Pages & Platforms presents

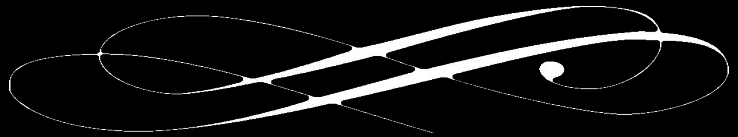
The Essentials of Writing Fantasy

Before we get started:

Grab your copy of the Pages & Platforms Guide

The 7 Essential Story Types

storypath.me/pwa



Have you drafted a fantasy story only to get stuck along the way?

Are you writing another draft with the same problem, not sure how to fix or even define it?

Have you...

Have you...

- Researched?

Have you...

- Researched?
- Tried plotting?

Have you...

- Researched?
- Tried plotting?
- Tried pantsing?

...and nothing has worked?

We're here to help.

Today you'll learn how to:

- Build

- Build
- Evaluate

- Build
- Evaluate
- Improve

- Build
- Evaluate
- Improve

your fantasy story...

Using Four Tools:

Using Four Tools:

- Marketing Categories

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- Story Types

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- Story Types
- Essential Story Elements

Using Four Tools:

- Marketing Categories
- Story Types
- Essential Story Elements
- Worldbuilding

You will be able to:

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- Evoke empathy for your characters.

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- Convey a thoughtful takeaway.

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- Evoke empathy for your characters.
- Create tension and excitement.
- Provide emotional satisfaction for your reader.
- Convey a thoughtful takeaway.
- Meet reader expectations for your Story Type.

Fantasy isn't a Story Type.

Fantasy is:

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- A story milieu.

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- A marketing category.

Fantasy as *Story Milieu*:

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- Veers from the “facts” of the real world.

Tables A1 - J26

Noblebright
MiddleGrade
Epic
African
LGBTQ
Comic
Viking
Asian
Supernatural
FairyTale
Fable
Gothic
YoungAdult
Grimdark
Speculative
Children's
Science
WonderTale
Dystopian
Urban
Desert
MiddleEastern
MagicalRealism
Contemporary
Arthurian
Mythical
Women's
Dark
Romance
European
Portal
Sword&Sorcery
Paranormal

Fantasy categories are important.

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They may greatly influence a reader's decision to read your story.

So know your category.

BUT...

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Marketing categories can't
tell you how to *construct* your story.

You may already know your category and still feel stuck.

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- How they **change** through the story.
- What **emotion** your reader expects to feel.
- The **premise** or message of your story.

That’s what Story Type is for.

Fantasy defines the milieu where your story takes place.

- Love in a world of shapeshifters.

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- Horror at the bottom of the sea.

- Love in a world of shapeshifters.
- Horror at the bottom of the sea.
- Crime in a city where magic is real.

Tools

Tools,
not
rules.

The End.

Why are Story Types so important?

Story Type determines:

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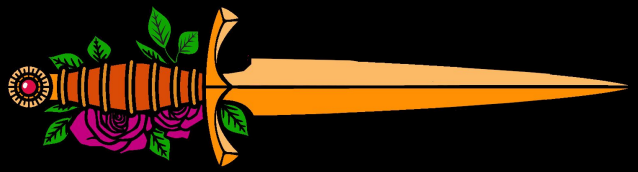
- The basic **premise** or message of your story.

And those essential elements shape your story.



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- For writers and editors.

Essential Story Types

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each with its own:

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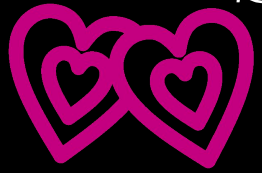
The Seven Story Types



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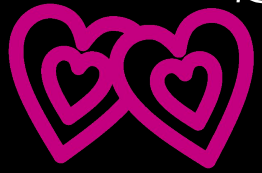

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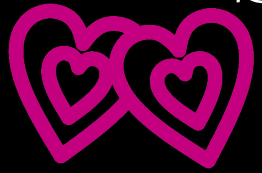

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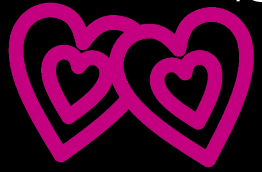

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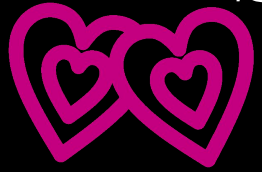

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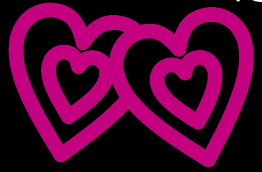

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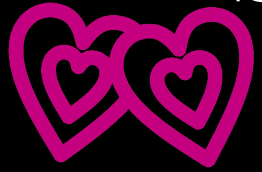

Let’s look at them one by one.

Action

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Action stories teach us the importance of individual heroism in the face of danger.

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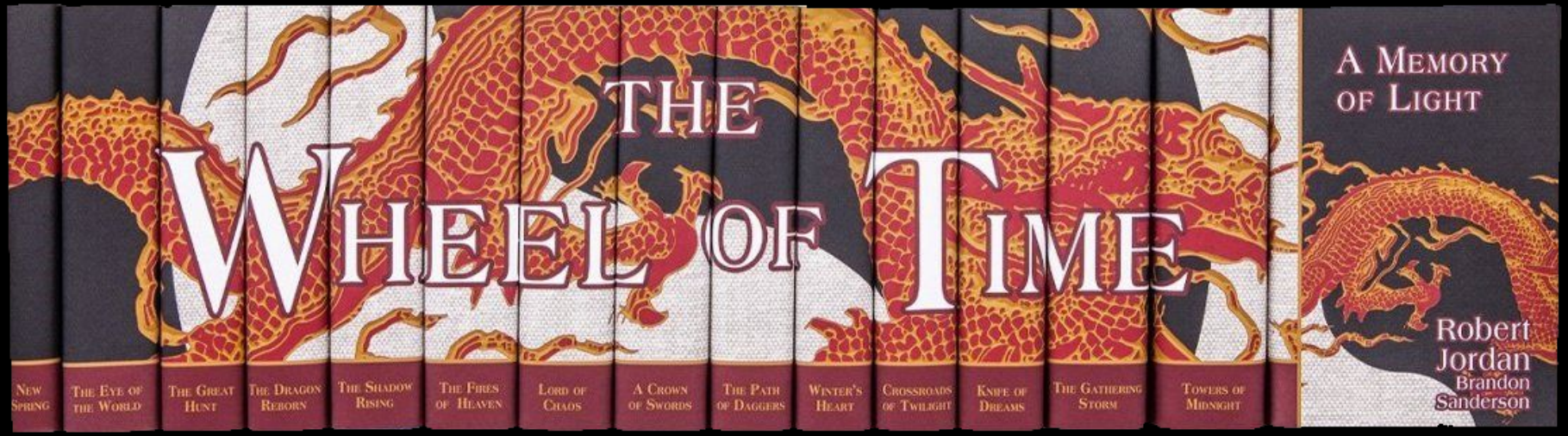
- The Action reader wants to **feel** excitement and a sense of bravery in the face of danger.

Premise

Action's Essential Premise

Heroic action against villainous behavior leads to saving lives, whereas refusing to act heroically leads to loss of life and moral failure.

Action Examples


THE
WHEEL OF TIME
A MEMORY OF LIGHT
Robert Jordan
Brandon Sanderson
NEW SPRING
THE EYE OF THE WORLD
THE GREAT HUNT
THE DRAGON REBORN
THE SHADOW RISING
THE FIRES OF HEAVEN
LORD OF CHAOS
A CROWN OF SWORDS
THE PATH OF DAGGERS
WINTER'S HEART
CROSSROADS OF TWILIGHT
KNIFE OF DREAMS
THE GATHERING STORM
TOWERS OF MIDNIGHT

SNEAK PEEK!
Chapters 1 to 6
TOMI ADEYEMI
CHILDREN OF BLOOD AND BONE

The Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation
Mo Xiang Tong Xiu

Crime

Crime

Crime stories teach us that social order & justice depend on clever people who outsmart chaotic wrongdoers.

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- Crime **stakes** involve justice and order.
- **Change** arc: injustice & chaos to justice & order.
- The Crime reader wants to **feel** intrigue and the safety of seeing justice prevail.

Crime's Essential Premise

Criminal activity results in chaos, whereas pursuit of justice restores social order.

Crime Examples

NO.1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
JIM BUTCHER
THE DRESDEN FILES
CHANGES
'Fast-paced and compelling'
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY
NO.1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
JIM BUTCHER
THE DRESDEN FILES
TURN COAT
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SCIFI NOW
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BOOKLIST
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DEATH MASKS
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JIM BUTCHER
THE DRESDEN FILES
SUMMER KNIGHT
'Highly recommended'
SFFWORLD.COM
NO.1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
JIM BUTCHER
THE DRESDEN FILES
GRAVE PERIL
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FOOL MOON
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STORM FRONT
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LOCUS

BEN AARONOVITCH
MIDNIGHT RIOT
"Fresh, original, and a wonderful read . . . I loved it."
—CHARLAINE HARRIS
BEN AARONOVITCH
MOON OVER SOHO
Magic and murder to a jazz beat
BEN AARONOVITCH
Author of Midnight Riot and Moon Over Soho
WHISPERS UNDER GROUND
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The international bestselling Rivers of London series
BROKEN HOMES
"The perfect blend of CSI and Harry Potter." —io9
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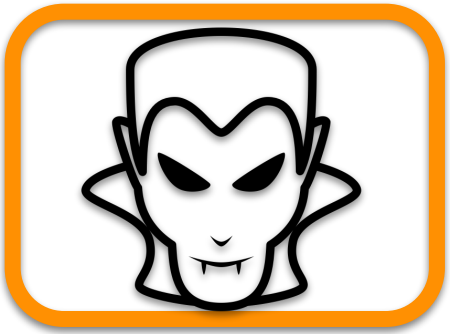
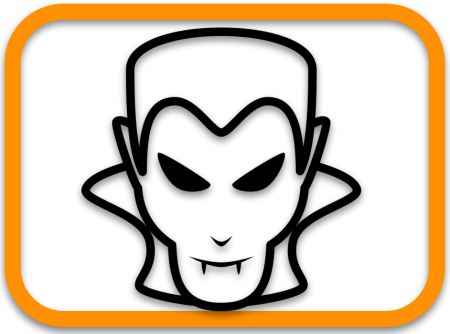
FOXGLOVE SUMMER
"The prose is witty, the plot clever, and the characters incredibly likeable." —Time Out
BEN AARONOVITCH
The Sunday Times Bestselling Peter Grant series
THE HANGING TREE
A secret world. A death. A favour.

