

Writing Prompt

Write a story including the following elements:

- *Wedding dress*
- *Crowd*
- *Anchorage*

Submit your story to [3Elements Literary Review](#) by May 31st.



Writing Project Series

Fiction



Agenda

What's a Short Story?

5.5 Elements of a Short Story

Writing Tips

Writer's Alphabet



Fiction

Something that is invented or untrue. Literature that describes imaginary events and people.

Fiction Formula:

Concept + Characters × Conflict = Great Fiction





What's a Short Story?

A story that is short.

A short story is a short, self-contained work of fiction that generally falls between 1,000 and 10,000 words. Stories that clock in under 1,000 words are known as flash fiction and stories of 500 words or fewer are considered microfiction.

How short is too short?

There's really no limit to how short a story can be. Consider Hemingway's famous six-word story:

“For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”



ACTIVITY

Write a ten word (or less) short story.





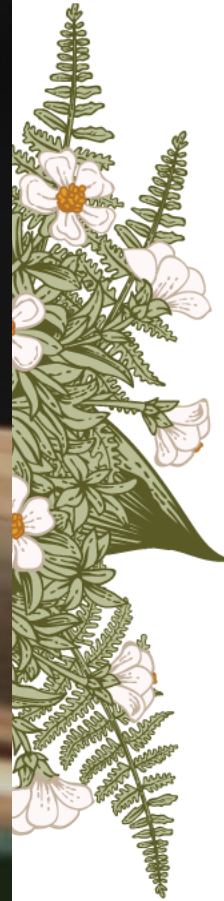
Short Stories VS Novels

Short Stories are condensed, focused versions of a full-length novel. This means:

- Short stories are typically less complex
- Not as much opportunity for world-building in short stories
- Not every character can and should be given equal screen time

However, short stories still:

- Are more digestible than full-length novels
- Can have meaningful themes, characters, and scenes
- Can be just as impactful as a novel



Read These!

[Longing Primavera by Bryana Lorenzo](#)

[My Teeth are up Here by Alexa DiFrancesco](#)

[The Green Ribbon retold by Alvin Schwartz](#)



5.5 Elements of a Short Story

Character

Plot

Theme

Conflict

Setting

Dialogue



Character

Characters don't have to be 'good', only interesting.

Want & Need

Want is a character's visible goal. External. Opposed by the forces of antagonism.

Need is what the character must discover about themselves or the world to become balanced or complete.

They spend most of the story trying to achieve their 'want' while (first subconsciously and then consciously) pursuing their inner need.

Writer's Alphabet: Characters



Anti-Hero: Protagonist that lacks traditional virtues of a hero. Ex. fools, rogues, dreamers. They still need saving graces for readers to be invested. They can't be passive.

Archetype: Similar to stereotypes, often used in myths. Create original and fresh characters that are multi-faceted instead.

Dialect: Don't do them unless you're familiar with them. Focus on rhythm and syntax rather than spelling words how they're pronounced. Don't caricature the speaker.

Names: Can have symbolic meaning, say something about a character's background and attitude, or say something about the setting. Don't have similar names.



ACTIVITY

Fill out the Character Checklist



A close-up photograph of a person's hands, heavily adorned with colorful beaded and metal jewelry, holding a clear crystal ball. The hands are positioned over a reddish-brown base. The background is a dark, starry night sky with a faint, glowing constellation visible. The overall mood is mystical and ethereal.

Writing Prompt

Using the same character from the last activity, write a short scene in which they speak to a fortune teller.

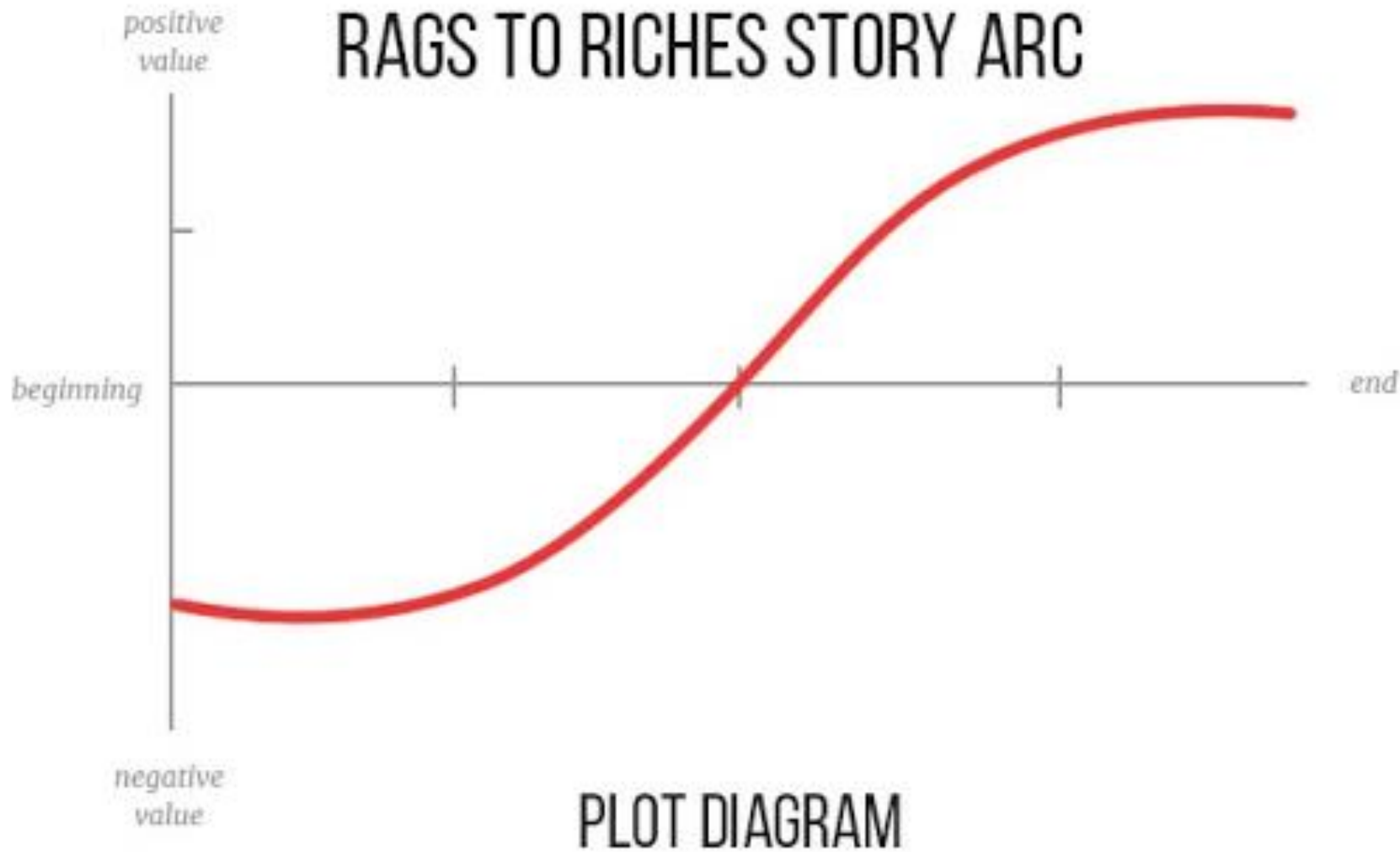


Plot

Plot is the series of events that illustrate the story's conflict. When you're writing a short story, it's generally best to start your plot as close to the end as possible.

