



Story Analysis: "Jurassic Park"

by Melanie Anne Phillips
& Chris Huntley

Objective versus Subjective Perspectives

In Dramatica, we can examine a story from the outside as a dispassionate observer, noting the relationship of Character to Plot and to Theme. We can also examine a story from the inside, by stepping into the shoes of the Main Character to discover how things look to them. In the first case, we see the story more like a general watching a battle from atop a hill. This is the **objective** perspective. In the second case, we see the story from the point of view of a soldier in the trenches. This is the **subjective** perspective. An audience is provided access to both by the author. When the audience is only shown information that the Main Character also receives, they are in the **subjective** perspective. When the audience receives additional information that the Main Character does not receive, they are in the **objective** perspective. The dramatic potentials of a story are created by the differential between the **objective** and **subjective** perspectives. At appropriate times, Dramatica aids the author in focusing her attention on the perspective that will most effectively support her dramatic intentions.

Building a Better Dinosaur

Jurassic Park is wonderfully entertaining. The concepts are intriguing, the visuals stunning. Everything it does, it does well. Unfortunately, it doesn't do enough. There are parts missing, little bits of "story DNA" that are needed to complete the chain. To be fair, these problems largely result from the mostly faithful adherence to the dramatic structure and dynamics of the book upon which the movie is based.

Storyform, the structure and dynamics of a story, is not medium dependent. What works in one medium will work in all others. Storytelling, however, must vary significantly to take advantage of the strengths and avoid the weaknesses inherent in any format. Jurassic Park makes this storytelling translation very well, but the flawed dramatics were nearly lifted intact, shackling the movie just like the book with a Pterodactyl hanging 'round its neck.

Yet criticisms are a dime a dozen. Suggestions for improvement are much more rare. Fortunately that is the strong suit of the Dramatica theory. Here is one plan for building a better dinosaur.

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Schedule Of Dramatica Workshops And Users' Group Meetings For 1994

Users' Group Meetings: The second Wednesday of every month from 7 pm - 10 pm starting July 13, followed by Aug. 10, Sept. 14, Oct. 12, Nov. 9, Dec. 14.

Dramatica Basics Workshops: The last Saturday of every month (except Nov. & Dec.) from 10am-2pm starting July 30, followed by Aug. 27, Sept. 24, Oct. 29, Nov. 19, Dec. 17.

Focus Workshops: Every Tuesday from 7pm-9pm starting Aug. 9, followed by Aug. 16, 23, 30; Sept. 6, 13, 20, 27; Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25; Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; Dec. 6, 13, 20.

WHERE: Both the Users' Group Meetings and the Workshops are held at the offices of *Screenplay Systems, 150 East Olive Avenue, Suite 203, Burbank, California, 91502, (818) 843-6557 or Fax (818) 843-8364.* Reservations are required.

Description of classes on pages 13-14. □

1994 Dramatica Calendar

JULY

Wed, July 13 *Users' Group Meeting (free)*
Sat, July 30 Dramatica Basics Workshop

AUGUST

Fri, Aug. 5 Hands On Dramatica Workshop, UFVA Conference, Bozeman Montana

Tue, Aug. 9 Focus Workshop: Appreciations
Wed, Aug. 10 *Users' Group Meeting (free)*

Sat, Aug. 13 Dramatica Demonstration/Workshop, Bulloch Ent. Services, Toronto (free)

Tue, Aug. 16 Focus Workshop: Character
Tue, Aug. 23 Focus Workshop: Storyforming
Sat, Aug. 27 Dramatica Basics Workshop
Tue, Aug. 30 Focus Workshop: Encoding

SEPTEMBER

Tue, Sept. 6 Focus Workshop: Plot
Fri, Sept. 9 Demonstration & Discussion, M.I.T. Media Lab, Cambridge, MA
Tue, Sept. 13 Focus Workshop: Theme
Wed, Sept. 14 *Users' Group Meeting (free)*
Tue, Sept. 20 Focus Workshop: Storyweaving
Sat, Sept. 24 Dramatica Basics Workshop
Tue, Sept. 27 Focus Workshop: Genre/Reception

OCTOBER

Tue, Oct. 4 Focus Workshop: Appreciations
Tue, Oct. 11 Focus Workshop: Character
Wed, Oct. 12 *Users' Group Meeting (free)*
Tue, Oct. 18 Focus Workshop: Storyforming
Tue, Oct. 25 Focus Workshop: Encoding
Sat, Oct. 29 Dramatica Basics Workshop

NOVEMBER

Tue, Nov. 1 Focus Workshop: Plot
Tue, Nov. 8 Focus Workshop: Theme
Wed, Nov. 9 *Users' Group Meeting (free)*
Tue, Nov. 15 Focus Workshop: Storyweaving
Sat, Nov. 19 Dramatica Basics Workshop
Tue, Nov. 22 Focus Workshop: Genre/Reception
Tue, Nov. 29 Focus Workshop: Appreciations

