

Creative Writing 1

with Johnny Worthen

Week 4 – The Muddled Middle
Tension and Scenes



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Today's Plan

- Suspense
- Tension
- Exposition
- Dialog
- Action
- Scenes
- But FIRST...



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Discussion of Reading



TO BUILD A FIRE
JACK LONDON

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Critique & Workshop

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Suspense

- Do you want to know how to create suspense?

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Tension like Crescendo

- In music, increasing volume or tension is called “crescendo”
- As with music, a story is more interesting when its tempo and quality change
- Changing, or shifting circumstances are necessary
- Changes need to happen believably
- Remember to allow room to breath
- Try to use **The Rule of Three**
 - *Try once, twice, succeed on third try*



Tension is More

- **THE STAKES** — Tension comes from increasing jeopardy and complications
- Solve one problem
 - Get two more
- Growing stakes, more problems
 - Subplots



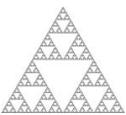
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Considerations

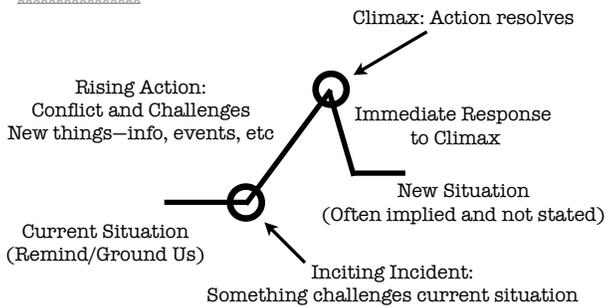
- Your character needs to respond in realistic ways to the elevating tension
- The events creating the tension need to be logical
- As you near the end, try not to leave too many loose ends – try to end with the tonic
- Keep your promises, so don't make too many

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Fractal



Scene: Mini form of Pyramid



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Exposition

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

- Exposition is telling the reader things they need to know
 - Setting, facts, details...
- Tell only what needs to be said, when it must be known
- Don't describe anything until someone interacts with it or the reader NEEDS to know.

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Action



- Play with time
- Slow things happen fast
 - *"He flew from San Francisco to Madagascar and arrived at 5:00, just as the rain began."*
- Fast things happen slowly
 - *"The hit was a lifetime in coming. The mugger rounded on him from behind his back. Tim saw it happening, and knew it would hurt, felt it even before it struck..."*

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Suspense continued

- Create suspense by asking a question and delaying the answer
 - *(yes, it's as simple as that)*



Dialog

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- Use minimum dialog tags

- to make them count

- “Said” is always good

- Avoid adverbs to modify tags

- Avoid patois as much as possible

- Read your dialog **out loud** to see if it sounds right.



Five Easy Pieces

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1. Think of someone you know well, or invent a person

2. Imagine the place you find this person

3. Write 5 Sentences

A Poem

1. Describe the person's hands
2. Describe something he or she is doing with the hands
3. Use a metaphor to say something about some exotic place
4. Mention what you would want to ask this person in the context of 2 and 3
5. The person looks up or toward you, notices you there, gives an answer that suggests he or she only gets part of what you asked.

Homework for Week 5

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- Write 2 pieces:

1. Five Easy Pieces

2. Dialog Scene (<300 words)

- Tell a story through dialog alone

- Read:

- “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Stetson
