

STORY CON

LESSON PLAN

Grades: **6th-12th**

Adaptation* **3rd-5th**

So You Want To Try Being a Plotter...Maybe?

Common Core Standard(s): CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3;

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.A

Materials Needed: 'Mechanics of Desire' sheet for every student. Access to the internet for searching.

Class Objective: I can experiment with different methods of plotting stories to plot my own unique story.

Lesson Plan

Day 1

1. Watch Heather Clark's class "**So You Want to Try Being a Plotter...Maybe?**" Have students take notes on ideas and methods Heather shares.
2. The students are going to start fleshing out a story idea today using some of the methods suggested in the class. Have them scan some google images to find a picture of someone they think would make a great main character for a book. If you can't do that, have them choose a character from a book or movie that they love and would love to write a new story about. They also need to think of a setting or world to place that character in. By the end of this day, they should have a main character and a setting chosen.

Day 2



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3. Using Heather's 'Mechanics of Desire' sheet from the link she included in her presentation, students will begin to flesh out their story idea. (This sheet is included below).

Day 3

4. Today students will write a pitch for this story they've created—just as Heather suggested in her class. The Snowflake Method she suggested can be found here: [Snowflake Method](#). They will attempt to write a pitch/query about this book using this method.

Day 4

5. On this day students are going to write the opening scene of this story and the closing scene of this story. JK Rowling has often said that when she wrote Harry Potter she wrote the first scene and the last scene before attempting to write the entire book.

Day 5

6. Have students share their ideas and opening/closing scenes with each other. It is okay that they haven't written an entire story at this point. The point is to give them exposure to different methods for plotting and to build their knowledge of plotting structures.

Printable worksheets/activities on next page

TO CHALLENGE: To take your plotting to the next level, purchase the Scrivener program Heather Clark suggested. A link to it is here: [Scrivener Purchase](#)



Mechanics of Desire

About: Basic premise of your novel (1 sentence if possible)	
Catalyst: What event or decision starts your main character off on is / her transformation journey? What makes this day different than any other day? How does it cause your character to change their lives? This is where you ask yourself if you are starting your story in the right place.	
Emotional Need: What does your character need internally. Start with basic human needs. Food shelter, love, survival, self fulfillment, etc. Must carry us from start all the way through to the climax. MC should achieve this or the story goal or both for a satisfying ending. Conflicts in the story should thwart this need. Your MC may not know this is what they need. You need this even if your book is plot driven.	



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Wound: Something from back story that still hurts your main character. It is often the reason the challenges they face are MOST difficult for them. It is the ROOT cause of the emotional need.	
False Belief: What is the lie the MC believes? This misunderstanding will fuel character's choices. It will guide their transformation. It may be a wrong way of seeing the emotional need. How do they DEMONSTRATE this mistaken belief? Why are they the ideal character to believe this lie?	
Story Goal: This is the thing the main character wants to achieve in the story. It's related to the Catalyst at the start of the story. It must parallel the emotional need. Must carry us all the way to climax. MC must achieve one or both of emotional need and story goal. MC knows what this is, often much sooner than emotional need.	



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Plan: This is what the character tells you they are going to do to get their story goal / meet their emotional need. It's what will direct choices and move them around in the story and may change as the MC tries and fails.

Obstacles: What forces oppose your character in meeting her emotional or concrete desires?

All true tension comes from this—a character with a powerful desire, and obstacles so strong that she stands to lose it, and incredibly high stakes. If possible, have obstacles of all three types.

man vs. self, man vs. man, man vs. nature

The obstacles should grow, and become more difficult, often as a result of your character's choices.



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Stakes: What will your character lose if they don't get their goal or need? Make this huge, and amp it up until you get to a feeling of if not a literal **life-and-death** situation.

Lesson Learned / Theme: Opposite of the false belief, or its true form. Your MC will learn your theme, **a one-sentence statement of truth.**

How do they learn the truth? How do they SHOW they have changed and learned the truth?

Knowing this theme guides what elements of story to keep and cut.



TO SIMPLIFY:

***ALTERNATE ADAPTATION for younger audience:**

Tweens (ages 9-12): 3rd-5th

Common Core Standard(s): CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.A

Materials Needed: A copy of 'Apples and Bananas Plot Organizer' for each student. Access to the internet.

