

Generalisations – can be broken

What do we understand structure to be?

-Nebulous – different things to different people.

A framework of generalisations within which the elements of a story lie.

This structure based on work done by Melanie Ann Phillips and Chris Huntley – 1990's – Dramatica - widely used in Hollywood – track record.

Why do stories exist?

A given:

Dramatica - a story is a tool from which we can learn. A story has an argument, or set of arguments embedded in it. But it is the meaning within the context that makes the story fall apart or hold together.

What starts an argument?

Conflict

Where does conflict come from?

Two opposing points of view

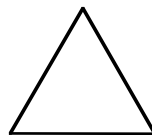
Moving on:

We look at story in two ways:

Objectively – what the author wants us to see of the whole thing - the big picture

Subjectively – through the eyes of a character – stepping into his shoes

Objective & Subjective = audience reception



Important: A lot of stories miss having all these perspectives: I and they are usually covered but not always you and we.

ie. the IC is not fully recognised.

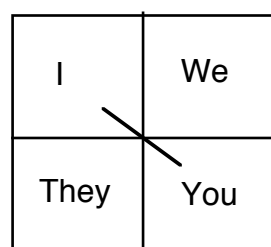
Dramatica Throughlines: (Journeys)

MC Throughline = I

IC Throughline = You

MC / IC Throughline = We

Objective Story Throughline = They



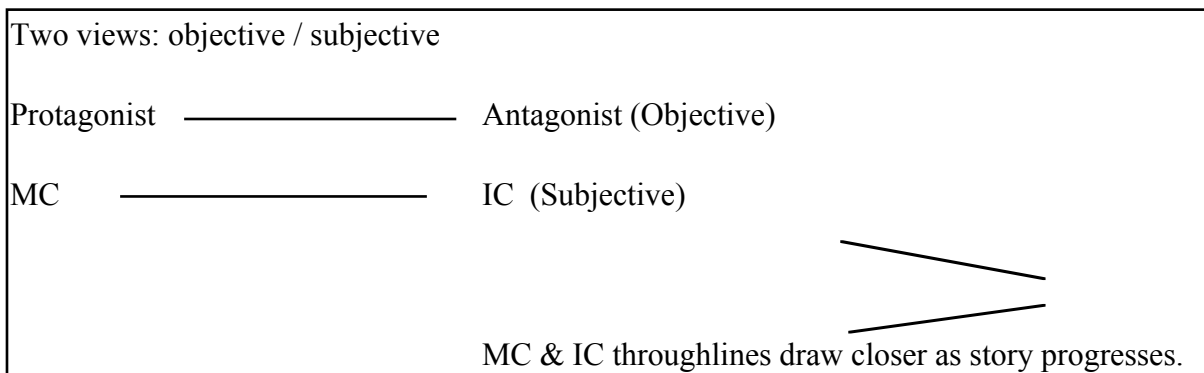
Why 4 Throughlines? Why not just one or two?

The 4 throughlines represent the context's where we can see and judge the inequity / conflict. What if the answer to an inequity lies in the third or fourth throughline?

Need to show the alternatives.

CHARACTERS AND THE FOUR THROUGHLINES

MAIN CHARACTER (MC) AND IMPACT CHARACTER (IC)



MC is the story's subjective character; the I.

Not necessarily the protagonist –can be anybody, or anything we can identify with.

To Kill a Mockingbird, protagonist is Atticus,
MC is Scout.

Atticus is telling her to leave Boo alone, not because he's malicious, only because he's different and demands respect. Boo saves Scout's life. That's the power of the MC; they coloured your view of the story.

Boo is IC. Subjective equivalent of the antagonist in the objective story.

The impact character is telling the main character do it this way, do it my way. Impacting MC so much that MC must reconsider their personal issues. IC will force the MC to grow but not necessarily change.

Interaction between MC and the IC = message.

IC has their own throughline. Can be anything.

Other IC examples: The Fugitive

MC and IC – need not be friends / enemies / neutral / not even aware
BUT impact must be felt.

Let's identify these MCs and ICs

Lord of the Rings

Peter Pan

Star Wars

Titanic

Sound of Music

Wizard of Oz

Notting Hill

Mrs Doubtfire

Your Own

Your Own

Answers are readers/audience perceptions

The MC / IC throughline. Two different views of the same issue.

MC throughline = MC own issues

IC throughline = IC own issues

MC / IC throughline = exploration of the common issue / conflict through the MC / IC relationship.

OS Throughline shows how conflict is created in the 'big picture' and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of attempts to resolve the throughline problem.

SUMMARY:

MC Throughline = personal experience of the story. Explores story inequity in terms of personal internal and external conflict.

IC Throughline = impersonal experience of the story. Explores story inequity in terms of conflict created due to the impact of contrary world views.

MC / IC Throughline = inclusive, passionate experience of the story. Explores story inequity in terms of the conflict that grows from the passion in relationships.

OS Throughline = dispassionate, objectified experience of the story. Explores story inequity in terms of the conflict that is created by the tug-of-war between the antagonist and protagonist.

