Taking a Page from Fiction: Applying Novel-Writing Tricks to Learning Design

Joseph Fournier
Anthem
Writer’s Block
My Secret Weapon

Photo by Patrick Tomasso on Unsplash

Photo by Gaelle Marcel on Unsplash
My journey as a writer...

I love to write

• Fiction writer and poet since I was seven years old
• Tech writer and instructional designer for Fortune 500’s
• 2 computer trade paperbacks with major publisher

Lots of novels started

People kept telling me I was a great writer...

My short-game was good

Something had to change.
Apparently, I wasn’t alone...
I decided to do something about it.

Focused on a handful of techniques

Took the best advice from each

Developed my own methods and rules

Set some personal goals

I’m still working on my craft as a fiction writer, but in pursuing improvement there, I kept seeing parallels with learning design.
My Writing Rules

✓ Make tangible progress on my fiction writing every day.

✓ Set a specific, achievable goal every week.

✓ Learn from each writing-related failure.

✓ Don’t over or under-encourage myself; be realistic about my skills and my goals.

✓ Learn to speak to other writers. Master the language of writing.

✓ Seek the right help. Listen to some people some of the time...but not everyone. Be true to myself and to the story.
Applying what I learned...

70,000+ words

NOT my genre

Three and a half weeks from concept to first draft

...just in time for my wife’s 50th birthday.
Session Goals

How to map a learning story from beginning to end

How to identify the protagonist, villain, and supporting characters for your learning

How to plot a positive-change character arc and use it to drive engagement

Discuss tools writers use to stay organized and focused that you can add to your learning design workflow
How to Make Sure Your Novel Fails

Tell your reader everything.

(Don’t let them figure anything out on their own!)

Let the hero drive the story.

(The conflict should take a back seat to your protagonist’s charm.)

Use average, everyday characters.

(Your readers don’t want to hear about exciting characters.)

Keep the drama to a minimum.

(No need for readers’ brains to be distracted by conflict or tension.)

Use a single point of view to tell your whole story.

(You don’t want to accidentally trigger conversation about the story due to varying perspectives.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pantsers</strong></th>
<th>vs.</th>
<th><strong>Plotters</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just start writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plan things out in detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have a clear vision of the end</td>
<td></td>
<td>Know exactly where they’re going with the plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May know audience pretty well</td>
<td></td>
<td>Can tell you the story before they write it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High reliance on creativity to drive all story development</td>
<td></td>
<td>May get stuck planning and not feel ready to write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Margaret Atwood, Pierce Brown, Stephen King  
J.K. Rowling, E.L. Stein, John Grisham
“Plantsers”

1. Plan the big picture
2. Plan scenes and major movements
3. Write a synopsis of each scene
4. Apply creativity while writing the details
5. Adjust the plan as appropriate
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme, Genre &amp; Setting</th>
<th>Value shift(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protagonist</td>
<td>Villain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Character(s)</td>
<td>Antagonist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo by [Sharon McCutcheon](https://unsplash.com) on Unsplash.
Theme

What you want to accomplish

Ties to your learning objective, but is not the same

Think about “change”

Think about “emotion” and “value shift”
## Theme vs Plot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Plot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal growth in response to adversity</td>
<td>Luke pursues his life as a Jedi to save the princess... and matures (a little) along the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning the deep secrets of self</td>
<td>Lisa is thrown into a spy game only to discover her life has uniquely prepared her with all the right skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story Theme</td>
<td>Learning Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good triumphs over evil</td>
<td>How the company value of transparency helps managers and employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True love overcomes all odds</td>
<td>Reporting employee theft is better for everyone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme, Genre & Setting
It is only because there are obstacles and challenges that there is a story.
## How We Think About Story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does this interest me?</td>
<td>Is it relevant? Dangerous? Eminent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is this making me feel?</td>
<td>This is the most important question we ask of story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this making sense?</td>
<td>Should I exit this content for something else that makes more sense?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Stories in Three Parts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Beginning Hook</strong></th>
<th>Get the readers introduced and reveal the characters and conflicts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle Build</strong></td>
<td>Increasing action and conflict to the point of desperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ending Payoff</strong></td>
<td>The turn toward resolution, surprises, reveals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Genres have conventions