THE&CITY

Horror





Horror

Horror stories remind us of the persistence of evil and show that only courage and eternal vigilance keep evil at bay.

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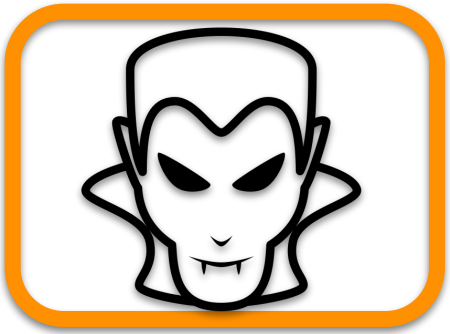

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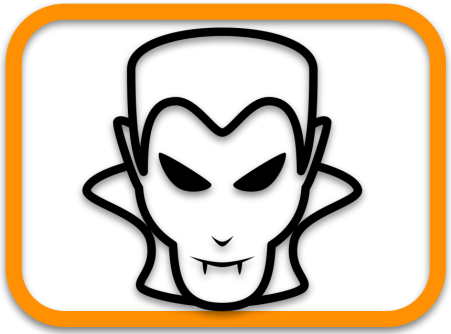
- **Change** arc: safety to threat of death/torment, to escape.
- The Horror reader wants to **feel** terror and imagine their bravery in facing a monster.

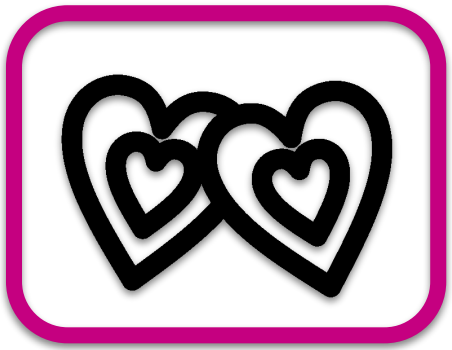
Horror's Essential Premise

Vigilance by ordinary people can keep evil at bay, whereas cowardice allows evil to thrive.

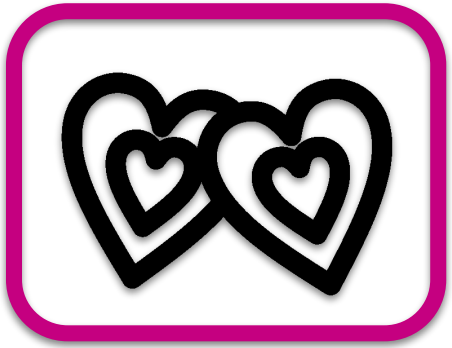


Horror Examples

Love

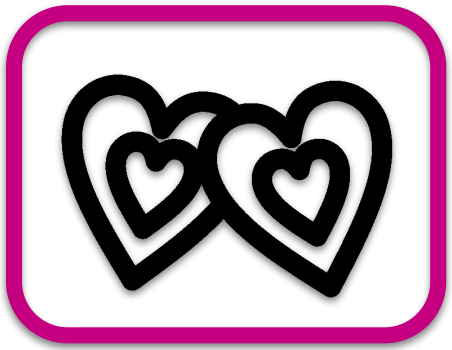


Love



Love stories show us how to earn the intimacy, love, & togetherness that help the human community thrive.

Love



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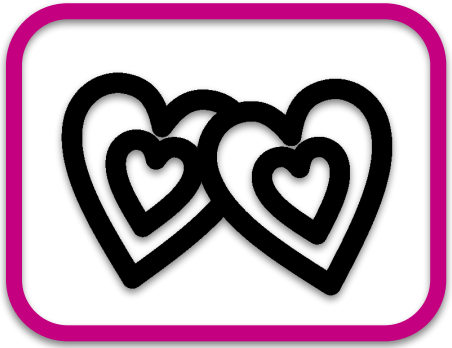

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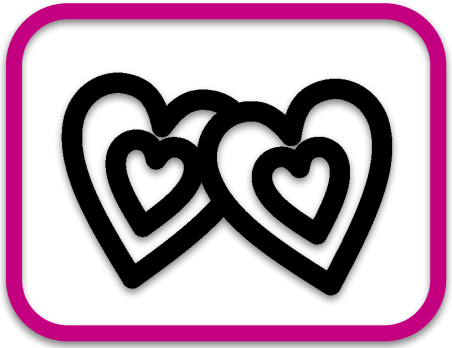

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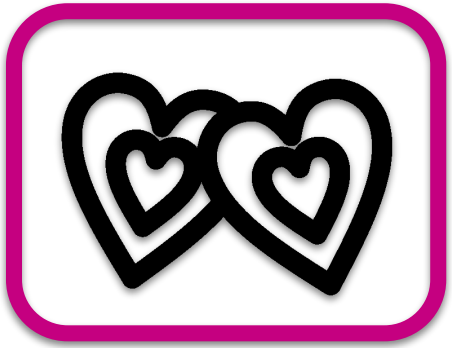
Love



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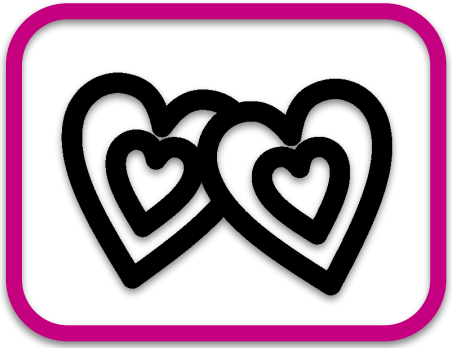

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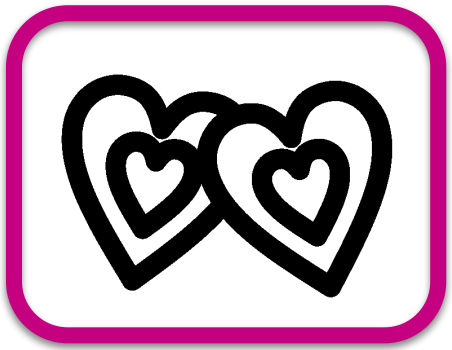
- The Love reader wants to **feel** anticipation of intimacy and vulnerability without risk.

Love's Essential Premise

A willingness to be vulnerable makes committed human connection possible, whereas an unwillingness to be vulnerable results in lack of connection.



