

Welcome to The Essentials of Writing Science Fiction



and the Happily Ever Author Club



Before we start:

Grab your FREE copy of the Pages & Platforms Guide to: The 7 Essential Story Types

pagesandplatforms.com/scifi



Have you started a science fiction story only to get stuck along the way?

Do you have a draft with problems you're having trouble diagnosing?







• Researched?





• Researched?

• Tried plotting?



Have you...

- Researched?
- Tried plotting?
- Tried pantsing?



...and nothing has worked?









is here to help.







IOOIS not rules.



Today you'll learn how to:







BuildEvaluate



Build
Evaluate
Improve



Build
 Evaluate
 Improve



Using Four Tools:



Marketing category



Story Types

THE .

World building



• Evoke empathy for your characters.



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- Create tension and excitement.



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- Provide emotional satisfaction for your reader.



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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.



Science Fiction isn't a Story Type.



"Science Fiction" defines the setting or environment where your story takes place.



And it is a marketing category.



Marketing category


• Require readers to suspend some disbelief.



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- May have a cautionary premise referring to current times.



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- Involve predicted or speculative technology.
- May take place on earth, on other worlds, or in space.
- Are regarded as speculative or imaginative.
- May veer from current scientific understanding.







Science Fiction categories are important.

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



So know your category.



BUT...



BUT...

Science fiction marketing categories can't tell you how to construct your story.



(That's what Story Type is for.)







Another caveat...

Another caveat...

• This isn't a one-draft process.



Another caveat...

This isn't a one-draft process.
(Sorry.)



Zero Draft



• Has a protagonist pursuing a singular **desire**...



- Has a protagonist pursuing a singular desire...
- ...which establishes clear stakes...



- Has a protagonist pursuing a singular **desire**...
- ...which establishes clear stakes...
- …and causes them to undergo a change as they pursue their desire.



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- …and causes them to undergo a change as they pursue their desire.
- Has a premise that's reflected in every scene.



- Has a protagonist pursuing a singular desire...
- ...which establishes clear stakes...
- …and causes them to undergo a change as they pursue their desire.
- Has a premise that's reflected in every scene.
- Is driving toward the emotion your reader expects to feel.







When all these are clear... Desire **Stakes** Change **Premise Emotion**



...revisions can begin.







Story Types

THE .

Choosing a Story Type is your most critical decision.



Story Type determines:



Story Type determines:

• Your protagonist's **motivation** (wants and needs).



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- What emotions you need to deliver to your reader.



Story Type determines:

- Your protagonist's **motivation** (wants and needs).
- What your protagonist has to gain and lose (stakes).
- How your protagonist will change.
- What emotions you need to deliver to your reader.
- The basic **premise** or message of your story.



And those essential elements shape your story.





• Your marketing category or setting type (genre).



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- For back-cover blurbs.



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- For back-cover blurbs.
- For agents or readers.









• A deep structure.





- A deep structure.
- A way to understand the kind of story you're telling.





- A deep structure.
- A way to understand the kind of story you're telling.
- The key to your essential story elements.











































Let's look at them one by one.









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



"BRILLIANT ... A CELEBRATION OF HUMAN INGENUITY [AND] THE PUREST EXAMPLE OF REAL-SCIENCE SCI-FI FOR MANY YEARS ... UTTERLY COMPELLING."—WALL STREET JOURNAL

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE MARTIAN ANDY WEIR

NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE FROM TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

A NOVEL

"Brilliant, endlessly rich . . . pairs well with 1984 or The Handmaid's Tale." — JOHN GREEN, New York Times

Parable of the Sower

With a new foreword from award-winning author

N.K. JEMISIN

WINNER OF A MACARTHUR "GENIUS" GRANT

OCTAVIA E







Afterword, Notes, and Glossary RUSSELL HOBAN



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





Crime's Essential Premise

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





Crime Examples



"NERVE-TINGLING." —*NPR BOOKS* "GRIPPING." —*LOS ANGELES TIMES* "EXQUISITELY CRAFTED." —SCOTT SIGLER

SIXAKES

MUR LAFFERTY

HUGO AND NEBULA AWARDS FINALIST













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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- Change arc: life to death to 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 the monster to win.