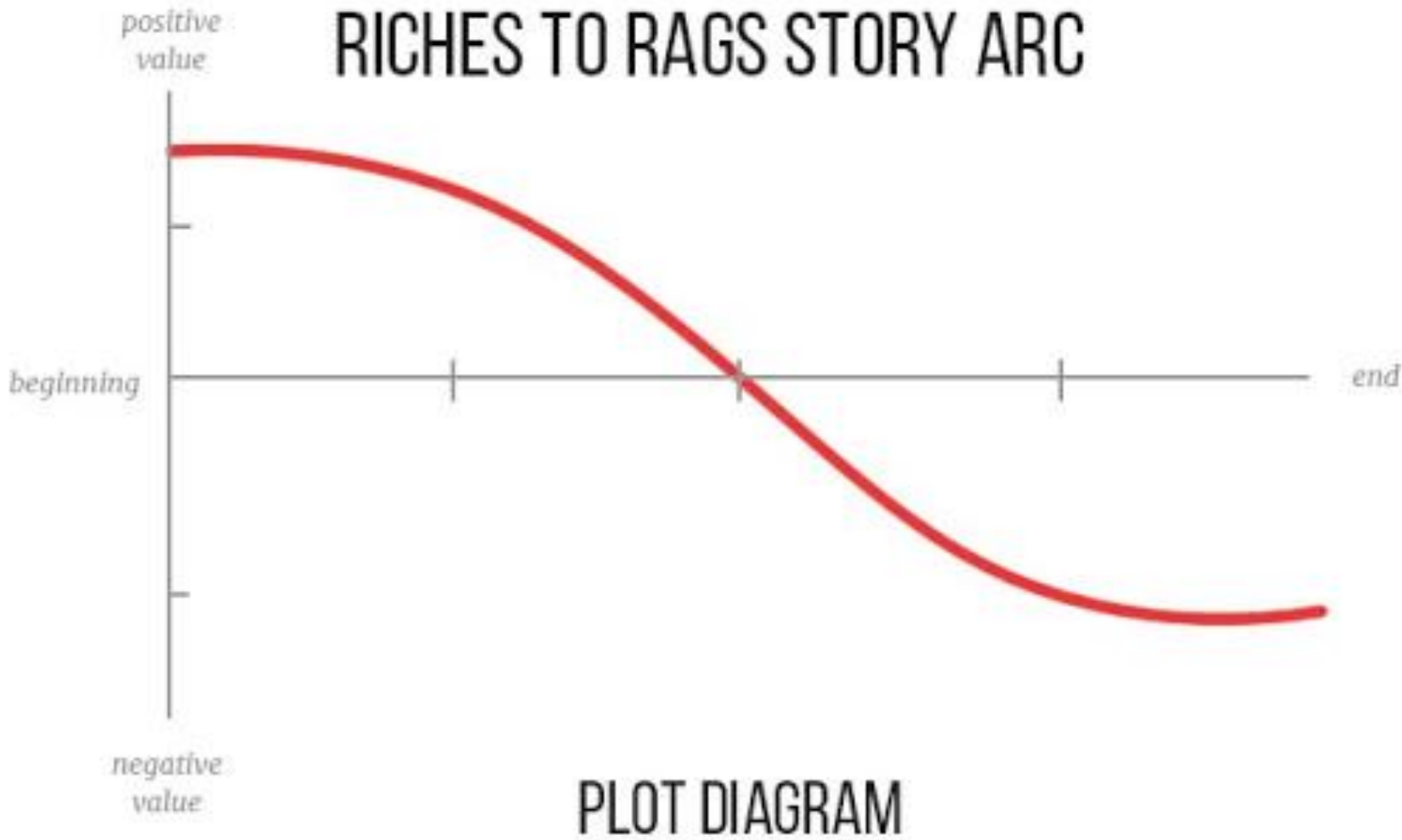
The following are the main six existing story arcs you can experiment with.