Genres have "obligatory scenes"

External Genre and Internal Genre
## Genre Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Love Story</strong></td>
<td>Lovers meet, attraction, conflict, resolution, live happily ever after (or at least until the sequel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horror</strong></td>
<td>Naïve or dumb characters, threat of extreme loss, back and forth between good and evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fantasy</strong></td>
<td>Magical or other worldly, threat of evil, quest or seeking (often Hero’s Journey), use of magic, hero coming of age/into skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Detective</strong></td>
<td>Unsolved crime, collection of clues, resolution through intelligence or persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concurrent Session</strong></td>
<td>Learners as consumers of content, PowerPoint drives session, start and end on time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying Productive Genre Conventions: e-Learning Example

- Predictable navigation and interface elements
- High value-to-click ratio
- Length expectations
- High interactivity coefficient
- Non-plastic characters
Genres for Learning?

- **Adventure**
- **Drama**
- **Thriller**
- **Mystery**
- **Fantasy**
- **Space Opera**
- **Love Story**

**Any progression through content**

**Dialog between learner and characters**

**Scenario-based exploration**
Theme, Genre & Setting
Identifying Characters for a Learning Story

Think “goal” first!

Choose main characters who can drive toward the goal, with help

Choose supporting characters who can provide that help...or stand in as learners who ask questions

Choose villains or obstacles to impair progress toward goal
Shortcuts to Story Development

Learn your characters well. Let them write the story.

What would Snow White do if she found a wounded bunny?

How would Bilbo Baggins respond to mandatory diversity training?
Character Development

• Protagonist
• Villain
• Antagonist
• Supporting Characters

Photo by Sharon McCutcheon on Unsplash
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme, Genre &amp; Setting</th>
<th>Protagonist</th>
<th>Villain</th>
<th>Supporting Character(s)</th>
<th>Antagonist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Photo by [Sharon McCutcheon](https://unsplash.com) on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com)
## Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villain</th>
<th>Protagonist</th>
<th>Antagonist</th>
<th>Supporting Characters</th>
<th>Narrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drives the plot</td>
<td>This is who/what the story is about</td>
<td>Stands in opposition to the protagonist</td>
<td>More than a minor character, but not a cameo</td>
<td>The voice of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has their own motivation</td>
<td>Not a perfect character</td>
<td>Can be villain</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Generally reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not necessarily evil</td>
<td>Has a problem</td>
<td>Doesn’t have to be villain</td>
<td>You’ll know much more about these characters than you will ever reveal</td>
<td>Has a perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can change during the story, but usually stable</td>
<td>Exist for a purpose</td>
<td>Has a consistent voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes a character</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shortcuts to Character Development

Create Characters based on Someone You Think You Know

- How would a team mate respond to a co-worker’s mysterious change in behavior?
- What would David Kelly do if he was challenged to traverse a maze, but had a magic phone and could call anyone for help?
The character I can relate to doesn’t look or act like me

Relatability has more to do with the reader’s fantasy world

The goal in fiction is never reality, but rather, “plausibility”

