



#### Introduction

So, you have an idea for the next best-selling novel and the next summer blockbuster movie. Before you bring that story to life, there is plenty of preparation to do. This program illustrates a step-by-step process of how to ensure that your finished story is rich, logical, smooth, and above all, interesting.

### The Brainstorming Process

Coming up with a story is like organizing information in a library, but the library is yourself. You are using this brainstorming process to conduct research among the things you know and make connections between them. When you associate existing ideas, new ideas emerge.

Remember, the more time and effort you put into preparation, the less frustration and unnecessary work you will need later. Would you rather fix a plot-hole when it is written on an index card, or would you rather do that in your final draft?

You can find a visual guide of the step-by-step process at the end of this handout. Each step has a few bullet points of what you should keep in mind during that step.

### **Terminology**

This list of definitions and points on some of the terms will be covered during the program. The list may be helpful as you use the visual guide.

- High concept An easily pitched idea in a succinct statement. E.g. A guy goes back in time to meet his parents, but his mother falls in love with him (*Back to the Future*)
- Low concept An idea that is more complex and relies on nuanced character development. It is harder to pitch. E.g. Pride and Prejudice
- Subtext Content not expressively stated but often understood by the reader/audience
- Log line A brief summary of the story highlighting its concept
- Mind map A visual diagram of information that specializes in the hierarchy and associations between ideas. In the creative process, use this tool to interrogate your story and ask what a naturally curious observer may ask about each part of each idea
- Wall of recall Our tendency to repeat what we consumed recently and mistake a stolen cliché to be our own fresh idea. To fight against it, eliminate the first three ideas that come to your mind when making creative decisions
- Key question The main question that the reader needs answering by the story. E.g. Can Dorothy return to her home in Kansas?
- Event In the context of storytelling, an event is simply a meaningful thing that happens. Ideally, every event should have an impact on the story
- Scene A sequence of character interactions within a (usually) continuous time. A scene consists of events and dialogue. The definition can be fluid as creative writing is not a precise science
- Outline A brief description of the story and its major events
- Treatment A detailed description of the story and all of its scenes

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#### **Additional Information**

Explore additional resources on our website and blog Plano Library Learns, including information about library databases

#### Lynda.com

Writing Training and Tutorials Link

Write a Bestselling Novel in 15 Steps Link

Develop Blockbuster Story Ideas that Sell Link

#### Kanopy

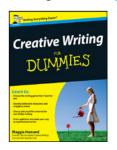
Writing Instruction Link

Great Courses: Screenwriting 101 Link

Great Courses: Writing Great Fiction Link

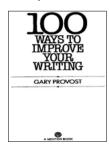
## **Books to Explore**

Through the Libby app and your library card, you can read more with eBooks



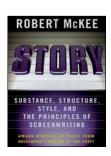
**Creative Writing for Dummies**by Maggie Hamand

Checkout



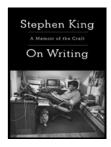
100 Ways to Improve Your Writing by Gary Provost

Checkout



Story: Style, Structure, Substance, and the Principles of Screenwriting by Robert McKee

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On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft by Stephen King

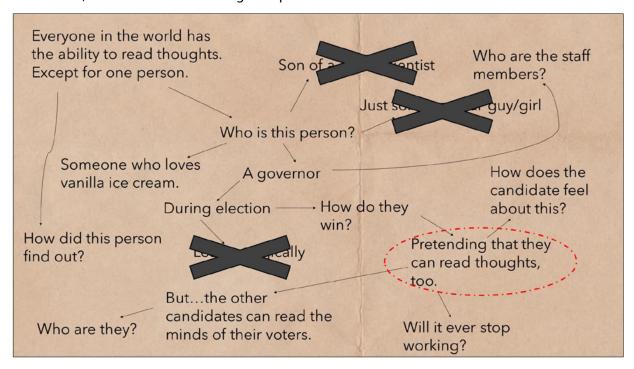
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Audiobook

