

INTERNAL DIALOGUE

DISCUSSION FROM LAST MEETING

Your Challenge for the this meeting was to: Write a story or poem using some internal dialogue.

- Internal monologue is a stylised way of thinking out loud. (Technically: thinking ‘on the page’.)
- Unlike stream-of-consciousness, an interior monologue can be integrated into a *third-person* narrative. The viewpoint character’s thoughts are woven into description, using the author’s own language.
- The essential difference between interior monologue and straight narrative:
 - **Straight Narrative** = the narrator talking (You know ‘the narrator’ — that made-up character who sounds like the author — but please don’t mistake authors for narrators – not all authors are crazy axe-wielding, mentally unstable murderers, unlike many of their narrators.)
 - **Interior Monologue** = a character talking/thinking, using words specific to that character, making assumptions, mistaken judgements, and reaching conclusions that are RIGHT FOR THAT CHARACTER.
- If interior monologue is done well, you won’t even notice it’s happening.

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Your Hero’s Emotional Inner Journey

Once upon a time there was a cowboy, or an ex-gunfighter who didn’t use guns anymore for moral reasons. Maybe he’d seen too much of the bad side of life and he’d become an alcoholic. When the bad guys came to town and started pushing good people around — he just watched — until he couldn’t stand it anymore. That’s when he unwrapped and re-oiled his guns again.

This is called your *Hero’s Inner Journey*, also known as their *Character Arc*.

What is your hero’s inner journey?

Your readers want to experience a satisfying inner journey for the main characters in the story. The protagonist may go through many trials and make a significant decision or take a big risk, but if they don’t go through some sort of internal change or metamorphosis, then there’s something lacking — something organic that, if it had been there, would’ve turned the story into something special.

Sometimes the best fiction involves a main character who has a problem, an issue, an unresolved inner conflict. He's sitting around trying to make it through life, but is hindered by this inner problem. He may not even realize that he's got this issue.

If fiction is about bringing the main character to a breaking point, then all the events of the story are about bringing that to pass. These events are the hero's efforts to resist the change, to keep making things work the way he's been going. The more he resists, the more he is pressured, until the hero reaches the breaking point.

At rock bottom, when the hero is finally humbled, he has a choice to make: to surrender to the new way or to reject it and go down doing it the old way. That's when he's finally willing to give it a try.

Or he reaches that breaking point and decides he's not going to change no matter what, and so he pursues a course that leads to his own destruction.

Getting the character to that breaking point, that moment of truth when he finally can see all the issues and make a choice knowing the stakes, is what the whole story has been about. What he decides in that moment of truth spells either his salvation or his damnation. It's the story of man, you see.

So, what is the issue or flaw the protagonist has? How will the protagonist work to resist making that change? What does "rock bottom" look like for this character and in this story? What will he ultimately decide?

This is your protagonist's inner journey (also called a character arc). It is a journey with an observable and predictable trajectory. Include this in your fiction and it will feel well-rounded and spiritually complete. Ignore it and readers (and editors) will feel that there is a certain ineffable *something* missing from your novel.

Ask Yourself: What Does Your Hero Want?

Luke Skywalker wants to defeat the Empire. If he doesn't, freedom in the galaxy will perish.

Lightning McQueen wants to get out of Radiator Springs to get to California for the Piston Cup. If he doesn't, his dream to win the cup as a rookie will die.

E.T. wants to get home. If he doesn't, he'll be stranded on Earth forever, and he's dying here.

Frodo wants to get to the Cracks of Doom and throw the Ring in to destroy it. If he doesn't, all the free peoples of Middle-Earth will be enslaved.

In its simplest terms, a novel is about a hero who wants something and the consequences if he or she doesn't get it. Be careful that you don't lose sight of this and write meandering stories that lose their way and leave your readers adrift.

No matter what happens to your protagonist, you cannot have him forget what he was originally after. He may realize, of course, that what he was *really* after was something else,

but it has to resonate with the reader.

At the end of the story, be sure that the climax addresses the hero's needs.

In your story:

- Who is your hero (are you sure you know?)
- What does your hero want?
- What stands in the way of your hero getting what s/he wants?
- How is s/he pursuing that goal in every scene?
- What are the stakes? What will happen if the hero doesn't get what s/he wants?
- Will the hero's goal become more focused as the story progresses? If so, how and why? Does this "redirected" goal makes sense with what s/he thought s/he wanted at the outset?
- Will your hero attain his or her goal?

If you can answer these questions it will help you be sure your protagonist's goals will be clear to the reader, which will keep the story pointed in the right direction.

Your Challenge:

Your challenge for the next meeting on **November 25th** is to write a short story that not only outlines the story, but also enlightens us as to your Hero's Emotional Inner Journey

Something to think about: Does this make your story Character-driven rather than Plot-driven?