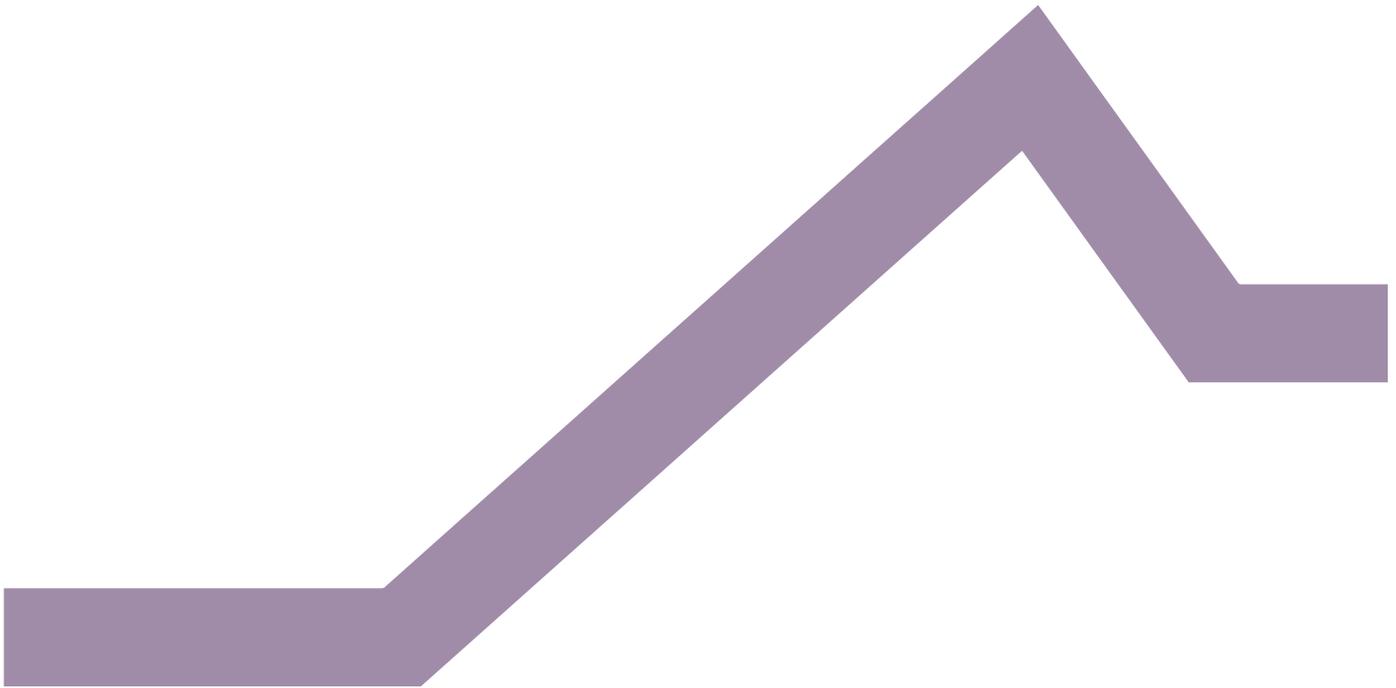


FIELD GUIDE

Craft stories

to teach, explain & inspire



SECTION 1

Start by covering the essential ingredients of storytelling. These are the foundational concepts you need to be aware of



Narrative 101

Craft a story

Amplify your story



SECTION 2

Cover the core tool (the storyline canvas) and process you can use to start crafting your own stories.