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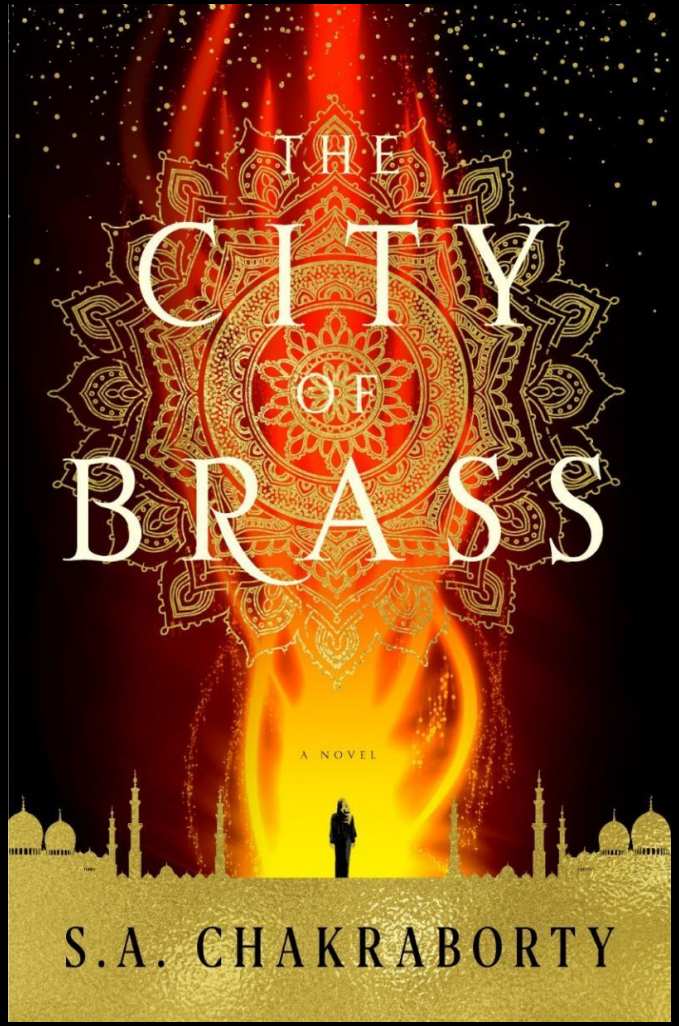
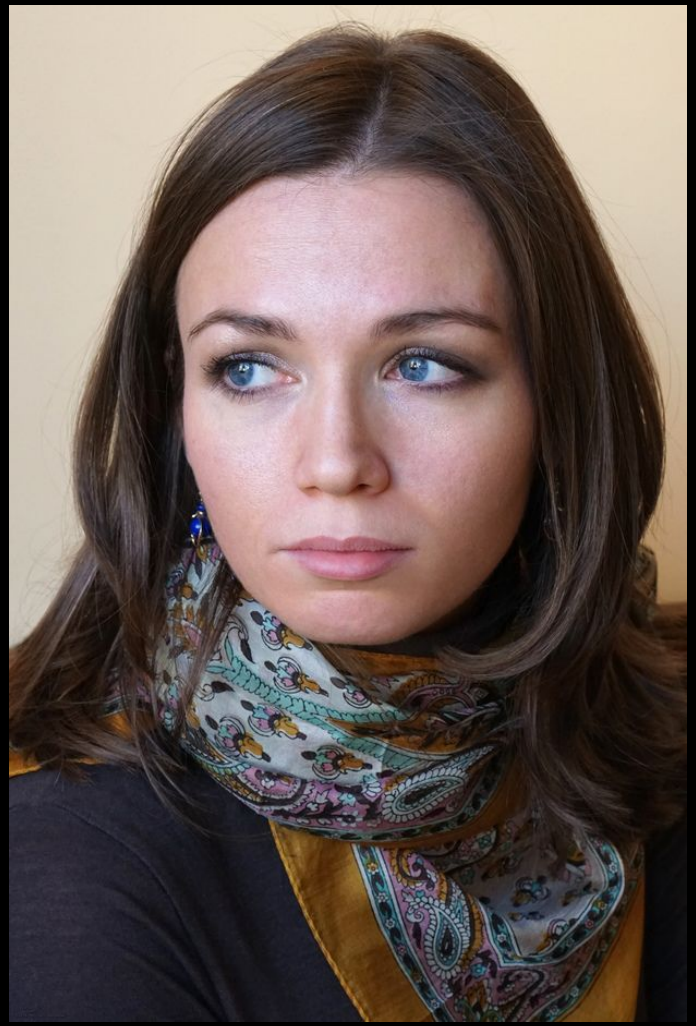
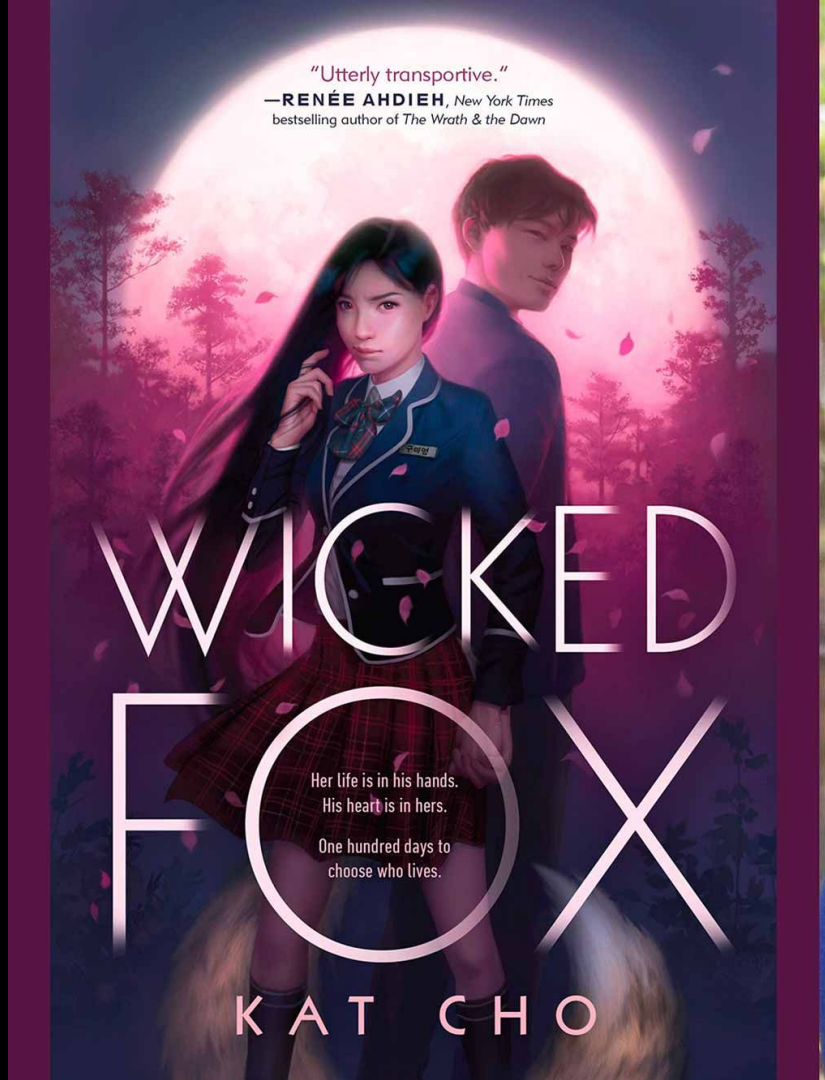
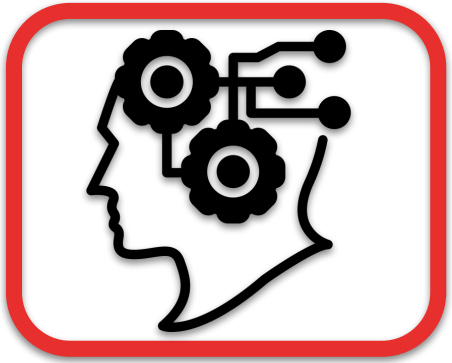

THE
CITY
OF
BRASS
A NOVEL
S.A. CHAKRABORTY



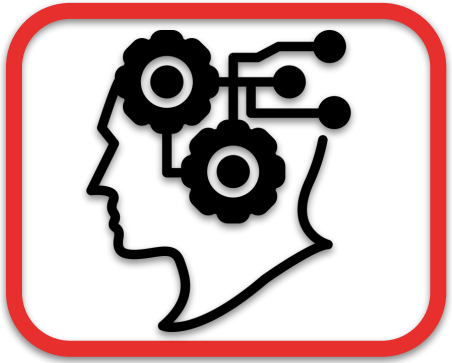
OUTLANDER


"Utterly transportive."
—RENÉE AHDIEH, New York Times
bestselling author of The Wrath & the Dawn
WICKED FOX
Her life is in his hands.
His heart is in hers.
One hundred days to
choose who lives.
KAT CHO

Worldview



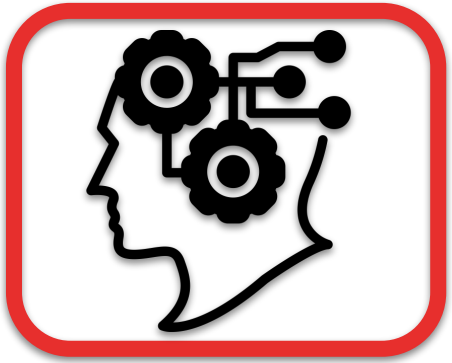
Worldview



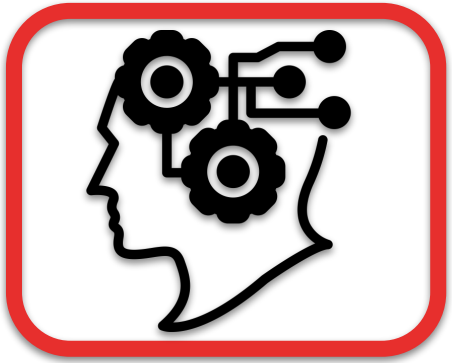
Worldview stories show that the world is not a simple, black-and-white place, and teach us about accepting the nuance and complexity of other human beings and ourselves.

Worldview

- Worldview stories are *character-driven*, and involve naivete, disillusionment, and meaning.



Worldview



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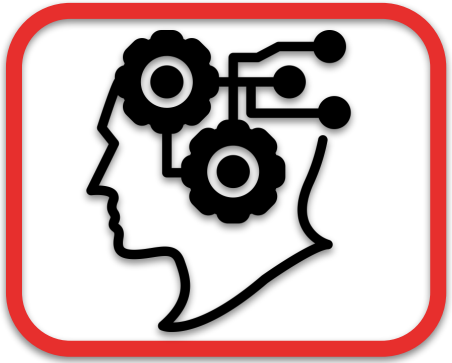
- The Worldview protagonist is **motivated** by a desire for knowledge or to avoid the truth.

Worldview



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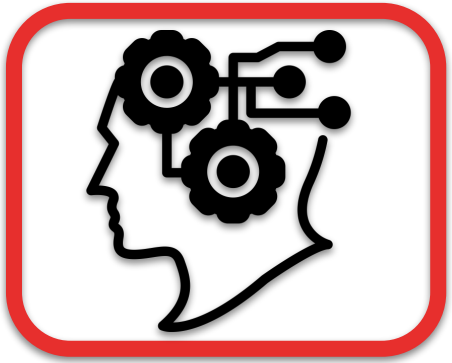
Worldview



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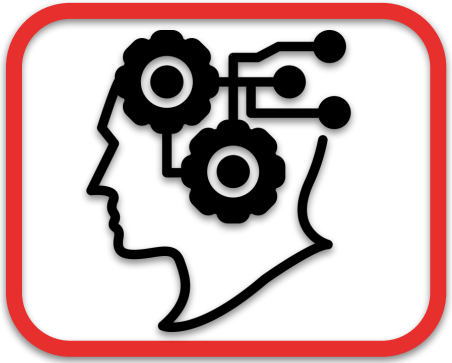
- **Change** arc: naive to sophisticated, ignorant to knowing/wise.

Worldview



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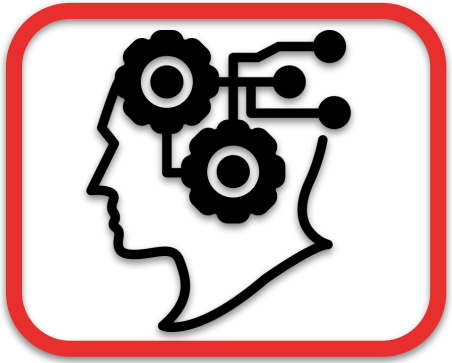
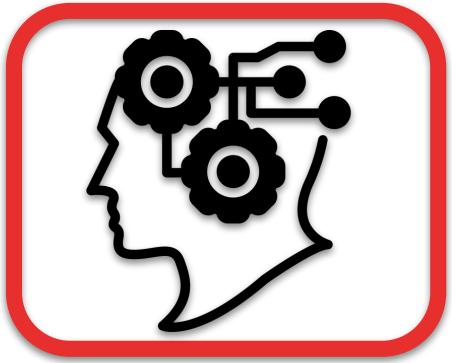
- The Worldview protagonist is **motivated** by a desire for knowledge or to avoid the truth.
- Worldview **stakes** involve ignorance and beliefs vs knowledge and wisdom.
- **Change** arc: naive to sophisticated, ignorant to knowing/wise.
- The Worldview reader wants to **feel** empathetic satisfaction or pity, and comparatively wise and mature.



