The Anatomy of Story: 22 Steps to Becoming a Master Storyteller

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The Anatomy of Story: 22 Steps to Becoming a Master Storyteller is a textbook written by screenwriter John Truby and it teaches the secrets to writing a successful narrative whether it be a script, novel, short-story or narrative nonfiction.[1] Truby is a well-known screenwriter and story consultant in the film industry and some of his works include Shrek and Scream. [1] He is also known for the screenwriting software program Blockbuster (originally “Storyline Pro”). [2]

Chapter 3 in this textbook outlines the seven key steps of story structure. [1] Truby states that these are the minimum amount of steps that lay in the structure of the story and as we progress from beginning to end these steps will develop accordingly. [1]

The Seven Key Steps of Story Structure [edit]

1. **Weakness and need**
   The protagonist must have a weakness that is detrimental to his or her life and must also have a need that must be fulfilled in order to improve that life. [1] It is important that the protagonist is not aware of this need in the beginning of the story. [1]

   **Example: Up (2009 film) [3]**
   Weakness: Carl is stubborn and refuses to change or connect with life outside of his house. His only wish now is to be left alone in his house filled with memories of his wife.
   Need: Carl needs friendship. He needs to step out into the world and connect again with others after the passing of his wife.

2. **Desire**
   Desire is a goal the protagonist wants to accomplish and it gives the audience something to strive toward during plot twists and arcs in the story. [1] It differs from need because need allows the audience to see how the protagonist must change, something the protagonist is unaware of until the climax of the story. [1]

   **Example: The Amazing Spiderman (2012 film) [4]**
   Desire: Peter Parker’s desire is to use his powers to rid the city of criminals after he loses his uncle to a thief he initially lets escape.
3. **Opponent**  
Structurally, a good opponent will not only want to stop the protagonist from reaching his goals but will also compete with the protagonist for the same goal. [1]

**Example: Tron: Legacy** [5]  
Sam (Kevin Flynn’s son) and Cube (the opponent) both fight to reach the ticket out of the virtual grid world and into the physical world. Note that although both have the same goal they also have very different plans to enact after attaining that goal. Sam wants to get back to reality and Cube wants to control the gateway and move forces into the physical world for subjugation.

4. **Plan**  
Simply stated, the plan is the action list the protagonist will use to overcome his or her opponent in order to reach the goal. [1]

To keep his house from being taken, and also keep his wife’s memories alive, Carl uses balloons to lift his house to safety and fly. His plan is to finally live his and his wife’s dream to visit that wilderness area in South America.

5. **Battle**  
This can be the climax of the story. This will be the final conflict between the protagonist and the opponent and will determine who wins the goal. [1] The conflict may be physical or verbal. [1]

**Example: Tron: Legacy** [5]  
The final conflict is physical and uses aerial and hand to hand combat to keep Cube from reaching the gateway back to the physical realm.

6. **Self-revelation**  
After the battle the protagonist will have a revelation about his or herself. [1] The revelation will be psychological and moral. [1]

Carl realizes his wife wanted him to continue to live his life to the fullest without her after her passing. He also realizes the importance of friends in his life.

7. **New-Equilibrium**  
Here everything returns to normal or a new normal and desire is gone. [1] Oftentimes a fundamental change has occurred with the protagonist. [1] This signals the end of the story.
Peter Parker learns the lesson that great responsibility lies with those who have great power. He sees how easy it is for a good man to turn into a monster when given great power and that weakness he sees in himself is something he must always fight.

References [edit]


External links [edit]

Amazon’s Link.