

Write From the Seed



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What is a Story Seed?

Writing tool

- Expresses the heart of your story in a few concise lines
- Similar to a premise

Reductive exercise

- Focus on what matters
- What elements of your story CAN'T be stripped away?

Why write a Story Seed?

- Your lifeline as a writer
- Save time, money, and creative energy

Similar Terms

Idea

Premise

Germ

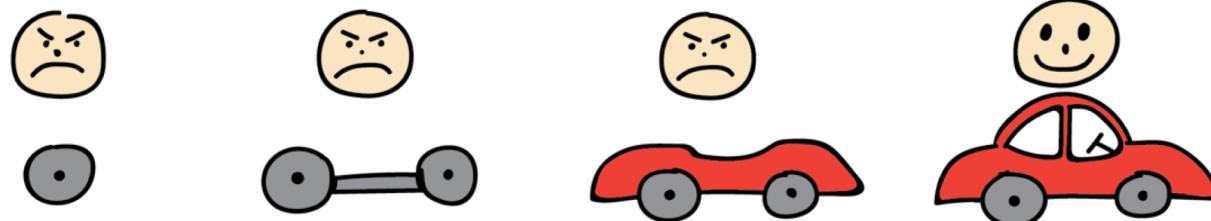
Inspiration

GMCs

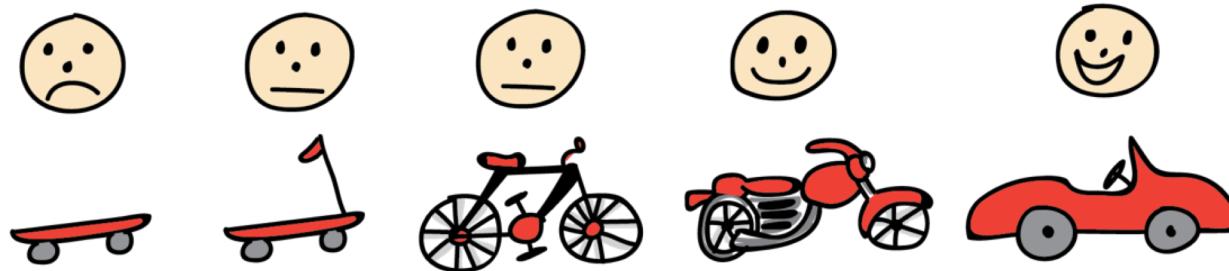
Query

Iterative Design

Not Like
This!