SECTION 3

Now that you have started crafting stories, take your stories to the next level and look to improve them in this section

1

Narrative 101

The message-story loop

Story = Plot + Character

How to structure stories

Story structure

Character transformation

2

Craft a story

External (plot events) & internal (character development)

Map out a story

Storyline canvas

Craft stories to teach & explain

3

Amplify your story

Common plot mistakes

Fine tune your message & story

Plot improvement questions

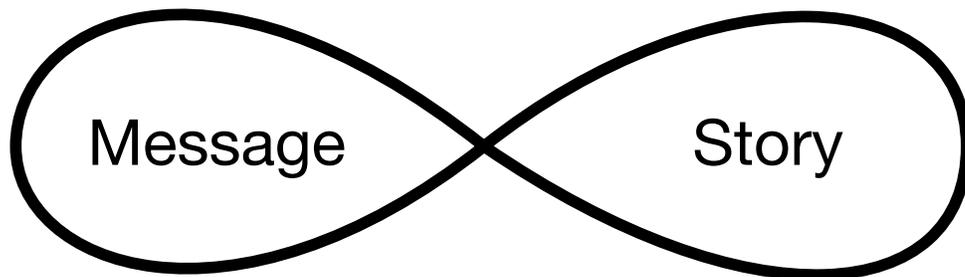
Character improvement questions

Make your story more dynamic

Narrative 101

The Message-Story Loop

Alternate between refining your message and sharpening the story that communicates it



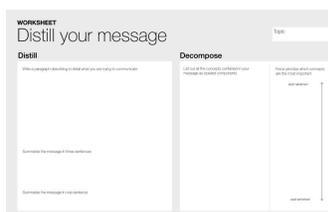
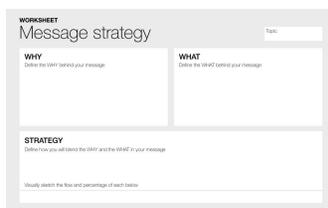
Distill your message down to its purest form to create a simple foundation you can build off from

DESCRIPTION

Stories are the perfect vehicle to spread your message. Take what you want to say and embed it in a story



RESOURCES



NARRATIVE

Story = Plot + Character

To create impactful stories that can be used to teach and explain you need two essential ingredients.

Plot



DESCRIPTION

You need a story structure (plot) that captures audience interest and that allows you to communicate with intention. 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.

FOCUS

External (actions, behaviors, results)

Character



DESCRIPTION

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). A transformed character's story contains the kernel of truth that conveys your message to the audience.

FOCUS

Internal (thoughts, beliefs, convictions)

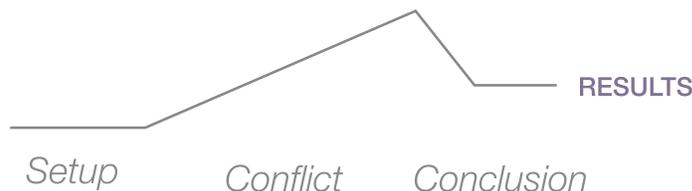
PLOT STORYLINE

How to structure stories

You need a dramatic arc to create a plot



You can often look back from results to find the storyline



What events led to these results?

What event kicked this all off?

What obstacles made it difficult to achieve these results?

How did they overcome these obstacles?

How did it all end?

