

THE STORY GRID GUILD
Writing Sprint for the week of April 6, 2020

Scene Assignment Type: A “Meet my significant other” scene with direct confrontation.

An example is a late Middle Build One Scene from William Goldman’s *Marathon Man*.

Character Number One: Your protagonist introducing their significant other to a member of their family or their closest friend.

Character Number Two: The authority position is the member of the family or the closest friend who is intent on confronting the object of their sibling/best friend’s affection. This character is deeply suspicious of the motives of the love interest.

Character Number Three: This character is walking into an extraordinary world, a familial environment that they have never been admitted into. They do have a secret that they are holding from their partner, but they must hold on to that secret or face their own agency deprivation or that of someone they are trying to protect.

Analyzing the Scene:

You may find the prompt is enough to get you writing without having to sweat the story grid structural details.

But you may find it easier to flow into the writing process by outlining the scene before you start scribbling.

Whatever the case, follow this simple process.

If you are energized by the prompt...just start writing and follow whatever pops into your mind without any hesitation or second guessing.

If you are befuddled and need to think through an outline, head on down to the “analyzing the scene” and “five commandments” prompts below.

Answering these questions should start poking ideas out of you. Once you get excited about a particular idea...start writing. You don’t have to answer all of the questions before you begin. Just use as many as you need to generate some sentences.

You may get stuck before you complete a first draft of the scene. If that’s the case, go back to the questions below and work through them as long as it takes to get you writing again. Don’t revise the previous material until you’ve put together a first draft. So, if you decide to change the inciting incident in order to solve the crisis, change it later after you’ve created the rest of the scene.

The key element here is to only outline and edit when you find yourself stuck. And when you're writing, don't break to outline or edit until you absolutely have to.

Here are our SG scene tools.

A STORY EVENT is an active change of life value for one or more characters as a result of conflict (one character's desires clash with another's).

A WORKING SCENE contains at least one Story Event. To determine a Scene's Story Event, answer the following four questions:

- 1. What are the characters doing?** One person is introducing their love interest to a person that they have a deep relationship with.
- 2. What is the essential action of what the characters are doing in this scene?** Take each character and figure out what their object of desire is for this scene. What does the protagonist wish to accomplish by the end of the interview? Who is your protagonist? Is there a line of deference to authority that they will not cross? That is, how far will they allow their desire to drive their behavior? Will they degrade themselves to get what they want? What does the confrontational figure wish to accomplish? What about the love interest? What are they hiding? Make sure all three of the desires conflict.
- 3. What life value has changed for one or more of the characters in the scene?** Someone is going to "win" the scene. And one of the other people will lose the scene. That means that someone will get what they set out to achieve. The others will fail to get what they want. Evaluating the life value shift for all three characters will enable you to get a tight grip on the conflict.
- 4. Which life value should I highlight on my Story Grid Spreadsheet?** Let's add all three characters' life value shifts to our spreadsheet for in-depth scene analysis. So, the protagonist would have a value shift from "unsatisfied to satisfied" and the antagonist would have the opposite value shift. Clearly considering the win/lose dynamics in a scene will home in on conflict. When you have three characters, think about all three of the interactions. The two family members. The lovers. And the love interest and the unknown family member.

HOW THE SCENE ABIDES BY THE FIVE COMMANDMENTS OF STORYTELLING

Inciting Incident:

Choose an unexpected event to drop into the scene that will require the protagonist to actively process. The drop-in unexpected event (a phere) could be a tool to achieve their scene desire or an obstacle that prevents them from achieving their scene desire. In the Goldman scene, the Dustin Hoffman character didn't wear a tie to lunch and the waiter insists he put one on. How

does the Roy Scheider character use that unexpected event to his advantage? How does the Marthe Keller character deal with it? How does Dustin Hoffman cope with it?

Progressive Complication: After the unexpected event drops in, have at least two complications that threaten or encourages the goals of the protagonist. That is, they either make the likelihood of the goal to be realized lesser or greater than the prior beat/s.

Turning Point Progressive Complication:

Metabolizing the phere event will eventually lead to the value shift of the scene, which is the turning point progressive complication. The goal value state of the protagonist will be realized or not.

Crisis: With the value shift changing comes the crisis of the scene. What does the protagonist do in the face of not achieving their goal or getting it met? The crisis must boil down to a best bad choice or irreconcilable good.

Climax: The protagonist acts out their crisis decision.

Resolution: The protagonist and the antagonist react to the new value state.