

SHORT STORY PLOTTING CHART

by Jill Williamson

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A short story needs three steps.

1. Introduce the main character and the problem or challenge that they face. The problem or challenge must give your main character some conflict and a goal or it won't be powerful or interesting enough for a story.

2. Escalate the problem by making you main character struggle.

3. End the story with the main character solving the problem, or coming to a new understanding because of it.

1. Introduce main character: _____

a. Problem or challenge: _____

b. Conflict: _____

c. Main character's goal: _____

2. The struggle: _____

3. How it will be solved or what is learned: _____

EXAMPLES USING SHORT STORY PLOTTING CHART

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Example: *The Merak Galaxy* by Jill Williamson

1. Introduce main character: Rigil Kentarus is a space ranger who is trying to pull his daily quota of stars into the station.

a. Problem or challenge: Many of the space rangers have disappeared lately. Now Rigil's best friend, Merak, has disappeared and Rigil must go and save him.

b. Conflict: Rigil must fly to the legendary magnetic hole to rescue his friend and coworkers. It is a dangerous task, but Rigil has no choice.

c. Main character's goal: Rescue the people from the magnetic hole without getting sucked in. He borrows his little sister's plastic space bike to achieve this goal, that way he won't be sucked in by the magnet.

2. The struggle: The only way Rigil knows of to demagnetize is to use a great amount of heat, but how can he tow a star with a plastic kid space bike?

3. How it will be solved or what is learned: Rigil tows Merak on his bike away from the magnetic hole long enough for Merak to lasso a star. The magnetic hole pulls Merak's bike in, but Rigil swings up just in time for Merak to jump on Rigil's bike and escape before Merak's bike crashes into the magnetic hole. Everyone is freed. Since Rigil is a hero and discovered a new galaxy, he gets to name it. He figures that an unstable galaxy deserves an unstable name, and titles it Merak Galaxy, in honor of his friend.

Example: *The Perfect Gift* by Jill Williamson

1. Introduce main character: (This was a first person story, so my main character didn't have a name!) My main character is getting ready for Christmas. Every year her family draws names. She drew her sister Milly and bought her the perfect sweater.

a. Problem or challenge: The sweater is missing!

b. Conflict: If my main character doesn't find it, she will have nothing to give her sister.

c. Main character's goal: Find the sweater and fast!

2. The struggle: My main character looks everywhere for the sweater. She prays. Then she finds the sweater! Her dog took it outside and under the porch. She had puppies and they are sleeping on the sweater!

3. How it will be solved or what is learned: When the time comes for Milly to open her gift, my main character tells her that she got her the sweater she liked, but then says, "I got you a gift but God had a better one." And she shows Milly the puppies. Gifts of love are the best gifts of all.