DECEMBER

Tue, Dec. 6 Focus Workshop: Character
Tue, Dec. 13 Focus Workshop: Storyforming
Wed, Dec. 14 *Users' Group Meeting (free)*
Sat, Dec. 17 Dramatica Basics Workshop
Tue, Dec. 20 Focus Workshop: Encoding

Free Dramatica Demonstration/Workshop

Toronto, Ontario — Chris Huntley, co-creator of the Dramatica Theory and Vice President of Screenplay Systems Inc., will be in Toronto on August 13th to demonstrate Dramatica. Bulloch Entertainment Services Inc. is hosting the event at their offices located at 1200 Bay Street, Suite 703, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5R 2A5. If you are interested, call Bulloch Entertainment Services Inc. @ (416) 923-9255. □

Hands-on Workshop at UFVA Conference

Bozeman, Montana — Screenplay Systems will be hosting two hands-on Dramatica workshops at this year's University Film and Video Association's (UFVA) annual conference. Located on the campus of Montana State University, the workshops will be held on Friday, August 5, 1994, and are free to all conference attendees. The workshops are to be held at the Macintosh lab in Cheever Hall, Room 121, from 8:45 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., and 10:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The lab will then be open for unstructured use of Dramatica from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Space is limited.

If you are interested in attending the conference, call Conference Services @ (406) 994-3333.

If you are interested in finding out more about the University Film and Video Association, contact Herb Farmer, UFVA Membership @ (213) 740-2921. □

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Tyranosaurus Wreck

Continued from page 1.

Dramatica Background

As a starting point, Dramatica denotes a difference between a Tale and a Story. A Tale describes a series of events that lead to success or failure. It carries the message that a particular way of going about solving the problem is or is not a good one. But a Story is an argument that there is *only one* right way to solve a problem. It is a much more potent form that seeks to have the audience accept the author's conclusions.

To gain an audience's acceptance, an argument (Story) must appeal to both logic and feeling. To make the logical part of this argument, all the *inappropriate*¹ ways a problem might be approached need to be addressed and shown to fail. Each one must be given its due and shown not to work except the one touted by the author. This is accomplished by looking at the characters and the plot objectively, much like a general on a hill watching a battle down below. The big picture is very clear and the scope and ramifications of the individual soldiers can be seen in relationship to the entire field.

However, to make the emotional part of the argument, the audience must become involved in the story at a personal level. To this end, they are afforded a Subjective view of the story through the eyes of the Main Character. Here they get to participate in the battle as if they were actually one of the soldiers in the trenches. It is the differential between the Subjective view of the Main Character and the Objective view of the whole battle that generates dramatic tension from which the message of the story is created.

By comparing the two views, the argument is made to the audience that the Main Character must change to accommodate the big picture, or that the Main Character is on the right track and must hold on to their resolve if they hope to succeed. Of course, the Main Character cannot see the big picture, so they must make a leap of faith near the end of the story, deciding if they want to stick it out or change.

Now this relationship between the Main Character and the Objective story makes them a very special character. In fact, they hold the key to the whole battle. They are the crucial element in the dramatic web who (through action or inaction) can wrap the whole thing up or cause it to fall apart. As a result, the personal problems they face reflect the nature of the Objective problem of the story at large.

To the audience there are two problems in a story. One is the Objective problem that everyone is concerned with; the other is the Subjective problem that the Main Character is personally concerned with. Although the problems may be greatly different in the way they are manifest, they both hinge on the crucial element in the Main Character as their common root. So, to be a complete argument a story must explore an Objective AND a Subjective problem, and show how they are both related to the same source.

Story versus Tale

A **tale** describes a problem and the attempt to solve it by a Main Character, ultimately leading to success or failure in the attempt. A **story** makes the argument that out of all the approaches that might be tried, the Main Character's approach *uniquely* leads to success or failure. In a success scenario, the **story** acts as a message promoting the approach *exclusively*, in the failure scenario, the **story** acts as a message *exclusively* against that specific approach. **Tales** are useful in showing that a particular approach is or is not a good one. **Stories** are useful in promoting that a particular approach is *the only* good one or *the only* bad one. As a result of these differences, **tales** are frequently not as complex as **stories**, and tend to be more straight forward with fewer subplots and thematic expansions. Both **tales** and **stories** are valid and useful structures, depending upon the intent of the author to either illustrate how problem was solved with a tale, or to argue how to solve a specific *kind* of problem with a **story**.

Story Mind

The central concept from which Dramatica was born is the notion of the **Story Mind**. Rather than seeing stories simply as a number of characters interacting, Dramatica sees the entire story as an analogy to a single human mind dealing with a particular problem. This **story mind** contains all the characters, themes, and plot progressions of the story, as incarnations of the psychological processes of that mind. In this way, each story *explores* the inner workings of the mind so that we (as audience) may take a more objective view of our decisions and indecisions and learn from the experience.

