

THE STORY GRID GUILD
Writing Sprint for the week of May 25, 2020

Scene Assignment Type: A “Phone call” scene with third person omniscient narration.

The Examples are from *Thelma and Louise* screenplay by Callie Khouri.

Character Number One: Your protagonist is either the dominant or submissive partner in a relationship making the phone call. They place the call.

Character Number Two: The opposite of your protagonist, this character receives the call.

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.

• ANALYZING THE SCENE •

A STORY EVENT is an active change of a universal human value for one or more characters as a result of conflict (one character's desires clash with another's, or an environmental shift changes the value positively or negatively).

A WORKING SCENE contains at least one Story Event.

It's often difficult to identify the Story Event in a scene, so STORY GRID has a set of Four Socratic Questions to help us with the process. Throughout this podcast, we'll ask these questions about every scene, and you'll get better and better at answering them.

The questions are:

- 1. What are the characters in the scene literally doing—that is, what are their Micro on-the-ground actions?**

One character is calling another character on the phone.

- 2. What is the essential tactic of the characters—that is, what Macro behaviors are they employing that are linked to a Universal Human Value?**

In Phone Scene Number One, the Susan Sarandon character is leveraging a friend's love for her to secure her future. The Michael Madsen character is confessing his love.

In Phone Scene Number Two, the Geena Davis character is buying some time so that she can hang out with her friend another day. The Christopher McDonald "Darryl" character is setting his partner straight, putting her back in her cage.

- 3. What Universal Human Values have changed for one or more characters in the scene? Which one of those value changes is most important and should be recorded in our STORY GRID SPREADSHEET?**

In Phone Scene Number One, the value shifts from "Insecure to Secure," for Susan Sarandon and "Secure to Insecure," for Michael Madsen.

In Phone Scene Number Two, the value shifts from "Imprisoned to Free," for Geena Davis and "Powerful to Impotent" for Christopher McDonald.

- 4. What is the Story Event that sums up the scene's on-the-ground actions, essential tactics, and value change? We will enter that event in the STORY GRID SPREADSHEET.**

Thelma gets her friend to give her all of his money.

Louise breaks it off with her husband.

HOW THE SCENE ABIDES BY THE FIVE COMMANDMENTS OF STORYTELLING

Inciting Incident:

Phone Call Number One, A character dials another's phone number. Phone Call Number Two, a character is told to call another character and told what to say.

Progressive Complication: After the unexpected event drops in, (the call is an unexpected event for the other party) have at least two complications that threaten or encourages the goals of the protagonist.

Turning Point Progressive Complication:

"I miss you 'peaches.'" The value shifts and the Susan Sarandon character knows this guy isn't bullshitting her.

"Darryl, you're my husband, not my father." The value shifts to the Geena Davis character.

Crisis: Does the winner of the scene continue to engage and risk losing the upper hand or disengage?

Climax: The powerful figure leaves the fight.

Resolution: The callers get what they want and need.