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Who we are

A.K. and Maeghan are both writers and independent editors with several books published. We also work with NaNoWriMo and can be seen hosting write-ins and events across Fairfax County.

A.K. is originally from the Pacific Northwest but has been in the DC area for over 20 years. She has been participating in NaNoWriMo events since 2007 and has been a Northern Virginia region co-Municipal Liaison for several years. She has four independently published novels under the name A.K. Child and is a professional editor.

Maeghan, currently residing in Sterling, VA, is a lifelong Virginian, with 4 books published under her name and 4 under a pen name. Her most recent publication is Incident Zero, a dystopian fantasy, which can be purchased from your favorite online retailer.

Marguerite grew up traveling all over the place but settled down in Maryland. She writes Gay Romance mixed in with Paranormal, Sci-Fi, Horror. While she doesn't offer editing services, she's a great resource for up-and-coming writers.
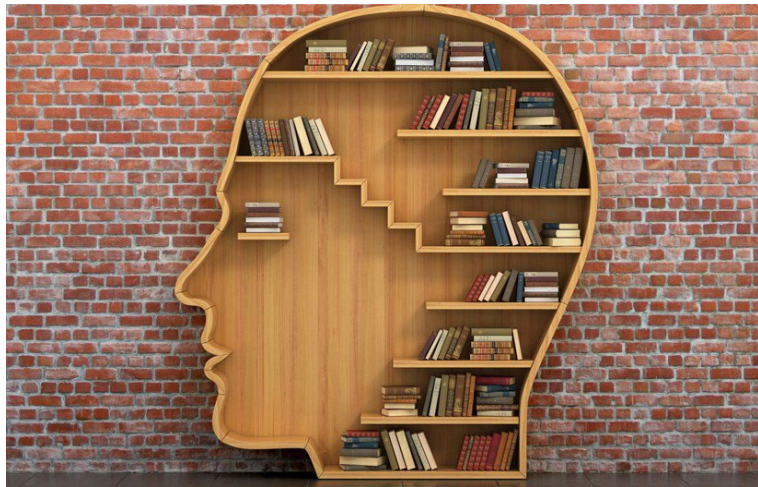
Framing a Story

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https://www.feralwritersclub.net

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Adding the Pieces

Add Characters

So, who is on this journey with the main character? Why are they on this journey? Who are the antagonists and protagonists? Are there any red herring characters? What kind of characters do you need to keep the story moving, or to wrap it up?

Define Motivations

Have you figured out your bad guy yet? If not, this is the time to start looking at the motivations behind your characters. Why does this person want these things? Why does this other person not want that person to get that thing?

Add Locations/Settings

So now you have a cast, where does the cast go? Where do they exist? What are the main characters' favorite haunts, their habits, their beliefs? Start describing them. Who goes there? Why? What happens in these places?

Now What?

Well, that depends on you, my dear writer. Are you a planner? Start a spreadsheet or new document. If you prefer notecards, go for it. If you're a pantser, well, get to writing!

So, How?

"The what happens is your plot." – James Scott Bell

Start Simple

The best place to start is figuring out your plot. You can do this by developing characters and deciding what makes them interesting or what they want to achieve. What's holding them back? Why is it holding them back? If you want to write a plot driven story, what is important about the plot? What can you accomplish or inform the reader as they follow the plot?

Add Complications

Once you have a plot in mind, start adding the structure. Develop the characters so they have flaws and strengths, backgrounds, beliefs, and ideas. Add in complications to make the characters move forward through the narrative. Figure out if the characters will have a good or bad ending.

Planning vs. Pantsing

A planner may write out all the "bones" of the structure, to include characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions. This can help them see the "frame" of the story and allow them to build around it. A pantser may have a more intuitive feeling about their structure and start writing around it without the need for a physical plan. Both methods are fine, and the writer should do what works for them. In either case, framing is the structure holding the story together.

Definitions

Plot
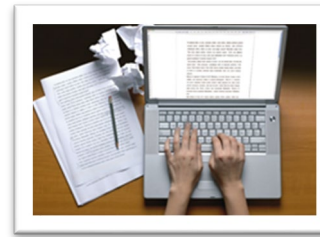
The plot includes the main events of a story presented in sequence (linear or non-linear).

Narrative Structure

Narrative structure is the bones of a story. The bones rise from the plot, and include the key conflicts, rising action, character dynamics, "beats," and ultimately the resolution.

Character vs. Plot Driven

Some stories are character driven, in that the characters' actions and personalities move the plot forward. Other stories are plot in driven, in that the main idea of the plot is what makes everything else happen.

Getting Started

What is Framing a Story?

Think of framing like building a house. Most houses start with a foundation, or what we would call "plot." Once the foundation is laid, then we begin "framing" the house, or putting up the narrative structure, which builds the story.

"A lack of narrative structure, as you know, will cause anxiety." —*John Dufresne*

Narrative Structure

Narrative can be structured in many ways, such as:

- Frame story;
- Story within a story;
- Linear narrative; and
- Non-linear narrative.

A Frame Story is an overarching story tying a more complex narrative together, like Canterbury Tales and One Thousand and One Nights. In these, narrators tell smaller stories within a larger narrative. This can manifest like the examples or can be something like letters scattered throughout a narrative. It acts like wires linking a story together, like a television show with "monster of the week" episodes giving hints to the overall season narrative. Supernatural is a great example of this.

For story within a story, think of the play within a play from Hamlet, where Hamlet uses the wandering actors to accuse his uncle of murdering his father. A more recent example is from the Ant-Man films where the comedic character retells the story for the audience. This gives the writer a chance to tell the audience exactly what to look for in the larger narrative, while giving the reader a chance to make sure they understand what is happening.

Linear and non-linear narratives are the most common narrative structures. Most stories will have a linear beginning, middle, and end. Some of these may be upset by moving back and forth through time, like the Witcher series, where we see important past events happen in the middle of current events.

No Plot, No Problem. Or is it?

Plot can be tricky. This is, again, the foundation of a story, and some stories have more foundation than others. Some are dirt-floors with lean-tos build on top. Some are concrete, holding up skyscrapers. Different stories have different needs, and it's okay if the plot is light. These are often "slice of life" stories which don't require deeper meaning.

Here are a few pieces that go into building the plot:

Key Conflicts: The main events shaping the character's obstacles.

Types of Conflict: Character vs. Character(s), Society, Nature, Technology, Supernatural, Fate, Self.

Rising Action: The section of the story leading to the climax.

Climax: When the character overcomes the obstacle.