The characters need to have the ability to drive the story

The villain (or the conflict) will drive the plot.
Your goal is to get learners or readers to see themselves in the story.
# Units of Story (Top-Down View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Global Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overarching story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Subplots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Story form elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emotional shifts throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plottable, measurable collection of story elements that combine to produce an intended effect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Subplot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Units of Story (Top-Down View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Global Story</th>
<th>The overarching story with subplots, story form elements, and emotional shifts throughout. A plottable, measurable collection of story elements that combine to produce an intended effect.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Subplot</strong></td>
<td>A story within the story. Has all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution), and often could be could be the basis of its own global story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Act</strong></td>
<td>A major life stage in the story that could be a self-sustaining story of its own. Like a sequence, but major change happens in an act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Sequence</strong></td>
<td>A collection of scenes that frame a change, but not a major shift. Getting a job, buying a car, courting a new romantic interest. Have all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Scene</strong></td>
<td>The smallest plot unit (mini-plot).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Beat</strong></td>
<td>An identifiable moment of change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Units of Story (Top-Down View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of Story</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Global Story</td>
<td>The overarching story with subplots, story form elements, and emotional shifts throughout. A plottable, measurable collection of story elements that combine to produce an intended effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Subplot</td>
<td>A story within the story. Has all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution), and often could be the basis of its own global story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Act</td>
<td>A major life stage in the story that could be a self-sustaining story of its own. Like a sequence, but major change happens in an act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sequence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Scene</td>
<td>The smallest plot unit (mini-plot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beat</td>
<td>An identifiable moment of change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Units of Story (Top-Down View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Global Story</th>
<th>The overarching story with subplots, story form elements, and emotional shifts throughout. A plottable, measurable collection of story elements that combine to produce an intended effect.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Subplot</td>
<td>A story within the story. Has all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution), and often could be the basis of its own global story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Act</td>
<td>A major life stage in the story that could be a self-sustaining story of its own. Like a sequence, but major change happens in an act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sequence</td>
<td>A collection of scenes that frame a change, but not a major shift. Getting a job, buying a car, courting a new romantic interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Scene</td>
<td>Sequences have all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Units of Story (Top-Down View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Global Story</th>
<th>The overarching story with subplots, story form elements, and emotional shifts throughout. A plottable, measurable collection of story elements that combine to produce an intended effect.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Subplot</td>
<td>A story within the story. Has all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution), and often could be the basis of its own global story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Act</td>
<td>A major life stage in the story that could be a self-sustaining story of its own. Like a sequence, but major change happens in an act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sequence</td>
<td>A collection of scenes that frame a change, but not a major shift. Getting a job, buying a car, courting a new romantic interest. Have all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Scene</strong></td>
<td>The smallest plot unit (mini-plot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beat</td>
<td>An identifiable moment of change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Units of Story (Top-Down View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of Story</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Global Story</strong></td>
<td>The overarching story with subplots, story form elements, and emotional shifts throughout. A plottable, measurable collection of story elements that combine to produce an intended effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Subplot</strong></td>
<td>A story within the story. Has all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution), and often could be the basis of its own global story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Act</strong></td>
<td>A major life stage in the story that could be a self-sustaining story of its own. Like a sequence, but major change happens in an act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Sequence</strong></td>
<td>A collection of scenes that frame a change, but not a major shift. Getting a job, buying a car, courting a new romantic interest. Have all of the story form elements (inciting Incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Scene</strong></td>
<td>The smallest plot unit (mini-plot)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Beat**

An identifiable moment of change

---

Write in Scenes to Tell a Story

- Scene
- Sequence
- Act
- Subplot
- Global Story

Beat
Organizing Your Scenes

Joey had a lot to think about. Mikayla was right.

He could hear his younger sister’s fresh words echoing through his mind: “Having a kid isn’t the same as getting a puppy.” Of course, he knew that, but her words, whether she’d intended them to or not, conjured up a bucketful of thoughts that he now had to explore—here, on this lonely highway, where so few approaching headlights reminded him to drive.

Joey already knew he wasn’t really ready to have a kid. Kids cost money, and the space between his paychecks was a sieve. Twenty-five dollars and a pile of student debt was all he had—he was lucky Mikayla lived only a quarter tank away.

He had needed this talk with Mikayla; he needed someone he could trust to cut through to the point with wisdom—and she nailed it. There was something else going on inside him. But she was encouraged: at least he was thinking it through instead of just getting his girlfriend pregnant.

That was logical. He got it. But it wasn’t the logic that struck Joey the hardest. Mikayla had paused, looked deeply into his eyes—the gateways to the soul, they say—and almost as though she was searching, muttered “There’s something else in there. This is not the problem you’re trying to solve.” And that was all. If she could see what it was, she didn’t say, but he knew she was right. And he knew she knew she was right.
Keep Notes

1. Joey Meets Maureen
   - Inciting Incident
   - Notes: 2365
   - Joey stops to help an elderly couple and inherits an old lady to take care of.

2. Joey Takes Maureen
   - Notes: 1748
   - Joey tries to pawn Maureen off on someone else, but has to take her home in the end.

3. Joey Gets the Money
   - Notes: 4109
   - Joey takes Maureen with him to the Supercenter, only to wind up having to deal with.