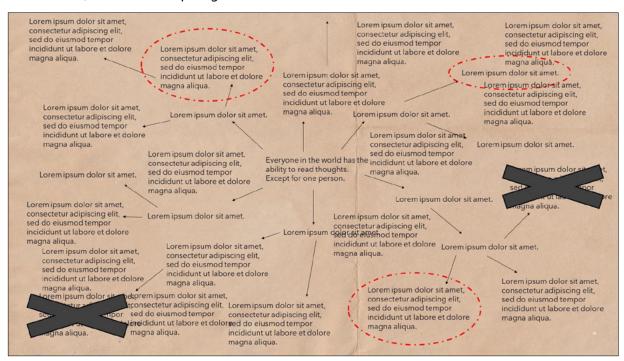
## Creative Writing: I Have an Idea

## **Mind Map Examples**

Partial view, unfinished in the interrogation process



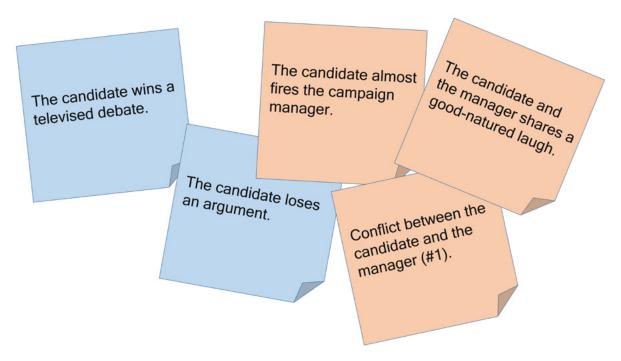
#### Holistic view, with the concept/log line at the center



Your mind maps should be much more detailed than these examples. The more thorough you are during this step, the more source materials you will gather for your story. You can also start a new map with a subtopic of the story at the center for focused exploration. Remember, they are tools intended only for you: You can make any markings on them and make them as messy as they need to be.

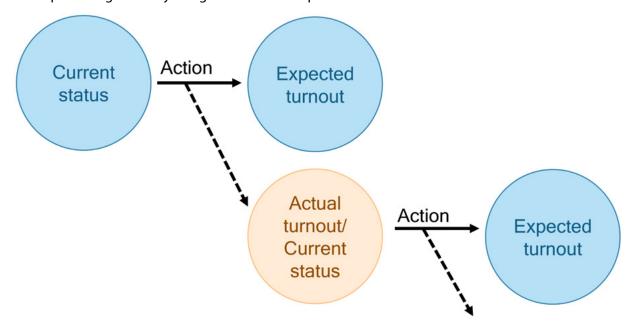
### Indexing

Use notecards or sticky notes to record the events you want to take place in the story. Events relate to each other. So, naturally, when you come up with one event, there should be another event generated. For example, if our hero wins a debate at some point in the story, there may be another event in which the hero loses an argument or gets embarrassed. These related events make the bigger events more impactful and meaningful.



#### Make a Scene

In each scene, the "main character" of the scene expects a turnout from the interaction, but the actual turnout is often different from expectation. This difference creates conflict, the driving force of storytelling. It also allows the storyteller to keep building the story using the new status quo.



## **Brainstorming Process Guide**

# Concept

- High concept vs. low concept
- · Conflict, character, story, and subtext

### Concept

- Use a large sheet of paper/poster
- Interrogate your story

## Mind Map

- Explore the details
- · Get past the "wall of recall"
- · Find the "key question"

## Index

- Index events from the map by using notecards
- · Create "twin events" based on existing ones
- · Organize events into groups

- Turn organized event groups into summary statements
- List statements in chronological or narrative order

## List

- · Brief descriptions of each scene based on the listed statements
- Every scene: Desire, concequences, urgency
- Every scene: Current status vs. expected turnout vs. actual turnout

# Outline

- Detailed description of the entire story
- **Treatment**
- Take time revising the treatment

# Now you are ready to begin writing!