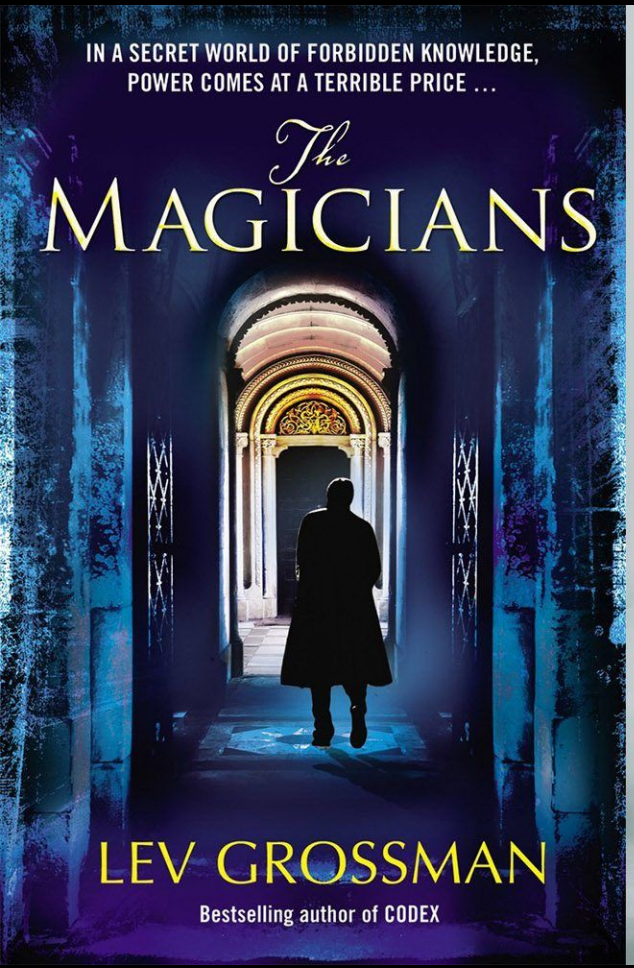
Worldview's Essential Premise

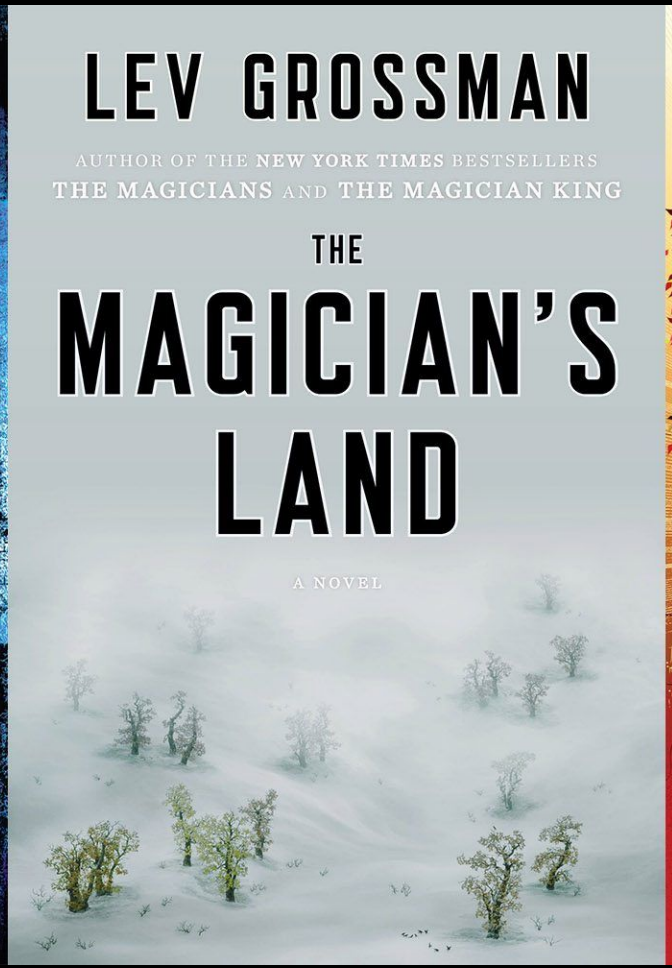
Open-mindedness leads to wisdom, whereas avoiding the truth results in self-deception.

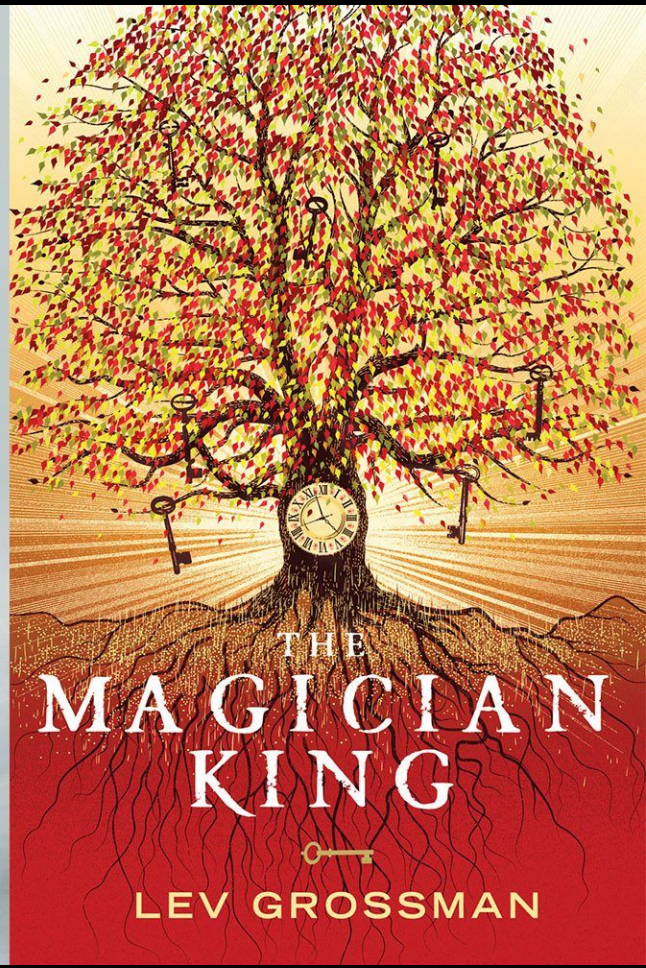


Worldview Examples

Oona
Out
of
Order
a novel
ADVANCE
READING COPY
FEBRUARY 2020
NOT FOR SALE
Margarita Montimore


IN A SECRET WORLD OF FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE,
POWER COMES AT A TERRIBLE PRICE ...
The
MAGICIANS
LEV GROSSMAN
Bestselling author of CODEX


LEV GROSSMAN
AUTHOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERS
THE MAGICIANS AND THE MAGICIAN KING
THE
MAGICIAN'S
LAND
A NOVEL


THE
MAGICIAN
KING
LEV GROSSMAN

A NOVEL

PIRANESI

Validation

Validation

Validation stories remind us that the ultimate definition of success is remaining true to honorable values.

Validation

- Validation stories are *character-driven* and involve the search for success and esteem.

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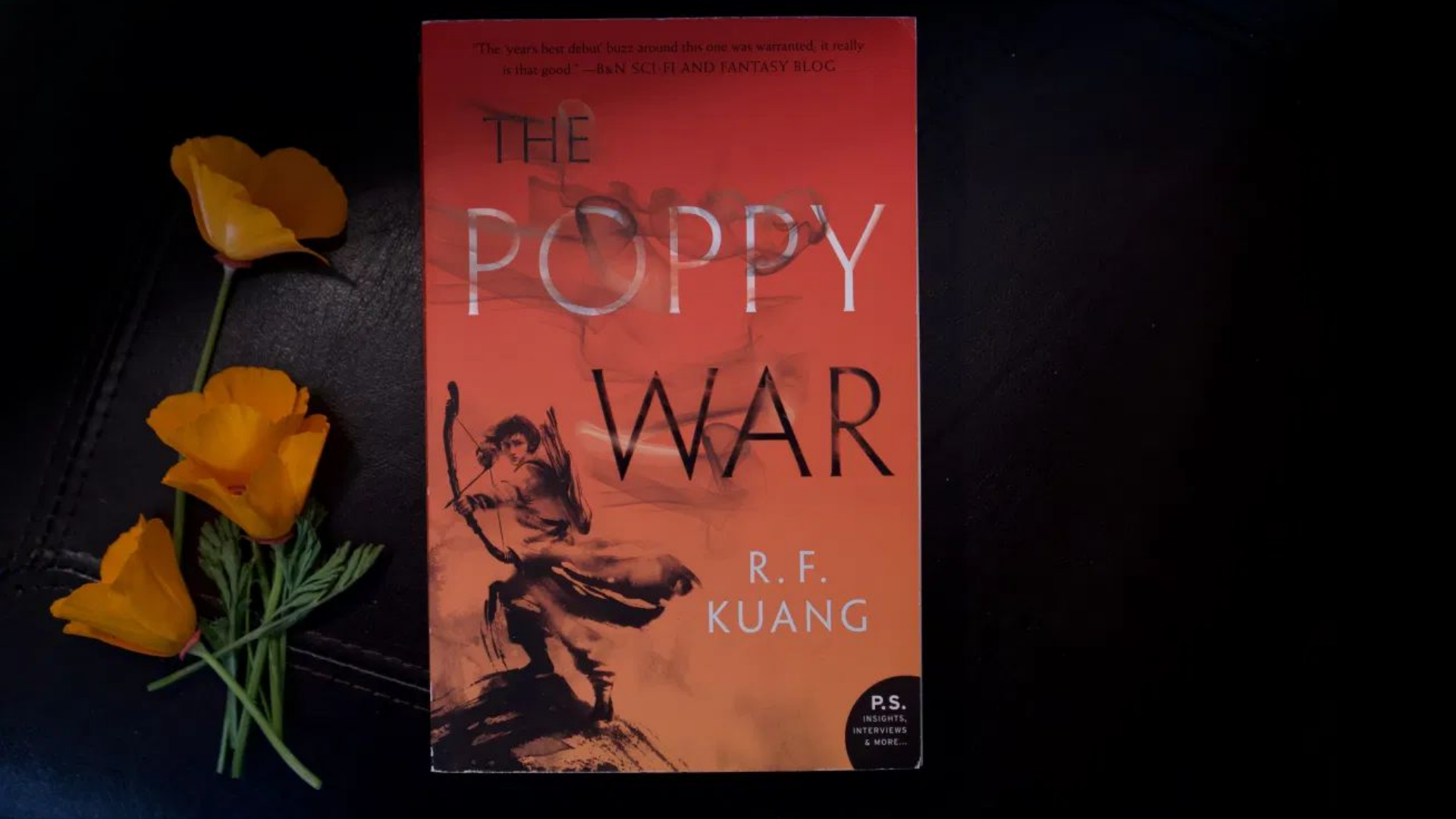
- The Validation protagonist is **motivated** by a desire to attain success and honor.
- Validation **stakes** involve success, compromise, failure, and selling out.
- **Change** arc: failure to success.
- The Validation reader wants to **feel** admiration or pity, and a sense of moral superiority.