DEVELOPING THE THROUGHLINES

MC AND IC THROUGHLINES

Dramatica theory has specific questions that help define how your MC throughline grows in relation to the other three throughlines:

At core of MC throughline is an inequity – personal conflict - MC problem

Q1 explores how your MC position on resolving this inequity changes during the story

The MC Resolve.

Resolve can be change or steadfast.

Change

leap of faith = Leap of Faith

story of exploration - resolve an issue near the beginning and then a similar issue arises at the end of the story. = Rainman.

Titanic - 2 changes - Rose on dockside with Cal. On survey ship with necklace.

Steadfast

The Fugitive - increasingly riskier situations; going back to the hospital, contacting colleagues; but he stays steadfast.

growth occurs regardless of change or steadfast.

IMPORTANT - IC pushes the MC to change or to remain steadfast.

steadfast guy, influential guy, sometimes without knowing it, witness To Kill a Mockingbird
mirror image of the MC.

Any examples?

If the MC changes then the IC must remain steadfast

Why?

Well, it places a value on the change = The Fugitive, in the storm drain tunnel Kimble shouts out at Tommy Lee Jones, Gerrard, I'm innocent. What does Gerrard shout back? 'I don't care.' By the end though we find that Gerrard has changed, anyone remember how? As Gerrard takes the cuffs off in the car, Kimble says 'I thought you didn't care.' Anyone remember what Gerrard replies? It's 'don't tell anyone.' That's our confirmation that Kimble has changed.

In TKMB Boo Radley remains steadfast, his looked out for the children, unknowingly to them, for the entire story and he of course saves Scout's life. She's the one who's changed, her prejudices are no longer valid. Boo stays firm. So the message is that the impact character mirrors the resolve of the MC.

Q2 explores how your MC grows to the point of change or holding steadfast.

The MC Growth

If he has a problem why not just solve it?

Because blind to solution

Doesn't understand the problem

Start or Stop

Stop normally personal trait (chip on shoulder)

Start either start doing something (hole in heart) or hold out for something.

Examples: Christmas Carol Scrooge is Start (being generous)

Star Wars Luke is Start (believing in his abilities)

TKMB Scout is Stop (being prejudiced)

Fugitive Dr Kimble is Stop (being a convict)

Q3 explores how your MC prefers to solve problems. Is he a do-er or a be-er?

The MC Approach

PREFERS to do something (do-er) or changes himself (be-er)

Not ACTIVE or PASSIVE – totally different

It is MCs preference at this particular time in their life.

It's whether he is able to manage the environment around himself mentally, adjusting his own inner being or whether he has to try to externally adjust the environment.

Either does the work in his head or tries to change the external environment.

Banana skin and pub

fish out of water

A few inequities:

I see someone lying in the gutter

Do-er: see what's wrong with him

Be-er: walk on by

I've got dirt on my clothes

Do-er: change

Be-er: Ignore

Examples:

James Bond? Do-er

Richard Kimble do-er

Chance the Gardener be-er

Hugh Grant Notting Hill: do-er

Tom Hanks Sleepless in Seattle: be-er

Q4 explores how your MC processes and solves problems. Do they use logical or intuitive style.

The MC Problem Solving Style

Alternative view is male / female mental sex.

Logical - connects the dots / comes to a conclusion

Intuitive - looks for relationships between things, shifts things and finds balance based on relationships

Mental sex nothing to do with gender, gender preference or anything else - problem solving process men are from Mars, women are from Venus idea, or rather the men are from some place, women from some moment, as it is very much a difference between how men and women view space and time that the real differences lay. It has no bearing on end decisions, both male and female mental sex can arrive at the same conclusions, and it bars nothing for either from the decision making process.

Female mental sex
leverage points of a problem
hold things together

male mental sex
break the problem apart,
force things together

Traffic Lights - go on red off or green on?

In the majority of cases your characters will have the same mental sex as their own physical gender drawback - alienate your reader.

Some Inequities

Salesman needs the sale / customer truculent and resisting

logical - move on
intuitive - ask how they're doing etc.

Someone famous has child kidnapped

logical - offer reward
intuitive - church and pray

Thief marries a policeman

logical - hide things and plan around them
intuitive - build things into fabric of lives so if discovered the impact would be great.

Ripley in Alien

Nick Nolte's Prince of Tides

Exercise

Lord of the Rings

Peter Pan

Star Wars

Titanic

Sound of Music

Wizard of Oz

Notting Hill

Mrs Doubtfire

Your Own

Your Own

SUMMARY

MC Resolve

MC Growth

MC Approach

MC Problem Solving Style

For the MC there is some kind of inequity - Can be internal or external, or both.

Rope - 4 throughlines

woven together - 4 throughlines not so obvious but good stories will have them.

each throughline splits into 4 (3 transitions) to reflect 3 act / 4 act structures.

STORY GOAL

central objective of the OS throughline

counterpoint to story goal is story consequence; the or else.

