5. What special gift do they possess...
6. The makes them worthy of redemption?

I feel like the story can go  
in a zillion different directions

Start Here



1. What's your story's theme?
2. Begin with your hero opposing that theme
3. End with your hero believing that theme
4. Create a plot that forces them to make the change



# I don't know how it should end

Start Here



1. What do you want your hero to learn?
2. What must your hero endure to learn it?
3. What/who must your hero vanquish?
4. What does your hero gain with the win?
5. What is the “new normal”

I think "story structure" is limiting and formulaic

- Follow your intuition
- Follow your characters
- Follow the fun

*"To be guided by fragrance is a hundred times better than following tracks."*

-- Rumi



# THE TREATMENT META DATA

- TITLE
- GENRE
- LOGLINE
- SETTING
- NETFLIX'S THREE WORDS
- THREE-TO-FIVE PAGE SUMMARY

# WHAT'S IN THE TREATMENT SUMMARY?

1. Inciting incident
2. What the hero wants
3. What and who are in the way
4. What's at stake
5. What the hero learns
6. Beginning, middle, end
7. How the hero and her world changes by the end



# WHAT'S NOT IN A TREATMENT SUMMARY?

- UNNECESSARY DESCRIPTION
- UNNECESSARY BACK STORY
- DIALOGUE (RARE EXCEPTIONS)
- IMAGES, DRAWINGS (RARE EXCEPTIONS)
- LONG PARAGRAPHS
- WEIRD FONTS

# META DATA EXAMPLE:

- TITLE: *THE WIZARD OF OZ*
- GENRE: *FANTASY ADVENTURE*
- LOG LINE: *TRANSPORTED TO A SURREAL WORLD, A YOUNG GIRL KILLS THE FIRST PERSON SHE MEETS AND TEAMS UP WITH THREE STRANGERS TO KILL AGAIN.*
- SETTING: *A MAGICAL AND COLORFUL LAND, FAR, FAR AWAY*
- NETFLIX'S THREE WORDS: *FRIGHTFUL, WONDEROUS, INSPIRING*



## A (LOOSE) LOG LINE FORMULA

**Inciting Incident** + **Protagonist** + **Action** + **Antagonist** + **Stakes**



After rescue by a German bounty hunter, a freed slave sets out to rescue his wife from a brutal plantation owner.



- Slapstick
- Feel Good
- Goofy



# CHECKLIST: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A TREATMENT

1. SET UP OF NORMAL WORLD
2. INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR CHARACTERS
3. INCITING INCIDENT
4. HERO'S OPENING BELIEF AND FLAW
5. WHAT THE HERO WANTS (CONSCIOUS EXTERNAL DESIRE)
6. WHAT THE HERO NEEDS (UNCONSCIOUS INTERNAL NEED)
7. END OF ACT ONE (INTRODUCTION OF THE STORY QUESTION)

8. Act II major plot points (conflicts, challenges, complications and CHOICES)
9. Act II mid-point crisis
10. End of Act II (lowest point for hero)
11. Act III major plot points
12. Climax (battle with antagonist?)
13. Resolution
14. Hero's closing belief (after lessons learned)



## TREATMENT TIPS

- KEEP IT SIMPLE
- TELL IT LIKE A SHORT STORY TOLD IN PRESENT TENSE
- KEEP THE STORY MOVING
- HIT THE BIG EMOTIONS
- STRIKE A TONE TO FIT THE STORY, BUT NOT OVERLY STYLIZED
- STAY AWAY FROM SUBPLOTS, IF POSSIBLE
- SHOW THE HERO'S ARC
- WRITE LIKE YOU'RE DESCRIBING WHAT'S ON THE SCREEN