

The Idea Machine

A workshop on developing story ideas

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Ten Questions to Consider

The 10 Qs

- Who are the people most affected by this news, and who stands to gain or lose?
- Can you identify the person or group at the center of these events?
- How have the personal qualities of the people involved affected the outcome?
- How and why did this happen, and what might these events lead to?
- Has this happened before?
- What is the problem, what are possible solutions, and who might provide those solutions?
- How does this news make you feel? Why?
- Whose part of the story is not being told?
- Are these events part of a trend?
- Who would care about this?

Your Communities

- Geographic
- Genetic
- Family
- Religious
- Professional
- Avocational
- Economic
- Age

Your Communities

- Ownership
- Ethnicity
- Physical
- Racial
- Personal taste
- Politics
- Personality
- Health

Pay Attention to Other People

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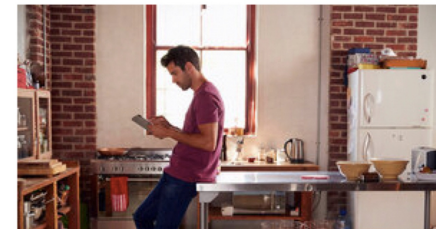
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JACK EL-HAI SEPTEMBER 30, 2018



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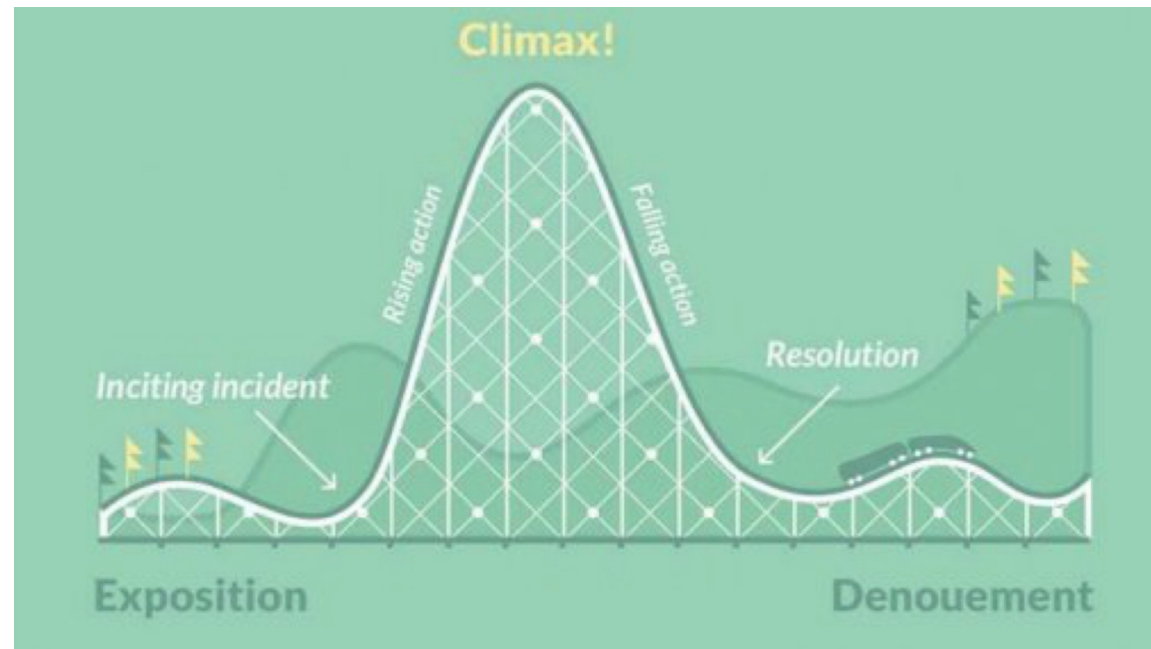


Story Structures

Story structures

1. Inverted pyramid: general to specific
2. The diamond: start specific, grow general, return to specific
3. The circle: story ends at the beginning, with new insights
4. The traditional narrative arc: complication, followed by crisis and resolution
5. The broken line: narrative periodically deviates from main thread to side stories
Looks like ----v----v-----v----v----
6. The braid: one predominant thread, but it weaves into other narrative threads
7. The zipper: two narratives that sometimes run together
8. Strict chronology
9. The spiral: a series of ideas that expand from one another
10. Layers: story narrative, followed by background info, followed by story, info, etc.
11. Branching: Narrative diverges at key points; may return to main branch
12. It's also possible to use musical forms, such as the sonata, for inspiration

