



WRITING SERVICES

STORYTELLING CHEAT SHEET

GOOD storytelling is more than a recitation of events or facts. If you want readers to have a visceral reaction to what you write, you will need to engage them in the story. Here's how.

STORYTELLING COMPONENTS	WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
1. Who is my target audience for this piece?	Know who you're writing the story for and what is likely to grab their attention.
2. What is my purpose in writing this story?	What do you hope your readers will feel at the end? What is your theme? Good vs evil? Love conquers all? Love is blind?
3. Who is telling the story?	Who is the narrator?
4. What is the story's point of view?	1 st person present: (<i>I am</i>) 1 st person past: (<i>I was</i>) 3 rd person limited: (<i>Through the eyes of one character - he/she</i>) Omniscient: (<i>Through the eyes of multiple characters.</i>)
5. What is the conflict in the story?	The only reason we read a story is to follow the main character(s) as he/she conquers hardships. What stands in the way of your protagonist reaching their goal? How does that manifest throughout the story?
6. What are the consequences of the protagonist's actions or decisions?	This adds tension to your story and why readers will 'care' about the outcome(s), so don't sugarcoat it.
7. Where does the story begin?	Something triggers the real story. In the Wizard of Oz, it's when Dorothy runs away from home. If she hadn't run away, she would have made it into the storm cellar when the tornado came, and she never would have taken the trip to Oz.
8. How will I use my opening sentence to draw readers in?	Grab your readers' attention with a hook. Ask a question. Make a declarative sentence that shocks the reader. Or paint a picture they can't ignore.

9. How will I use emotion to keep readers reading?	Don't be shy about infusing emotion into your story. Without emotion and/or the passion behind the character's driving need towards a specific goal, your story will fall flat.
10. How can I create visual images to make the piece memorable?	Good writers don't 'tell' their readers what they want them to know—they show them. You do this through action, dialogue, and visual images. (Show, don't tell)
11. Do I have a story arc?	Think of every story as a journey from normal, everyday life (beginning) until something forces your protagonist to change (trigger). He now faces obstacle after obstacle (middle) as he strives for a goal, until forces come together at a critical high point (climax) and he finally succeeds or fails. After that, the story wraps up (end), answering all questions and placing your protagonist into a new normal.
12. Narrative drive	As you look back over your story, does the narrative drive (what your protagonist is chasing) sufficiently push the story forward? Or does it lag in places you have to fix?