Storyforming versus Storytelling

There are two parts to every communication between author and audience: the **storyforming** and the **storytelling**. **Storyforming** is the actual dramatic structure or blueprint that contains the essence of the entire argument to be made. **Storytelling** is the specific way the author chooses to illustrate that structure to the audience. For example, a story might call for a scene describing the struggle between morality and self-interest. One author might choose to show a man taking candy from a baby. Another might show a member of a lost patrol in the desert hoarding the last water for himself. Both **what** is to be illustrated and **how** it is illustrated fulfill the **story's** mandate. Another way of appreciating the difference is to imagine five different artist's each painting a picture of the same rose. One may look like a Picasso, one a Rembrandt, another like Van Gogh, yet each was describing the same rose. Similarly, different authors will choose to **tell** the same **story form** in dramatically different ways.

Leap of Faith

No Main Character can be sure that she will succeed until the story has completely unfolded. Up until that moment, there is always the opportunity to change one's approach or one's attitude. For example, a Main Character may

¹ *Inappropriate* does not mean good or bad. Within the confines of the Objective Storyline, there isn't any need for value judgements to be placed on the propriety of each possible solution, just whether or not they are appropriate to solving the problem at hand. In the storytelling, the Author may wish to throw in a value judgement but that is unnecessary to making the storyforming point.

determine that what they thought was the true source of the problem really is not. Or they may reconsider their motivation to try and resolve it; whether they should give up or try harder. Again, there is no way for them to tell with certainty which path will lead to success. Indeed, all of these choices have been made by Main Characters in stories and all have led to both success and failure. Nevertheless, each scenario closes in on a single moment in the story, the moment of truth, where the Main Character has their last opportunity to remain steadfast in their approach and attitude, or to change either or both. After that, there is no choice but to see it to its conclusion, good or bad. That moment of truth is called the **Leap of Faith** because the Main Character must choose a course and then commit themselves to it, stepping into the unknown with blind faith in a favorable outcome.

Character

In Dramatica, there are two major divisions of Characters: the Subjective Characters and the Objective Characters. Subjective Characters are the smaller group, consisting of only two kinds: the Main Character and the Obstacle Character. Both of these are concerned with providing the audience with a Subjective view of the story.

There can, and frequently are, many more Objective than Subjective Characters. An **Objective Character** is defined as a specific collection of dramatic *Elements or characteristics* that remains consistent for the entire story. There are sixty four elements in the Dramatica Structure, which represent the building blocks of Characters. All sixty four elements must be used to fully develop the story's argument. To have meaning to an audience, the group of elements that makes up each character must not present a consistent viewpoint (with regards to the story goal/problem) during the course of the story. In this way the relative attributes of each of these elemental approaches can be clearly explored during the course of the story. Sixty four elements may at first sound too limited to create interesting characters, but when you consider that the number of arrangements of the elements is multiplied by the way the might be grouped, the total number of characters that can be created is in the millions.

Story wise, the **Objective Characters** present the story for the audience, and the **Subjective Characters** allow the audience to participate in the story. Because of this, **Subjective Characters** are unique in that they do double duty by having a special relationship with the audience and also pulling their weight as **Objective Characters** as well. This is because they are concerned both with the Main Character's personal problem and also the story problem.

Main Character

A story has a central character that acts as the focus of the audience's emotional attachment to the story. This **Main Character** is the conduit through whom the audience experiences the story subjectively. The **Main Character** may be the Steadfast Character who needs to remain

Jurassic Park Analysis:

Jurassic Park attempts to be a story (not a tale) but does not make it because its exploration of the Subjective problem is lacking.

The Objective problem is clearly shown to be caused by the relationship of Order to Chaos. The message of the logical side of the argument is that the more you try to control something, the more you actually open yourself up to the effects of chaos. As Princess Leia put it to the Grand Moff Tarkin in Star Wars, "The more you tighten your grip, the more star systems will slip through your fingers."

Since Order is actually the problem, the Chaos must be the solution. This is vaguely alluded to in Jurassic Park when the Tyrannosaurus wipes out the Raptors, unknowingly saving the humans. Although the point is not strongly stated, it is *sort of* there. We will come back to this point later to show how it should have been a much more dramatically integral event than it was. The important concept at the moment is that as far as it goes, the Objective Storyline is fairly close to what it should be, which is true of most action-oriented stories.

It is the Subjective Storyline that fails to fulfill its dramatic mandate in Jurassic Park. To see how we must go back to the very beginning of the film, to our Main Character, Dr. Alan Grant. Since Dr. Grant contains the crucial element, we would expect him to intersect the Objective Story's problem by representing Order or Chaos. Clearly the author intended him to represent Order. This means that he contains the Problem element (the inappropriate attitude or approach that is the underlying source of the Story's troubles), rather than the Solution Element, and as such must Change in order to succeed.

The entire first scene with Grant at the dig *should have* illustrated his love of Order. All the elements were there: a disruptive boy, a randomly sensitive computer, a helicopter that comes out of nowhere and ruins the dig. All of these things *could have* illustrated Grant's hatred of Chaos and his quest for Order. Using the same events and incidents the point might have been made in any number of ways, the easiest being a simple comment by Dr. Grant himself.

Unfortunately without any direct allusion to Order being his primary concern, Dr. Grant comes off simply as finding disruptions inconvenient, faulty equipment annoying, and kids as both.

