Slide 1

Novel Writing 101
inspired by *Story Magic*
by Laura Baker and Robin Perini

Presented by Sharon Mignerey

"Good fiction can be defined with Five Cs:
convincing characters caught in compelling conflict."

Brandilyn Collins, author of *Getting into Character*

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Slide 2

Writing a story is a bit like building a house. Lots of components that must work together. We refer to them separately, but these are incomplete without the whole –whether a house or a story.

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Slide 3

Story Magic

About 2000, this story structure model was developed by Laura Baker and Robin Perini

Story Element	Character 1	Character 2
The Inciting Incident		
Long Range Goal		
Short Rang Goal		
Character Flaw		
Conflict / Relationship Barrier		
Black Moment / Major Reversal		
Climax		
Realization / Resolution		

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Story Models by Vogler and Hague

Christopher Vogler, 12 steps
(based on Joseph Campbell)

Michael Hague

1. Setup
2. Change of Plans
3. Progress
4. Complications and Higher Stakes
5. Final Push
6. Aftermath

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Story model – Star Model

Second Pivotal Point

First Pivotal Point

Third Pivotal Point

Beginning

Resolution

Similar to the Snow Flake method by Randy Ingermanson

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Other Story Structure Models

- *Save the Cat* by Blake Snyder has 15 "beats" that covers similar ground as the Hero's Journey.
- Carolyn Wheat, *How to Write Killer Fiction*, a template for murder mysteries from the crime, clues and red herrings to finding justice.
- Pamela Regis, *The Natural History of Romance*, has a template specific to romance from flawed world to happily-ever-after.

No model is perfect for every writer.

Any model can be helpful, but are not dogmas or mandates.

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Okay – There's a Model. So What?

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Plotters (During)
- Provides a structure
- Allows you to focus on the story elements in play for a particular part of the story.
- Provides a sense of order

Panzers (After)
- Can be a useful diagnostic tool during revision
- Ensures the story elements work as your imagination intended

Knowing the model that works for you becomes part of the "muscle memory" for storytelling

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Within Any Model –
Building Blocks Common to Story Telling

- Motivation / Reaction Units
- Plot – The events within a type of story
- Characters and character development
- Scenes
  - Dialogue and narrative
  - Setting and world building
  - Theme and genre expectations

The focus of this workshop.

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Building Block –
Motivation / Reaction Units

From Dwight Swain (*Techniques of the Selling Writer*)
- Puts tension in every exchange. Tension keeps your reader engaged.
  - Cause (Motivation)– something happens
  - Reaction – character responds to the cause
    1. Feeling (visceral or emotional)
    2. Action
    3. Speech

The order matters. FAS

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Motivation – Reaction Units at Work

"Need some help?" John asked the woman struggling with a lug wrench. (Cause)

At the sound of his voice, her head whipped up as though she hadn't heard his approach. (Visceral Reaction)

She swallowed, Visceral Reaction) her gaze going to the empty road except their two vehicles. Her attention dropped to the flat tire next to her knees. (Action) "Um …. I …" (Speech)

(New cause for him) "I'm a tire changer from way back, and it looks like you could use some help."

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Motivation Reaction Sample

Write your own M/R sample of a couple of paragraphs beginning with:

- Fortunately, he arrived …   OR
- As the first ray of sun speared over the horizon … OR
- The bike skidded to a stop, and …

(2 minutes to write, BREAK, 5 minutes to share after break)

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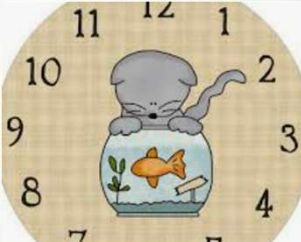## 10 Minute BREAK

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Building Block – Plot

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Plot as a chronical of events

Jack and Jill went up the hill

To fetch a pail of water.

Jack fell down and broke his crown,

And Jill came tumbling after.

Plot as story

A chain of cause and effect, where the relationship between characters and events are so deeply intertwined they cannot be separated.