RAGS TO RICHES STORY ARC



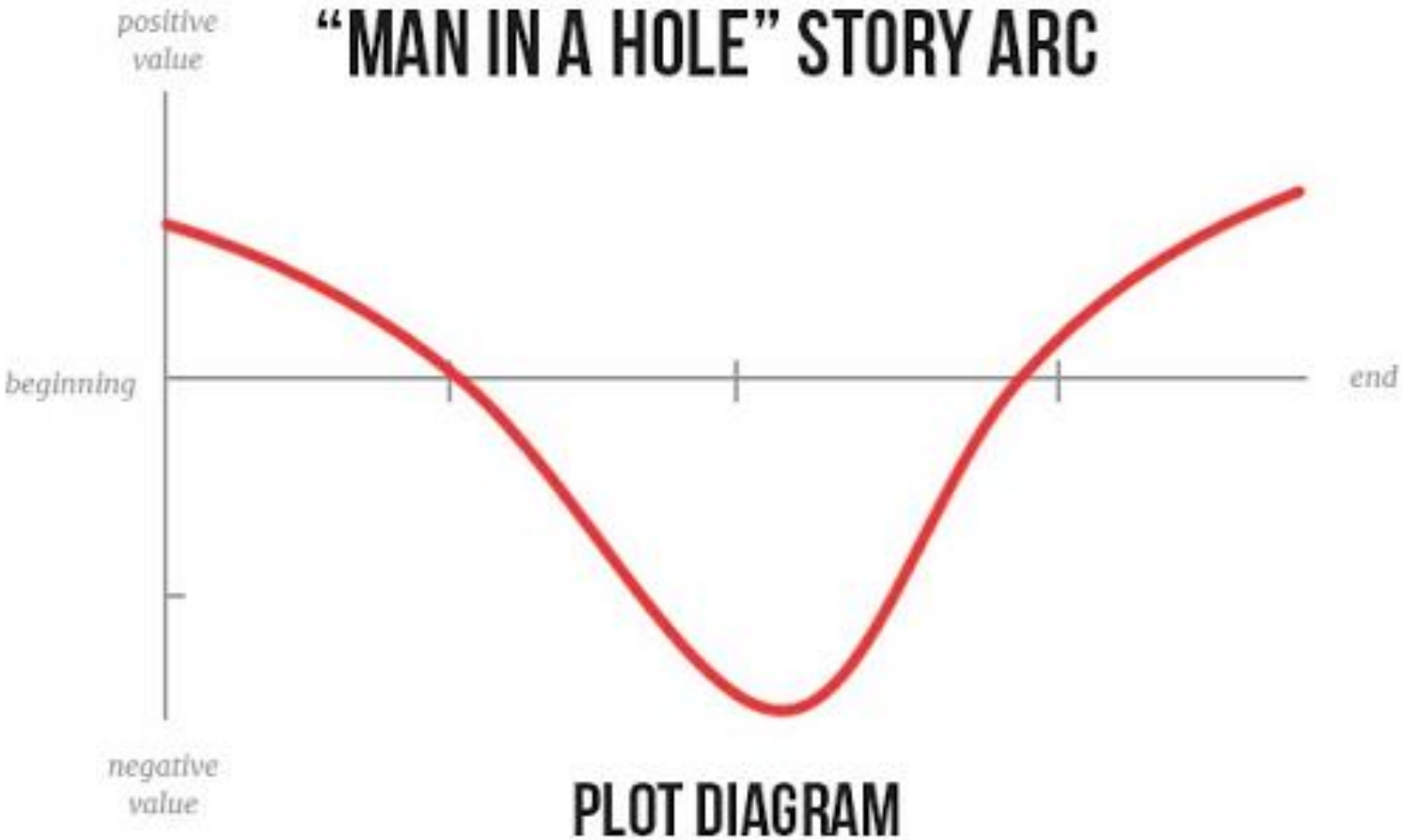
Rags to Riches

RICHES TO RAGS STORY ARC



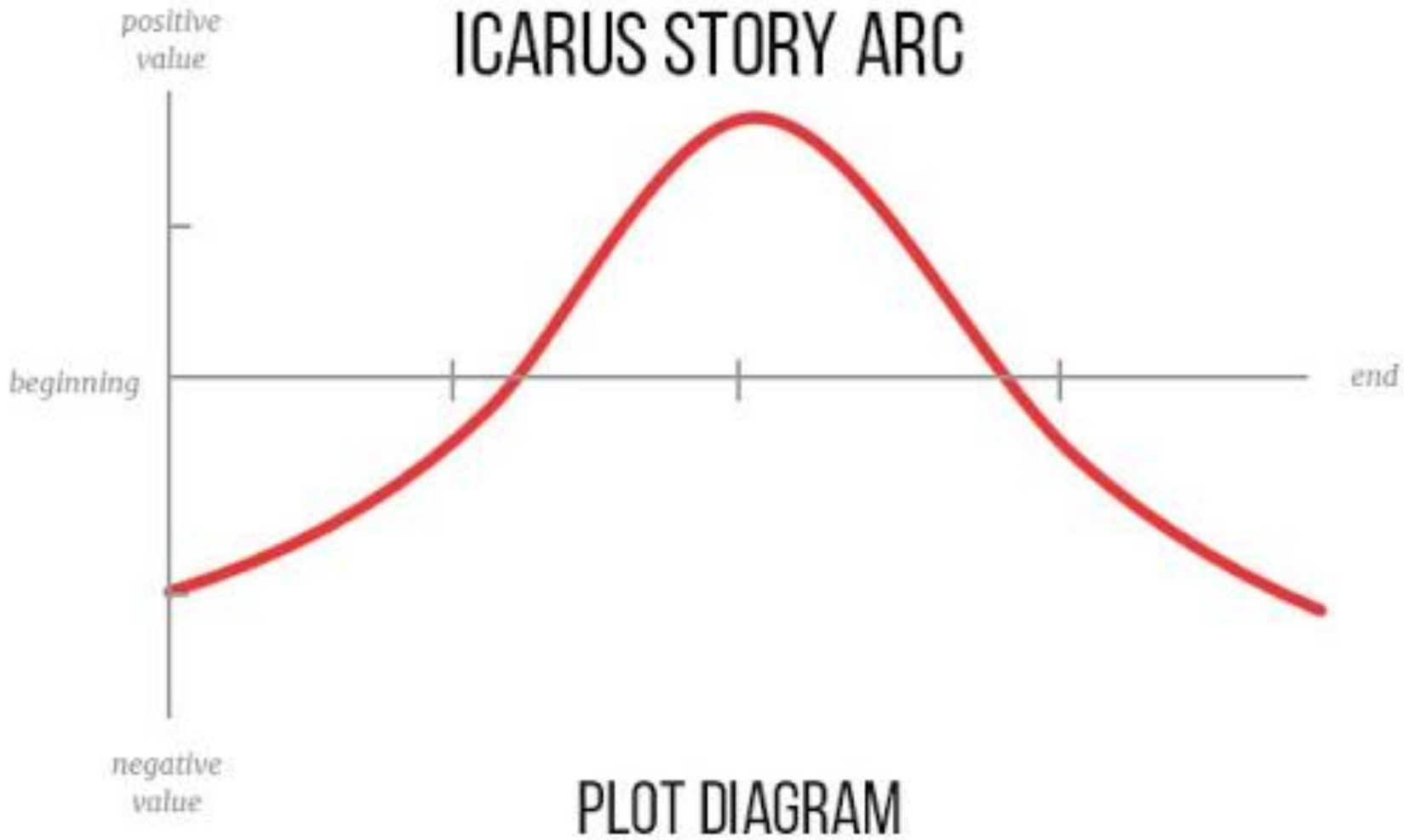
Riches to Rags

“MAN IN A HOLE” STORY ARC



