

Synopses

Writing the synopsis:

A. Create your story question.

Protagonist's name: _____

Antagonist's name: _____

Protagonist's goal (wants more than anything): _____

Antagonist's goal: _____

Set up the above as a story question as follows:

_____ (protagonist) **must** _____

(protagonist's goal) **by** _____

(conflict with antagonist) **only to realize** _____

(what the character learns that helps him/her grow)

*Example: Dorothy **must** defeat the Wicked Witch who stands between her and home **by** marshalling her friends and resources **only to realize** the power to go home was within her all along.*

B. Uncover your theme or "master-effect"

The "master-effect" of your story is "the cerebral and emotional impact the author wants the book as a whole to have, both during the reading and when the reader comes to the end." (from *THE FICTION EDITOR, THE NOVEL, AND THE NOVELIST* by Thomas McCormack, 2006)

Try to find the emotions that drive your work. Exercise:

- (a) List your 3 most powerful childhood memories
- (b) Identify the 3 emotions key to those memories
- (c) Identify your work that was easiest to finish, and list the 3 emotions that drive your protagonist
- (d) Identify your work that has been a struggle, and list the 3 emotions that drive your protagonist
- (e) Circle the strongest emotions from these lists, paying attention to patterns. For example, two repeating emotional patterns in my life (and thus in my work) have been betrayal, and fear of death.

Identify:

Protagonist's internal/emotional conflict: _____

Protagonist's main flaw: _____

What does your character need to learn in order to overcome her flaw?:

Now define the "master-effect" in a single sentence. _____

Example from the Wizard of Oz: A young girl must uncover the traits that form her as a fully developed person by conquering her fear of growing up.

C. Identify the elements that you must relate (time, place) in order for a reader to understand your synopsis.

Time period: _____

Setting: _____

D. Bring all of these elements together in a paragraph.

Example:

In 1904 Margaret Bennet has it all – money, position, and an elegant family home in Newport, Rhode Island. But just as she is to enter society, her mother ruins everything, first with public displays, and finally by disappearing. Maggie's confusion and loss are compounded when her father drags her to Yellowstone National Park, where he informs her that they will remain. At first Maggie's only desire is to return to Newport. But the mystical beauty of the Yellowstone landscape, and the presence of young Tom Rowland, a boy unlike the others she has known, conspire to change Maggie from a spoiled girl willing to be constrained by society to a free-thinking and brave young woman living in a romantic landscape at the threshold of a new century.