- Hamlet seeking revenge for his father's death
- Frodo returning the Ring to Mount Doom
- Dorothy needing to return home

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Plot – as a Type of Story

From *20 Master Plots and How to Build Them*
by Ronald Tobias

- Quest
- Adventure
- Pursuit – the Chase
- Rescue
- Escape
- Revenge

- Riddle
- Rivalry
- Underdog
- Temptation
- Metamorphosis
- Transformation
- Maturation

- Love
- Forbidden Love
- Sacrifice
- Discovery
- Wretched Excess
- Ascension
- Descension

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Plot – as Genre

- Mainstream is a publishing strategy, not a genre.
- Genre is a category of art based on form, style, or subject matter. Common examples:

- Mystery
  - Cozy
  - Police Procedural
  - Amateur Sleuth
  - Hard Boiled PI
- Thriller
  - Political
  - Psychological
  - Techno
  - Caper

- Science Fiction
  - Post apocalyptic
  - Cyber punk
  - Steam punk
  - Military
- Fantasy
  - Horror
  - Urban
  - Other Worldly
  - Heroic / High

- Romance
  - Historical
  - Contemporary
  - SF/F/ P
  - Romantic Suspense
- Literary
  - Women's
  - Historical
  - Coming of Age

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Plot – as The Hero's Journey Structure (Christopher Vogler)

- Ordinary World
- Call to Adventure
- Refusal of the call
- Meeting the mentor
- Crossing the first threshold
- Test Allies Enemies

- Approach to the Innermost Cave
- Supreme ordeal
- Reward
- The road back
- Resurrection
- Return with elixir

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Plot – as Story Structure

Aristotle

I. First Act – first ¼ -- introduce characters and story problem

II. Second Act – middle half of the story where there are increasing complications

III. Third Act – final ¼ with the climax and wrap up.

Michael Hauge

I. Setup – first 10%, end with 1st turning point

II. New Situation – ends with 2nd turning point

III. Progress – begins at 25% in, ends with point of no return

IV. Complications – next 25% that ends with major setback (black moment)

V. Final Push – begins 75% in and ends with climax

VI. Aftermath – last 10%

The model I find most useful.

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Story emerges as motivated characters move through plot.

- Plots tend to be recognizable and limited.
- Characters bring plot to life. Plot cannot happen without characters. A child died.
- Characters with motivation plus plot create story. – A child died. Then her mother died of grief

"Plot is the bare account of what happens in a story, without much consideration of "why" or how it affects characters and audience emotionally. I reserve the word "story" for the artful arranging of the plot [and character] to produce these emotional effects."
    ~Christopher Vogler

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Plot as Story (Swain)

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➡ **What is your story about?**

A character (1) in a situation (2) wants something (3).

An obstacle stands in the way of that want (4).

What catastrophe results if the character does not achieve the want (5)

Tell me your story in 2 sentences and a question.

A creature with great intelligence was created in a lab. He escapes from the lab, longing for companionship, but is so gruesome others run away and fear him. Will he be killed by those who fear him before he finds connection and acceptance?

(2 minutes to write. 5 minutes to share)

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Building Block – Character Development

➡ Sometimes, a particular kind of character is needed to fulfill the needs of a plot. (Plot driven story)

➡ Sometimes a particular kind of plot is needed to feature the arc of a specific character. (Character driven story)

➡ And sometimes magic happens where the plot idea and character idea manifest together.

Compelling stories, whether plot drive or character driven, require characters who want something.

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Primary Characters

➡ Have plan and purpose, hunger and dreams (Orson Scott Card)

➡ Make decisions that drive forward plot.

➡ Are in conflict with other characters

➡ Have a character arc (they change over the course of the story)

➡ Must be compelling (larger than life or unique)

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Primary Characters as Archetypes

- Archetype is a recognizable pattern with unique strengths, weaknesses, and deep wants. Reveal human nature.
  - The mentor, the lover, the orphan, the charmer, the outlaw, the caregiver, the explorer, the jester, the creator, and so on.
  - Archetypes indicate likely patterns of behavior.
  - Archetypes provide a guide for areas of conflict and agreement with other archetypes.
- Stereotype is a cliché, often dehumanizing, of a type. Conceal complexity. Avoid stereotypes!

  The jock, the Jarhead, the cheerleader, the bookworm, the bombshell, the geek, and so on.