Story Arc



Story Database

Name				Date	
Categories					
	Fun 3 30	Lucrative 3 30	Doable 2 20	Attention 2 20	Total score
Media					
Timeliness					
Start date					
Source					
Notes					

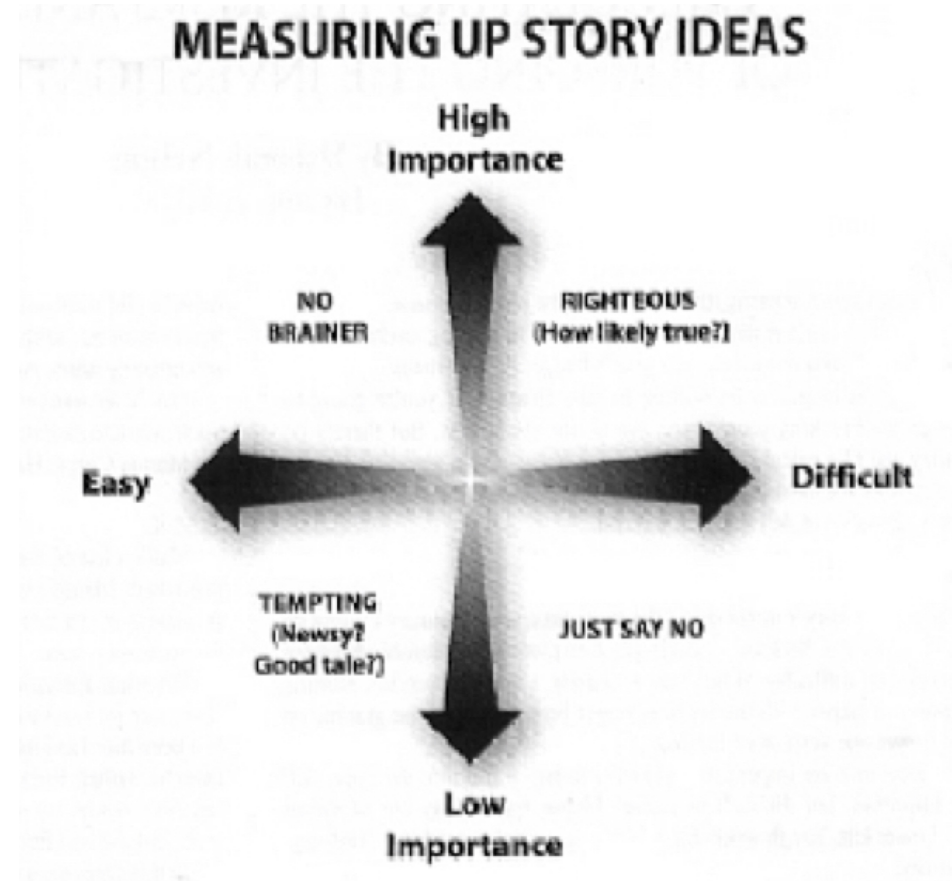
Story Qualities

Write down three or four important qualities you want your ideas for stories, poems, scripts, or essays to possess.

These qualities can be anything you really care about. Some examples:

- Artistically satisfying
- Challenging
- Lucrative
- Disruptive
- Instructive
- Attention-getting
- Revolutionary
- Easy
- Personally intense
- Improves the world
- Career-advancing
- Genre-stretching

Measure Your Story Ideas



Story Judging Formula

Making your idea-judging formula

1. Choose two to four of your idea qualities that are most important to you.
2. Give weight to each of your chosen qualities. You want the total weight to equal 100. If you wish to weigh them equally, two chosen qualities would each have 50 percent weight. Four equally weighted qualities would each have 25 percent weight. If you want to weigh some qualities more heavily than others, adjust the balance while maintaining the total at 100. If you're using three qualities, one quality can have 40 percent weight, and two others can have 30 percent weight.
3. To judge your idea, rate it on each quality on a scale from 0 to the weight you have given the quality. Then add up the ratings for a total score.
4. Example: You have selected four qualities. Quality 1 has 50 percent weight, Quality 2 has 20 percent weight, and Qualities 3 and 4 each have 15 percent weight. You rate your idea at 40 for Quality 1, 18 for Quality 2, 5 for Quality 3, and 12 for Quality 4. That gives you a total rating of 75.
5. After you have judged several of your ideas, you can rank them by their total scores. The one with the highest rating wins.