

How to Write a Story That Rocks

First Principle: Have something to say before you write

- Kumbaya
- Won't have full picture, will develop as you write, but must have something living

4 Key Things to Develop

1. Character
2. Setting
3. Problem
4. Plot

Second Principle: Form Follows Function

- Can't develop Big 4 in any old way
- Provo to Coalville in 60 min: not all modes of transportation work

Third Principle: Follow Your Passion

- What rocks you might not rock me
- 10 stories—what draws you?

Problem: The Engine

HAPPINESS	DANGER/THREAT	LACK/OPP	MYSTERY
Physical			
Social			
Possession			
Freedom			
Hope			
Meaningfulness			
Self-worth			

- What are the dangers here? What could go terribly wrong?
- Who hurts the most? Who stands to lose the most?
- Who poses a threat?
- What does villain want? What's his or her plan? What gives the villain the odds?
- Criminal aspects?
- What could be lost? Opportunities/lacks? Mysteries?
- Inner problem or external?
- Immediate, significant, specific, probable?

Juice up the Problem

1. List & Twist (opposite, different, unrelated)
2. Genre Jolt
3. Change Arena
4. What's Cool? (What's funny?)
5. How has it been done by others? Learn & twist
6. Motive Twist
 - a. Why? Why really?
 - b. What's the antagonist really after?
7. Situation—what's going on? What's really going on? No really.
8. Raise stakes
 - a. How can things get worse?
 - b. What is the worst that could happen?
9. Complicate
 - o Dilemma--conflicts with hero's other values or desires
 - o Conflicts with what other "good" guys want
 - o Conflicts with setting
 - o How is villain 2 steps ahead?
 - o Does hero have handicap or flaws?

Creative Principles

- 3 step process: Feed (Zing), Activate Prior Knowledge, Q&A
- Farmer's faith--trust process, use manure
- Follow your zing

Juice up the Characters--2 main things

Interest Factors

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| a) Extraordinary job, traits, history, skills--Awe | j) Rogue |
| b) Powerful | k) In terrible danger |
| c) Beautiful | l) We want to root for them |
| d) Wish-fulfillment | m) Fighting injustice |
| e) Humorous (lines, 8 types) | n) Goals, hungers |
| f) Outrageous, eccentric, odd | o) Surprising, against type |
| g) Mystery, Secrets | |
| h) Intriguing back story | |
| i) Dangerous | |

Rooting Factors

Root For

- Situation
 - Fighting injustice, for opportunity, to escape lack
 - Underdog
- Character is Sympathetic
 - Enjoyable
 - Engenders gratitude
 - Admirable
 - Beautiful
 - Courageous, clever, dependable, good-humored, fair, etc.
 - Takes action

Root Against

- Situation
 - Source of threat to happiness
 - Obstacle to person we're rooting for
- Character is Contemptible
 - Engenders resentment
 - Ruthless
 - Cruel
 - Self-serving
 - Untrustworthy
 - Whiner
 - Self-righteous

Juice up the Setting

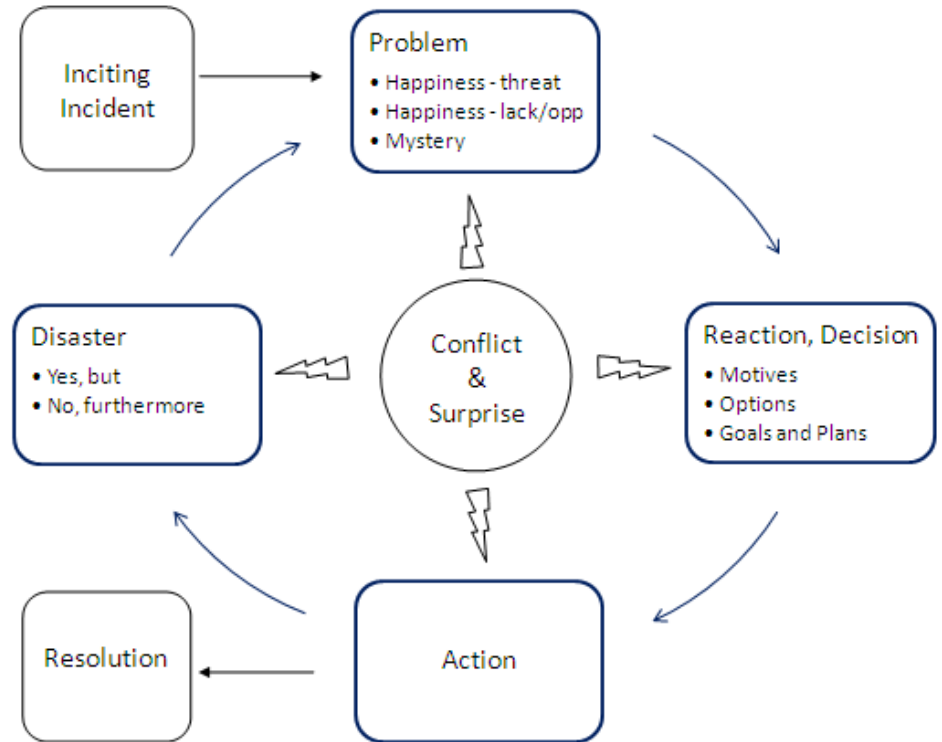
- Cool
- Dangerous
- Wonderful
- Twisted

Plot: How the character solves or doesn't solve the problem

- Needs to take a form that produces desired effect in reader
 - Curiosity & Suspense > Noo! > Triumph, Relief
 - One pattern: Prob, Not Right, Real Prob, Worst Fears, Resolution
- What makes problems harder to solve?
 - Wrong diagnosis, Hard to diagnose
 - Conflicts—with self (dilemma), others on team, antagonists, setting
 - Obstacles
 - Things go wrong, Unforeseen complications
 - Villain isn't a blockhead—reacts and adjusts, is a few steps ahead
- Turns, reversals, etc.—new info or event changes situation

Process to Bring it to Life: Step, Sketch, Draft

Story Cycle



Scene Sketch

- What's the story cycle step? How will this move story forward?
- Who is there? Goals, motives, who has issues with whom?
- Where are they? Unique visuals, sounds, smells, time, sun, season, weather?
- What surprises & conflicts does the protagonist encounter?
- What's the outline of what happens?
- What are some payoffs?

Draft Guidelines (there are more)

- In late, out early
- Stimulus-Response
- Vivid nouns, active verbs
- Begin with hook, end with turn
- Orient reader in first paragraph—who, where, what, when