PLOT STORYLINE

Story structure

Setup

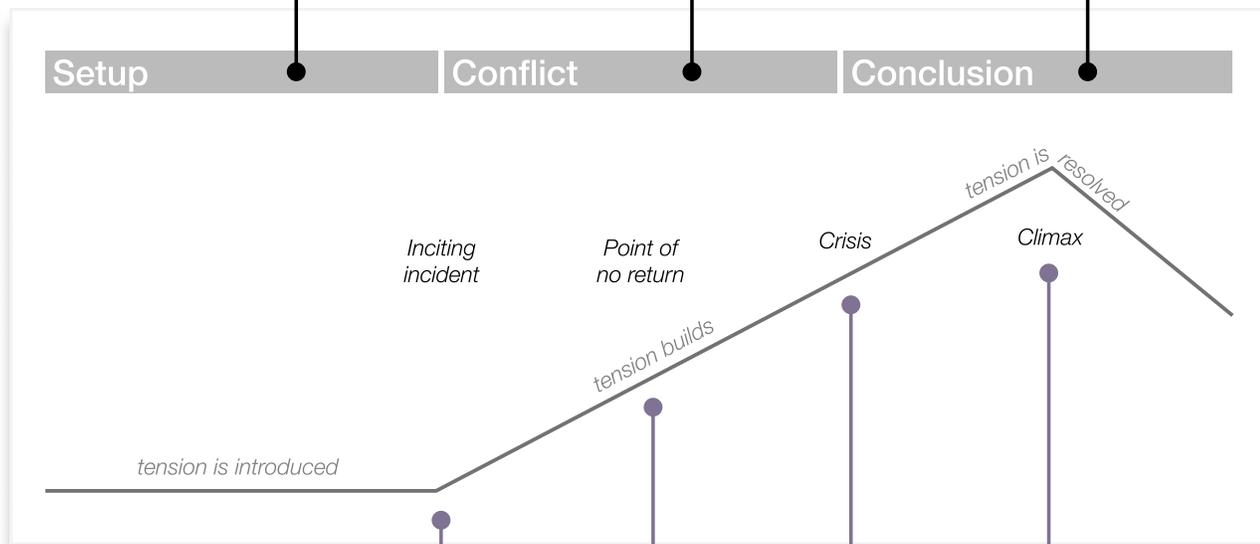
Introduce the character and setting and begin to lay down the essential context needed to understand the complication

Conflict

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

Conclusion

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

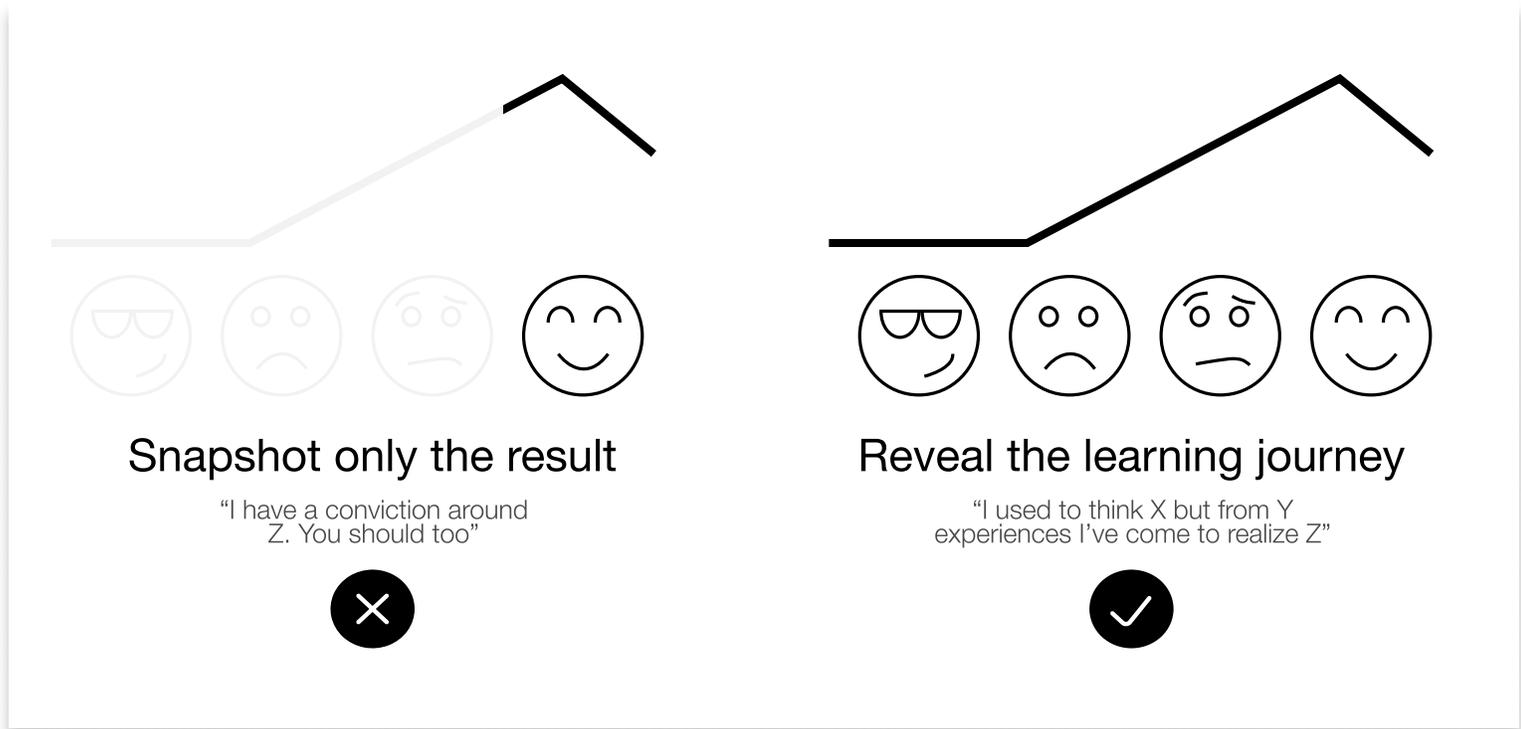
The plot event where the character has grappled enough with the complication to where there is no going back to a world where they did not have awareness of it. There now is a strong need to resolve the problem posed by the conflict.