Terminator

Stop John Connor getting killed

or else

Machines will win

PLOT DYNAMICS

Q1 to 4 drive the MC throughline - Q5 to 8 drive the OS throughline.

Q5 explores the force that drives the act turns and overall movement in the OS

The Story Driver

Action or Decision

Look for an 'inciting' event that starts the story / matched by 'concluding' event that closes it.

looks at the causal relationship of your story

All should be same nature: ie action or decision.

Affects also the MC throughline

Both equally capable of driving any story - feel of the story will come across as different.

Notting Hill is that a decision or action driver?

It's an action; orange juice is spilled. She decides to accept his offer of help; inside, for no apparent reason she kisses him as she's leaving, leaving them both bewildered. This action / decision driver continues throughout the story; final action he proposes.

Action:

Star Wars

Jaws

Decision

The Firm

Q6 explores the scope of the story; some form of limit.

The Story Limit

Time or Option Lock

Although it may seem artificial it is essential - produces the tension & resolution

What happens when limit is met?

Climax of the story - the final attempt to resolve the OS inequity.

Time Lock

Specific time or specific duration.

Option Lock

Specific number of options - 3 wishes

Specific set of conditions - alignment of planets.

Option & Time work together: Time produces tension in Option Lock and vice-versa.

Buried alive.

subtle difference.

Person buried runs out of options: air, shouting, crying, energy, kicking, scratching etc. - time causes the tension.

Person buried but has taken poison - 15 minutes to live. All above options are irrelevant if he's not out in 15 mins. Tension comes from lack of option success.

eg

Chariots of Fire (Time)

how is it that an option lock can bring a story to an end?

Well, if a character has tried various options and failed then there are three options open for him; try an option not yet tried, or re-try an option already tried, or give up altogether. For our man in the coffin, there are only so many options he can try, so he will keep trying them until time does indeed run out, he will keep re-trying those he already has discarded, he will holler and cry, he will bang and curse. If he gives up then he has failed and will die. So the story ends.

With your story then the options need to be exhausted if he is to give up. Once you have shown that they are exhausted then we know that there is no resolution to his inequity and we know that the story is, in fact, at an end.

Q7 is a simple assessment of whether the story goal is achieved or not.

The Story Outcome

Success or Failure

Not could or should the goal have been achieved.

Q8 explores the scope of the story; some form of limit.

The Story Judgment

Similar to Story Outcome but focused on MC

Did the MC work out his angst or not?

Story Outcome and Story Judgement work independantly to provide meaning to story argument yet work together to create additional meaning

	Outcome Success	Outcome Failure
Judgement Good	happy ending	Personal Triumph
Judgement Bad	Personal Tragedy	Tragedy

Examples:

Fugitive

Titanic

TKMB

Silence of Lambs

Exercise		
Lord of the Rings	Peter Pan	Star Wars
Titanic	Sound of Music	Wizard of Oz
Notting Hill	Mrs Doubtfire	Your Own
Your Own		

OTHER DYNAMIC COMBINATIONS

MC Approach / Story Driver

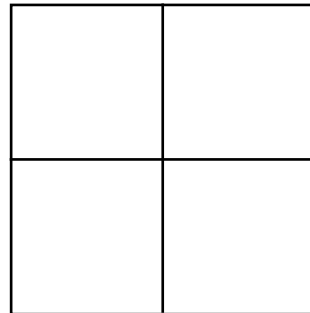
Rough idea of how involved MC will want to be in OS Throughline

	Story Driver Action	Story Driver Decision
MC Approach Do-er	Willing or Eager	Reluctant or Unwilling
MC Approach Be-er	Reluctant or Unwilling	Willing or Eager

Fish out of water - preferred method of solving problems fairly ineffective in OS throughline.

STRUCTURAL CHART

top level = Throughline (domain)
second level = Concern
third level = Issue
fourth level = Problem



Dynamic Pairs
Dependant Pairs
Companion Pairs

MC throughline & IC throughline will be dynamic pair relationship
OS throughline & MC / OS throughline will be dynamic pair relationship
No two throughlines share same domain

Throughline: An author cannot successfully make an argument promoting a solution until he or she has identified the Problem.

Problems: Situations, Activities, States of Mind, and Manners of Thinking. Since they are related, all four of these domains will figure in every story as the Problem works its influence into all areas of consideration. One will be both the source of the Problem's roots and therefore the place it must ultimately be solved.

Concern: How problems manifest themselves themselves. For example, if the Problem is that there is not enough money to pay the rent, it might motivate one person to take to drink but another to take a second job. Principal area affected by the story's Problem and serves as a broad indicator of what the story is about.

Issue: What light you want the audience to see the problem. The point of view from which the audience evaluates the meaning of the story is crucial to supporting the conclusion to a given argument. Issue helps select a filter through which the author can control the shading of the events that unfold. In a sense, Issue provides the audience with a yardstick and tells them, "measure what you see by this scale."

Problem: Deck of cards from Q1 to Q8.
Throughline / Concern / Issue weaken the structure
Problem collapses it