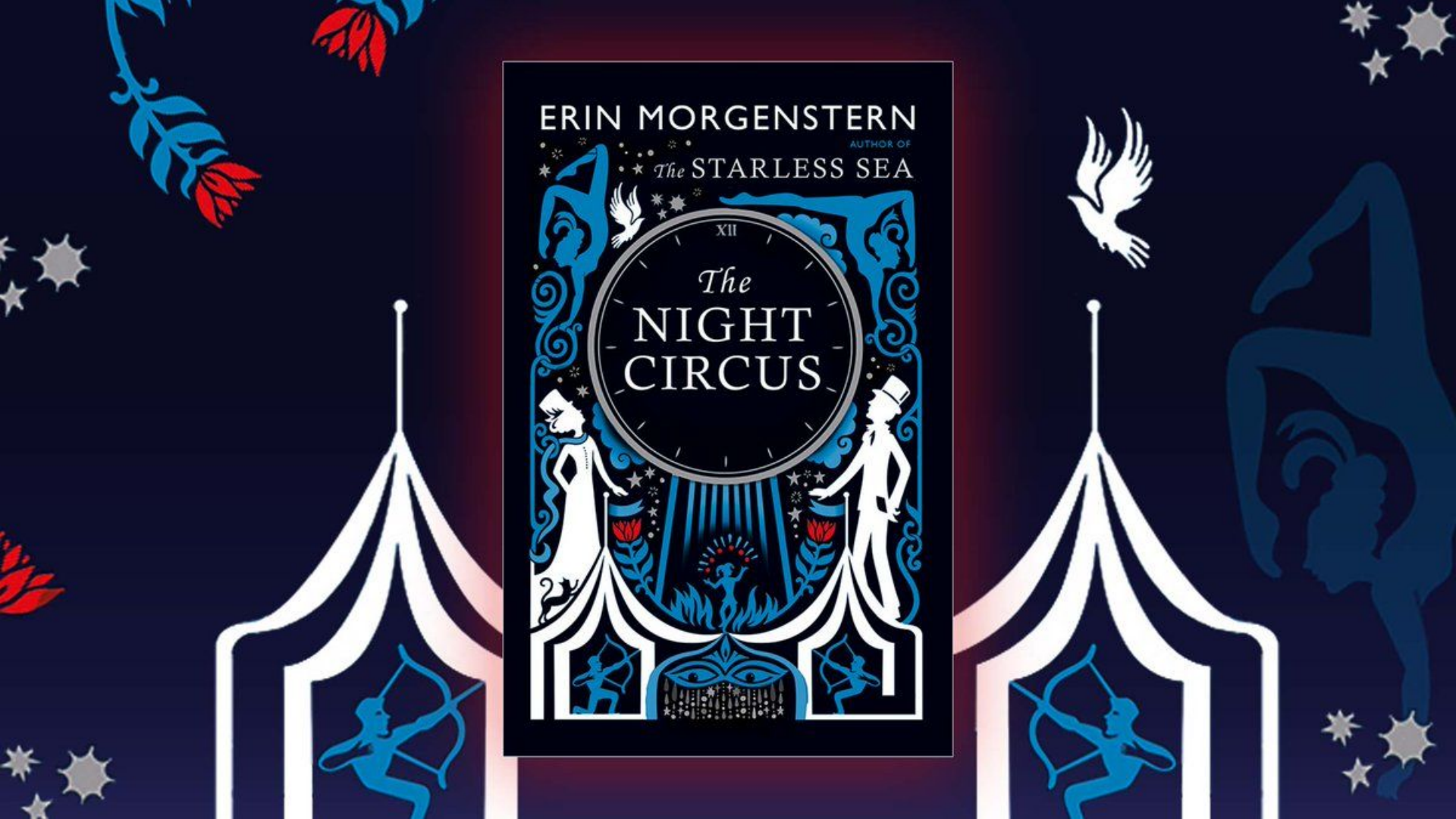
Validation's Essential Premise

Ethical choices create true success, whereas unethical choices lead to true failure.

Validation Examples

JONATHAN
STRANGE
&
Mr NORRELL
a novel
Susanna Clarke


"The year's best debut' buzz around this one was warranted. it really is that good." —B&N SCI-FI AND FANTASY BLOG
THE POPPY WAR
R. F. KUANG
P.S.
INSIGHTS, INTERVIEWS & MORE...


ERIN MORGENSTERN
AUTHOR OF
The STARLESS SEA
XII
The
NIGHT
CIRCUS

Redemption

Redemption

Redemption stories remind us that our wrongs can be forgiven if we take altruistic actions and sacrifice for the greater good.

Redemption

- Redemption stories are *character-driven*, and involve the search for forgiveness or atonement.

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- The Redemption protagonist is **motivated** by guilt, shame, and a desire for forgiveness.
- Redemption **stakes** involve shame, altruism, and sacrifice.
- **Change** arc: guilt to atonement to forgiveness.
- The Redemption reader wants to **feel** satisfaction, pity or contempt, and moral superiority.

Redemption's Essential Premise

Altruistic action results in forgiveness, whereas selfishness leads to moral failure.

Redemption Examples

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

"Juju assassins, alternate history, a gritty New York crime story…in a word: Awesome."
—N. K. JEMISIN, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Fifth Season*

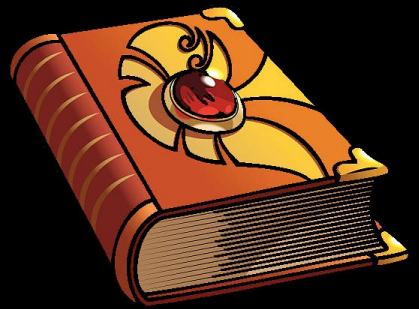
TROUBLE THE SAINTS

A NOVEL

ALAYA DAWN JOHNSON

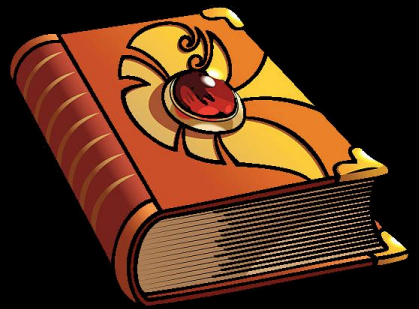
And those are our
Story Types.

Innovate
with story combinations



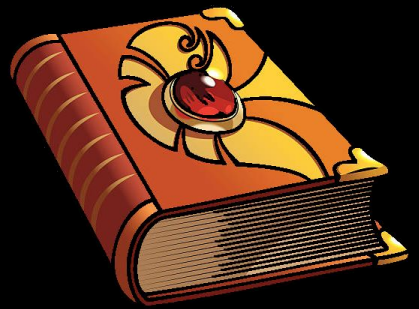
Innovate
with story combinations

- Plot-driven primary + character driven secondary



Innovate
with story combinations

- Plot-driven primary + character driven secondary
- Character driven primary + plot-driven secondary



The plot-driven Story Types:

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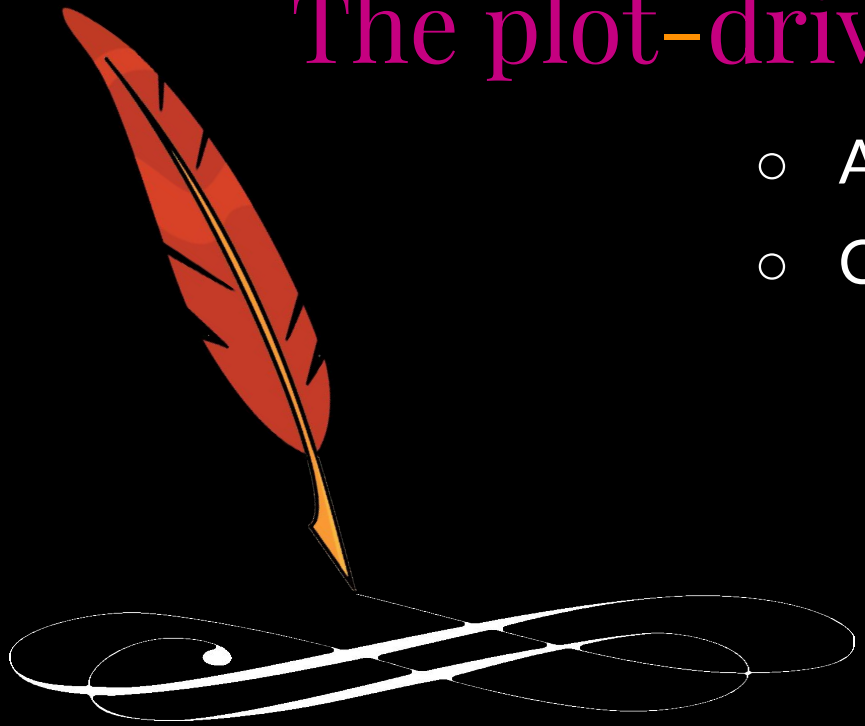
- Action

