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Plot development worksheet

While everyone carves pumpkins and is hunting for a black turtle neck and New Balance sneakers, in between desperately trying to finish my house repairs before the freezing cold arrives, I'm preparing for NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month). In the Seattle area, the NaNoWriMo fans filled not one, but two plot development workshops in a few hours of registration. So I thought I would put some NaNoWriMo Preparation Tips and ideas for those of us who don't get to attend. Plot Development Worksheets First, show me some new plot and chapter development storyboard worksheets. Click on the title below to download: Novel Storyboard Worksheet : An open storyboard for taking notes on events and characters per chapter Traditional Plot Development Storyboard : The traditional fiction arc split into the standard 20 chapters used by mass market paperbacks for decades. Blake Snyder's Save the Cat! Storyboard Worksheet : Screenwriter and teacher Blake Snyder's technique condensed into a storyboard format for plotting contemporary high-concept fiction. Chapter Storyboard Worksheet: Good for breaking a chapter down for scene, especially useful if you have multiple locations and character point of view to hold events in a clear order Character Development and Profiling Heroes and heroines, even only protagonists and antagonists, can often be blurred in the heat of trying to write a novel in a month. So I started using the Target Audience Profile worksheet that I give my marketing students to help them keep their lead or customer sharp. Try filling out the audience profile worksheet and writing a profile of your main characters to keep at hand. It helps in trying to answer that magical, musical question What would this character do now? Target Audience Profile Worksheet Once I have a basic demographic profile of a character, I add things like family background, every significant incidence in character life like bullying at school or winning a contest that had an impact. I find a lot of times when I'm stuck or blocked in a project, it's because I haven't really defined a character (or any of them) well enough to clearly know how he or she would react or respond to the situation. Visual techniques for developing plot and characters A number of writers I've met use collage to prepare for their writing projects. Bestselling romantic comedy author Jennifer Crusie has a collection of them now and here (Wild Ride Collage) and here (this is more about the process). Basically it is similar to doing a visualization collage. Start with focus on the title or theme of your story. Then collect images and words from magazines or other media while emphasizing your theme or title. You even collect found objects that seem to fit (I met an author who actually makes sculptures for his projects). Once you feel like you've collected enough stuff to start, grab a large sheet of paper - or a box if you want to go 3D - and start putting together your images, words, objects as it moves you. Jennifer Crusie and others talk about leaving character or story elements when they feel like something's missing and the authors are held up later. Writeoncon.com has a video by author Tera Lynn Childs showing how she creates a character collage here. I've also met authors who draw or paint a scene from their story. I met some who actually describe the book to inspire them throughout the process and keep the mood and another (a screenwriter) who created the movie poster. My absolute favorite was a writing friend who persuaded an associate of B. Dalton to give her one of their old bestseller list cards; carefully replace the number position with her book title and name; and then hung it up for her workspace to have her write daily. She also made book covers to place in front of her workspace and individual character collages. She didn't reach #1 before she died, but she did make it to the list. There is no right or wrong way to do this. There's just your way. These are all just a way for authors to use another part of their brain in solving plot and character development. Give it a try. If there's nothing else, you have a conversation piece. The goal is to get to know our characters, get a feel for their story arcs, and inspire us to keep our backsides in our chairs and our fingers on our keyboards until we get our book (or at least 50,000 words and the basic spine of our book). So NaNoWriMoers, let's start our engines! And feel free to share this post with your NaNoWriMo community! Do you want to support the author? There are hundreds, perhaps thousands of articles about new plotting on the web. There are a few plotting worksheets, with spaces and questions for you to fill out your own work - some of them are good. But I couldn't find what I wanted, so I decided to make it and share it with all of you. The Plotting Worksheet is for writers who spread ideas (perhaps a conflict + resolution) that need to be worked in a basic plot structure. It's 1 page, bare bones, easy to view at a glance. The Plotting Worksheet with prompts is the same with questions to ask your answers, in case some of the steps confuse you or you are familiar with different terminology, etc. It's two pages, and gives you more to chew on as you plot. Note: If you are in the stages, it is perhaps easiest to fill this worksheet in order. For example, you would only know your on shocking