Crisis

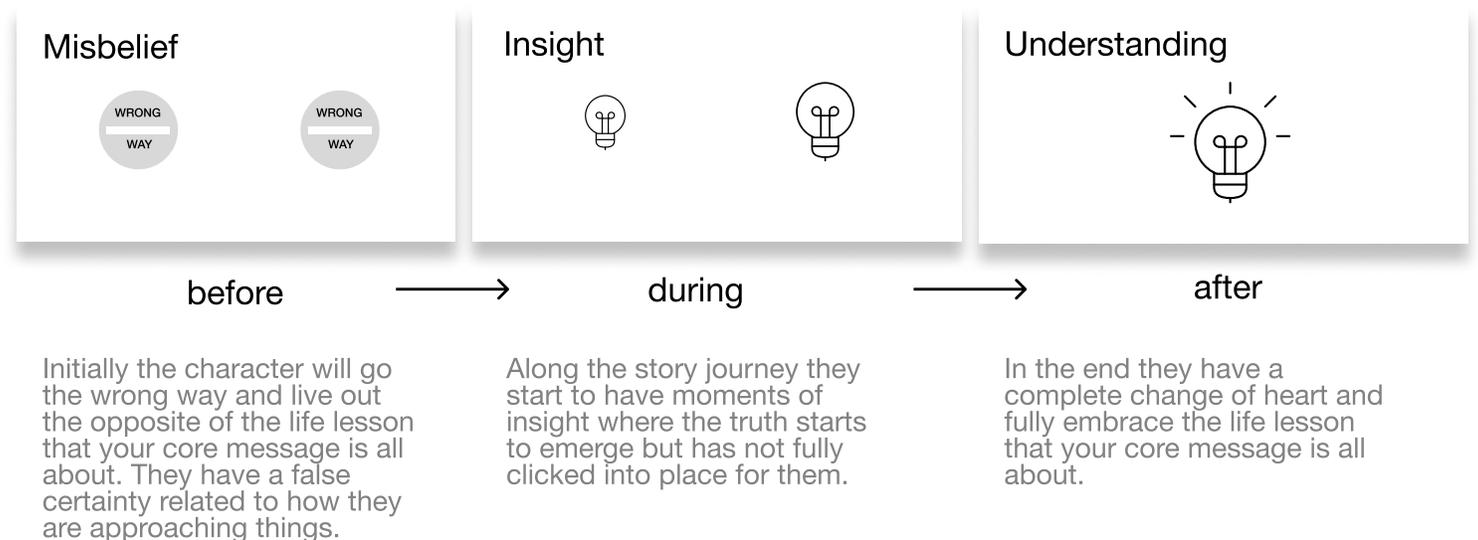
A plot event where the impact of the complication is felt deeply by the character. At this stage it feels like there is no hope in regards to resolving the conflict.

CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION

Make your message clear, accessible & compelling



To teach through story, find characters who learn your lesson the hard way—starting with mistakes, building insight, and arriving at understanding.



Character transformation is the key to bringing your message to life

Craft a story

Storyline Canvas

Craft stories to teach, explain & inspire



1

EXTERNAL

Plot events

actions, behaviors, events

This section consists of all the external events and actions that you could witness and view. This is the linear sequence of events from beginning to end.



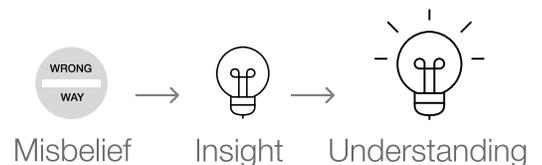
2

INTERNAL

Character transformation

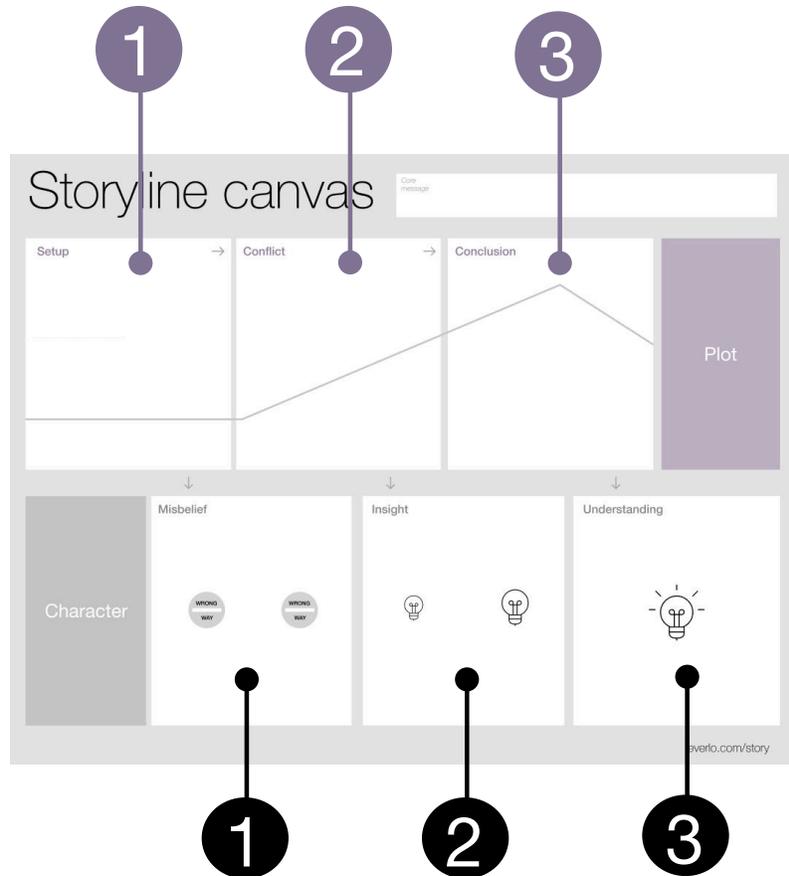
thoughts, beliefs, convictions

This section consists of all the internal thoughts, emotions and beliefs that are in your character's heads. The best stories contain protagonists whose worldviews are challenged or expanded. This section brings that change to light.