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Your Characters

- Who is your hero / heroine / protagonist
  - Name, situation, archetype, want
- Who is your antagonist / villain
  - Name, situation, archetype, want
- Who are the secondary characters surrounding these two (no more than 3 for each)
  - Name, role in the story, his / her want apart from the role

(2 minutes to write. BREAK, 5 minutes to share after break)

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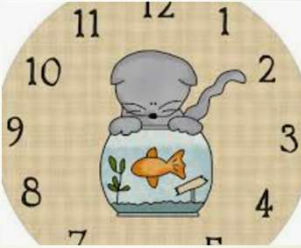**10 Minute BREAK**

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Compelling Characters

- Are **risk takers capable of success** beyond what most of us would attempt.
- Are both **reliable and able to surprise**.
- Are either **completely loyal or utterly treacherous**
- Are **worthy of redemption**
- **Engender empathetic or sympathetic reaction** from readers
- When the chips are down, **willing to self-sacrifice**.
- Have **a little mystery** where the layers are never completely revealed.

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Memorable Characters

- Make your protagonist a hero / heroine (Maass)
- Establish character identification (Hauge) by one of these:
  - Create sympathy for a character
  - Put a character in jeopardy
  - Make a character likeable
- Give your character flaws (Story Magic)
- Make characters larger than life (Maass)
  - Five things (s)he would never say, do, think
  - Seven reasons for their deep want.

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Motivated Characters

- Motivation is a desire for change
- Motivation to avoid pain or gain pleasure
- Motivation to satisfy an immediate need
- Motivation is based on values
- Motivation is influenced by dreams (to be and become more) and regrets

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Characters – Story Level Motivations
- What is your character's most powerful dream? Why is it?
- What is your character's greatest fear? Why is it?
- What is your character's most cherished belief or value? Why is it?
- What is your character's greatest regret? Why is it?
- What happened on the worst day of your character's life? Why was it?

For your protagonist / hero / heroine, choose one of these and write a paragraph or two about this.

5 minutes to write. 5 minutes to share

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Characters+Motivation+Obstacle=Tension

→ Motivation / Reaction units are one technique to keep tension in the scene.

→ Tension – the uncertainty and anticipation of what happens next – is what makes readers keep reading

Tension

Obstacle (Conflicting Wants)

Character Wants Something

2nd Character Wants Something

Tension happens in scene where characters have opposing wants.

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Characters – Protagonist and Antagonist
- Protagonist
  - Can be a hero or not
  - Is the character the story is primarily about
  - Makes good and bad decisions that causes stuff to happen (plot moves forward)
  - Is deeply motivated.
- Antagonist
  - Can be a villain or not
  - Is the character who forces change in the protagonist
  - Is deeply motivated

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Character Worksheets

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Create ONLY for protagonists and antagonist

Important
- Physiological
  - Height, eye color, hair color, etc.
- Sociological
  - Family of origin
  - Ethnicity
  - Geographic roots
  - Religion

Very Important
- Psychological
  - Values
  - World view
  - Motivation
  - Deepest Desires
  - Greatest Regrets
  - Most cherished memories

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Characters = Story People (Swain)

- Primary
  - Protagonist
  - Antagonist
  - Villain
  - Hero
  - Heroine
- Walk-on
- Secondary
  - How many?
  - Roles
    - Sidekick
    - Mentor
    - Gatekeeper
    - Comedic relief
    - Allies
    - Enemies

Secondary characters need their own agency, a reason for being apart from their roles

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Building Block – Scenes

"A scene is a unit of conflict, of struggle, lived through by character and reader ... It changes your character's situation; and, while change doesn't always constitute progress, progress always involves change."

~Dwight Swain

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Scenes – Beginnings and Endings

When should a scene begin?

As soon as possible. Establish the setting with evocative language with the details pertinent to the scene.

Drop into the middle of action at the beginning of the scene.

When should a scene end?

As soon as possible. When the character reaches a change of state—surprise, disaster, hook

Warning! Avoid beginnings where a character is moving from one place to another where a character is thinking.

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Building Block – Scenes

- The primary building block of story
- An event within the story
- Goal, conflict, disaster
  - Whose goal?
  - Whose conflict?
  - Whose disaster?
- Consists of
  - A place
  - A time
  - A change

Where?
When?
Who?
What?
How?

Your reader wants to know: where am I, who am I supposed to be rooting for, what's happening, and why should I care?