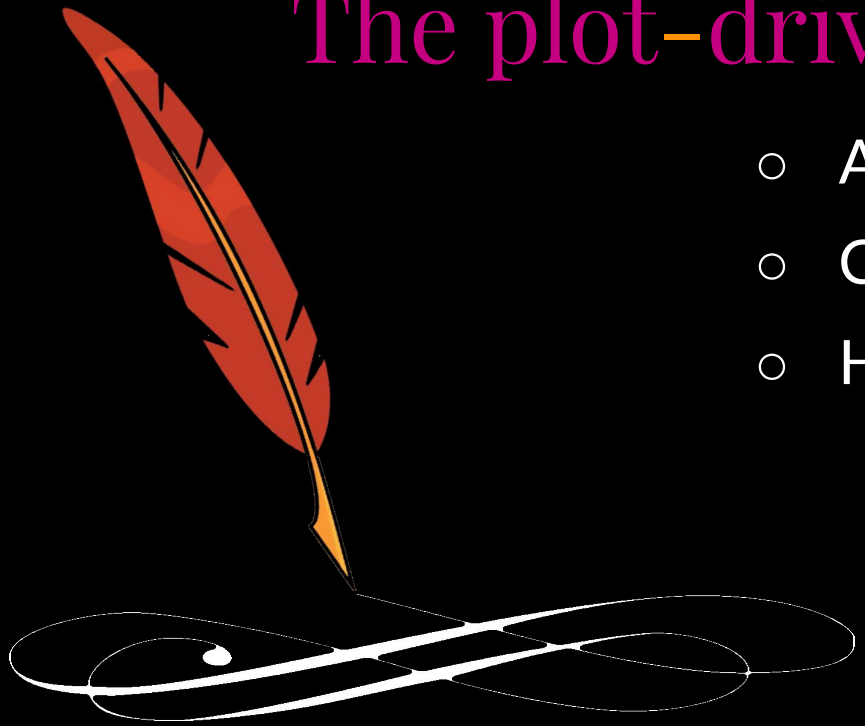
The plot-driven Story Types:

- Action
- Crime



The plot-driven Story Types:

- Action
- Crime
- Horror



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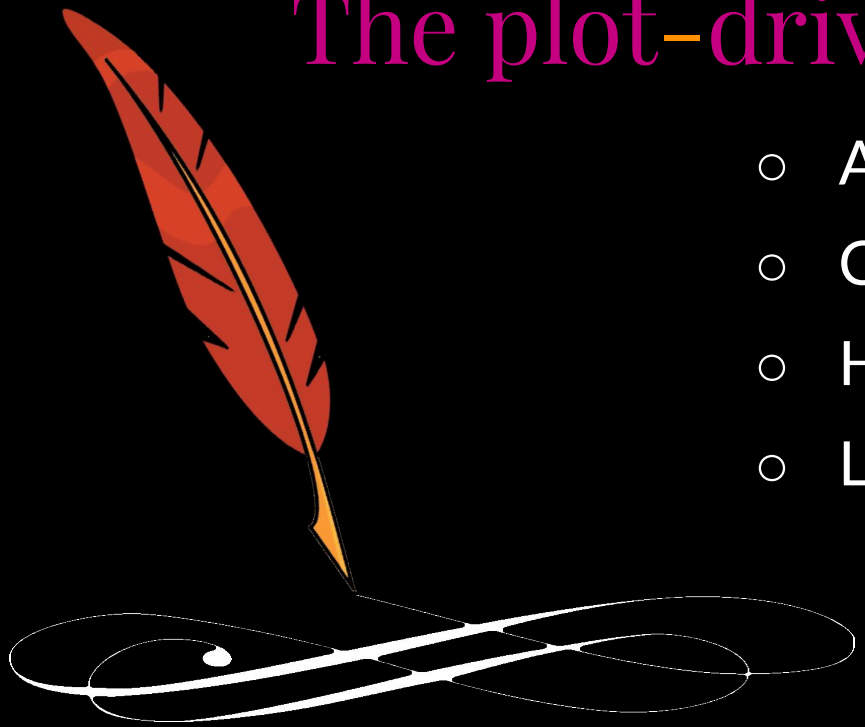
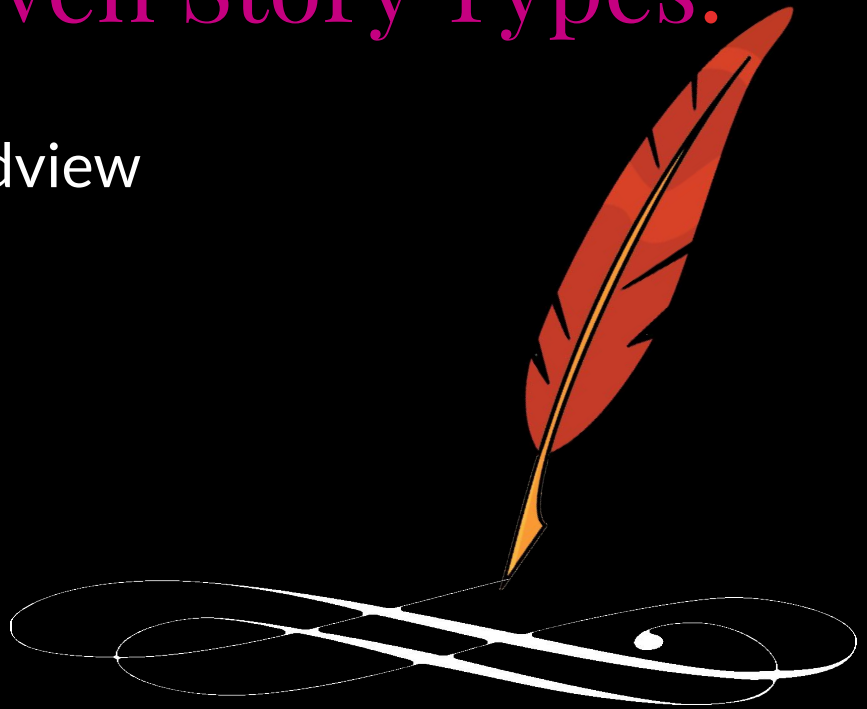


- Action
- Crime
- Horror
- Love

The character-driven Story Types:

The character-driven Story Types:

- Worldview

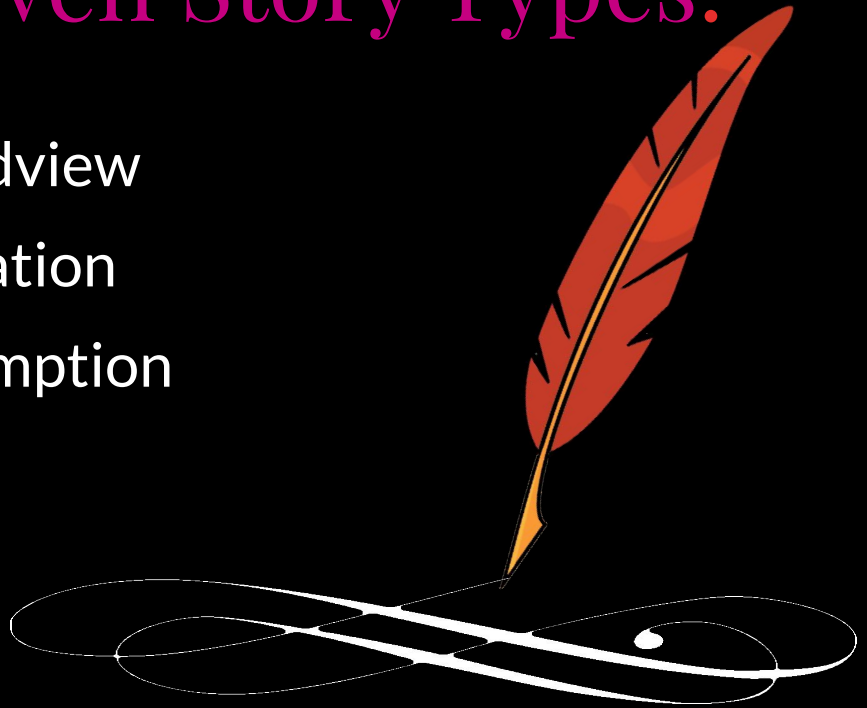


The character-driven Story Types:

- Worldview
- Validation

The character-driven Story Types:

- Worldview
- Validation
- Redemption



Some fantasy combinations:

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- Worldview with Action (*The Magicians*)

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- Worldview with Action (*The Magicians*)
- Worldview with Crime (*Piranesi)*

Some fantasy combinations:

- Worldview with Action (*The Magicians*)
- Worldview with Crime (*Piranesi)*
- Action with Love (*The Untamed*)

Some fantasy combinations:

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- Action with Love (*The Untamed*)
- Crime with Validation (*Rivers of London*)

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- Horror with Validation (*Beloved*)

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- Crime with Validation (*Rivers of London*)
- Horror with Validation (*Beloved*)
- Horror with Worldview (*Coraline*)

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- Redemption with Horror (*A Christmas Carol*)

Some fantasy combinations:

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- Crime with Validation (*Rivers of London*)
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- Redemption with Horror (*A Christmas Carol*)
- Love with Action (*Wicked Fox*)

To recap...

Each Story Type has its own:

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- Protagonist **motivation**.

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- Protagonist **motivation**.
- Protagonist **stakes**.

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- Essential **premise**.

Which helps you, the author:

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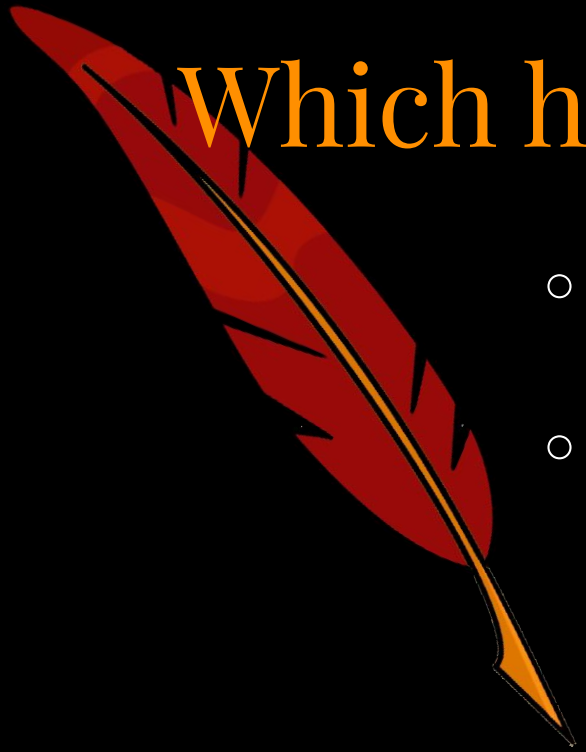
- Meet the expectations of your intended reader.