4. Enter Crush
   - Notes: 2808
   - 11050 total

5. Jalumpids Crawl
   - Notes: 2426
   - 13476 total

6. Enter Mikayla
   - Notes: 2533
   - 16009 total

7. Archinian Orb
   - Notes: 2694
   - 18703 total

8. Homecoming, Etc...
   - Notes: 18703
   - +4539
   - 23241

9. First Flight
   - Notes: 23239
   - +2574
   - 25813

10. Journey To The Slip...
    - Notes: 25813
    - +1223
    - +3 (from 8)
    - 27039
...more Notes

Physical/Static Characteristics
Age: 25

Character Traits
[How do I make Joey progress as a character without making him “perfect” in the end? What will be his remaining character flaws?]
Funny, sometimes flippant — changes to —> not much; a little less flippant, but still has this. Dominant, but sometimes passive/submissive — changes to —> expressively dominant and not willing to take crap.
Not consistently confident — changes to —> high self-confidence without much arrogance, but some.

What is Joey’s Inner Conflict?
Joey longs to find meaning and purpose in his life. He chose to have a job without real responsibilities so he wouldn’t be a slave to his work, and so he could make money to go back and finish college, but his college debt is too high for him to pay it off with the job he has, so he feels trapped and has no idea how he is ever going to break out of the cycle and have a job that would support a family.
Joey - Starts off unsure of himself. He has a leader in him, but he doesn’t think he’s lived up to his potential so far. He doesn’t think he’s good enough yet for some of the basic things in life, like getting married and having kids, etc. He’s just a kid himself, with a kid’s job, barely making enough money to pay his bills and not enough to catch up with his debts.
Joey is thrust into the leadership role and after some try-fails comes to accept his role as the captain
### Basic Story Mapping (used in analyzing stories)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Element</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters</strong></td>
<td><strong>Problem or Goal:</strong> What sets events in motion? Where did the characters start? What changed? What needs to be overcome?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Progression:</strong> What drives the characters toward the goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plot</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resolution/Outcome:</strong> How does the problem get solved? How is the goal attained?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mapping by Scenes ( Scenes Build Stories!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
<th>S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
<th>…</th>
<th>S35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Emotional Intensity**
- Beginning Hook
- Middle Build
- Ending Payoff

**Time**
- 0
- 30
- 60
- 90
- 120
### Story Arc

Derives from Freytag’s “dramatic arc”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>Introduces the important background info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising Action</td>
<td>Plot-driving events leading to greatest interest; tension or anxiety builds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climax</td>
<td>Turning point; changes protagonist’s fate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling Action</td>
<td>Key action between protagonist and antagonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denouement</td>
<td>Conflicts resolved and normalcy returned or reset for protagonist; release of tension or anxiety for the reader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intended to apply to ancient Greek and Shakespearean drama, not modern.
# Story Arc

| Purpose is to effect change; to move a character or situation from one state to another | Poor village faces challenges and rises to position of prosperity |
| Arcs can be used to visually approximate emotional states of readers | Teen meets fears head-on and passes into adulthood |
| Arcs tend to follow predictable patterns based on genres | Arcs represent cause-effect that tie elements of the story together |
| Arcs visually represent readers’ expectations |  |
Story Arcs

Cinderella

Common Disaster

Three Act Structure

Love Story
What’s the Learning Arc?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme, Genre &amp; Setting</th>
<th>Value shift(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protagonist</td>
<td>Villain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Character(s)</td>
<td>Antagonist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo by [Sharon McCutcheon](https://unsplash.com) on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com)
Arcs within the Story Arc

*Character Arc or Change Arc* – How is change happening to character?

The *Reader’s Arc* - How is the story affecting the reader?

The Plot Line

Basically a story arc with the plot details added

Can serve as a road map
Movements in Story

- Inciting Incident
- Progressive Complications
- Climax
- Crisis
- Resolution
Plot Line: the top-down view of story

Plot Line for a Horror Screenplay

- **Hook**
- **Inciting incident**
- **Progressive Complications**
- **1st Turning Point**
- **Pinch 1** – protagonist tries to understand
- **Midpoint - Crisis**
  - moment of truth
- **Pinch 2** – reminds protagonist what’s at stake
- **2nd Turning Point**
- **Rise to challenge**
- **Climax**
- **Ending - Resolution**

