

How To Know If Your Story Works As A Whole



StephanieMorrill.com/OYANer

What does “works” mean?

How to know if you’ve written a story that you would read and enjoy in its entirety even if it wasn’t your story.

Write a description of your book using
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- Will help you identify what your story is really about.

STEPHANIE MORRILL

*within
these
lines*

TORN APART BY WAR.

HELD TOGETHER BY HOPE.



Within These Lines is about an Italian American teenage girl who is in love with a Japanese American teenage boy, and they must figure out how to endure when his family is taken away to a concentration camp during WWII.

Write a description of your book using only one or two sentences.

- Will help you identify what your story is really about.
 - eliminates conflict for the sake of conflict.

Turn your sentence into a paragraph or
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- Major characters

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- Story Structure

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- Major characters
- Story Structure
- Theme

Set in San Francisco. MC is Italian. Her parents are Alessandro and Zola Cassano (which is Mariano's younger brother and the girl he almost married in LG) They moved to SF to get away and be near Zola's remaining brother is in Alcatraz.

MC is in love with Japanese boy who she knows from a stand where she buys produce. I think she's obsessed with fresh fruit. That's going to be her thing. She loves being in the country with the orchards and everything.

Story starts just before Pearl Harbor. That's our disturbance? Or maybe just after.

Write a couple chapters

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(and/or maybe do some research and
take time to world build!)

Write a synopsis

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- Helps to further identify the core of the story.

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- Helps to further identify the core of the story.
- Helps identify character motivations, plot points and twists, and theme.

But a shocking discovery leads Piper to...

When a turn of events prompts Piper to...

Meanwhile, Piper learns a big secret, which causes her to...

Character Motivation: Backstory

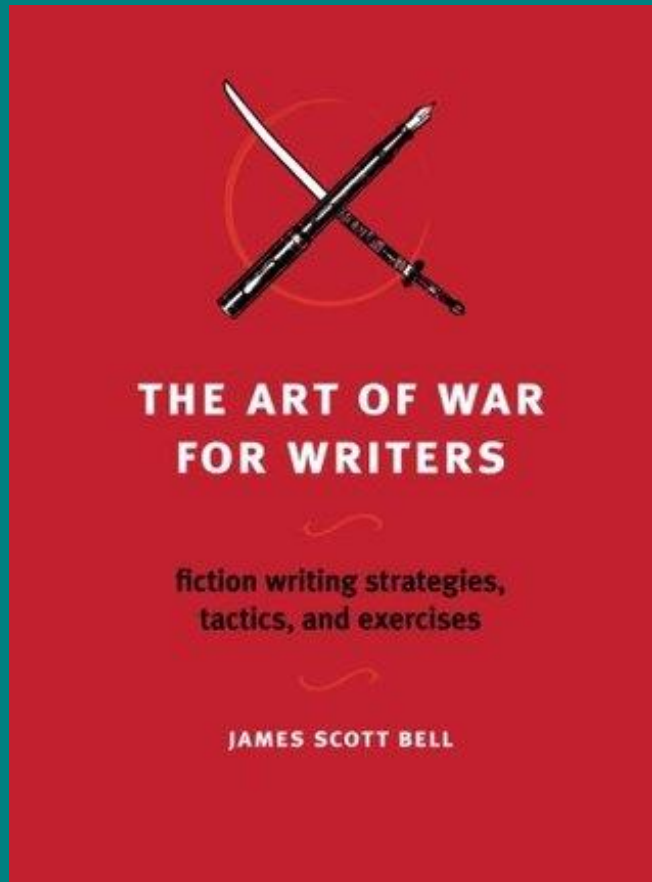
- What lie (or misbelief) does the character believe?

Character Motivation: Backstory

- What lie (or misbelief) does the character believe?
- What hard life things have happened to the character?

Character Motivation: Backstory

Exercise idea: Voice journals



“The voice journal is simply a character speaking in stream-of-consciousness mode. You prompt the character by asking the occasional question, and then just let your fingers record the words on the page.”

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- How's the character right? Wrong?

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- How's the character right? Wrong?
- How does the character want to be different?

Character Motivation: Self-identity

- How does your character see his or herself? What's one word they would use to describe who they are?
- How's the character right? Wrong?
- How does the character want to be different?
- How will their perspective change during the story?