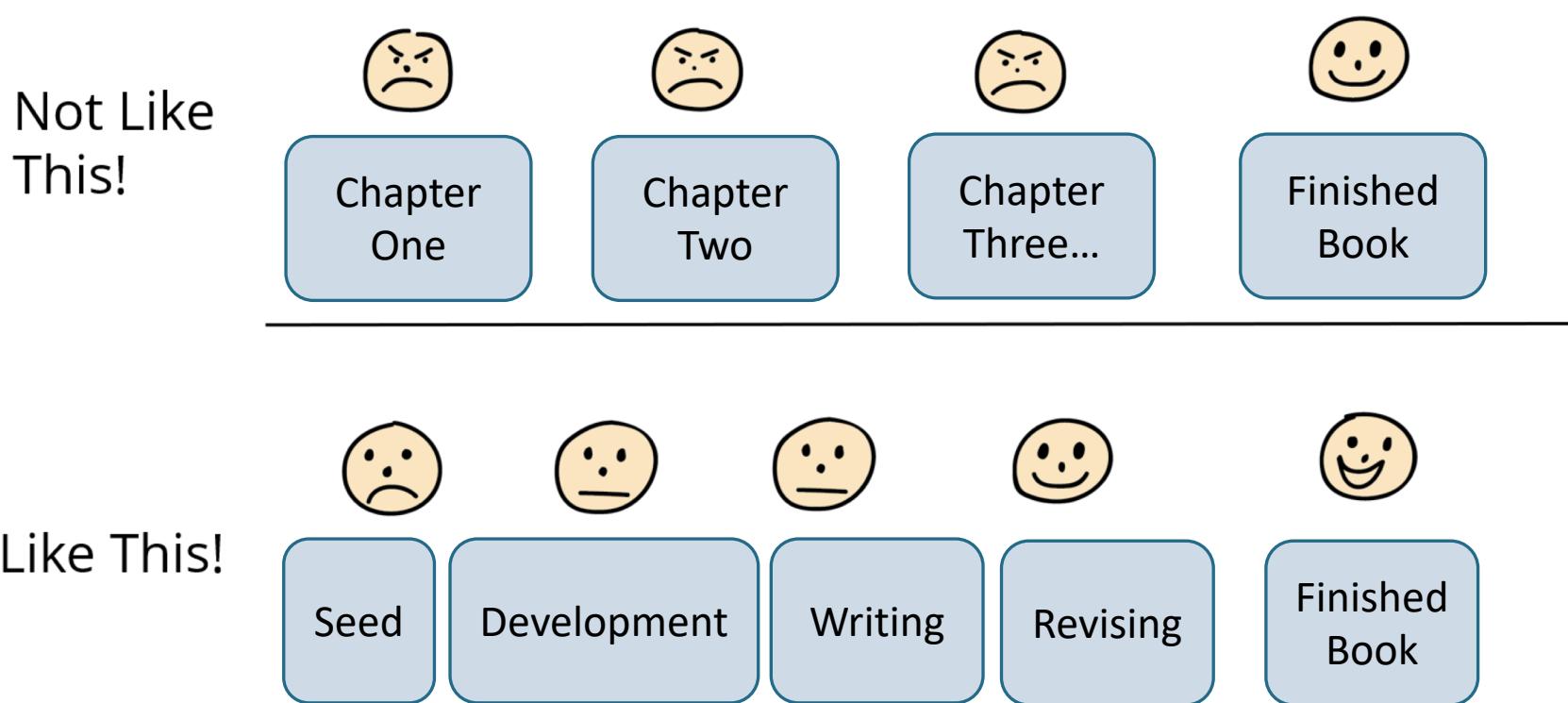


Like This!



—Henrik Kniberg

How to Apply That to Story Design



How to Apply That to Story Design

“If you don’t know what the heart of your story is, whether it’s a serious emotional tale with lighter moments, or a lighthearted romp through a wacky universe, you’re going to have disconnects everywhere.”

– James Portnow, *Extra Credits*

Writer, game designer, video game developer consultant

Writing the Seed

Character

Conflict

World

Theme

Mood

Design

Exercise

Write a single sentence that attempts to capture the heart of your book.

- What was that sentence about? Did you write about a character? A theme? A world? A struggle?
- What was important to you about what you wrote?

Do it again with a completely different sentence.

- What stuck out this time?
- Did you learn anything different?

Could you write 5 different lines that captures the heart of your book in different ways?

- What elements are consistent in each line?
- Is anything less important than you thought?

Focus on What's Important

What core elements can **NOT** be removed?

- A central character
- The magical world
- A crucial event

What **CAN** you remove without changing the core story?

- Subplots
- Side characters
- Space ships
- Don't add complexity when you need to focus on the core first

Using the Seed

Goal: to **LEARN** about the story

- Is this engaging?
- Does this make sense?
- What aspects are important to you?
- Do you have a story? Or just an idea?

