

AATE 2020: Vision

Crafting Stories that Serve Your Diverse Classroom, Curriculum, and Life!

July 25, 1-2:15pm

Workshop with Shawn Shafner, shawنشafner@gmail.com
Arts for All, www.arts-for-all.org

What is a Story?

Stories are narrative structures that invite listeners/viewers/readers to empathetically experience the combined consequences of circumstance and action. As storytellers, we create whole worlds with our words. Truly, stories are powerful stuff, and each reflects and imparts its own perspective on the world. Stories do not tell themselves; we carry that grave responsibility. So when we have the opportunity to engage a specific audience in a specific time, what exactly is the story we want to tell? What is the world we want our listeners to experience, and why? How might we use stories in service to audiences (and learners) wrestling with specific lessons, themes or concepts?

Taking Ownership Over the Story

1. What is the “simple story”?
 - a. Articulate the story’s plot in one sentence. It should be clear, simple and basic, excluding details but sticking to the core.
 - b. What is the theme in simple terms? You might imagine it as a bumper sticker, slogan, idiom or one sentence summary. Does this story serve a bigger idea that interests you/your audience?
2. The most interesting stories are character driven—the action occurs as a consequence of the characters’ circumstances, objective, and what they do to achieve their objective.
 - a. Articulate each element of the story in as simple a fashion as possible (the “simple story”).
 - i. Exposition—Where is the character coming from (emotionally/psychologically/physically)?
 - ii. Conflict—What propels the character to take action?
 - iii. Climax—What is the culminating event or action that leads to changes in the character?
 - iv. Resolution—What does the character learn? Where are they by the end of the story (emotionally/psychologically/physically)?
 - v. NOTE: You may also do this for “Rising Action” and “Falling Action”
3. Now that you have the bare bones of your story, it’s time to make it flesh. Ask yourself:
 - a. What are the major themes, ideas, or lessons I want to emphasize in this story? What is my perspective on the story?

- b. How can details about the environment and surrounding circumstances help to serve my story?
 - c. How can the characters help to serve my story? How many viewpoints do I want present in my story? With whom do I want my audience to empathize?
 - i. Flat or generalized characters can be helpful for teaching/reinforcing simple moral lessons. Complex, round characters can be helpful for unpacking moral dilemmas and inspiring critical thinking.
 - d. Have I taken care of my story? Have I followed each new thread/character/detail through all four elements of the story? Alternately, are there threads I intentionally want to leave hanging, or incorporate in the second half?
4. Have fun!
- a. Communicate the story to your audience in the present moment. Tell them—the actual people in the room right now—tell **them** the story.
 - b. Be open to opportunity in the form of inspiration, accidents, and the unexpected. The world of the story is as wide as we want it to be.
 - c. Have fun! Seriously.

Your Story

Identify the “simple story” for your narrative in general, and for each major moment in order to create the bones of your story.

Overall:

Exposition:

Conflict:

Climax:

Resolution:

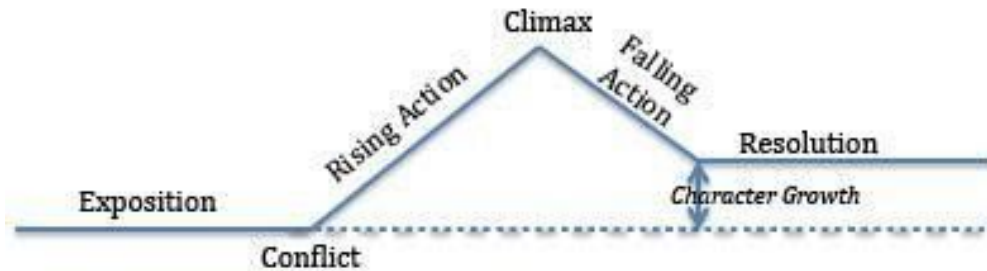
Additionally, consider
Major themes or lessons:

Setting(s):

Character(s):

Story Models

Western Dramatic Arc



The Hero's Journey, first articulated by mythologist Joseph Campbell