STORYLINE CANVAS

Map out a story (to teach & explain)



Plot

1 Setup



Introduce the character and setting and begin to lay down the essential context needed to understand the complication
from start to inciting incident

2 Conflict



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 Conclusion

Bring the conflict to its peak and then resolve it.
from crisis to climax to end to crisis

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



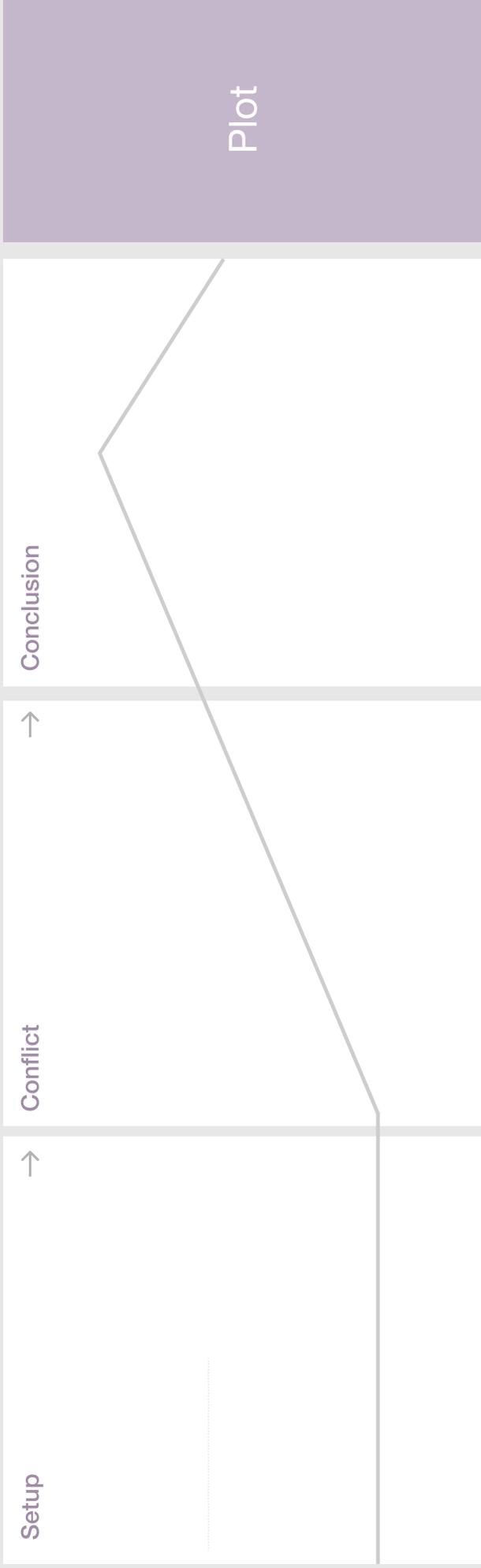
The character collides with the complication and it forces them to start to wrestle with the truth contained in the life lesson of the story.

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.

Storyline canvas

Core message



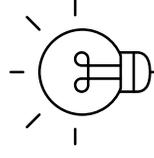
Misbelief



Insight



Understanding



Craft stories to teach & explain

1 Core message

Add the core message you want to communicate to the top right corner of your Storyline Canvas



2 Character understanding

Map out the thoughts, beliefs and convictions a character would have if they fully understood your core message.



3 Reverse engineer your story

Work backwards to identify story elements that would lead to a character coming to that understanding. Fill in each of the other sections (you can reference the trigger questions below)



Setup

How does someone behave who has not yet understood your core message?

What events might kick off their journey to discovering the truth of your core message?

Misbelief

What does someone believe or think before understanding the life lesson of your core message?

What false certainty and false convictions would they hold?

Conflict

What negative consequences would stem from them not knowing the life lesson in the core message?

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

Insight

What might they start to think as they grapple with the truth of the core message?

What would they start to think to themselves as the truth of the core message starts to emerge for them?

Conclusion

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

What results might they achieve?

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

Understanding

What does someone (who completely understands the life lesson of your core message) think or believe?

What convictions do they now have?