Man in a Hole

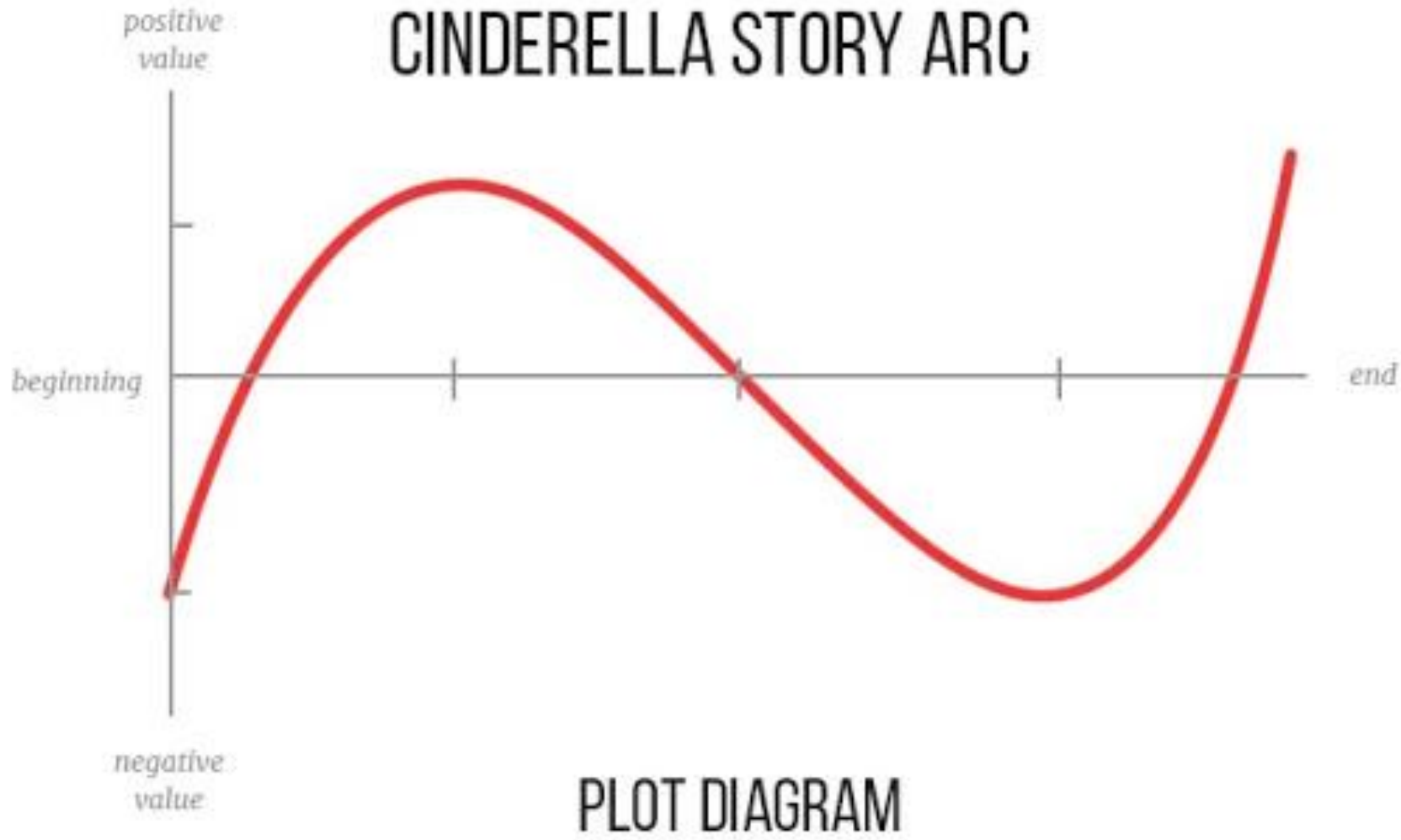
ICARUS STORY ARC



THE HUNGER GAMES TRILOGY

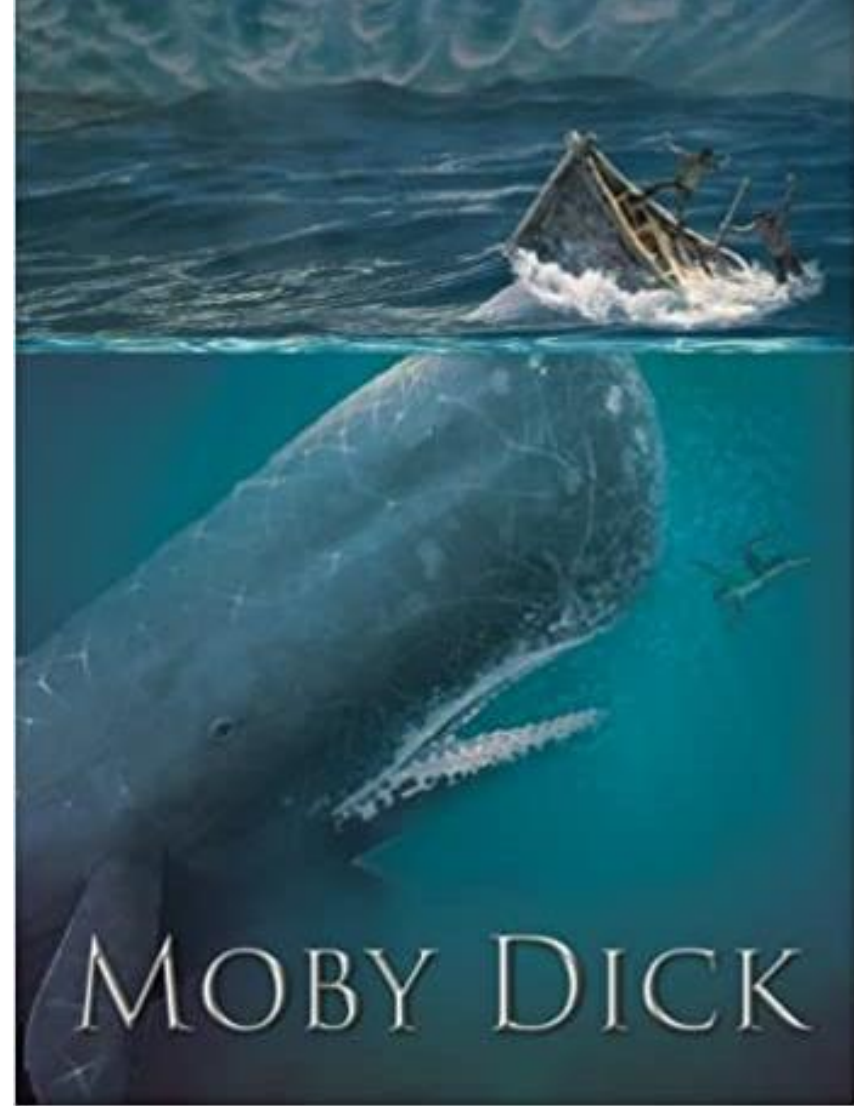
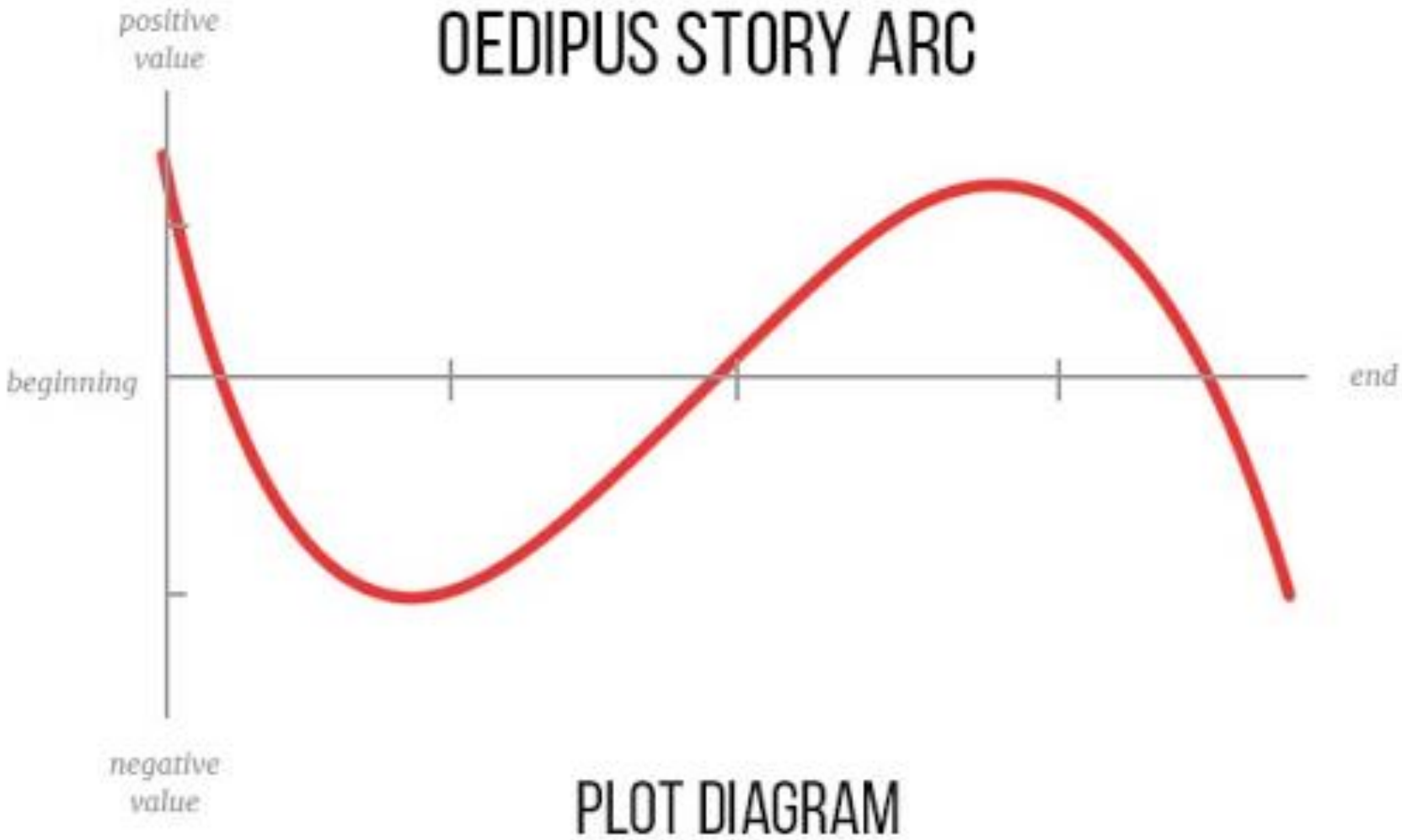
Icarus / Freytag's Pyramid

