To Date

Let's take a look at where we've been thus far.

- October 8: What is the **Difference between Story and Plot,** and does it really matter. Your Challenge: write The Plot or Story-line to a story about "A protagonist who leaves their everyday life to do something important."

- October 22: **Character Development, First Impressions**
The Challenge: using an image write a first impression physical description and a non-physical description of this person.

- November 12: **Character Development, Backstory**
The Challenge: using an image or a physical description of a character in a book, write a non-physical/character description of this person and tell us their backstory.

- November 26th: **Character's Development using Dialogue**
The Challenge: using your two previous characters put them into a given situation and write their dialogue; be sure that what they say reflects their characters.

- December 10: **Christmas Party** and discussion of the book *Medicine Walk* by Richard Wagamese

- January 14: **Character Development, Dialogue and Subtext**
The Challenge: place your same two characters into a situation where they get lost. Write their dialogue using subtext to reveal the true reasons for their conflict with one another.

- January 28: **Self Promotion:** you are a writer
The Challenge: write your *elevator pitch* and your *artist statement* with intention to promote yourself and your own writing

- February 11: **Symbolism**
The Challenge: write a story or poem that uses symbolism.

- February 25: **Internal dialogue, inner monologue**
The Challenge: write a story or poem using internal dialogue

- March 10: **Meeting cancelled** due to covid-19.

- November 11: **Your Hero's Emotional Inner Journey**
The Challenge: write a short story or poem that enlightens us as to the hero's Emotional Inner Journey.

Character-Driven vs Plot-Driven

The importance of Balance

November 25

Make a list of your favourite books of all time, and then ask yourself why? What made those books so great that they made your list? Chances are high that your reasoning for all of them had something to do with incredible characters that you connected with and rooted for throughout the story. Chances are also high there was a great plot that intrigued your intellect and propelled you to turn the page to learn what was going to happen next to your beloved character.

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Plot-Driven

Broadly speaking, writers who prefer writing action-driven stories focus on logical thinking, rational analysis, and accuracy. Action-driven writers like structure. They usually pre-plot or create an outline before writing. Action-driven writers have little trouble expressing themselves in words.

It's helpful to think about plot-driven stories as a complete journey where there is a clear end goal which has already been decided. The characters are there to help move the plot from A to B and if you replaced them with other people, the plot basically stays the same.

Plot-driven stories are commonly found in mystery, crime, romance, and fantasy genres, where we know that at the end the murder will be solved, the guy will get the girl, or the prince will inherit his kingdom.

For example: Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is an example of a plot-driven story, though it does explore the characters a bit, especially considering the main character is a recurring character in the series. The story is driven forward by events rather than the events revealing things about the character.

Character-Driven

Writers who write character-driven stories tend to focus on aesthetics and feelings, creativity and imagination. These writers enjoy playing with the beauty of language. They like to work

things out on the page. They write a more internal story, taking time to reflect on the characters to discover who they are as people. The nature of the characters and the decisions they make shape the plot and the final outcome of the story.

Character-driven plots are usually considered 'literary fiction' because their structures (especially their endings) are unpredictable and their characters are more in-depth.

For example, Liesel Meminger in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, is a [round character](#) that is perfectly capable of making her own decisions and choosing her own path in the book's plot. Her thoughts and actions are her own, and if you replaced her with another girl there may not have been so many stolen books or well-kept secrets.

Which is the better?

The best stories are the ones that have interesting plots AND engaging characters. Most writers have a preference for one style of writing over another. Some writers are more adept at developing complex, interesting, and quirky characters. Others excel at page-turning action.

The Test

Here is a test to see whether you are stronger at developing Character Emotional Development plotlines or Dramatic Action plotlines.

Think of a story, or stories, that you have written, that you really like.

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Fill in the Character Emotional Development Plot Profile below for your protagonist (the character who is most changed by the dramatic action), any other major viewpoint characters and, if there is one, the character who represents the major antagonist for the protagonist.

1. Protagonist's overall story goal: _____
2. What stands in his/her way of achieving this goal: _____
3. What does he/she stand to lose, if not successful: _____
4. Flaw or greatest fault: _____
5. Greatest strength: _____
6. Hates: _____
7. Loves: _____
8. Fear: _____
9. Secret: _____
10. Dream: _____

Results

1. Writers who filled out 1-3 with ease prefer writing Dramatic Action.
2. Writers who filled in 4- 10 with ease prefer Character Emotional Development.
3. Writers who filled in everything with ease find both the Dramatic Action and the Character Emotional Development plotlines come easy.

Analysis

Without a firm understanding of points 1-3, you have no front story. The Dramatic Action plotline is what gets the reader turning the pages. Without it there is no excitement on the page.

Without a firm understanding of points 4-10, you are more likely to line up the action pieces of your story, arrange them in a logical order and then draw conclusions. Yet, no matter how exciting the action, this presentation lacks the human element. Such an omission increases your chances of losing your audience's interest; readers read 70% for character.

The Challenge

The Challenge for the next meeting on **December 9th** is to write a short story or poem that is driven by both the plot and the characters; and send it in at your earliest convenience. If you don't know where to send it, just contact us.

AND/OR
Prepare the following

Identify your all-time favourite book. Was it plot-driven or character-driven, or both? What appealed to you about it; why did you like it? We will ask you to read this at our next meeting. It will help us find a great novel to read over the holidays.

Our next meeting is the Christmas Party.

We are still isolating due to covid-19 so our Christmas Party will be a ZOOM meeting. Bring your own wine and cheese to the party, or your favourite hors d'oeuvre and favourite drink — don't worry, we won't let you drive home.

Be sure to take time before the meeting to visit our website and provide feedback to others who have also sent their work in.

Research sources

- https://writersedit.com/fiction-writing/character-plot-driven/
- The Test: https://www.writersstore.com/character-driven-or-action-driven/
- https://writersatelier.com/plot-driven-vs-character-driven-stories-by-angelique-bochnak/
- https://www.writersstore.com/character-driven-or-action-driven/