**Amplify
your
story**

NARRATIVE PATTERNS

Common plot mistakes

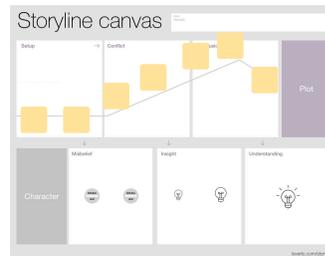
Monologue

MISTAKE

While you might have told a linear sequence of events, there is no dramatic arc or conflict to your story.

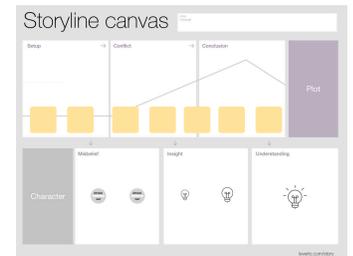
HOW TO ADDRESS

Identify a clear before and after and name specifically what is the conflict in the story that creates tension.



Perception

What you thought you did



Reality

What you actually did

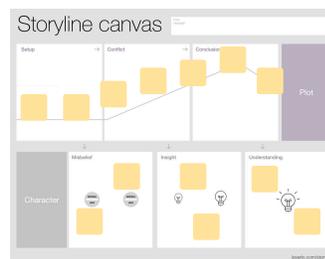
Narrow focus

MISTAKE

When you find an exciting plot point, an easy mistake is to go deep into the specifics of that event. While you have a lot of story elements for it, that does not equate to a full story. In reality you have found an exciting climax and now need the rest of the story.

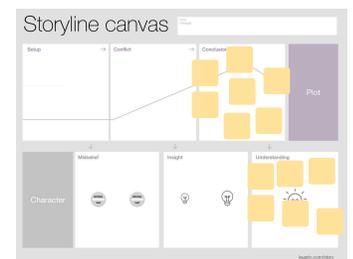
HOW TO ADDRESS

Zoom out and understand the big picture steps that led to this plot point. How did this all get started? What happened along the way to this major event?



Perception

What you thought you did



Reality

What you actually did

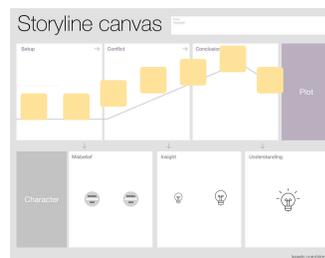
Hollow plot

MISTAKE

Simplifying down a story to a clear beginning and an end but missing the middle. With only two major plot points it is not possible to create a dramatic arc.

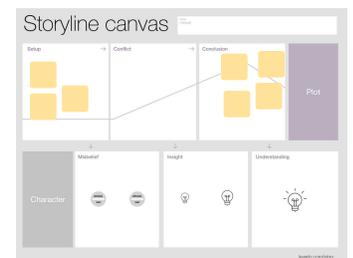
HOW TO ADDRESS

Dig deeper and add complexity to the middle of your story. What challenges do your characters face between the beginning and end? Are there other events that raised the tension in the middle? Do you need to go farther back in time to an earlier starting point? Lastly, what is happening internally for your character(s) throughout this journey?



Perception

What you thought you did



Reality

What you actually did

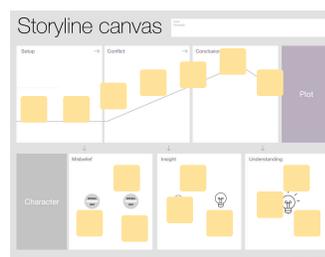
Hidden character development

MISTAKE

It is easy to only focus on the external actions, behaviors, events and results. But this is to ignore the internal thoughts, beliefs, and changing convictions of your character(s).

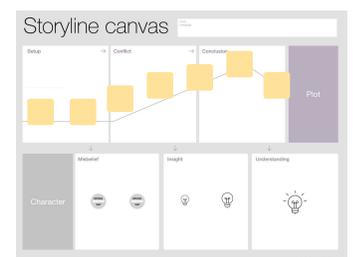
HOW TO ADDRESS

Identify what your character(s) would be thinking or feeling for each major event in your plot.



