

THE STORY ROAD MAP

START HERE

I want to write a book...

in a particular genre...

about...

that will...

something that happens...

make the reader feel something...

a world where...

someone...

address a question or problem...

who wants something...

explore...

who experiences something...

a physical landscape...

teach the reader something...

who opposes something...

a psychological landscape or mind space...

an emotional or interpersonal landscape...

a conflict or controversy...

Story is...
**Emotional
Experience Oriented**

Story is...
**Character
Psychology Oriented**

Story is...
World Oriented

Story is...
**Character
Goal Oriented**

Story is...
**Author
Didactic**

Story is...
Event Oriented

Story is...
**Character
Struggle Oriented**

WORLD ORIENTATION

Whether a completely invented science fiction / fantasy world, fairyland, past, present, or future... in a real or imagined place, the key to world oriented storytelling is rules: What is impossible and what is possible? What is permitted and what is forbidden? What is encouraged and what is frowned upon? What is conventional and what is eccentric? Where are the boundaries? Once you know the rules the story should arise from a simple conflict: either there are rules that are in conflict with each other, or a person finds themselves in conflict with a rule.

EVENT ORIENTATION

Event oriented storytelling is all about consequences. Crime and Thrillers are usually event oriented. Focus on the consequences of the event for different people, and the way that the final outcome of the story is different for different people. Characters will typically be stereotypical or shallow - this is what you want. Exploring an event in depth is about exploring what it means through many pairs of eyes.

EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE ORIENTATION

What matters most is what the character and/or the reader feels. Before you start writing, outline the course of the emotional experience, both of each character and of the reader. Look at the transition points from one emotional state to another, and from one emotional experience to another. The features of the story will arise naturally from those points.

CHARACTER ORIENTATION (GOAL, STRUGGLE, PSYCHOLOGY)

It matters who the people in the story are, and /or you care about them. It's important to get to know the characters. Invent (do not write down) detailed biographies for them. Role play interactions between them. Think about them the same way as you think about real people by imagining your characters interacting with you, and other real people that you know. This way, when you place characters in situations, you will know what they will do. What they choose to do will drive the story.

AUTHOR-DIDACTISM

Two words: Be careful! The best way to achieve your aim is to pick one of the other orientations in this map, and use it as a framework. Event Orientation is the easiest, followed by World Orientation, but any of them will do. Use this as a means of deriving the story, which will then act as a medium or conduit for your personal aim. Treat your personal aim, message, or theme as secondary. Let it color your choices when you have them, and let it seep through in your imagery. Never use a character to explain it. Let the story do the explaining. Show why it is important. It is all too easy to alienate the reader.

What Kind of Story Are You Writing?