Why is it so important to set up the nature of the problem so early? Well, one of the major problems with the Jurassic Park storyform is that we really don't know what the problem is until near the end of the first act. Certainly almost every movie goer must have been aware that this was a picture about an island where they cloned dinosaurs back to life, and they run amok wreaking havoc — that's all *storytelling*. But that doesn't say *why*. The "Why" is the *storyform*: the excuse, if you will, for having a story to tell. If the point of contention had been established up front, the whole thrust of the picture would have been given direction from scene one.

Just stating that Dr. Grant share the problem with the story is obviously not enough. The relationship between his view of the problem and the Objective view of the problem is what explores the concept, makes the argument, and allows the Main Character to grow. Ultimately, it is the differential between the two that brings a Changing (versus Steadfast) Main Character to suspect the error of their ways and make a positive leap of faith. They see the problem outside themselves, then find it inside themselves. They change the inside, and the outside follows suit.

What does this mean for Jurassic Park? As it is, Doctor Grant's attitude

toward John Hammond's ability to control the dinosaurs is one of skepticism, but not because of Order, because of Chaos. Grant simply agrees with Ian Malcolm, the mathematician. This makes the same point from two directions. But Grant's function is not to tout Chaos, but to favor Order. Only this point of view would be consistent with his feelings toward the children.

As illustrated in the table scene with Hammond, Ian, and Elissa, Grant jumps from representing approach to representing the opposite, neutralizing his effectiveness as owner of the crucial element and taking the wind out of the dramatic sails.

This problem could have been easily avoided and strong drama created by having Dr. Grant continue to believe that the park is unsafe, *but for different reasons*.

(Note: The following proposed scene is designed to illustrate how Grant's and Ian's positions on what is needed for the park to be safe is different. The storytelling is minimal so as not to distract from the storyforming argument.)

GRANT
How can you be sure your creations won't escape?

HAMMOND
Each compound is completely encircled with electric fences.

GRANT
How many fences?

HAMMOND
Just one, but it is 10,000 volts.

GRANT
That's not enough....

HAMMOND
I assure you, even a T-Rex respects 10,000 volts!

GRANT
No, I mean not enough fences. It's been my experience that Dr. Malcom is right. You can't count on things going the way you expect them. You need back-ups to your back-ups. Leave a soft spot and Chaos will find it. Put three fences around each compound, each with a separate power source and then you can bring people in here.

MALCOM
That's not the point at all! Chaos will happen no matter how much you prepare. In fact, the more you try to control a situation, the greater the potential that chaos will bring the whole thing down.

In the above scene, Grant stresses the need for even MORE control than Hammond used. This clearly establishes his aversion to giving in to chaos. But Ian illustrates the difference in their points of view by stating that the greater the control you exercise, the more you tighten the spring of chaos.

What would this mean for the middle of the story? Plenty. Once Grant and the children are lost in the open with the thunder lizards, he might learn gradually that one must allow Chaos to reach an equilibrium with

steadfast or the Change Character who needs to change in order to resolve their personal problem.

Obstacle Character

Every Main Character has a single **Obstacle Character** that forces the Main Character to a leap of faith. From the Main Character's point of view, the **Obstacle Character** may seem to be blocking the road to the solution of the Main Character's *personal* problem in the story, or they may seem to be trying to knock them off the road to the solution. In a more objective view, the **Obstacle Character** functions to block the Main Character from sweeping their personal problem under the carpet, forcing the Main Character to address it directly. In every act, a story problem is introduced that requires the Main Character to expose their personal problem in order to solve the story problem. It is the **Obstacle Character** that creates the story problems for the Main Character. Frequently, the Main Character is chosen by the author to be the Protagonist as well. And often, the **Obstacle Character** function is combined with the Antagonist. In this way, they each do double duty as the prime movers of both the objective and subjective concerns of the story. This arrangement is not essential, however, and in many cases it is prudent to assign the Main and **Obstacle** roles to characters other than the Protagonist and Antagonist in order to clearly explore the relationship between the Objective and Subjective problems of the story.

Problem Element

Of all the character Elements, there is a single one that describes the essence of both the story's problem and the Main Character's personal problem. This element acts as a hinge or bridge between the Objective and Subjective views. The inclusion of this element in an Objective Character is what identifies them as the Main Character. This is because it makes that character the only one who can solve both the Objective and Subjective problems in a single stroke by addressing the problem.

Solution Element

The Solution Element is the "flip side" of the Problem Element. In a story, the focus may be on the Problem Element ("The Main Character **should not** be this way") or the focus may be on the Solution Element ("The Main Character **should** be this way"). If the Main Character should not be a certain way, we say it is a "Stop" story, as she must stop being a certain way. If the Main Character should be a certain way, we say it is a "Start" story, as she must start being a certain way. So in a sense, the Problem Element is not by itself the cause of the story's problem, but works in conjunction with the Solution Element to create an imbalance between two traits that need to be balanced. The choice to present one as a negative trait defines it as the Problem Element and its positive partner becomes the Solution Element.

