

PLAYBOOK

# **Craft stories** **to teach & explain**

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# PLAYBOOK

# Craft stories to teach & explain

## Narrative 101

Clarify the message, craft the story

Story = Plot + Character

How to structure stories

Story structure

Stories: teaching life lessons through others' experiences

## Craft a story

Map out a story (to teach and explain)

Storyline canvas

Reverse engineer stories

Craft stories to teach & explain

## Amplify your story

Story structures

Asses what your story is communicating

Plot improvement questions

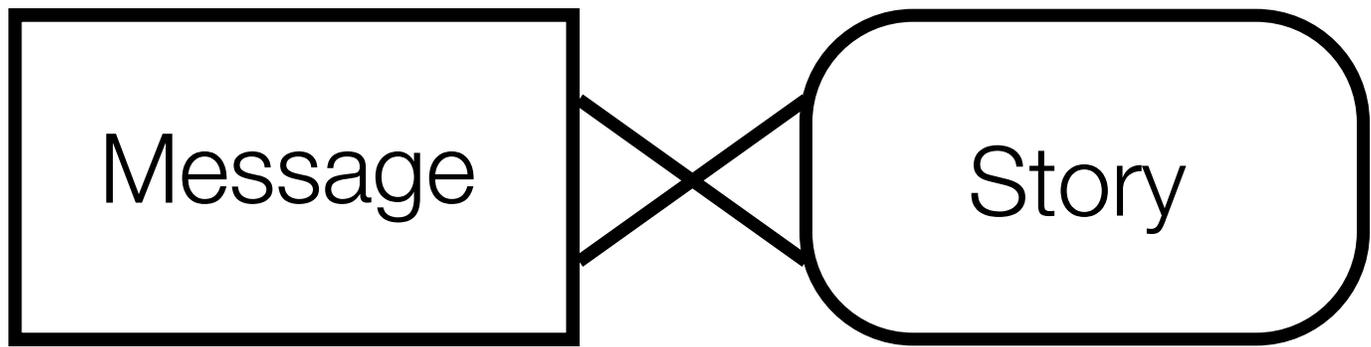
Character improvement questions

Make your story more dynamic

3 types of narrative to master storytelling

Section 1

# **Narrative 101**



## 1 Clarify the message

Before jumping to working on writing a story to communicate your message, take time to first clarify your message. You want to distill your message down to its purest form to ensure that when you build on top of it you are communicating exactly what you intend.

## 2 Craft the story

There is no better vehicle for a message than a story. Once you know what you want to say, embed that message into a story. Reverse engineer the story by mapping out the character transformation that leads them to learn the life lesson (your message). Then construct the plot to bring the story to life.

## NARRATIVE

# Story = Plot + Character

To create impactful stories that can be used to teach and explain you need two essential ingredients. You need a story structure (plot) that captures audience interest and that allows you to communicate with intention. You also need a round character that is changed by the plot events and through this transformation they learn a life lesson (your hidden message).

## Plot

Stories need a beginning, middle and end. They need a complication that creates a dramatic arc that transform a endless monologue into an arresting story. Enter plot otherwise known as your story's structure.

## Character

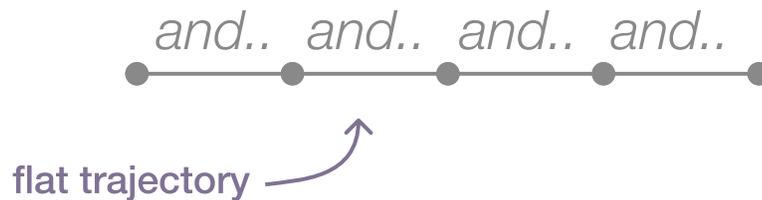
Stories need characters who are transformed by their experiences. They need a protagonist with a goal who encounters obstacles along the way. A transformed character's story contains the kernel of truth in their experience that conveys your message to the audience.