Horror Examples















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





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- Change arc: disconnected to connected.
- 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.





Love Examples



the time traveler's wife

AUDREY NIFFENEGGER



You can erase someone from your mind. Getting them out of your heart is another story.





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.


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- 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 enjoys feeling comparatively wise and mature.





Worldview's Essential Premise

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





Worldview Examples





summer in a lagy

THE ONES WHO WALK AWAY FROM OMELAS



URSULAK. LEGUIN









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





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- Validation stories are *character-driven* and involve the search for success and esteem.
- 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 enjoy a sense of moral superiority.





Validation's Essential Premise

Ethical choices create true success, whereas unworthy goals lead to selling out.





Validation Examples



TERRY PRATCHETT

A DISCWORLD[®] NOVEL

















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











- Redemption stories are *character-driven*, and involve forgiveness or atonement.
- The Redemption protagonist is motivated by guilt, shame, and a **desire** for forgiveness.





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- Redemption stakes involve selfishness, 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



GATEWAY FREDERIK POHL



MARVEL STUDIOS RIACK WIDDW

EXPERIENCE IT JULY 9 OR ORDER DISNER+

And there you have them:

And there you have them: The Seven 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





 \circ Action



• Action

 \circ Crime



 \circ Action

- Crime
- Horror



- \circ Action
- Crime
- Horror
- \circ Love





• Worldview



• Worldview

• Validation



- Worldview
- Validation
- Redemption







• Love with Action (A Complicated Love Story Set in Space)





- Love with Action (A Complicated Love Story Set in Space)
- Action with Redemption (Gateway)





- Love with Action (A Complicated Love Story Set in Space)
- Redemption with Horror (A Christmas Carol)
- Validation with Crime (Going Postal)





- Love with Action (A Complicated Love Story Set in Space)
- Redemption with Horror (A Christmas Carol)
- Validation with Crime (Going Postal)
- Worldview with Love/friendship (The Nobodies)





- Love with Action (A Complicated Love Story Set in Space)
- Redemption with Horror (A Christmas Carol)
- Validation with Crime (Going Postal)
- Worldview with Love/friendship (The Nobodies)
- Action with Worldview (Parable of the Sower)



So, to recap...





- Protagonist motivation.
- Protagonist stakes.

- Protagonist motivation.
- Protagonist stakes.
- Protagonist change.



- Protagonist motivation.
- Protagonist stakes.
- Protagonist change.
- Reader emotion.



- Protagonist motivation.
- Protagonist stakes.
- Protagonist change.
- Reader emotion.
- Essential premise.





• Meet the expectations of your intended reader.



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



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

But what about...

World Building

Three main questions

to consider about the world you're building...







And those questions are:



And those questions are:

• What obstacles & opportunities does the world present to the characters in your story?



And those questions are:

- What obstacles & opportunities does the world present to the characters in your story?
- What is your **narrative device & point of view**?


And those questions are:

- What obstacles & opportunities does the world present to the characters in your story?
- What is your **narrative device & point of view**?
- How much does your reader need to know in order to keep reading?





• Climate, geography



- Climate, geography
- Socioeconomic system



- Climate, geography
- Socioeconomic system
- Culture, history



- Climate, geography
- Socioeconomic system
- Culture, history
- State of science & technology







SOCIAL CLASS IN THE 25TH CENTURY























• Who's telling the story?



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



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



- Who's telling the story?
- \circ To whom?
- Why?
- From what distance in time and space?









The Movie Mistake





What does your reader enjoy?













Three pretty good guidelines.



Less is more.





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



Select details that will pay off later.



This is a lot

to absorb.

So let's recap.

The essentials every story needs.

1

Why the science fiction genre doesn't determine your Story Type.

The 7 Story Types and their importance for science fiction writers.

How Story Type helps you innovate and meet reader expectations.

Some worldbuilding insights.

We hope you're ready to write your science fiction story.



Before the Q&A: Grab your FREE copy of the Pages & Platforms Guide to: **The 7 Essential Story Types**

pagesandplatforms.com/scifi