Author's Proof

Technically speaking, the moment of climax in a story is the intersecting point where the nature of the Main Character crosses paths with the nature of the story. It is here that the course of one, both, or neither of them may be altered by the interaction. The only way an audience can be sure what, if anything, has changed course is to plot one more dramatic point past the climax to illustrate the new direction of story and Main Character. This might be the “?” after the words “The End” in a monster story or a formerly mean man sharing his sandwich with a stray dog on the way home. The purpose is simply to illustrate that the suspected effect of the climax has or has not truly resulted in a change in course. As such, it functions as the Author's Proof and is a key component of the denouement.

Order

The characteristic representing Order is concerned with keeping things organized. Change is not a problem as long as it is orderly. However, sometimes you can't get there from here and the whole system has to be blown apart to rebuild from the ground up. Sometimes a little chaos needs to reign so that a log jam can be broken or a process speeded up. The Order characteristic is an organization and control fiend.

Chaos

Chaos is disorder, randomness, anarchy. The Chaos characteristic is brilliant at cutting through a Gordian knot. But then it just keep cutting every rope it see until the chandelier falls on its head. It “stirs the pot” just to see what will happen.

Change

Every Main Character represents one special character element. This element is either the cause of the story's problem, or its solution. The Main Character cannot be sure which it represents since it is too close to home. Near the climax of the story, the Main Character must make a Leap of Faith and decide if they should stick with their approach in the belief that it is the solution, or jump to the opposite trait in the belief they have been wrong. When a Main Character decides to abandon their story-long approach for its counterpart, they are said to Change. And as a Changing Main Character, they will contain the problem element/characteristic in the story.

Steadfast

Every Main Character represents one special character element. This element is either the cause of the story's problem, or its solution. The Main Character cannot be sure which they represent since it is too close to home. Near the climax of the story, the Main Character must make a Leap of Faith and decide if they should stick with their approach in the belief that it is the solution, or jump to the opposite trait in the belief they have been wrong. When a Main Character decides to stick with their story-long approach, they are said to remain Steadfast. And as a Steadfast Main Character, they will contain the solution element/characteristic in the story.

Order. Several close encounters with the dinos might result in minor successes and failures determined by applying Order or allowing Chaos.

As it stands, Dr. Grant simply learns to care about the children. But what has really changed in him? What did he learn? Would it not have been more dramatically pleasing to have the children teach him how chaos is not just a disruptive element, but sometimes an essential component of life? And would it not make sense for someone who has spent his whole life *imagining* the way dinosaurs lived to be surprised by the truth when he sees them in person? What a wonderful opportunity to show how the Orderly interactions he had imagined for his beloved beasts are anything but orderly in the *real* world. So many opportunities to teach him the value of Chaos, yet all we get is “They DO travel in herds... I was right!” Well, that line is a nice place to start, especially if you spend the rest of the story showing how wrong he was about everything else. Truly a good place to start growing from.

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the Subjective Storyline is the manner in which they escape in the end. Grant and the kids are sealed in the control room, but the Raptors are right outside. The girl struggles to get the computer up so they can get the door locked. This of course, merely delays the Raptors until the helpless humans can escape into another Raptor attack. Then out of nowhere, T-Rex conveniently barges in, kills the Raptors and allows the humans to escape? Why? Why *then*? Was T-Rex just waiting in the wings for his cue?

Let's describe one possible ending that would've tied in Chaos, Dr. Grant's personal problem of order in the Subjective storyline, his growth as a character and eventual change, AND have all this *force* a successful outcome to the Objective storyline.

Imagine that earlier in the story, when the power went down it only affected some of the compounds, not all. So only some of the areas were open to the roving dinos. Rather than having Elissa get the power back on for the fences, she merely powers up the computer system, but then no one can boot it up.

Dr. Grant and the kids make it back to the control room, barely escaping the T-Rex who is trapped by one of the functional electric fences. They climb over the fence on a tree knocked down by the Tyrannosaurus. The Raptors are at the door of the control room, the girl goes to the computer to lock the door. She locks it, then tells Grant she can bring up the rest of the fences. There might be some kind of visual reminder in the room (such as a dino picture) that Grant (and the audience) associate with his major learning experience with the kids about needing to accept Chaos. Grant almost allows her to bring up the power, then yells for her to stop. He tells her not to bring it up, but to actually *cut* the power on *all* of the fences.

Just as before, the Raptors break in, the humans escape onto the dino skeletons. NOW, when T-Rex comes in to save the day, it is solely because of Dr. Grant's decision to cut the power to the fence that was holding him in. Having learned his lesson about the benefits of Chaos and the folly of Order, he is a changed man. The author's proof of this correct decision is their salvation courtesy of T-Rex.

Equilibrium is established on the island, Grant suddenly loves kids, he gets the girl, they escape with their lives, and all because the crucial element of Order connected both the Objective and Subjective storylines.