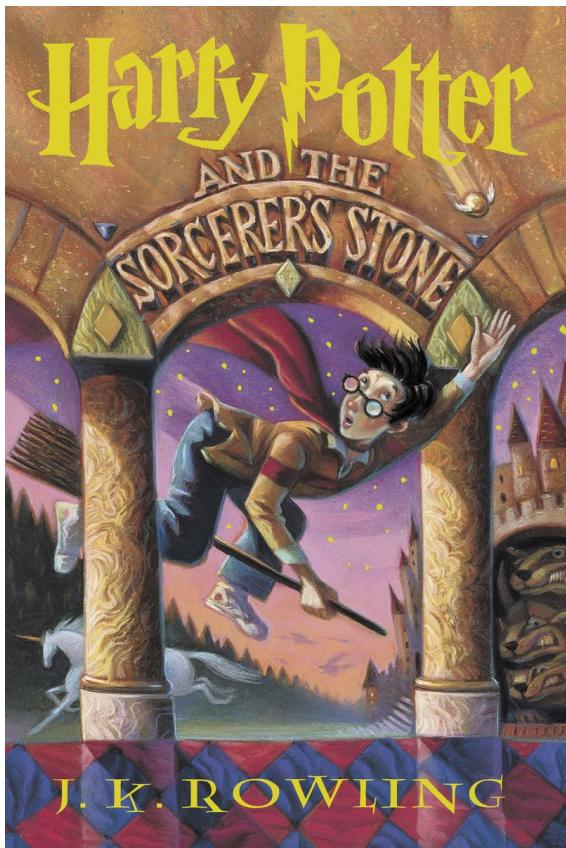
Keep working on the seed

- Identify problems early (even before critiquing pages)
- Get feedback
- If it doesn't work wouldn't you want to know that before page 400?

Guiding Questions

1. Who is the main character?
2. What is their central conflict/challenge?
3. What do they want to achieve by the end?
4. What will their character change be?
5. What is significant about the world?
6. How do you want the book to end?
7. What themes do you want to explore?
8. What excites you about this book?
9. What will make others want to read this?

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone



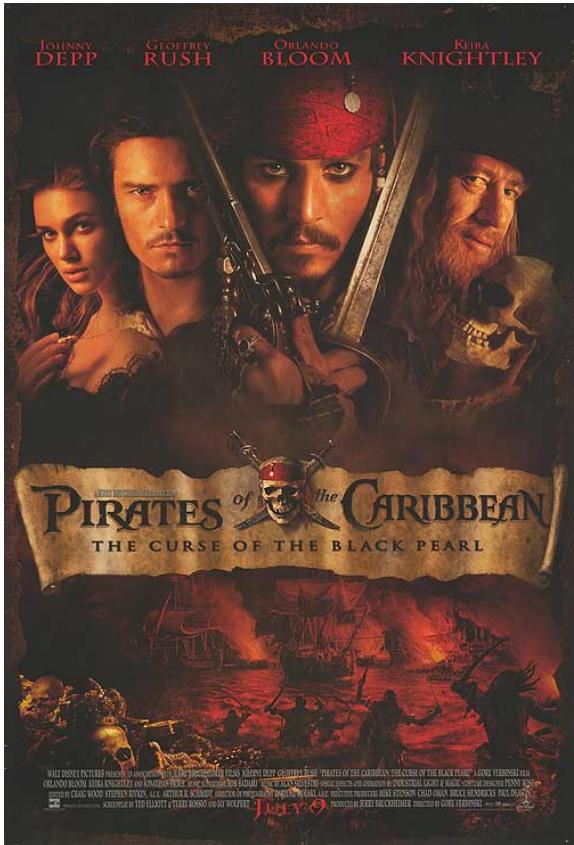
Harry Potter, an outcast boy living in an abusive household, is invited to a school of magic.

For the first time, he is accepted into a found family of friends.

Harry and his friends must solve a mystery in order to defeat the dark wizard that killed his parents.

Does not include: Dumbledore, Quidditch, Hagrid, school houses, trolls in the bathroom, smelly turbans, three-headed dogs, moving staircases, Diagon Alley...

The Curse of the Black Pearl



William Turner must trust one pirate to help save Elizabeth from another pirate, and ultimately must become a pirate himself to succeed.

Does not include: Commodore Norrington, Aztec gold, the *Black Pearl*, Mr. Gibbs, skeletons, monkeys, burning rum on an island, Gov. Swan...

Writing a Premise Line

When **AN EVENT** happens to **A CHARACTER**, they **ACT** deliberately and are opposed by a **CONFLICT** which they struggle with towards **AN ENDING**.

- 1. Event:** What starts the main action of your book? Not the opening, but the inciting incident.
- 2. Character:** Whose story is it?
- 3. Act:** What important action or decision does that character make?
- 4. Conflict:** What do they struggle with? Who is standing in their way?
- 5. Ending:** What inevitable yet unexpected ending are character and conflict heading toward?