Character Motivation: Story Events

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Don't think:

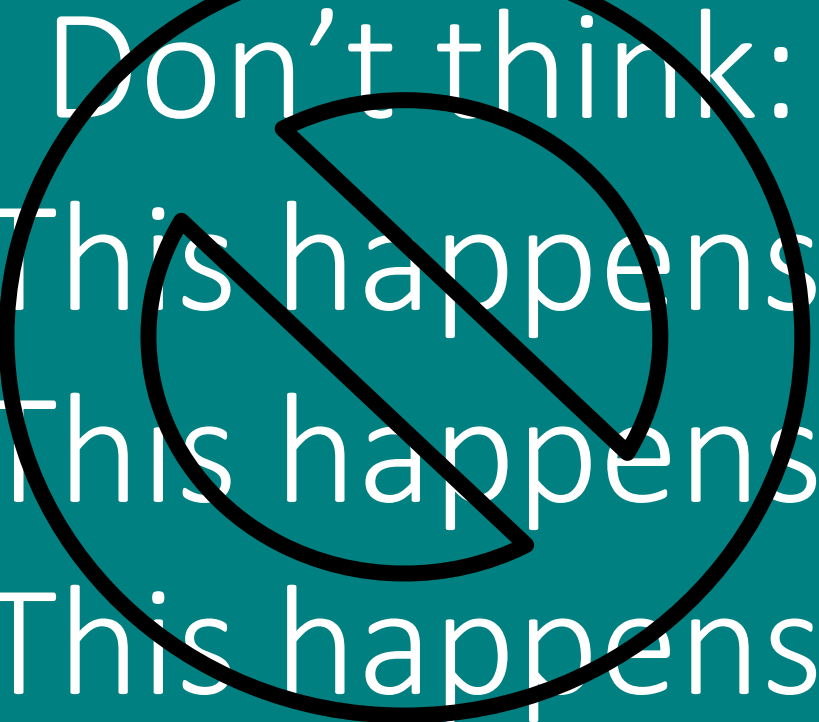
This happens.

This happens.

This happens.

Character Motivation: Story Events

Don't think:
This happens.
This happens.
This happens.



Think:
This happens,
and so this happens,
and so this happens.

Character Motivation is directly linked to stakes

Is your character motivated by potential reward or potential fear?

“Books aren’t written—they’re rewritten. Including your own. It is one of the hardest things to accept, especially after the seventh rewrite hasn’t quite done it.”

-Michael Crichton

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Read the entire manuscript looking for one thing: **What works and what doesn't?**

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What works and what doesn't?

- Characters: Does what they're doing make sense? Does who they are in the beginning of the draft make sense with what I know now from writing the end?
- Plot: Did I foreshadow something that never happens? Or did I over foreshadow and everything feels obvious? Do I like the decisions I made about plot twists or do I want to brainstorm new ideas?

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What works and what doesn't?

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Editing

Read the entire manuscript looking for one thing:

What works and what doesn't?

- Theme: Does my theme align with what I originally thought the book would be about? Did it evolve as I wrote? What changes need to be made?
- Research/Worldbuilding: What do I need to put more thought into or do more research on? What's inconsistent in my world or setting?

Editing

Read the entire manuscript looking for one thing:

What works and what doesn't?

- What if questions:
 - What if my character did xyz instead? What would the ripple effects be?

Big To-Do List Items:

- Evalina's story line in the last 1/3 of the book doesn't work. Come up with new story line for her and fix all scenes
- Cut Lorenzo.
- Research how deployment worked and make changes to chapters 7, 15, 16, and 20.

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Small To-Do List Items:

- In chapter 4, fix placeholders and put in real street names.
- Research mens clothing in 1940s
- Look at menus for Italian restaurants in the 40s and make changes

Next: Actually do the stuff on the list!

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Next: Read the book from start to finish and make changes as you go.

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Next: Time for critique partners?

Ready(ish) for the world?

ELIZABETH GILBERT

author of *EAT, PRAY, LOVE*

BIG MAGIC

CREATIVE LIVING
BEYOND FEAR

“I could sit down with you right now and go through each of my [published] books, page by page, and tell you everything that’s wrong with them. This would make for an incredibly boring afternoon for both of us, but I could do it. I could show you everything that I elected not to fix, change, improve or fuss over . . . To save time, though, let me offer just one representative example.”

ELIZABETH GILBERT

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“I feared I might end up destroying a book that was already done, and was already good enough. It would be like a carpenter tearing down a finished house and completely starting over because he’d noticed—at the very end of the construction project—that the foundation was off by a few inches.

And do you know what happened when I released my admittedly imperfect book into the world? Not much.”

Have I written a *good enough* story that I would read and enjoy it in its entirety even if it wasn't my story?