Class Objective: I can plot a story and write an opening scene for that story.

ADAPTED LESSON PLAN

Day 1

1. Tell students they are going to start experimenting with story planning or plotting. Explain what 'plot' means. Then watch **Heather Clark's** class "**So You Want to Try Being a Plotter...Maybe?**"
2. After watching the class, have students ask any questions they have about the content of the video. Tell them they are going to think of an interesting character and an interesting setting today. Have them use familiar books or movies for this. They can come up with a better story if they choose a character they really like and put them in a weird or unique place. (Think Harry Potter but on a spaceship). By the end of the day, they should have chosen their character and setting.

Day 2

3. Today students will use the sheet from this free TeachersPayTeachers site: [Plot Organizer from Apples and Bananas](#) to start plotting out the story they will tell.

Day 3

4. Today students will write just the opening scene for this story. Tell them to think of the story like the first scene in a movie and they are just describing the scene to someone else. Remind them to include description as well as dialogue in that opening scene.



EXTRA WRITING PRACTICE: All ages (optional)

For extra writing practice and to reinforce today's topic, assign a [writing prompt](#) or have them continue working on a page/chapter of their own novel or short story, applying the key techniques learned today. Set a timer for at least 15-30 minutes & have students do a nonstop writing sprint in class or assign for homework.

Editing Skills:

Manuscripts may then be exchanged with other students for peer review, with specific attention focused on how the topic of the day was applied. This will enhance editing skills, while simultaneously further ingraining the lesson at hand and the added benefit of "fresh eyes" giving input on their work.

Revising Skills:

When the papers are returned, students have the opportunity of fine tuning the skill of taking feedback and applying it to revision and rewrite of their manuscript.

Group Discussion/Reflection:

After rough draft & final draft are returned it may be valuable to share what was most helpful or difficult about the feedback and how it may have improved their writing. (Writing clubs can meet online or in person for group discussions)

Extra Credit Opportunities:

Submitting work can be a scary/rewarding experience, no matter the outcome. Offer extra credit incentive for students who create & submit entries at storycon.org/contests for the chance to be recognized, awarded & potentially published. in the [TWEEN 1st Paragraph, Teen 1st Line, 1st Chapter, Teen Anthology, Poetry & Photography Cover Contests.](#)

ATTEND WRITING WORKSHOP: Offer make up credits to students who attend live [StoryCon](#) writing conferences. The largest teen writing conference in the nation, with master writing classes for Teens, Tweens & Educators taught by award winning authors.

Educators: Earn relicensure & up to 5 hours graduate credits from SUU by attending Educator Base Camp. Bring a group for a free Educator Pass.*

CHALLENGE:



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- ☐ Encourage students to continue writing on weekends, holiday breaks and over the summer.
- ☐ *Join or Start a school Writing Club* that meets at lunch or after school*
- ☐ *Better Together! Create or join writing clubs online or in person, to watch & work through TABCClassroom.com together! (invite friends from school, StoryCon or our moderated TABC discord/other safe writing discussion board)*

*extracurricular writing classes may involve school licensed students or those with an annual personal subscription. If they need a subscription, have them visit TABCClassroom.com

- ☐ **FOLLOW UP!** Send feedback!. I'd love to hear how you use Classroom, suggest edits, what you like most, classes, contests, conference experiences & creative ways you incorporate it all into your curriculum.
sarah-noel@operationliteracy.org

- ☐ **SHARE TABCClassroom.com** with a friend or school.

Invite them to StoryCon.org & "tell the teacher" ([email me](#))

If they subscribe to StoryCon's TABC CLASSROOM™ Vault or Register to attend StoryCon, **we like to thank "BOOK HEROES!" with a \$6 StoryCon Promo Codes for registration/the merch store.**



THANKS

*Visit OperationLiteracy.org to find out more about our next **StoryCon™** with **Educator Base Camp™**, **Teen Author Boot Camp™** & **Tween Author Boot Camp™**. Attend our intensive writing conferences in person to learn from the masters, meet favorite authors and to be a part of a supportive writing community that will help students hone their writing skills, get published & boost their confidence. Join the discord server or start your own writing group to do TABC Classroom with friends.