Which helps you, the author:



- Meet the expectations of your intended reader.
- Write a consistent story with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Which helps you, the author:

- Meet the expectations of your intended reader.
- Write a consistent story with a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Finish your book.

Worldbuilding

Three main questions

Three main questions

Three main questions

- What obstacles & opportunities should the world present?

Three main questions

- What obstacles & opportunities should the world present?
- What is your narrative device & point of view?

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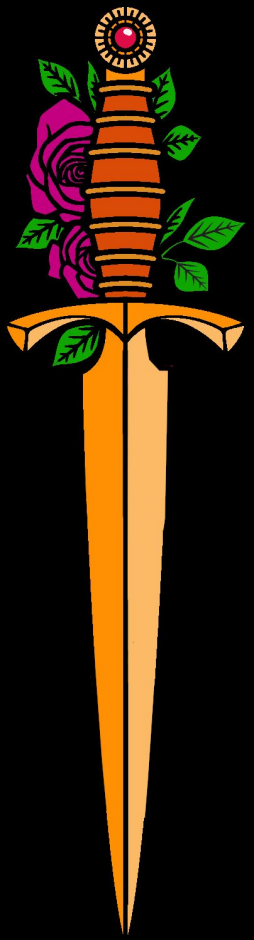
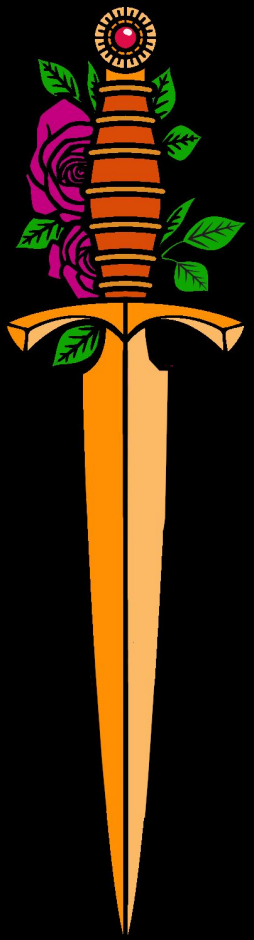
- What is your narrative device & point of view?
- How much does your reader need to know to keep reading?

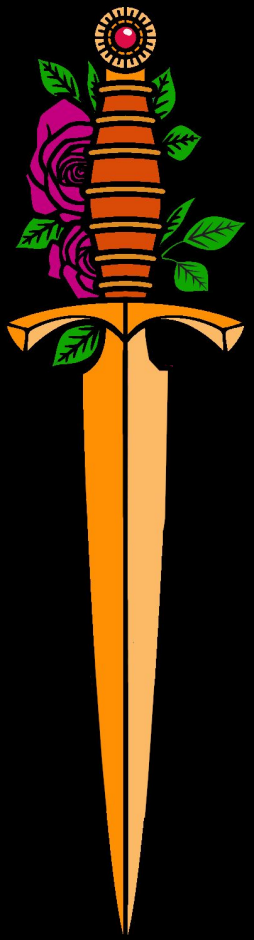


Obstacles & Opportunities



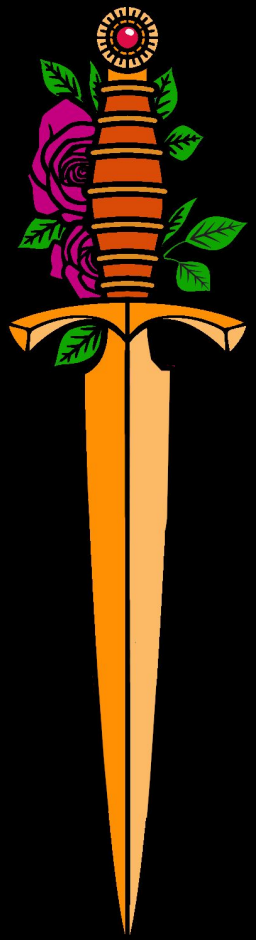
Obstacles & Opportunities

- Climate, geography



Obstacles & Opportunities

- Climate, geography
- Socioeconomics



Obstacles & Opportunities

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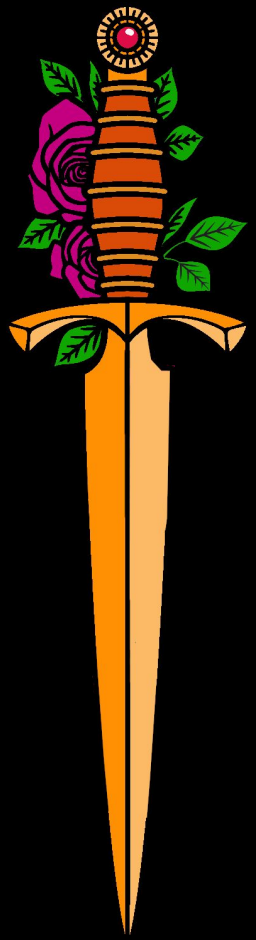
- Socioeconomics
- Culture



Obstacles & Opportunities

- Climate, geography
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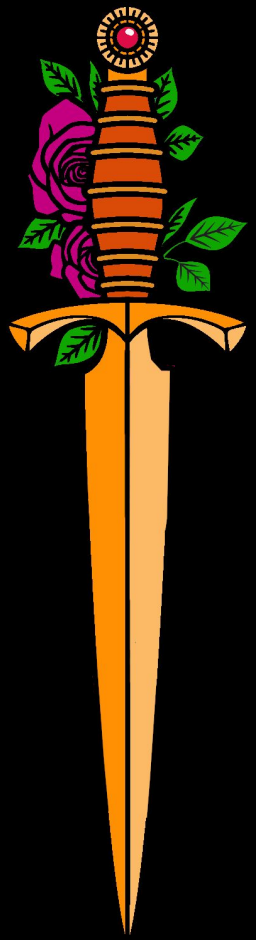
- Culture
- Technology



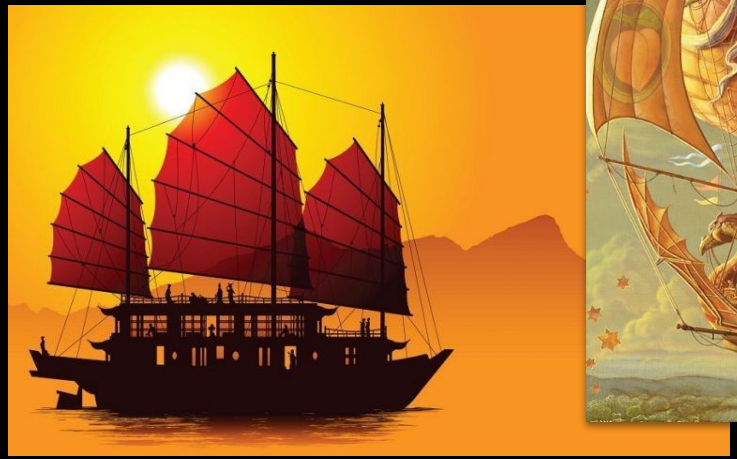
Obstacles & Opportunities

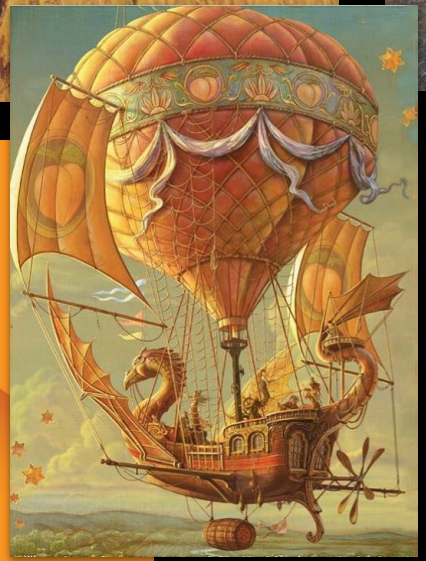
- Climate, geography
- Socioeconomics
- Culture
- Technology
- System of magic

Y.M.G
TRINITY FULL GOSPEL CHURCH
(NEW CREATION MINISTRIES)
WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

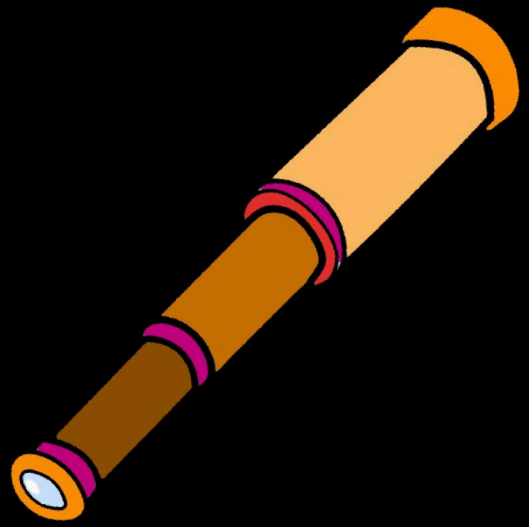
BROWNS
BAKERY
CAKES PIES
&
SWEETS
FRESH BREAD
ROLLS
FANC
BAK

S.S. "Queen Mary"
Via New York
BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION
CALGARY, ALTA.
MY 28
36
S.0.5
CANADA
10
CENTS
Mr Reg. H Maile
11 Queen's Rd.
Malvern Worc's
England
R
CALGARY, ALBER.
SUB No. 6
ORIGINAL No.
52



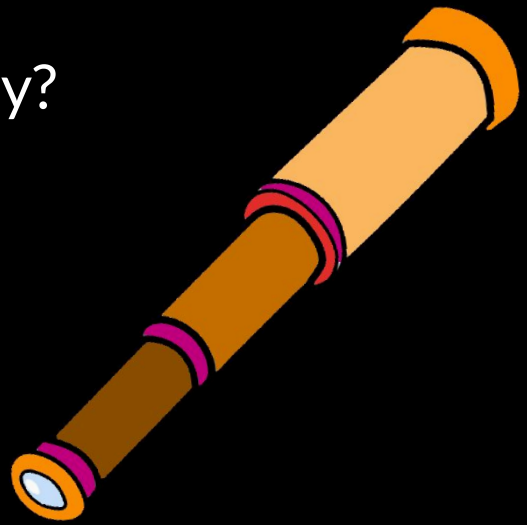


Narrative Device & POV



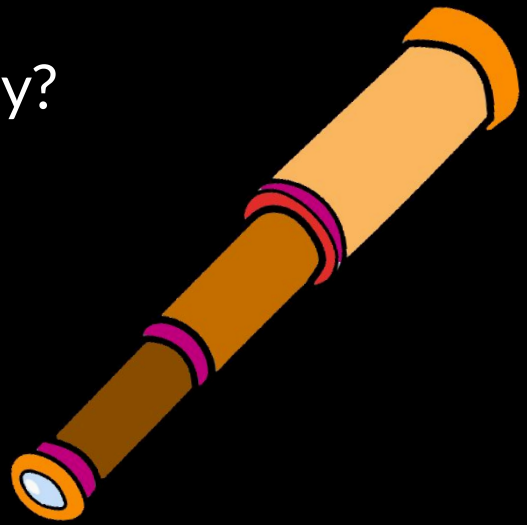
Narrative Device & POV

- Who's telling the story?