CINDERELLA STORY ARC



Cinderella

OEDIPUS STORY ARC



Oedipus

Stories you should NEVER write

- **Banging-Shutter Story:** Build up with a perceived threat, scary sounds, footsteps... only to have the cause be something like the shutters, a racoon in the attic (no pay-off).
- **The Bathtub Story:** A character is in one place the whole story and only thinks, remembers, worries... there's no action. They never leave the tub.
- **Hobos-In-Space Story:** Few characters outside of society that make philosophical comments about society without doing much of anything. Comes across as self-indulgent and snarky.
- **I-Can-Hardly-Wait Story:** Sets up a character with expectations and hopes and then dashes them at the end (father wants kids to come for Christmas, they die in a car crash). Trivializes sad events and they become plot devices.
- **I-Cried-Because-I-Had-No-Shoes-Till-I-Met-A-Man-Who-Had-No-Feet Story:** Designed to teach a lesson rather than give an experience. Stereotyped characters. Tries to tell readers how to behave.
- **The-Last-Line-Should-Be-The-First-Line Story:** The build up to a good ending is unnecessary, and the ending should actually be how the story starts.
- **Weird Harold Story:** Strange, outcast character with odd behavior but few insights.
- **Zero-to-Zero Story:** Ex. A character is introduced as a loser only to ironically lose a competition at the end. The readers haven't been taken anywhere.

Writer's Alphabet: Plot



Bathos: Negative term for when writers try too hard to make their readers cry, and their work seems stupid because of it. If you're going to add misery, it needs to relate to the plot and have purpose.

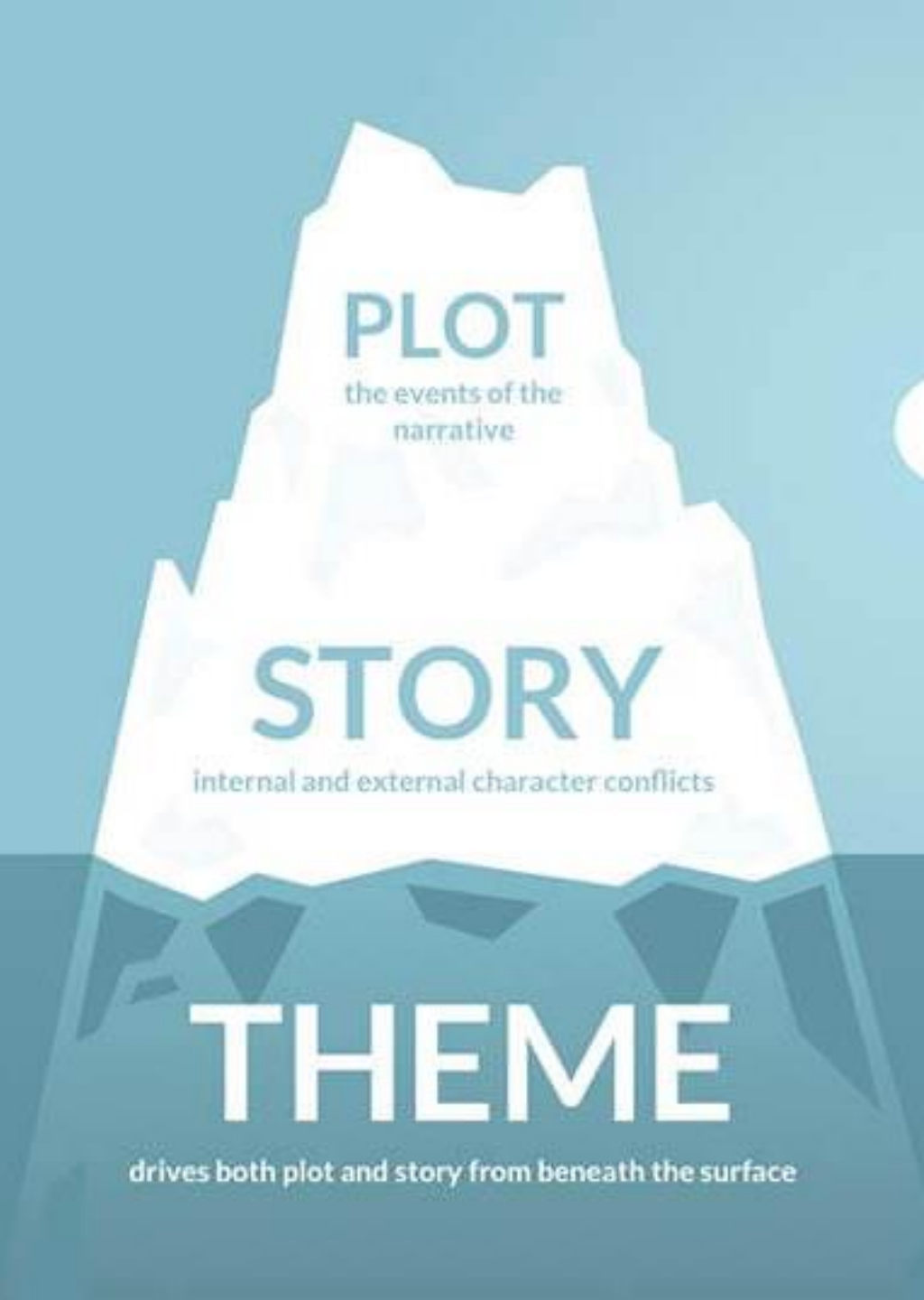
Beginnings: Begin with tension and immediacy. Don't preface. Don't just tell about the world, put readers into it.