Certainly, Dramatica has many more suggestions for Building a Better Dinosaur, but, leapin' lizards, don't you think this is enough for one edition of Storyform? □

Special Supplement
Dramatica Structural
Model Centerfold Pinup

Dramatica Table of Story Elements

This table represents the dramatic topics that occur in all complete stories. Like its scientific cousin (the Periodic Table of Elements), items are arranged in families. Dramatic families include Genre, Plot, Theme, and Character. The interrelationships between these four aspects of story can be seen in the nested nature of the table. Dramatica theory describes how to place these story elements in context to create dramatic appreciations such as “Goal” and “Premise.” Dramatica software automatically rearranges the table to create a story progression that reflects the dramatic decisions made by an author.

Reaching Screenplay Systems Via Electronic Mail:

Screenplay Systems can be reached from most computer services via our Internet addresses. If you send to our Internet addresses, your message will be directly received by the appropriate support staff.

To Reach:	Send To:
Dramatica Theory Support:	Dramatica@Screenplay.com
Movie Magic Budgeting Support:	MMB@Screenplay.com
Movie Magic Scheduling Support:	MMS@Screenplay.com
Scriptor Support:	Scriptor@Screenplay.com
General Technical Support:	Support@Screenplay.com
Suggestions (features, services):	Suggestions@Screenplay.com
Questions about Updates:	Updates@Screenplay.com
Requests for Training:	Training@Screenplay.com
Business Services & Inquiries:	Business@Screenplay.com

How Do I send Internet Mail?

With some services you must prefix or postfix an Internet address in some special way, and other services do not require any additional addressing. Below are some examples of how to send Internet Mail from various electronic services. We use the "support" mailbox as an example, but you can use any of the above addresses the same way:

America On-Line:	Dramatica@Screenplay.com
AppleLink:	Dramatica@Screenplay.com@INTERNET#
Compuserve:	Dramatica:Support@Screenplay.com
eWorld:	Dramatica@Screenplay.com
NETCOM:	Dramatica@Screenplay.com
Prodigy:	Dramatica@Screenplay.com
MCI MAIL:	Type "Help Address Internet" for instructions
INTERNET	Dramatica@Screenplay.com

Several other services support Internet Mail. Check with your service provider for details.

NOTE: Although Screenplay Systems maintains several mail addresses on many of the services mentioned above, it is still faster for you to send questions via our Internet address. This is because we have a computer that checks for Internet mail every half-hour, and immediately delivers your message to us. Please bear in mind that sending any electronic mail is not instantaneous — it can take anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours for your service to send your message to our mailbox.

D-Mail:

I find the explanations and documentation very ACA-DEMIC in tone, this makes the concepts more difficult than they need to be. The text seems to be written with great concern for accuracy, but sometimes it seems vague. I'm still trying to understand how you define male and female methods of problem solving.

Peter Gould <pgould@mizar.usc.edu>

One Woman's Problem Solving is Another Man's Justification

Both Males and Females use the same techniques, but in different contexts. What is problem solving for one may indeed be justification for the other. In fact, of the four approaches in any given story, in one Domain both will see the approach as problem solving, in another both will see justification. The third would be problem solving for one and justification for the other and the fourth vice versa.

Men TEND to use linear problem solving as their first method of choice. In linear problem solving, they set a specific goal, determine the steps necessary to achieve that goal, and embark on the effort to accomplish those steps. Gathering facts, or successfully achieving requirements all deal with seeing a number of definable items that must be brought together to make the mechanism work in the desired manner.

This is a very spatial view of problem solving, as it sees all the parts that must be accomplish and/or brought together to resolve the problem or achieve the goal.

Women TEND to use holistic problem solving as their first method of choice. In holistic problem solving, steps are not important and there may not even be a specific goal to achieve but simply a new direction desired. As a result, the RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN things are what is measured and adjusted to create a change in the forces that determine that direction. Unlike male problem solving, there is no causal relationship stating that THIS leads to THAT. Instead, COMBINATIONS of changes in the way things are related alters the dynamics of the situation rather than the structure, and changes context rather than meaning.

This is a very temporal view of problem solving, as it looks at the way things are going and tries to alter relationships so that the direction of the forces that create the problem is deflected.

Now, both men and women use both techniques. Also, women may become trained to use the linear method first, and men may develop a preference for

the holistic method as their primary problem solving approach. However, these are preferences made through conscious choice, training, or experience. But underneath it all, the brain's operating system for problem solving will either be linear or holistic. This is what sets men and women apart from each other. No matter how much common ground they come to from training, experience, and conscious choice, there is always that underlying level in which they can never see eye to eye, because they have intrinsically different outlooks.

So, when choosing male or female mental sex, we are not concerned with the up front and obvious, we are concerned with that hidden level at the foundation of the Main Character's psyche that dictates a linear or holistic approach to the problem regardless of what is done consciously.

That's why the issue becomes vague - because it is not cut and dried in the Main Character nor is it up front. It is just their tendency at the lowest most basic part of their mind to go linear or holistic.