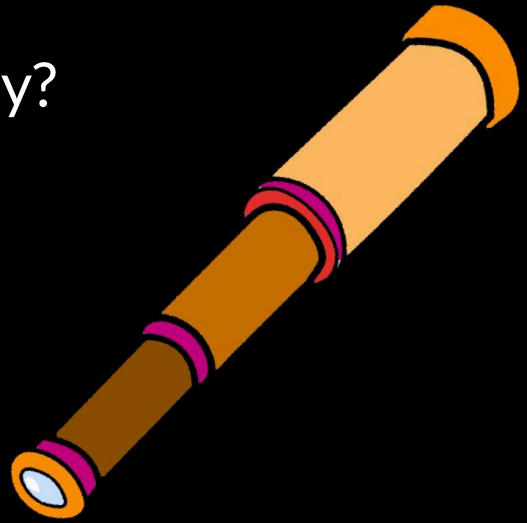
Narrative Device & POV

- Who's telling the story?
- To whom?



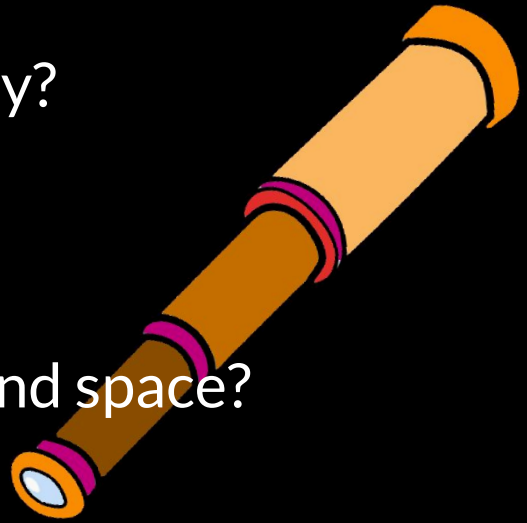
Narrative Device & POV

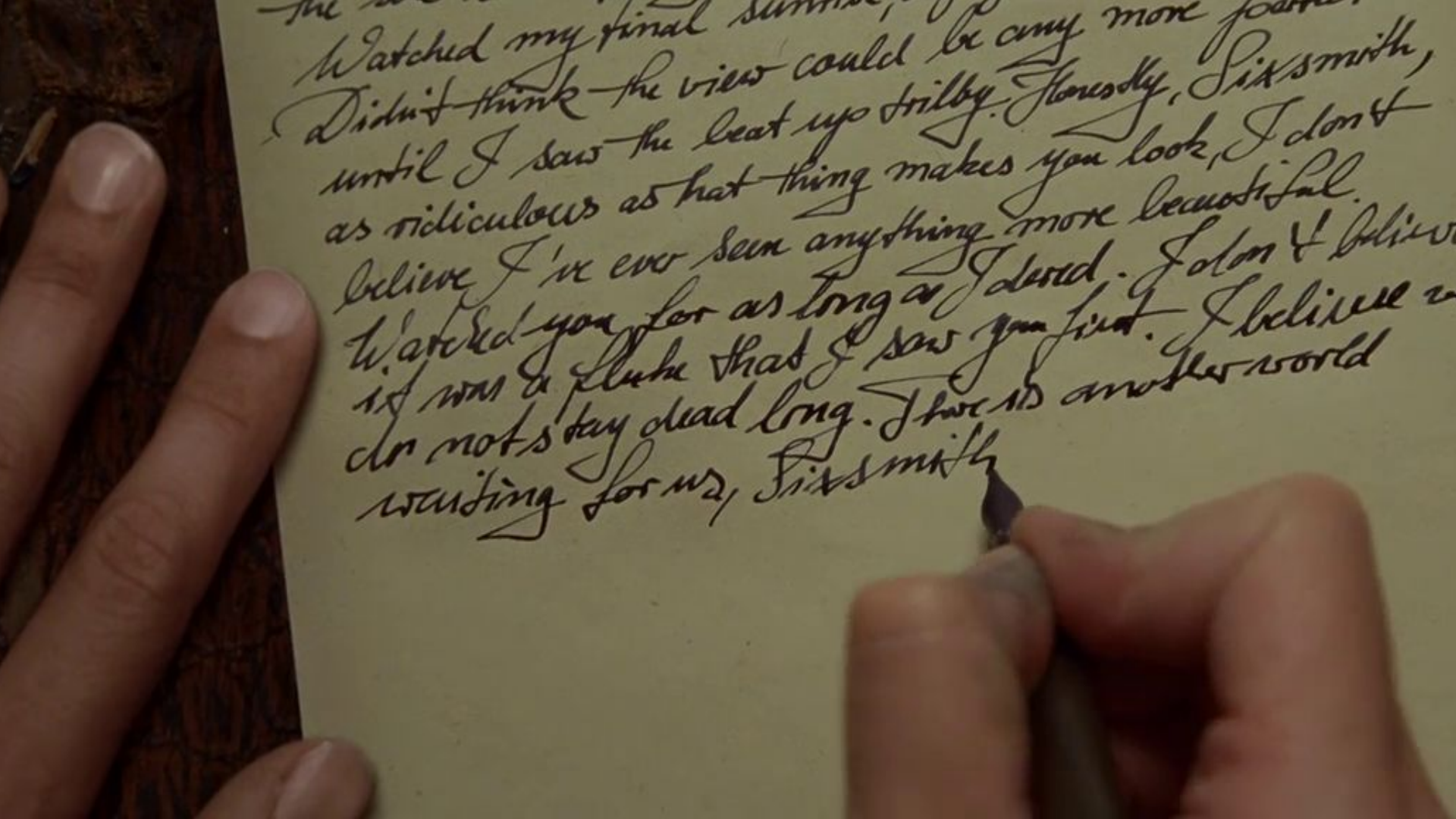
- Who's telling the story?
- To whom?
- Why?



Narrative Device & POV

- Who's telling the story?
- To whom?
- Why?
- From where in time and space?





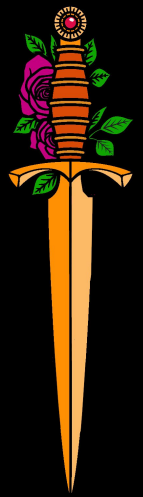
the [illegible]
Watched my final sunrise, [illegible]
Didn't think the view could be any more [illegible]
until I saw the beat up trilby. Honestly, Sixsmith,
as ridiculous as hat thing makes you look, I don't
believe I've ever seen anything more beautiful.
Watched you for as long as I dared. I don't believe
it was a fluke that I saw you first. I believe [illegible]
do not stay dead long. There is another world
waiting for us, Sixsmith

How much information?

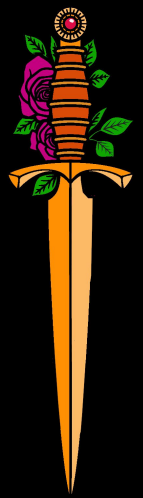
What does *your* reader enjoy?

Just enough...

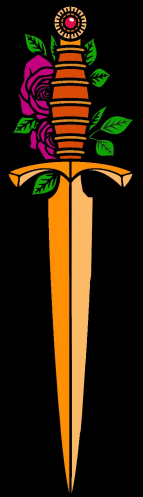
Three pretty good guidelines.



Less is more.



Describe a little, explain less, & don't interrupt action.



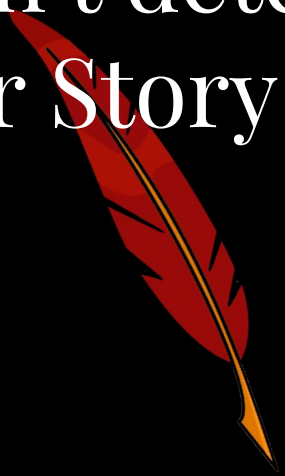
Select details that will pay off later.

Wow.

This has been a lot to absorb.

So let's recap.

Why the fantasy genre doesn't determine your Story Type.



The seven Story Types and their importance for fantasy writers.

The essential elements unique to each Story Type.

How Story Type helps you innovate & meet reader expectations.

Some worldbuilding insights.

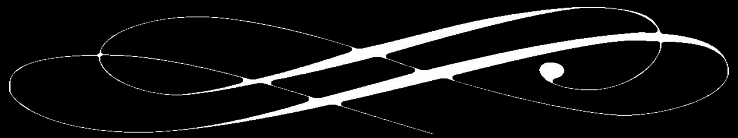
We hope
you're ready to
write *your*
fantasy story.

Before the Q&A:

Grab your copy of the Pages & Platforms Guide

The 7 Essential Story Types

storypath.me/pwa



Questions & Answers

Your fantasy story must:

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- Show the protagonist's **motivation**.

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Your fantasy story must:

- Show the protagonist's **motivation**.
- Create high **stakes** for your protagonist.
- Cause your protagonist to **change**.
- Deliver certain **emotions** to your reader.
- Have a unifying **premise**.