

Goal, Motivation, and Conflict

Tobi's Down and Dirty Guide...

This talk is for:

Storytellers who would like to write or relate their stories to an audience.

About me:

Tobi Doyle writes contemporary romance

- Independently Published 14 books
- Published 2 books with Boroughts Publishing Group (Co-Authored w/Becca Barray)
- Sold last year's NaNoWriMo to Harlequin Desire, and got an advance!!! TBP July 2017
- Is represented by Laura Bradford
- Written two YA Romances under the name Doyle MacBrayne
- Is sarcastic, occasionally curses worse than a sailor, a member of RWA, and working diligently on improving her writing skills.
- Contact her at tobi@tobidoyle.com

Why GMC?

A good story has:

- A beginning
- A middle
- An end
- A reason to care enough to turn the page or keep listening.
 - That's conflict that's making you turn the page.
 - The goal is what your protagonist wants (either physically or emotionally).
 - The motivation is WHY your character wants it.
- You can be a plotter or a pantsers.

Why GMC?

They go together and it's really hard to separate them.

A story with a goal but no conflict is boring.

A character facing conflict and has no motivation is a very short, unsatisfying story.

A motivated character with no goal is uninteresting. Even Seinfeld (the sitcom about nothing), had a goal for each episode.

Ex: My GMC

GOAL:

To give you some things to think about as you plan your NaNoWriMo project and hopefully encourage you to be a better writer.

MOTIVATION:

I love learning and teaching.

CONFLICT:

Talking in front of people is awkward... and what if you think I'm full of crap... and really, why would you want to listen to me... and... and... and...

The conflict is in the butts. -Sarah Maclean

My example would be a HORRIBLE STORY.

BUT... what if...

Goal: Successfully give a presentation.

Motivation: Prove that my psychiatrist has “cured” me of stuttering and feelings of inadequacy.

Conflict: He hasn't! I've just been sleeping with him instead and if my husband finds out he'll kill him.

Linda Howard on conflict - If your hero is a fireman, your heroine better be an arsonist.

Still, my story isn't great. Maybe hubby is on the Medical Advisory Board and could pull Psych's license immediately. Maybe Psych needs his job because he's paying for a long term care facility for his ailing mom.

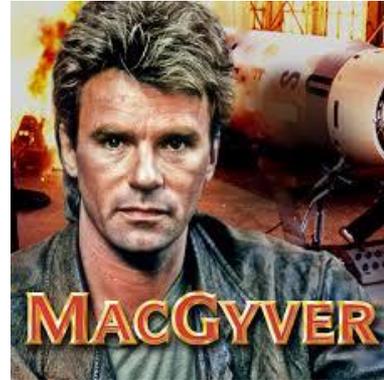


Keeping the reader's interest

Homework: Think of your favorite book/tv show, what the goal of the character was at the beginning, and what obstacles they overcame.

The obstacles create tension, and can stem from the character's internal conflict or the asteroid that's about to hit Earth.

The obstacles should get harder as the story progresses.



Motivation answers the why's

Why would she stay married to an abusive husband?

Why would a psychiatrist risk his medical license?

Why would her husband want to murder anyone?

Michael Hauge

<http://www.storymastery.com/>



- Motivation of your character comes from a wound and the resulting belief. (Ex: Good Will Hunting)
- The identity is what your character shows the world.
- Their essence is who they really are.
- I strongly recommend his workshops!

Remember, you're GOD in your story's world. You get to invent your characters, BUT make it believable.

Motivation - Make it Real

Give your character depth.

Backstory doesn't have to be on the page, but knowing the wound will help your reader sympathize with your character.

Even villains have motivation.

In our example:

Husband's motivation: Dad killed his Mom while driving drunk. He was raised by an abusive grandparent that hated his father. He's been told his whole life he's unworthy of love and the thought of losing his wife to another man makes him crazy.

Psychiatrist's motivation: His father was abusive and he begged his mother to leave him. She never did and is now disabled. He feels like he's failed her. He became a Psych to understand why women stay and help them. He believes the wife is his chance at redemption.

Wife's motivation: Her parents had her to be her older sister's playmate. Her older sister hated her, and she's felt like she's never belonged. At first, hubby was great. Then he isolated her. Now she's too scared to leave her husband because she'll have nothing.

Motivations Matter

Your backstory may change as you're writing your story.

If the motivation is weak, the reader may find themselves putting the book down or not connecting with your character.

The worse the wound, the stronger the motivation, the more emotionally involved the reader.

GOALS - Internal and External

Internal - usually emotionally motivated.

External - usually external/situationally motivated.

Goals can change through the story.

Tragedies are when your protagonist CAN attain his goal but chooses not to for the sake of others.

Stories tend to have TWO goals, both internal and external.
Both lead to CHARACTER GROWTH!

Goals: In our example

- Wife Originally
 - Internal - not upset her husband.
 - External - wants to stop stuttering bc it annoys hubby.
- After meeting psychiatrist (the inciting incident)
 - Internal - wants a friend.
 - External - wants to stop stuttering.
- Lastly
 - Internal - to live happily ever after with psychiatrist.
 - External - to be free of husband and keep psych safe.

OMG that's the worst story EVER....

- But, what if...
 - Internal - to be loved unconditionally
 - External - to be safe
- That works FOR ALL OUR CHARACTERS
 - And, holy cow, we've found a theme!
 - Theme is universal and resonates with reader.
- Their wounds can remain the same. Their motivations can remain the same, but they're reactions to each situation might be slightly different.
- KEEP WORKING AT IT UNTIL IT FEELS RIGHT, THEN WRITE.

Great GMC - leads to emotional satisfaction

Your character's story should have personal growth. The ACTION/CONFLICT of the story should have affected them to CHANGE.

- It might not be a positive change. (Horror)
- Change has to be believable.
 - A word about Scooby Doo and Old Man Winters
- Change relates to the theme of the book.
- Rising conflict and resolution is, in fact, something the human animal enjoys reading.

Resources:

RWA.org You don't have to be a romance author to join. They offer national and chapter workshops on craft, business, etc.

Michael Hauge: www.storymastery.com

Goal, Motivation, and Conflict: Debra Dixon

The Hero's Journey: Christopher Vogler

Stephen King On Writing

The Positive Trait Thesaurus: Angela Ackerman & Becca Puglisi

The Negative Trait Thesaurus: Angela Ackerman & Becca Puglisi

Compete Writers Guide to Heroes & Heroines: 16 Master Archetypes:
Tami D. Cowden, Caro LaFever, Sue Vidars