

## Journalism/Creative Writing Extended Project Fiction Track

### Step Two: Outlining Continued

Yesterday you got the basics of your plot down. Today we're going to fine tune the plot, both main and subplots.

In your journal/or your computer, go through the following steps:

1. For each character (at least the important ones) answer the following three questions:

- 1) What does the character want?
- 2) What stands in their way of getting it?
- 3) What happens if they don't get it?

And now you have: 1) Tension, 2) Conflict, and 3) Stakes!

2. Yesterday, you got at least the basics of the plot/subplots down. Today, we're going to make sure they're arranged well (like in the last storyline you created yesterday). Essentially, you'll always want to open a new "loop" or "door" before you close one. This elicits a constant state of dissonance that keeps readers glued to the story. You'll especially want three main "doors" in the three "acts" of your story. Basically, in each act, your character will make a decision, or walk through a "door", that makes it impossible for them to go back to the way their life was before the beginning of the novel. The "door" at the end of act 1 leads to act 2, the door at the end of act 2 leads to act 3, and the door in the middle of act 3 leads you to the climax. If you can figure out what your three doors will be, your outline will be that much stronger.

3. Here's an example of acts in an outline. Feel free to use and manipulate if that helps you outline your story.

#### Act 1

- Incomplete—establish the protagonist's "want" and their "need"
- Unsettled—an outside force appears (i.e. invitation or threat)
- Resistant—the protagonist refuses to do the right thing
- Encouraged—the protagonist is pushed in the right direction
- Committed—Protagonist burns bridges, so no turning back

#### Act 2

- Disoriented—navigate to goal facing unfamiliar challenges and new rules.
- Inauthentic—the protagonist is confronted with their main character flaw, but they refuse to address it.
- Confronted—the protagonist realizes they must face their flaw or lose everything.

Reborn–protagonist demonstrates that they have changed  
Desperate–complications mean hitting rock bottom

Act 3

Decisive–Climax–protagonist must choose between want and need  
Complete–The protagonist gets what they deserve, based on their  
choice.