Motif: Recurring element in your work, a repeated image that grows meaning.

Narrator: Teller of the story. Give them a personality of their own.

Premise: What readers must accept for the story to begin.

Title: Should tell about the story and invite readers in to be interested.



Theme

The theme is the main idea explored by the author in the story. It's not the plot or a summary, but rather some aspect of life being commented on.

Some common themes:

- Good VS Evil
- Loyalty
- Life & Death
- Coming-of-Age
- Love
- Power



Conflict

Will they win or lose? This is what keeps people reading.

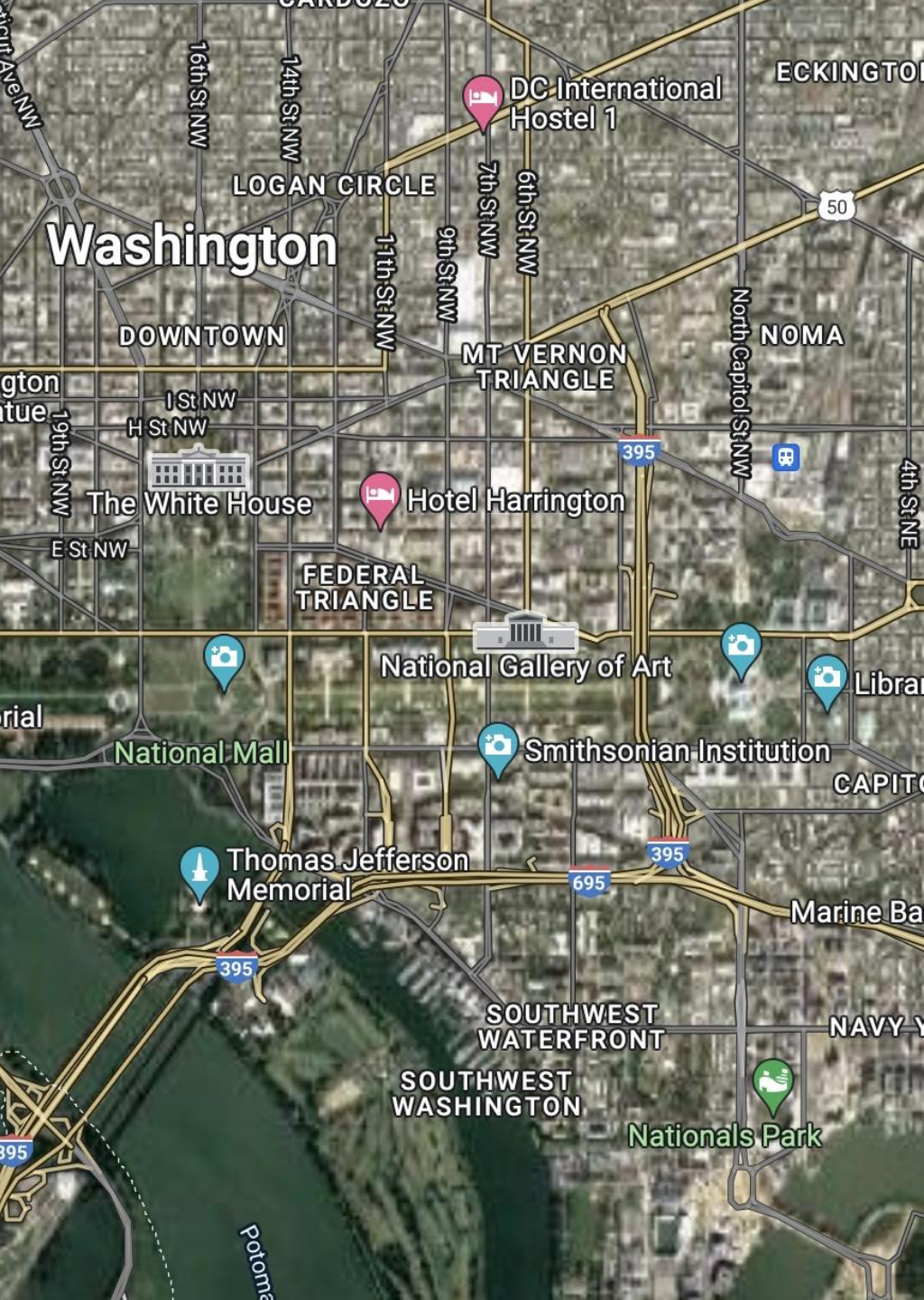
Without conflict, there's no story. If the conflict is too easy, the story stalls. If it's overwhelming, then the author's created an unsolvable problem.

Conflict exists when a character wants something, tries to get it, but is met with opposition.

2 Dogs, 1 Bone



- What is at stake for the main character? What might happen if they don't obtain their goal? Do they risk losing their job? Their family? Their life? The greater the stakes, the more invested your readers might be.
- **2 dogs, 1 bone.** Two characters who want the same thing (for different reasons, maybe), but only one can get it. This creates immediate conflict.



Setting




Setting is the time and place in which your story happens.

