

Plotting and Storytelling with Shellie Arnold (Handout 1)

Three Decisions to Make

Genre:

Audience:

Purpose: To show _____

(Read in that genre to educate yourself about the nuances of that genre. Be honest about the audience and their expectations within the genre. Choose a purpose consistent within the genre.)

Three Elements to Understand

Character Arc:

Inner Journey:

Outer Journey: (includes the Third Strand)

Define your Character Arc: With your “purpose” in mind, create an inner journey to communicate that idea. Imagine a flight of stairs with ten steps—see diagram. Your book might have more or less “steps” on her journey, so use whatever is appropriate for her process and arc. Complete the sentence “My character goes from ___ to ___.”)

>When the story begins, my character is _____. (step 1)

>When the story ends, my character is _____. (step 10)

>What comes before step 1? (Choose the backstory to support her arc and make her change compelling)

>What happens in her journey right before step 10? (What position would she need to be in and what would push her to embrace that level of change? (this is step 9)

>What inciting incident makes her move from step 1 to step 2?

>Describe step 2: how is she different on step 2 from who she was when the story started (step 1)? (J-I-V-E: Journey, inner desire, voice, experience.)

>What decision or change in perspective does she need to make to move from step 9 to 10? This is **premise**.

>Verify your backstory, history, step 1, inciting incident, and step 2 against your premise. (Analyzing this is critical to ensuring your beginning is going in a direction that will connect with your ending. Now you can plan the middle of the book.)