Emotional Intensity

Time

0  30  60  90  120
### Scenes and Beats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Beat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Could be a story all by itself</td>
<td>A moment in time; a whisp; a flash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each scene moves the story forward</td>
<td>Beats make scenes interesting and dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often carefully planned</td>
<td>Often just emerge (actors sometimes improvise beats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary unit of story</td>
<td>Create rich subtext</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus during planning and first draft</td>
<td>Focus in third or fourth re-write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing in Beats

A **beat** is the timing and movement of a film or play. In the context of a **screenplay**, it usually represents a pause in dialogue. In the context of the timing of a film, a **beat** refers to an event, decision, or discovery that alters the way the protagonist pursues his or her goal.

[Beat (filmmaking) - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beat_(filmmaking))

Character grabs door handle
Character turns door handle
Character opens door
Explosion in room

4 beats. 4 camera shots (minimum).
The Thing About Beats

- Beats matter
- Beats bring the story to life
- Beats don’t require flowery language
- Scenes are the sum of beats

“He slinked in between the leaders.”

“As she turned the handle, her mind sent a tingling sensation to a spot above her left ear.”

“They talked in their cute little code back and forth, and Joey tried to pretend he didn’t hear them.”
Beats in Non-Linear Digital Learning

Beats may track with interactions between learners and the learning experience design

Learner selects Choice A

System presents feedback

Learner reads/hears feedback

Learner makes another choice
Beats in Scenario-Based Learning

Beats may track with interactions between characters

- Manager gives feedback
- Character reflects on feedback
- Learner makes choices based on character reflection
- Learner gets feedback based on choice

Arcs visually represent readers’ expectations
Story Arcs are Roadmap

The key to plotting a **Positive-Change Character Arc** is to understand the desired story/learning arc and plot it before you finalize your design.

REF: http://www.musik-therapie.at/PederHill/Structure&Plot.htm
Positive Change Arcs

The positive-change arc drives engagement if:

• Learners relate to the characters and their struggle
• There is a villain or a significant obstacle
• Expected story patterns and flow are used for the learning experience flow
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme, Genre &amp; Setting</th>
<th>Value shift(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protagonist</td>
<td>Villain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Character(s)</td>
<td>Antagonist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo by Sharon McCutcheon on Unsplash
Mapping the Plot Line

Plot Line for Any Story

Time

Emotional Intensity

Beginning Hook

Middle Build

Ending Payoff
Plot Line: the top-down view of story

Plot Line Graph

Emotional Intensity

Time

0 30 60 90 120

Hook
Inciting incident
1st Turning Point
Pinch 1
Midpoint
2nd Turning Point
Pinch 2
Rise to challenge
Climax
Ending

Plot Line for a Love Story Screenplay
Plot Line: the top-down view of story

Plot Line Graph

Emotional Intensity

Time

0 30 60 90 120

Hook
Inciting incident
1st Turning Point
Pinch 1
Midpoint
2nd Turning Point
Pinch 2
Rise to challenge
Climax
Ending

Plot Line for a Hero’s Journey Screenplay
Plot Line: the top-down view of story

Plot Line for a “Reality” Show

Plot Line Graph

- Emotional Intensity
- Time
- 0 30 60 90 120
- Hook
- Inciting incident
- 1st Turning Point
- Pinch 1
- Midpoint
- 2nd Turning Point
- Pinch 2
- Rise to challenge
- Climax
- Ending
Story Mapping Tools and Techniques

- Outlining
- Mind Mapping
- Genre Mapping
- Energy and Emotion Mapping
- Conflict and Resolution Mapping
The Story Grid Approach

My Key Take-Aways

Stories that work make you want to keep reading

Learners have expectations too

Help learners anticipate upcoming value

Don’t bore your learner

Um... keep it short enough that they’ll want to continue

Learn and use genre conventions

Movements:

• Inciting Incident
• Complication
• Crisis
• Climax
• Resolution

Shawn Coyne: http://www.storygrid.com/
Tools for Writers
Writing Tools to Consider (not an endorsement)

• ProWritingAid
• Scrivener
• Sigil
• SmartEdit
• Storist
• Ulysses
• WriteItNow
• WriteWay
Questions? Ideas?

Joe Fournier

Joseph.Fournier@Anthem.com