incident and your climax. But from climax, you work backwards to distract your darkest hour, etc. I hope this helps. Of course, every story is different, and there are really no rules to plotting. Plotting, is not meant to be the right way to do it - just a good place to start. Tweak as desired. You work out your subplots with the same worksheet. And don't forget to break up your characters with the Character Chart template. Happy plotting! See the full list of available organizational documents. All documents are © Annie Neugebauer. These documents are only for personal use. Copyright applies. Ask permission for anything other than personal records. If you want to share these with writers you know, send them the link so they come visit me here. Thank you all so much for your support! Share this: Some writers are plotters, some are armorers (write by the seat of their pants), and some are a combination of both. I think at some point almost all writers are on both sides of this (feel free to comment if I'm wrong!). For those writers who need a little plotting help get the story back on track if you feel like you've lost it, to have an idea of where to post it, or to lay out the whole story, here are links to plot worksheets that can help you plot. Let us know which one you like or don't like, and share in the comments below if you know more! Happy plotting! 1. Jami Gold's Story Planning Worksheets Jami has created numerous worksheets for writers. These worksheets are recommended by many! She has worksheets based on the teachings of other writers, plus some she has created on her own. Here are a few I recommend from her page: Blake Snyder's Save the Cat Beat Sheet (created by Elizabeth Davis) Larry Brooks' Story Engineering Beat Sheet Jami Gold's Basic Beat Sheet Jami Gold's Romance Beat Sheet * You have to go to the link above and then you can download the sheets from there. 2. Annie Neugebauer, author, created two Word doc worksheets that are really great. These are a bit more basic than Jami's sheets above, but give an overview of where you're going. One is simple, the second contains clues to make you think and ask questions about your story and characters. I recommend the prompt a lot. 3. Fill in the Blanks: A sudden template to keep you on target by Janice Hardy. 4. This site has six great templates to download! 5. Story Writing Help - Plot worksheets Other useful posts about plotting and sketching: Do Do do you have a worksheet or summary to add to this list? What are you using? KATIE McCOACH is a freelance development book editor at KM Editorial who works with authors of all levels to help them create their best possible story. Katie is a member of Romance Writers of America and the Editorial Freelancers Association. She has published essays in TrainWrite and Kalliope and is currently writing a contemporary novel. For advice on editing, writing and publishing visit her blog on and make sure to follow her on Twitter@KatieMcCoach. Make sure you subscribe to the blog so you don't miss another post! Below are the main parts of Goldy Locks and the Three Bears. Place each component where it belongs in the plot chart by placing the number in the circle. What is it? 1. The gingerbread man came to a river he couldn't cross. 2. An old woman who lived in a cottage baked a gingerbread man. 3. The fox has the gingerbread man on the duck. Where do these fit into the schedule of the story? 1. Foxy Loxy told them that he would show them a shortcut to the king. 2. She ran to tell the king that the sky was falling. 3. She turned around and went back to her farmyard, never to give the king her message. 4. Henry Penny and all her friends ran into Foxy Loxy who said he wanted to go with them. 1. The little red chicken ate the bread all by itself, enjoying every bite. 2. The little red chicken did all the work while the other three lazed around all day and refused to help. 3. When the bread was ready, the pig, duck and cat all said they were ready to eat it. 4. The pig, the duck, and the cat refused to help plant the corn. Place each component where it belongs in the plot chart by placing the number in the circle. For example: 1. The first pig built his house from straw, and the big bad wolf came and blew it down. 2. The big bad wolf got angry about the pigs tricking him, so he decided to go down the chimney of the pigs brick house and eat them for dinner. 3. The first pig went to live with the second pig, whose house was built from sticks, until the big bad wolf blew it down as well. 1. Little Red Riding Hood met a wolf in the woods and told him she would visit her grandmother. 2. Little Red Riding Hood arrived for her visit, not realizing that it was the wolf dressed as her grandmother. 3. A ranger heard her scream, came to her rescue, and made the wolf spat the grandmother. 1. As soon as she was queen, she had a baby who came to get the little man. 2. A miller told the king that his daughter could spin straw in gold; therefore, the king asked her to take her to the palace and to what she could do. The little man told her she had three days to guess his name, or the baby became his. The old slow and steady wins the race! 1. When asked how she slept, she said she felt something hard under her hair it was black and blue. 2. A prince wanted to marry a real princess, but was unable to find one. 3. The Queen decided to test her and see if she was a real princess. A classic story of finding a needle in a haystack. Haystack.