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Scenes and Concerns

Authorial Concerns
- Propel the plot forward
  - Raise the stakes
  - Foreshadow future events
- Turning Points
- Reveal character
  - Inner motivation
  - Outer motivation

Character Concerns
- Possession of something
  - The romantic interest, the job, the jewel
- Relief from something
  - Fear, domination, blackmail
- Revenge for something
  - A slight, a loss, a betrayal

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**Scenes –
Desire, Distance, Denial, Devastation**

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- **Desire** (express as an active specific verb)
  - True for the story
  - True for the chapter
  - True for this scene right now
- **Distancing** – the desire is not easily attainable, in fact, may be impossible.
- **Denial** – the character cannot get what (s)he wants
- **Devastation** – twist of fate – not only is it bad, it's horrible

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Characters – Scene Level Motivations

- What does your POV character want during in this scene?
- What does your non-POV character want during this scene?
- What agendas, if any do these characters have?
- What does your character want in this paragraph?
- What want makes your character speak this line of dialogue?

Remember the Motivation / Reaction Units? Write a page of a scene using that structure with your characters.

5 minutes to write. BREAK. 5 minutes to share after the break.

Something happens (cause/motivation). Reaction (FAS--feeling, action, speech)

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10 Minute BREAK

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A Character and Storytelling Model

- Based on Story Magic and Michael Hauge's Six Point Structure
- Other things you may want
  - Character notes
  - Secondary character sketches
  - Bits of scenes
  - Setting details
  - Time line
  - Other things meaningful to your process

Alter and adapt to fit your way of writing.

Use to design your own story

Use to identify and fix holes in the story

Make this your own!

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Story Element	Major Character 1 Protagonist/ Hero(Ine)	Major Character 2 Protagonist/ Antagonist
Outer Motivation Visible Desire for outward accomplishment Revealed through action Answers the question: what is this story about? Is related to plot		
Story level goal (may be unknown at the beginning) related to outer motivation		
Inner Motivation Invisible Desire for self-worth Revealed through dialogue and narrative Answers the question: why does she want to do that? Is related to character growth		

Add as many columns as you need for the complexity of your story.
LOFTR = Frodo, Aragorn, Gandolf, and Sauron.
Pride & Prejudice = Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy, and Lady Catherine
Shrek = Shrek, Donkey, Princes Fiona, and Lord Farquaad

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Story Element	Major Character 1 Protagonist/ Hero(Ine)	Major Character 2 Protagonist/ Antagonist
Setup Prevailing awareness of character Inciting incident		
Short range goal		
Short range goal		
Character strengths (gets character out of trouble)		
The new situation and new short range goal		
Character glimpses what (s)he could be		
Change of Plans		
Turning Point 2 (point of no return)		

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Story Element	Major Character 1 Protagonist / Hero(ine)	Major Character 2 Protagonist / Antagonist
Beginning of Act II (25% point +/-)		
Point of no return		
Internal conflict causes complications		
Allies and enemies		
Deepening motivations: retreat or go forward. Another short range goal and growing importance of the long range goal.		
Turning Point 3		
Things get worse and maybe appear to be great but are not		
Internal motivation at stake and new accompanying short range goal.		

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Story Element	Major Character 1 Protagonist / Hero(ine)	Major Character 2 Protagonist / Antagonist
Major setback / black moment		
New awareness and cusp of resolving internal conflict to become person hinted at in the beginning		
Beginning of Act III (75-80% +/-)		
Final push toward climax		
Turning point 5 – climax		
Transformation and aftermath. (90-95% +/-)		
Becomes person hinted at during the beginning (or not—tragedy)		

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Reading List

- *Techniques of the Selling Writer* by Dwight Swain
- *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screen Writers* by Christopher Vogler
- *Writing the Breakout Novel and Workbook* by Donald Maass
- *Goal Motivation Conflict* by Debra Dixon
- *Save the Cat* by Blake Snyder
- *Writing Screenplays that Sell* by Michael Hague
- *Fire in Fiction* by Donald Maass

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- Read a lot in your favorite genres and authors
- Read new authors, unfamiliar genres.
- Write a lot
- Write more
- Read more, especially things that inspire you.
- Write … keep writing

Questions?

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