

LESTER DENT'S MASTER PLOT FORMULA

6000-word pulp story divided into 4, 1500-word parts:

FIRST PART:

1. Begin with (as many as possible):
 - a. A different murder method for villain to use
 - b. A different thing for villain to be seeking
 - c. A different locale
 - d. A menace which is to hang like a cloud over hero
2. Introduce hero.
3. Put hero in trouble.
4. Hint at a mystery, menace or problem.
5. Hero tries cope.
6. Introduce ALL the other characters ASAP.
7. Hero in physical conflict near end.
8. Plot twist near end.

SECOND PART:

1. Hero in more trouble.
2. Hero struggles, which leads to...
3. Another physical conflict.
4. A surprising plot twist near the end.

THIRD PART:

1. Hero in more trouble.
2. Hero makes some headway.
3. Hero corners villain in...
4. Physical conflict.
5. A surprising plot twist which ends badly for the hero.

FOURTH PART:

1. Hero almost buried in trouble.
2. Hero extricates themselves **using their own skill**, training or brawn.
3. Remaining mysteries resolved as...
4. Hero takes control of final conflict.
5. Final big plot twist.
6. The punch line.

After each part check:

- Increasing suspense?
- Growing menace?
- Logical progression?
- Purposeful action?
- Varied action?
- Continuous action?
- Show don't tell?
- Character tags?
- Convincing triumph?
- Satisfying for readers?

DAN WELLS'S 7-POINT PLOT STRUCTURE

STORY ORDER:

1. **Hook**
 - a. Hero in opposite state to their end state.
2. **Plot Turn 1**
 - a. Introduce the conflict.
 - b. The hero's world changes; call to adventure.
 - c. New ideas
 - d. New people
 - e. New secrets
3. **Pinch 1**
 - a. Apply pressure:
 - i. Something goes wrong.
 - ii. Bad guys attack.
 - iii. Peace is destroyed.
 - b. Forces the hero into action.
 - c. Introduce villain.
4. **Midpoint**
 - a. Movement from one state to the other.
 - b. Shift from reaction to action
5. **Pinch 2**
 - a. Apply more pressure until situation seems hopeless:
 - i. A plan fails.
 - ii. A mentor dies.
 - iii. The bad guy seems to win.
 - b. The jaws of defeat.
6. **Plot Turn 2**
 - a. Move the story from midpoint to end.
 - b. Hero obtains final piece to move from midpoint to resolution.
 - c. "The power is in you!"
 - d. Hero snatches victory from the jaws of defeat.
7. **Resolution**
 - a. Hero follows through on their decision from the midpoint.
 - b. Hero becomes the opposite of their Hook state.

PLOTTING ORDER:

1. Resolution
2. Hook
3. Midpoint
4. Plot Turn 1
5. Plot Turn 2
6. Pinch 1
7. Pinch 2

FLESH OUT THE SKELETON:

- Rounded characters
- Rich environments
- An "ice monster" prologue
- Try/fail cycles
- Subplots

RANDY INGERMANSON'S SNOWFLAKE METHOD

1. 1-sentence summary (**1 hour**)
 - a. 15 words or fewer
 - b. No character names
 - c. Tie big picture to "personal picture" - what does the character have to lose and what do they want to win?
 - d. Read NYT bestseller blurbs for inspiration
2. Expand sentence to full paragraph summary (**1 hour**)
 - a. Approx. 5 sentences
 - b. Story setup
 - c. (Three) Major disasters
 - d. Ending
3. One page summary for each character (**1 hour each**):

Character's...

 - a. Name
 - b. 1 sentence storyline
 - c. Motivation (what do they want abstractly?)
 - d. Goal (what do they want concretely?)
 - e. Conflict (what prevents them from reaching goal?)
 - f. Epiphany (what they learn, how they change)
 - g. 1 paragraph storyline
4. Expand each sentence in summary (#2) to full paragraphs. (**several hours**)
 - a. All paragraphs end in disaster, except...
 - b. Final paragraph shows how the book ends.
5. 1 page description of each major character (**1-2 days**)
 - a. Tell story from POV of each character.
6. Expand each paragraph from #4 into full page synopses. (**1 week**)
 - a. High level logic & strategic decisions
7. Expand character descriptions from #3 into full character charts. (**1 week**)
 - a. Birthdate
 - b. Description
 - c. History
 - d. Motivation
 - e. Goal
 - f. Epiphany, etc.
8. Turn 4-page summary from #6 into a scene spreadsheet.
 - a. 1 line per scene
 - b. Columns for:
 - i. POV character
 - ii. What happens
 - iii. Page numbers
9. (optional) Expand each scene from spreadsheet into multi-paragraph description.
 - a. Add dialogue
 - b. General workings of conflict
10. Start writing first draft.

BLAKE SNYDER'S BEAT SHEET

ACT ONE (THESIS)

1. **Opening Image (1)** - set tone, mood & style; give "before" snapshot of hero.
2. **Theme Stated (5)** - declaration of theme, argument or story purpose (by minor to main character).
3. **Set-up (1-10)** - introduce hero's quirks; how & why they need to change
4. **Catalyst (12)** - bad news that knocks down set-up, but ultimately leads the hero to happiness.
5. **Debate (12-25)** - hero questions their ability to proceed.