## PLOT STORYLINE

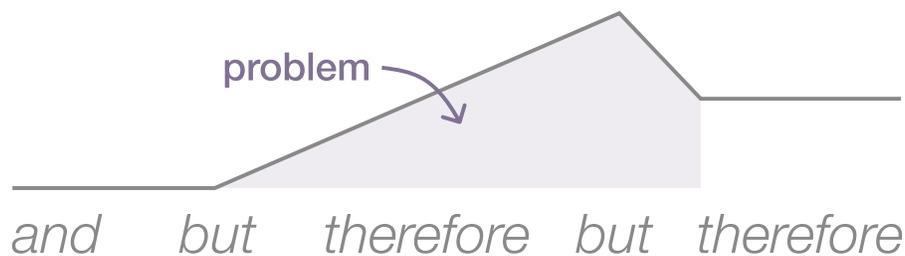
# How to structure stories

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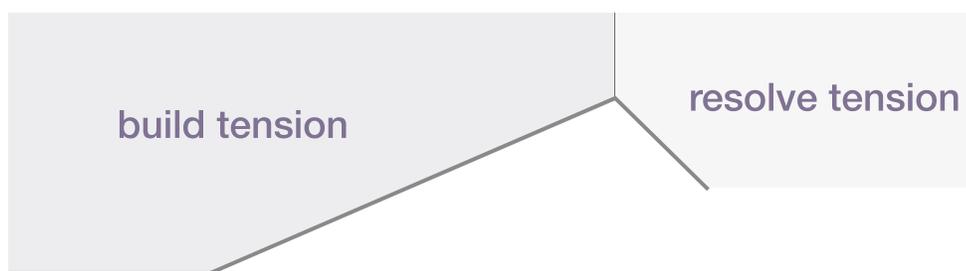
Stories with no problems are missing a plot



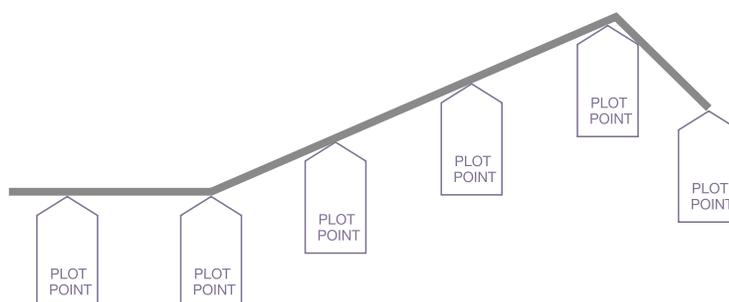
You need a dramatic arc to create a plot



A plot centered on a complication creates tension



Every plot point needs to tie to this singular storyline



## PLOT STORYLINE

# Story structure

## Beginning

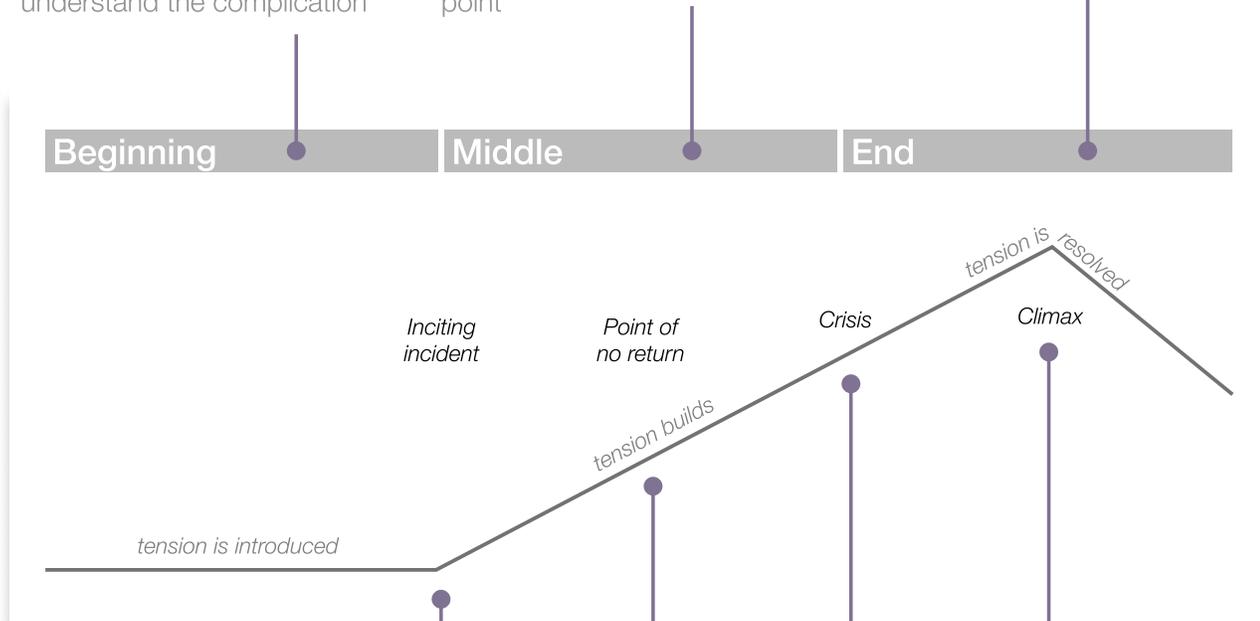
Introduce the character and setting and begin to lay down the essential context needed to understand the complication

## Middle

Create tension with formal introduction of the conflict and build this towards a breaking point

## End

Bring the conflict to its peak and then resolve it.