Perception

What you thought you did

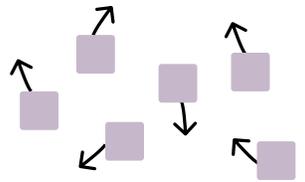


Reality

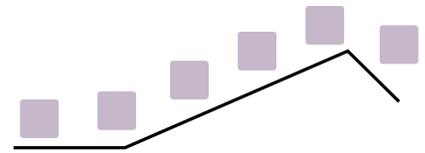
What you actually did

Fine tune your message & story

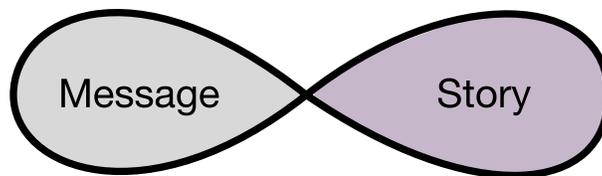
You want every plot point to tie to a single storyline that reinforces your core message.



Disconnected message and story elements



Single clear message and storyline



Beginner

Map out the story



Advanced

Distill the message

Map out the story

Refine the message

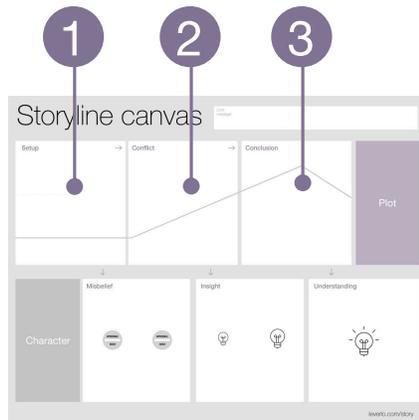
Sharpen the story



World class



Plot improvement questions



1 Setup

What is the bare minimum of context that you will need to fully understand this story?

What kicks things off in the story?

What is the inciting incident? How can you introduce the context to lead into this?

2 Conflict

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

What creates tension in the story?

What is at stake here? What events could bring that reality to the forefront?

Why can't the protagonist just immediately get what they want? What prevents them from doing so?

3 Conclusion

What is the primary event or plot point of the story? (aka the climax)

How is the tension in the story resolved?

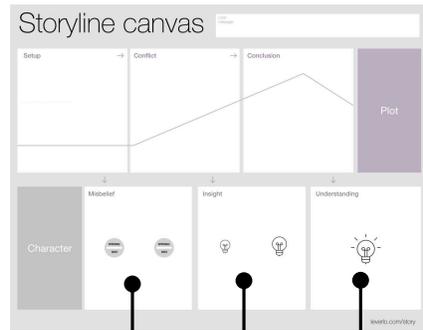
How does the story end?

What is the result or outcome of the story?

How are things different now? What events could bring that to light?

How does the protagonist now operate due to the circumstances of the story?

Character improvement questions



1

2

3

1 Misbelief

What does the character want? What is their current belief related to how to achieve that goal?

What does the character think or believe when they do not yet understand your core message?

2 Insight

How is the character's worldview changing? What insights are they gaining from the experiences?

How is the truth of the core message becoming more clear to the character?

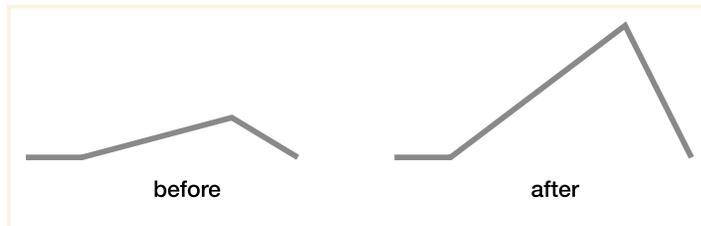
3 Understanding

What does the character learn from the story?

How do their convictions, thoughts and beliefs change due to this understanding?

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.



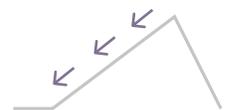
Stakes

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.