Each component in a story setting helps to build the narrative's mood, plot, and character development









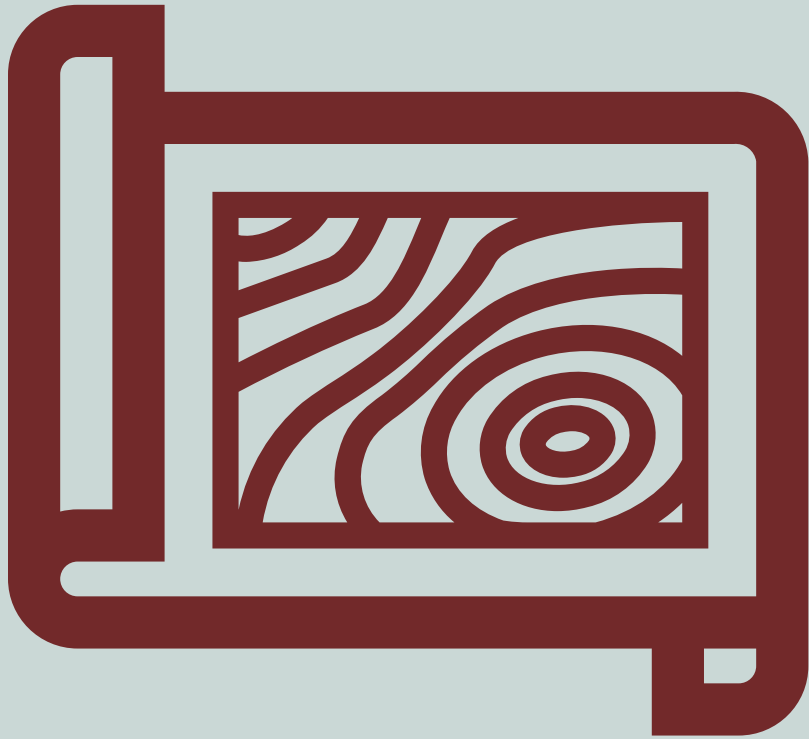
The Setting is a Character!

The setting is more than just a backdrop to your story.

Setting can:

- Set the mood and atmosphere
- Cause conflict / oppose the characters
- Reference real life history that relates to your story

If your setting isn't doing any of the above things, why is it your setting?



Setting Checklist

Setting Checklist

- What's the weather like?
- How does it affect the citizens?
- What are the most important buildings or features?
- What does it smell like?
- What flora and fauna are present?
- What is everyday life like here?
- What do the homes tell me about the people inside?
- What unique features are there?

A large, colorful, striped planet (resembling Jupiter) is the central focus, set against a dark, starry space background. The planet's bands are in shades of blue, green, and purple. In the lower right, a smaller, brownish planet is visible. The overall scene is a space-themed illustration.

Writing Prompt

You just landed on an undiscovered planet; fill in the Setting Checklist with this new planet in mind.

Writer's Alphabet: Setting



Atmosphere: Atmosphere is using setting to create a sensory experience for readers. Don't just set the atmosphere once, keep hammering it into every page.

Description: Don't paint pictures, paint action. Description should move the story forward. Give one or two vivid details, readers will build the rest. Embed information. Must be natural and not boring, best to infuse with action.

Diction: Word choice determines voice. Adds texture.

Places and Place Names: If a story happens in a well-known place like New York, you establish authenticity.



Dialogue

Essential to the Story

From One Character to Another

Contains Conflict & Tension

Matches the Speaker

Isn't Real-Life Speech

Compressed

A black and white photograph of a busy city street. In the foreground, a person is pushing a metal cart with two boxes on it. To the left, a person is walking away from the camera. In the center, a person is walking towards the camera. To the right, a group of people is walking, including a woman looking at her phone and a man in a cap. The background shows tall buildings with many windows and a clock tower. The overall scene is a busy urban environment.

Writing Prompt

You've been bumping into the same stranger for months. Finally, you decide to say hello...



Writing Tips

Writer DON'Ts

- **Don't** write too many stories in a single piece of fiction.
- **Don't** end stories with a shocker (and then I woke up).
- **Don't** write what you **DON'T** know (do research).
- **Don't** give characters similar sounding names.
- **Don't** preface your novel with unnecessary backstory/explanation that makes readers impatient for the story to start.



Avoiding Writer's Block

- **Writing prompts:** Brief story concepts that prompt you to write. They can be vague or specific.
- **Write where you want:** You don't have to write chronologically.
- **Writing sprints:** Quick, timed writing activities that force you to focus on quantity over quality.

A person in a blue athletic outfit is running on a red track. They are carrying a large, black, oversized pen horizontally across their back, with their hands resting on it. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Writing Sprint

2 minutes to write anything, whether it be a continuation of one of the previous writing prompts, a story you have in mind, or simply all the thoughts in your head.



ACTIVITY

Write the formula for a story you will write.





Concept + Characters x Conflict = Great Fiction

_____ + _____ x _____ = My Story





Writing Project Series

The **Writing Project Series** is intended for writers who want to produce a small collection of poetry or short stories but don't know where to begin.

Each month from June to December, we'll unpack a different stage of the writing process from drafting to publication, all while you work on your manuscript. The series culminates in your work being featured in a **published anthology that will appear on our library's shelves!**



<p>Tues, March 19th 7 pm - 8:30 pm Central Library Auditorium</p>	<p>Writing Project Series: Drafting Starting a writing project and overwhelmed with ideas? Learn how to build the skeleton of your project and what to consider in the earliest stages of your work.</p>
<p>Tues, April 16th 7 pm - 8:30 pm Central Library Auditorium</p>	<p>Writing Project Series: Poetry Learn about the characteristics of a poem, different kinds of poetry, and just how powerful poetry can be.</p>
<p>Tues, May 21st 7 pm - 8:30 pm Central Library Auditorium</p>	<p>Writing Project Series: Fiction Who doesn't love a story that can be told in ten pages or less? Come learn the art of the short story!</p>
<p>Tues, June 18th 7 pm - 8:30 pm Central Library Auditorium</p>	<p>Writing Project Series: Editing I've written a bestseller – now what? Learn to tackle the editing process. *Submit your anthology selection by July 1st!</p>
<p>Tues, July 16th 7 pm - 8:30 pm Central Library Auditorium</p>	<p>Writing Project Series: Publishing Pt. 1 Let's explore the traditional publishing process! Learn about querying agents, working with publishers, and participating in literary events.</p>
<p>Tues, August 20th 7 pm - 8:30 pm Central Library Auditorium</p>	<p>Writing Project Series: Publishing Pt. 2 Let's explore the self-publishing process! Learn about formatting, printing, binding, and promoting your work.</p>
<p>Thurs, September 5 7 pm - 8:30 pm Central Library Auditorium</p>	<p>Writing Project Series: Launch Party! Join us for readings, refreshments, and fun at the launch of PPL's second Writers' Anthology featuring work by participants of the Writing Project Series!</p>

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Next
Program

Artfest with Poet Shawn Roberts

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MAY **Central Library**
25 Saturday, May 25, 2024
2024
SAT 2:00pm - 3:00pm

PUBLIC EVENT

Setup Time: 30 minutes

Teardown Time: 30 minutes



Program Type: Author Event, Culture of Reading, Writing and Publishing

Age Group: Teen, Adult, Y/Z Young Adult

Event Details

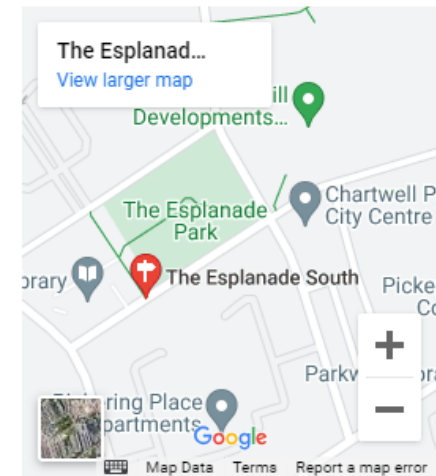
Head over to Esplanade Park to enjoy a reading by local poet and host of Pickering Public Library's 'Poetry in the Park', Shawn Roberts.