## Inciting incident

The plot event where the character first engages with the complication. They are made aware of it for the first time in a pointed way.

## Climax

The ultimate plot event of the story that everything builds to. Here the problem must be resolved in a do or die plot event.

## Point of no return

The plot event where the character has grappled enough with the complication to where there is no going back to a world where they did not have awareness of it. There now is a strong need to resolve the problem posed by the conflict.

## Crisis

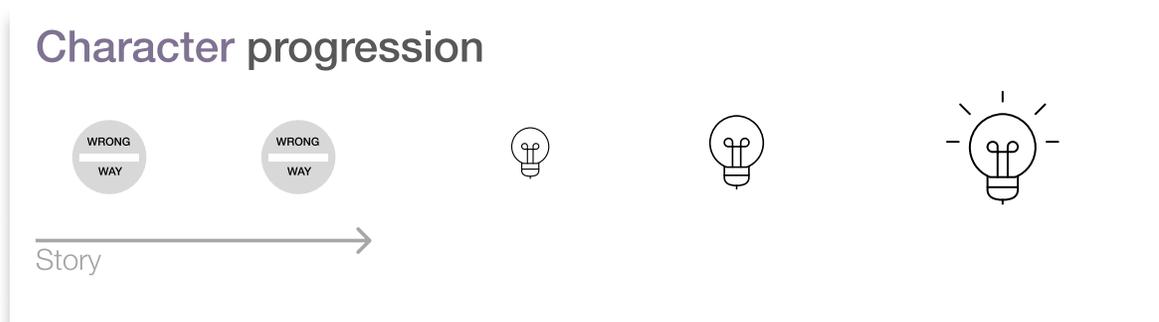
A plot event where the impact of the complication is felt deeply by the character. At this stage it feels like there is no hope in regards to resolving the conflict.

# Stories: teaching life lessons through others' experiences

To teach and explain specific lessons with stories, you need to find **characters** who have faced a challenge related to your message.

before  $\xrightarrow{\text{change}}$  after

Not only that, you want to find **characters** who have learned the life lesson (from their experience) that you are trying to teach and convey.



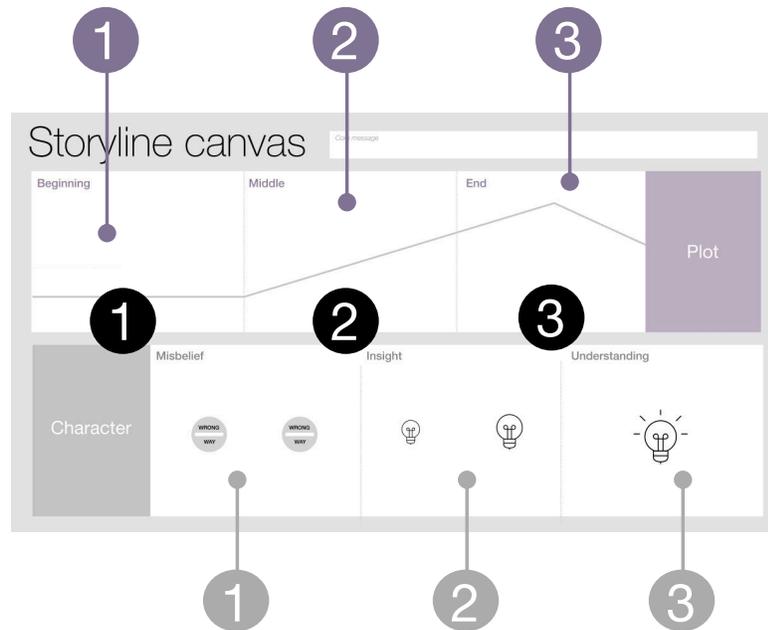
Initially the character will go the wrong way and live out the opposite of the life lesson. Then along their story journey they will have a moment of insight that builds until full understanding when everything clicks into place.