Star Wars: A New Hope

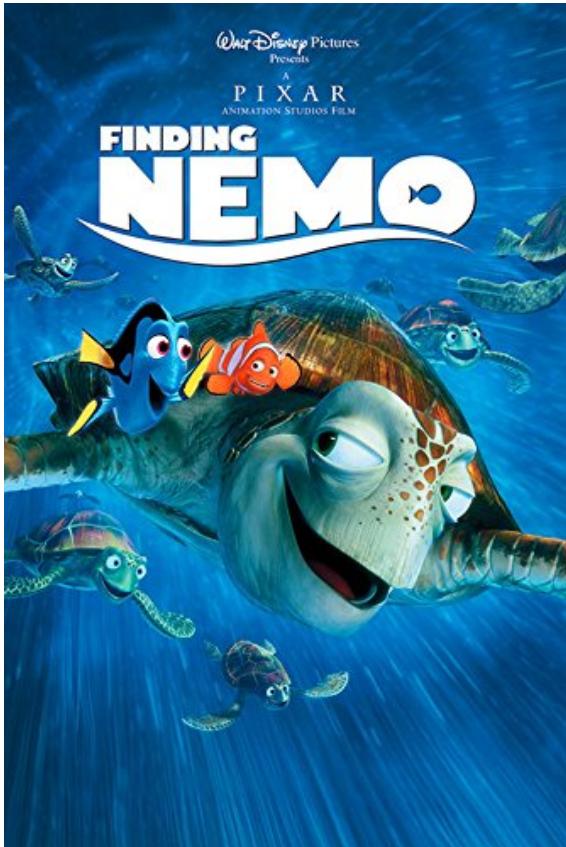


When farm boy Luke Skywalker gets a message from a Rebel leader asking for his old friend Obi Wan, he joins with Obi Wan and a scoundrel pilot to rescue her.

Luke must learn the ways of the Force, a mystical energy from an old warrior religion, to stop the Empire from destroying the Rebel base.

Does not include: Chewbacca, lightsabers, X-Wings, Stormtroopers, the *Millennium Falcon*, Darth Vader...

Finding Nemo



Marlin is a father afraid of leaving the safety of his reef.

When his overprotective nature pushes his own son away, getting Nemo captured by a scuba diver, Marlin must brave the open ocean to rescue his son.

When he and his forgetful friend Dory finally find Nemo, Marlin must realize that his son is more capable than he thought, and even though the open ocean is terrifying, it is full of amazing adventures and new friends.

Does not include: Crush, P Sherman 42 Wallaby Way Sydney, sharks, dirty fish tanks, the East Australian Current, jellyfish...

Honing In

List out the top 3 most **important** characters.

- Why are they the important?
- What do they do for the story?

List out the top 3 most **interesting** characters.

- Are they the same?

What is the single most important event **to you** in your book?

- Was it the beginning? Ending? Somewhere in the middle?
- A twist, inciting incident, climax?
- If not, could you make that event one of these plot beats?

Using the Seed

If you run into a problem

- Refer back to the seed
- See where in the process the problem lies

Revise and rewrite your seed as your story grows

- It will change, but it's important to remember what parts can change and what has to stay the same
- What's the most important element of the story for you?

Get feedback at every stage of the process

- Varies from author to author
- Find trusted, critical readers

Test, Test, Test

Practical

Does this make sense?

Is the writing clear?

Does the structure work?

Are there problems?

Emotional

What do you like? Dislike?

Is this boring? Exciting?

Do you care about the characters?

Would you read this book? Why?

Keeping a Problem Document

Don't try to ignore design problems.



The earlier you identify a problem, the easier it is to solve.



Find solutions to problems that deepen the story.

Identifying Problems

Think of the potential problems your story might pose. List out a couple.

- Where does the problem lie? In the seed, development, or actual writing of the book?
- Can you use these problems as opportunities for making a better story?
- Does a problem require you to take a step back and reexamine your story?

Write From the Seed

Write the
Seed

Express the heart of your story
in a few concise lines.

Test

Get feedback at every stage of
the process.

Focus

Refer to the Seed any time you
get stuck.

Solve
Problems

Identify problems early and let
solutions make your book better.

Thank You



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