Shawn Roberts is a local poet and artist who has been writing and creating art for over 30 years. Only recently has he decided to take his passionate hobby off the couch and into the world. He has had poems and short stories published in various magazines. Currently he is the proud host and curator of Poetry in the Park, an open mic event held seasonally at the Pickering Library.

Check out the next Poetry in the Park event here: <https://cal.pickeringlibrary.ca/event/poetry-park-711>

See here for more information about Artfest 2024: <https://www.pickering.ca/en/discovering/artfest.aspx>

Location Details



Central Library

One the Esplanade S
Pickering, ON L1V 6K7
(905) 831-6265

See map: [Google Maps](#)

Contact Info

Name: Joseph Donato
Presenter: Shawn Roberts

Artfest with Local Writers

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MAY Central Library

26 Sunday, May 26, 2024
2024
SUN 3:00pm - 3:30pm

PUBLIC EVENT

Setup Time: 30 minutes

Teardown Time: 30 minutes



Program Type: Author Event, Culture of Reading, Writing and Publishing

Age Group: Teen, Adult, Y/Z Young Adult

Event Details

Enjoy readings by local authors and poets who participated in Pickering Public Library's 'Writing Project Series' in 2023. Hear from N.E. Rule, Daphne Pereira, Aastha Saini, Kaitlyn Haddlesey, Elle-Mai Saar, and Rio Murphy.

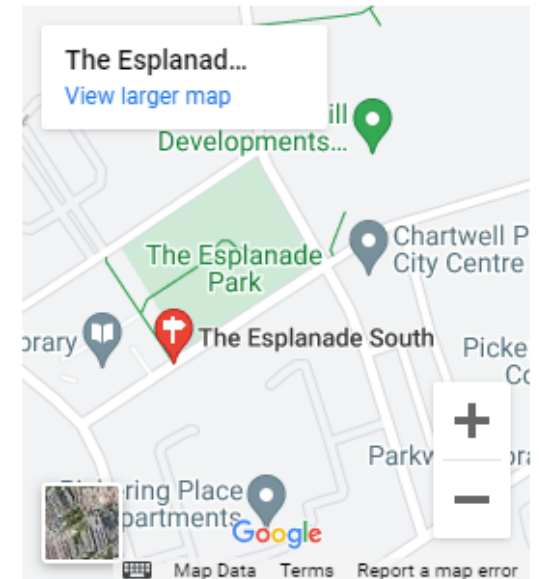
Check out the next Writing Project Series event here:

<https://cal.pickeringlibrary.ca/event/writing-project-series-editing-2208>

See here for more information about Artfest 2024:

<https://www.pickering.ca/en/discovering/artfest.aspx>

Location Details



Central Library

Poetry In The Park

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[Upcoming](#) [List](#) [Month](#) [Week](#) [Day](#)

JUN **Central Library**
10 Monday, June 10, 2024
2024
MON 7:00pm - 8:30pm

PUBLIC EVENT

Setup Time: 1 hour

Teardown Time: 30 minutes

[Also Occurs On](#) 



Program Type: Community Wellness, Culture of Reading, Inclusion and Belonging, Writing and Publishing

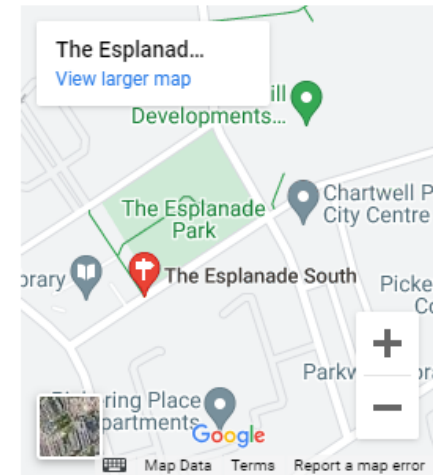
Age Group: Teen, Adult, Y/Z Young Adult, Seniors

Event Details

Meet us under the gazebo in Esplanade Park for exciting open mic poetry! Share your own poems or some of your favourites, or feel free to listen and snack on provided cookies and coffee. This program is for hardcore poetry-lovers seeking local literary opportunities, as well as those curious about the world of poetry in general. All are welcome and we hope to see you there!

A table will be available to display your free promotional materials.

Location Details



Central Library

One the Esplanade S
Pickering, ON L1V 6K7
(905) 831-6265
See map: [Google Maps](#)

Contact Info

Name: Joseph Donato
Phone Number: (905) 831-6265

Writing Project Series: Editing

[View](#) [Copy](#) [Notify All Registrants](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Revisions](#)

JUN 18 Central Library Auditorium
2024
TUE Tuesday, June 18, 2024
7:00pm - 8:30pm

PUBLIC EVENT

Setup Time: 15 minutes

Teardown Time: 15 minutes

Capacity: 15



Program Type: Culture of Reading, Writing and Publishing

Age Group: Teen, Adult, Y/Z Young Adult, Seniors

Registration for this event will be open from **May 14, 2024 @ 9:30am** to **June 18, 2024 @ 7:00pm**.

There are **15** seats remaining.

Staff Notices:

The registration form is hidden from patrons.

Event Details

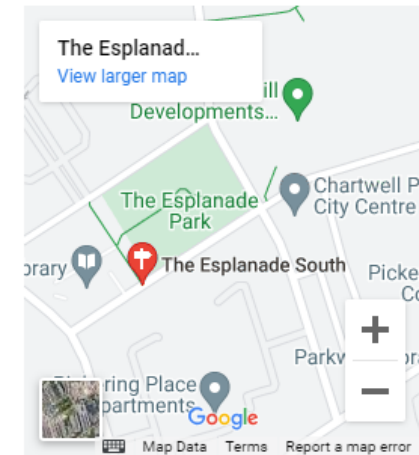
You've written a bestseller – now what? Let's tackle the editing process and the art of critique, learning what to cut, where to expand, and how to produce the best quality product possible.

The Writing Project Series is intended for writers who want to produce a collection of poetry or short stories but don't know where to begin. Each month from March to September, we will unpack a different stage of the writing process from drafting to publication, all while you work on your manuscript. The series culminates in your work being featured in a published anthology that will be added to the library's collection! *

* You must attend at least 3 of the Writing Project Series events to be included in the anthology.

[Upcoming](#) [List](#) [Month](#) [Week](#) [Day](#)

Location Details



Central Library

One the Esplanade S
Pickering, ON L1V 6K7
(905) 831-6265

See map: [Google Maps](#)

Attachments

[WPS-FlyerAndAgenda-Digital-2024_2.pdf](#)

Contact Info



Thank You!