## Section 2

# Craft a story

## STORYLINE CANVAS

# Map out a story (to teach & explain)



## Plot

### 1 Beginning →

Introduce the character and setting and begin to lay down the essential context needed to understand the complication

*from start to inciting incident*

### 2 Middle →

Create tension with formal introduction of the conflict and build this towards a breaking point

*from inciting incident to point of no return to crisis*

### 3 End

Bring the conflict to its peak and then resolve it.

*from crisis to climax to end*

## Character

### 1 Misbelief →

The character has not yet learned the life lesson from this story and their actions highlight this. They have a wrong belief that is shown through their behaviors.

### 2 Insight →

The character collides with the complication and it forces them to start to wrestle with the truth contained in the life lesson of the story.

### 3 Understanding

The character faces the ultimate test related to the complication and from it learns the life lesson. Their behavior now reflects an understanding of the lesson.

## Story

### 1 Setup →

The story starts and learn the context related to the character and their misbelief

### 2 Conflict →

The meat of the story where all the plot events force the character to wrestle with and form insights related to the life lesson.

### 3 Conclusion

The climax occurs with a plot event that forces understanding of the life lesson out of the character. Their understanding has fully crystallized and they live into this now.

## MAP THE CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION

# Reverse engineer stories

Start at the end with the **core message** (life lesson) of the story



Then reverse engineer backwards from that core message. Do this by brainstorming the character transformation that would happen in your story to lead to your core message being the life lesson of the story.



How does someone behave who has not yet understood the life lesson in your core message?

What would their belief be prior to learning the life lesson?

What negative consequences would stem from them not yet knowing the life lesson?

What are examples of events that might force them to face their lack of understanding?

How might they confront their ignorance related to the life lesson?

How might they confront their ignorance related to the life lesson?

How does someone behave who completely understands the life lesson in your core message?

What would they now do differently after learning this life lesson?

How will they now face future situations armed with this knowledge?

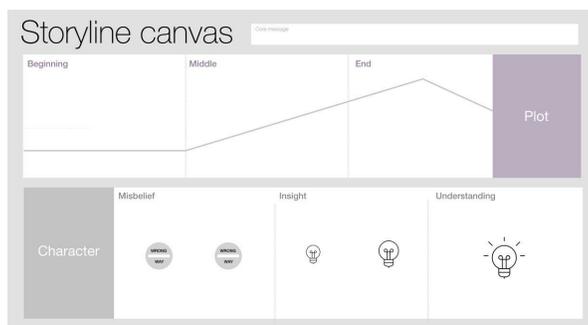
# Craft stories to teach & explain

## 1 Map the story

Map out the plot and character transformation

**Plot** beginning, middle, end

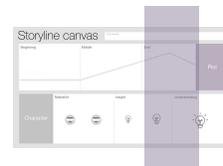
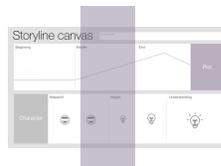
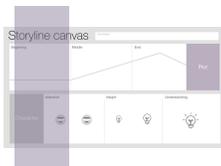
**Character** misbelief, insight, understanding



## 2 Craft the story

Construct your story using the mapped out elements and the following flow

**Setup** → **Conflict** → **Conclusion**



## Section 3

**Amplify  
your  
story**

# Story structures

## Broken plot patterns

### Hollow plot

An underdeveloped story where there is a beginning and an end but its missing a middle. With only two major plot points it is not possible to create a dramatic arc



### Monologue

An endless litany of details that contains no central complication. While there is a character there is no dramatic arc to the story as the status quo is never disrupted.



## Library of plot patterns

abc

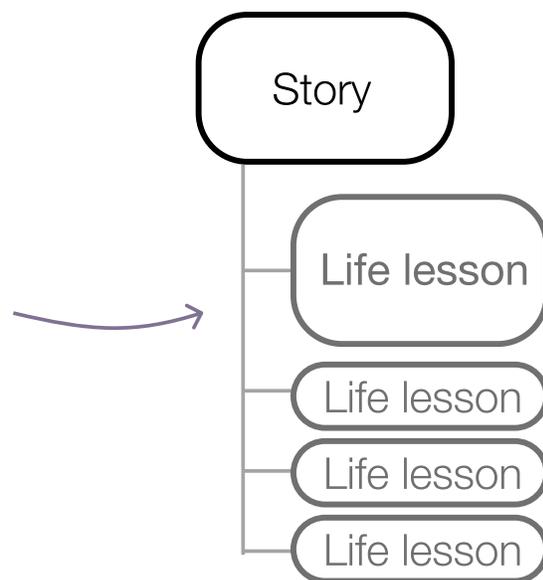
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# Assess what your story is communicating