ACT TWO (ANTITHESIS)

6. **Break into Two (25)** - hero (through their own decision) moves into the antithetical world.
7. **B Story (30)** - break from main story; often a "love" story; meet new characters antithetical to earlier ones.
8. **Fun and Games (30-55)** - provides the promise of the premise; movie trailer moments; whatever's cool.
9. **Midpoint (55)** - fun and games over; hero reaches false peak or false collapse; changes dynamic; raises stakes.
10. **Bad Guys Close In (55-75)** - bad guys regroup; internal dissent in hero's team; hero isolated and headed for fall.
11. **All Is Lost (75)** - false defeat (that feels real); "whiff of death" (often of mentor); end of old way.
12. **Dark Night of the Soul (75-85)** - darkness before the dawn; hero feels they're beaten and forsaken.
13. **Break into Three (85)** - internal B story provides solution to A story.

ACT THREE (SYNTHESIS)

14. **Finale (85-110)** - triumph for hero; bad guys dispatched (in ascending order); hero changes world.
15. **Final Image (110)** - opposite of opening image; proof of real change.

THE NEW & IMPROVED GARY PROVOST PARAGRAPH

from *How to Tell a Story* by Peter Rubie

Once upon a time, *something happened* to someone, and he decided that he would pursue *a goal*. So he devised *a plan of action*, and even though there were *forces trying to stop him*, he moved forward because there was *a lot at stake*. And just as things seemed *as bad as they could get*, he learned *an important lesson*, and when *offered the prize* he had sought so strenuously, he had to *decide whether or not to take it*, and in making that decision he *satisfied a need* that had been created by *something in his past*.

THE FOOL'S JOURNEY

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 00. The Fool | 11. Strength |
| 01. The Magician | 12. The Hanged Man |
| 02. The High Priestess | 13. Death |
| 03. The Empress | 14. Temperance |
| 04. The Emperor | 15. The Devil |
| 05. The Hierophant | 16. The Tower |
| 06. The Lovers | 17. The Star |
| 07. The Chariot | 18. The Moon |
| 08. Justice | 19. The Sun |
| 09. The Hermit | 20. Judgement |
| 10. Wheel of Fortune | 21. The World |

> [Click here](#) for a guide to using *The Fool's Journey*.

EVA DEVERELL'S ONE PAGE NOVEL

BRAINSTORM:

- 3 names
- 3 wants/goals/needs
- 3 locations
- 3 objects
- 3 obstacles
- 3 things lost/sacrificed
- 3 occupations
- 3 things on your mind

PLOTTING ORDER:

- 1. Resolution
- 2. Stasis
- 3. Shift
- 4. Trigger
- 5. Quest
- 6. Power
- 7. Bolt
- 8. Defeat

STORY ORDER:

1. **Stasis:** the character isn't living to their full potential - opposite state to Resolution.
2. **Trigger:** an internal or external impulse (or both) forces the character to take the first step towards their Resolution state.
3. **Quest:** the character enters the new world of adventure, meets mentors or allies and makes a (bad) plan to solve the problem the Trigger created.
4. **Bolt:** the (bad) Quest plan inevitably goes wrong.
5. **Shift:** the character makes the paradigm shift necessary for them to inhabit their Resolution state.
6. **Defeat:** the character makes the ultimate sacrifice.
7. **Power:** the character finds a hidden power within themselves that allows them to seize the prize.
8. **Resolution:** the character is living up to their full potential in their Resolution state.

> [Click here](#). to enrol in the online course.

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CHRISTOPHER VOGLER'S WRITER'S JOURNEY

1. Ordinary World
2. Call to Adventure
3. (Acceptance or) Refusal of the Call
4. Meeting with the Mentor
5. Crossing the Threshold to the Special World
6. Tests, Allies and Enemies
7. Approach to the Inmost Cave
8. The Ordeal
9. Reward
10. The Road Back
11. The Resurrection
12. Return with the Elixir

> *The Coterie* has a table comparing the *Writer's Journey*, *One Page Novel*, *Hero's Journey* & *Fool's Journey*.

JOHN TRUBY'S 22-STEP STRUCTURE

1. Self-revelation, need and desire
2. Ghost and story world
3. Weakness and need
4. Inciting event
5. Desire
6. Ally or allies
7. Opponent and/or mystery
8. Fake-ally opponent
9. First revelation and decision: changed desire and motive
10. Plan
11. Opponent's plan main counterattack
12. Drive
13. Attack by ally
14. Apparent defeat
15. Second revelation and decision: obsessive drive, changed desire and motive
16. Audience revelation
17. Third revelation and decision
18. Gate, gauntlet, visit to death
19. Battle
20. Self-revelation
21. Moral decision
22. New equilibrium

JOSEPH CAMPBELL'S MONOMYTH (THE HERO'S JOURNEY)

SEPARATION

- The Call to Adventure
- The Refusal of the Call
- Supernatural Aid
- The Crossing of the First Threshold
- Belly of the Whale

INITIATION

- The Road of Trials
- Meeting with the Goddess
- Woman as Temptress
- Atonement with the Father
- Apotheosis
- The Ultimate Boon

RETURN

- Refusal of the Return
- The Magic Flight
- Rescue From Without
- The Crossing of the Return Threshold
- Master of Two Worlds
- Freedom to Live

> *You can find a summary of each myth motif in 'Using the Hero's Journey' in [The One Page Novel Bonus Lessons](#).*

NIGEL WATTS'S 8-STAGE PLOT STRUCTURE

1. **Stasis:** once upon a time
2. **Trigger:** something out of the ordinary happens
3. **Quest:** causing the protagonist to seek something
4. **Surprise:** but things don't go as expected
5. **Critical Choice:** forcing the protagonist to make a difficult decision
6. **Climax:** which has consequences
7. **Reversal:** the result of which is a change in status
8. **Resolution:** and they all lived happily ever after (or didn't).