How can we illustrate this is a Main Character? Well, the following point by point comparison may help:

Female: looks at motivations

Male: looks at purposes

Female: tries to see connections

Male: tries to gather evidence

Female: sets up conditions

Male: sets up requirements

Female: determines the leverage points that can restore balance

Male: breaks a job into steps

Female: seeks fulfillment

Male: seeks satisfaction

Female: concentrates on "Why" and "When"

Male: concentrates on "How" and "What"

Female: puts the issues in context

Male: argues the issues

Female: tries to hold it all together

Male: tries to pull it all together

As we can see, both men and women will use each other's techniques. However, one set comes first or takes priority, and that is determined by mental sex. So, if you keep in mind that this all may be overshadowed by other learned techniques, you can illustrate male and female problem solving techniques as a TENDENCY to employ those listed above, all other things being equal. □

Dramatica Tips

Identifying the Throughlines in your story.

One of the easiest ways to identify the four throughlines in your story (objective, subjective, main character, and obstacle character) is by looking at the characters. Who are they? What are they doing? What are their relationships to one another? Clearly identifying the characters in each throughline will make selecting the thematic domains, concerns, ranges, and problems for the throughlines much easier.

For the Objective Story Throughline:

When looking at the characters in the Objective Story throughline, identify them by the roles they play instead of their names. This keeps them at a distance and a lot easier to evaluate them *objectively*. For instance, some of the characters in Shakespeare's "Hamlet" might be the king, the queen, the ghost, the prince, the chancellor, and the chancellor's daughter, while the characters in "The Fugitive" might be the fugitive doctor, the fugitive retriever, the dead wife, the one-armed man, and so on. By avoiding the characters' proper names you also avoid over identifying with them and confusing their personal concerns with their concerns as objective characters.

For the Subjective Story Throughline:

When looking at the characters in the Subjective Story throughline, it is best to look at the main and obstacle characters by their role in lieu of their names. The subjective story throughline is a look at the *relationship* between the main and obstacle characters, not the characters themselves. Thus, the relationship between the fugitive doctor and the fugitive retriever is the focus of the subjective throughline in "The Fugitive," whereas "The Verdict" focuses on the relationship between the defense attorney and the girlfriend/"spy."

For the Main Character Throughline:

When looking at the Main Character's throughline, all other characters are unimportant and should not be considered. Only the main character's personal identity or essential nature is meaningful

while their roles in the objective and subjective throughlines are irrelevant. What qualities of the main character are so much a part of them that they would not change even if they were plopped down in another story? For example, Hamlet's brooding nature and his tendency to over think things would remain consistent if he were in a different story, whereas Laura in "The Glass Menagerie" by Tennessee Williams would carry with her a world of rationalizations and a crippling propensity to dream.

For the Obstacle Character Throughline:

When considering the Obstacle Character's throughline, look to the type of impact they have on the main character. Think of the obstacle character in terms of their name, but think of the main character in terms of their role. In viewing the obstacle character this way, it is easier to identify the essential impact that they have on others. Obi Wan Kenobi's fanaticism (regarding *using the force*) in "Star Wars" and Deputy Marshal Sam Girard's tenacity (in *catching his man*) in "The Fugitive" are aspects of these obstacle characters that are internal to their nature and would continue to be so in any story they might be found. □

Gender Speak: "What's in a Name?"

Throughout this newsletter (as in all Dramatica documentation) you will find an inconsistency in the use of female, male, and neuter personal pronouns (she, he, it, etc.) This inconsistency is intentional. Each of our contributors has a different take on being neutral, engaging in affirmative action, or sticking with the old guard, and that is reflected in the variations in pronoun usage from article to article. In an early attempt to resolve these differences, we researched potential solutions only to find that there was no universally accepted gender-neutral alternative. The closest suggestion we found appeared in "Return of the Straight Dope" by Cecil Adams that describes a gentleman who blended personal pronouns " 'he or she, it' to produce *h'orsh'it*." Rather than engage in more of the same, we have opted for inconsistency. □

1994 DRAMATICA WORKSHOP CURRICULA

Basics Workshop:

DRAMATICA BASICS (\$100, 4 hours)

Dramatica is a radically new approach to story, and as such, contains fundamental ideas that have to be grasped in order to turn it into the most useful writing tool ever created for you. This basics workshop provides a general overview of Dramatica concepts and theory and is a **prerequisite to taking any of the other more advanced and in-depth workshops**. When you've finished this workshop you will be able to analyze and create stories using the Twelve Essential Questions, understand the relationships between Main and Obstacle characters, and discuss the Story Mind and Grand Argument Story in relation to your own writing. These ideas and more will be explored to prepare you to use Dramatica on your own or to move on to more in-depth workshops. Meeting 10am-2:30pm (with a lunch break from 12-12:30pm), on the Saturdays of July 30, August 27, September 24, October 29, November 19, December 17.

Focus Workshops:

Focus on: DRAMATICA APPRECIATIONS (\$50, 2 hours • Prerequisite: Dramatica Basics)

In this workshop, we seek to gain an in-depth understanding of all the various *appreciations* Dramatica considers in your story. Stories transmit their meaning through their appreciations, but what does this mean? We will look at what these appreciations are, what they do for your story, and how best to approach them. What is a Story Goal or an Outcome of Success? How are the Focus and Direction related to the Problem and Solution? How does Unique Ability work with a character's Critical Flaw? These are just a few of the concepts which become clear and useful when you understand Dramatica's *appreciations*. Meeting 7pm-9pm on the Tuesdays of August 9, October 4, November 29.