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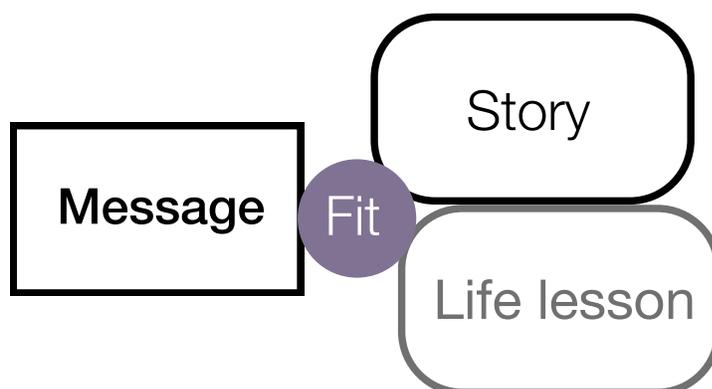
Every story can teach multiple life lessons

There usually is a primary life lesson (morale of the story) that is inherent to a story.



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Assess whether the primary life lesson **fits** what **message** you are trying to communicate



## STORY STRUCTURE

# Plot improvement questions

### Trigger questions

What gets in the way of the protagonist getting what they want?

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What is the primary event or plot point of the story?

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What kicks things off in the story?

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What makes things hard in the story?

### Tips

“Show don’t tell” by using actions to reveal the complication instead of just stating it

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The primary event should be the climax of the story

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This is your inciting incident and it should tie directly to the story’s complication

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# Character improvement questions

## Trigger questions

What does the character want?

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What will they learn from the experience?

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## Tips

Their goal should tie directly to the story's main complication

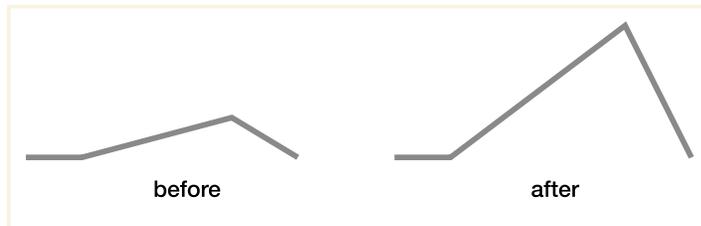
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The primary life lesson from the story is your core message

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## HOW TO GUIDE

# Make your story more dynamic



Every story needs a complication (↘↗) at its core. Use the guide below to increase this dramatic arc.

## Ways to increase tension

### Uncertainty

The more uncertainty the more it draws the audience in to wonder how the story will resolve itself.



### Obstacles

The more problems and obstacles that have to be overcome the more intriguing the story. Obstacles can be external or internal for the character.



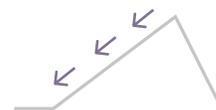
### Stakes

Raise awareness for what is at stake in the story to increase tension.



### Competing forces

Detail who or what is coming against the protagonist to prevent them from achieving their goal



### Time pressure

With only so much time before deadlines the pressure skyrockets and creates tension.



### Withheld info

When the character is missing key info that the reader is aware of it rackets up the tension in the story.



# 3 types of narrative to master storytelling

## 1 Summary narrative

As the name suggest summary narrative summarizes a period of time. You quickly cover what happened over a length of time instead of going into deep detail of every second.

### EXAMPLE 1

Over the next three months, Sarah transformed her spare room into a functional home office.

### EXAMPLE 2

The renovation cost twice what she budgeted, but by summer's end she had a workspace that finally felt like her own

## 2 Scenic narrative

Vivid scenes where you know where a character is and what they are doing frame by frame. You are a fly on the wall getting to witness exactly what is happening.

### EXAMPLE 1

Sarah stood in the doorway, paintbrush dripping navy blue onto the dropcloth as she studied the half-finished wall.

### EXAMPLE 2

She wiped her forehead with the back of her hand, leaving a streak of paint across her temple, and smiled at the emerging color.

## 3 Transitions