Focus on: CHARACTERS (\$50, 2 hours • Prerequisite: Dramatica Basics)

One's story may easily succeed or fail based on the strength of one's characters. Often, though, little consideration is given to their development. In this workshop, we will demonstrate how to use Dramatica not only to build complete characters for your story, but also to build the relationships between your characters and look at how they grow and evolve. In short, we provide guidelines on how to create characters vital to the argument of your story. We will look at Objective and Subjective Characters, Character Archetypes, Stereotypes and Complex Characters, Players, Hand-offs and more. Meeting 7pm-9pm on the Tuesdays of August 16, October 11, December 6.

Focus on: STORYFORMING (\$50, 2 hours • Prerequisite: Dramatica Basics)

In this workshop, you learn how Dramatica can spark life into stories during the earliest stages of writing. How do you come up with a single storyform that suits you? What is the impact of your storyform? What do all of its parts mean? We will go over examples and see how the same storyform can be illustrated differently and how small differences in storyform can have an overall major impact. When the concept of storyforming becomes second nature then Dramatica's versatility really becomes impressive. Meeting 7pm-9pm on the Tuesdays of August 23, October 18, December 13.

Focus on: ENCODING (\$50, 2 hours • Prerequisite: Dramatica Basics)

Okay, you have come up with a storyform. How are you going to symbolize it and make it speak to an audience? The symbols you choose will speak in accord to the cultural background of your intended audience, so how do you consider this when encoding? In this workshop we will look at the two basic ways to illustrate the points of your storyform: using space and using time. These two approaches combine with an appreciation for the impact of age, ethnicity, religion and other cultural measuring sticks to create the culturally specific message of any story. This is the workshop for people with a message they want to get out there. Meeting 7pm-9pm on the Tuesdays of August 30, October 25, December 20.

Focus on: PLOT (\$50, 2 hours • Prerequisite: Dramatica Basics)

One of the most common approaches to writing is to come up with a plot for a story and then supply the details that suggest themselves as holes in the plot are detected and filled. Dramatica allows writers to gain an understanding of their plot while simultaneously covering all possible gaps in their story. From the distinction between Objective and Subjective storylines and their relation to each other to the concept of Plot Resolution, Dramatica theory introduces new ways to think about plot. With ways to isolate both the structure and the dynamics of the story, one finds a three-act progression and a four-act structure existing in plot simultaneously; six thematic sequences being explored in two thematic movements. All this and more will be discussed in this exciting workshop. Meeting 7pm-9pm on the Tuesdays of September 6 and November 1.

Focus on: THEME (\$50, 2 hours • Prerequisite: Dramatica Basics)

With an understanding of Dramatica comes a high resolution with which to look at theme that has never been available before. Normally thought of as a kind of feeling which sums up any particular work, Dramatica sees it as a structural and dynamic necessity to creating a story. This workshop will have an in-depth exploration of the two aspects of theme: the spatial and the temporal. The spatial side describes the thematic conflicts in your story and the means by which those conflicts are measured. The temporal side involves deciding the order in which thematic explorations will occur. Seeing how to draw this information and mold it through Dramatica will be the focus of this productive session. Meeting 7pm-9pm on the Tuesdays of September 13 and November 8.

Focus on: STORYWEAVING (\$50, 2 hours • Prerequisite: Dramatica Basics)

On the one hand is the storyform, on the other is one's storytelling. The process of joining them together can be as simple or as complicated as you like. Creative storyweaving is where twists and shocks and original narrative layouts are created. In this workshop we will explore this practice, examining the effects of emphasis and order in stories. Sub-stories and sub-tales (commonly referred to as sub-plots), flash forwards and flashbacks—all of these are storyweaving techniques for making the storyform and the storytelling work together in exactly the way you intend. Meeting 7pm-9pm on the Tuesdays of September 20 and November 15.

Focus on: GENRE AND RECEPTION (\$50, 2 hours • Prerequisite: Dramatica Basics)

Genre stories immediately call forth such images as a climatic gunfight, a steamy romance, or alien pods sucking out some poor astronaut's life-force. But these classifications of story really have more to do with encoding and reception than with anything contained in the actual storyforms that are behind their meanings. Meaning only really exists where it is received, so looking at how reception works is important to predicting how any story will be seen by an audience. There are two kinds of reception we will look at in this workshop: the author's reception of her own story as she writes it and the audience's reception of the finished story. This workshop will discuss the fascinating ins and outs of this important process while looking at how to achieve the highest level of communication between you and your audience. We will also look at genre stories in general and particularly at the comedy genre: situational, black, and dramatic. We'll examine storytelling techniques of genre and look at some typical storyforms, seeing explicitly where genre and storyforming come together and where they diverge. Meeting 7pm-9pm on the Tuesdays of September 27 and November 22.

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How do you rate this first edition of Dramatica's Storyforming?

Excellent Good Fair Poor

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