

Let's review our writing process so far:

1. premise
2. 7 major structure steps
3. character web
4. opposition
5. plot: conflict sequence and reveal sequence
6. we talked about adding any specialized genre beats for your story forms
7. we clarified the theme in the form of the moral argument
8. scene list
9. constructing the scenes and writing 3-track dialogue

- writing scene description
- monologue
- exposition through conflict
- setting the tag line
- opening scene
- closing scene
- talk about writers' work

Big misconception: screenwriters think they are writing for the audience, or the director, or the studio.

NO, you are writing for the **reader**.

Guarantee: if the reader sees large blocks of description on page 1 they are almost guaranteed to say no.

That's because they don't have time to read it.

Key rule: everything you write should be geared to giving the reader the fastest read possible.

The trick to describing action is the **verb**.

You want the punchiest, most active verb possible.

Scenes and dialogue are all about maximum dramatic power.

Monologue gets at truth and emotion through the conflict a person has with himself.

A monologue is a mini-story within the mind of the character that is made public.

Key point: you have to justify using a monologue, especially in film and television.

The Verdict

INT. COURTROOM — DAY

Galvin in front of the full jury box.

GALVIN

You know, so much of the time we're lost. We say, "Please, God, tell us what is right. Tell us what's true. There is no justice. The rich win, the poor are powerless..." We become tired of hearing people lie. After a time we become dead. We start thinking of ourselves as victims.

(pause)

And we become victims.

(pause)

And we become weak...and doubt ourselves, and doubt our institutions...and doubt our beliefs. We doubt the law.

(beat)

But today you are the law. You are the law...And not some book and not the lawyers, or the marble statues and the trappings of the court...all that they are is symbols.

(beat)

Of our desire to be just...

(beat)

All that they are, in effect, is a
prayer...

(beat)

...a fervent and a frightened
prayer.

(beat)

In my religion we say, "Act as if
you had faith, and faith will be
given to you.

(beat)

If. If we would have faith in
justice, we must only believe in
ourselves.

(beat)

And act with justice.

(beat)

And I believe that there is justice
in our hearts.

Exposition: try to have the characters fight about the information.

Key technique: when you first use the tag line it should mean exactly what it says.

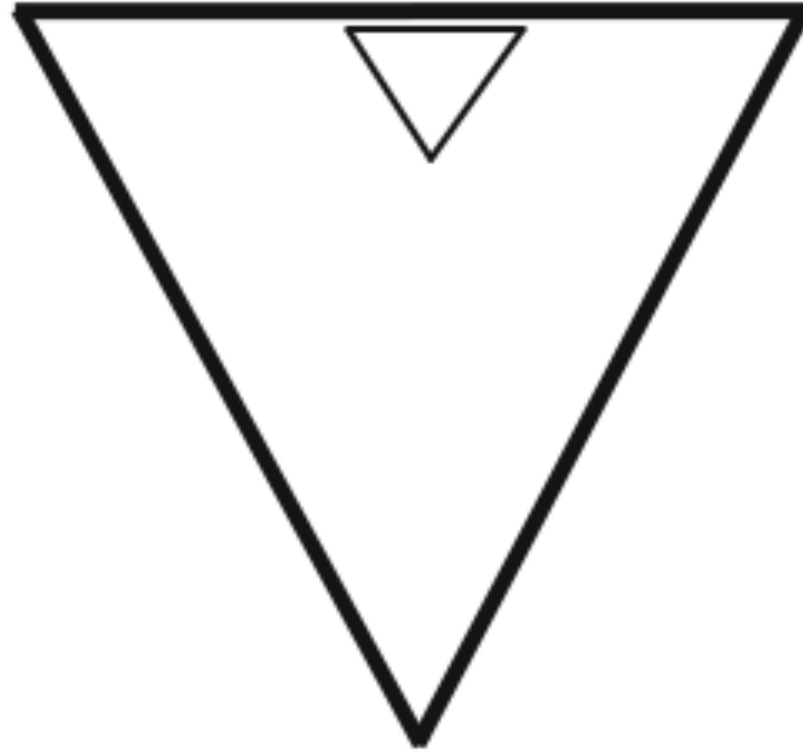
No symbolic meaning at all.

Key technique: always think of the opening and closing scenes together as a unit.

Think of the entire story as a vortex, and the first scene is the set up of this vortex.

That's why it's helpful to think of the first scene as a vortex inside the larger vortex of the story.

First scene of story



End of the story

Key point: the first time we see the main character should be **prototypical**.

It shows who this person essentially is.

Create a prototypical Butch and Sundance experience that also introduces the key thematic patterns.

Track 2 Moral argument and/or Values:
aesthetics vs. practicality.

Track 3 Key words or images: bars going down, light going out, time and space closing in.

A BANK GUARD. It is closing time now and he is slamming metal plates into place, the sound loud and sharp and final.

BUTCH, watching the guard work.

BUTCH

What happened to that old bank this town used to have? It was beautiful.

GUARD

(continuing to slam things shut)

People kept robbing it.

BUTCH, who starts to walk away across the street toward a barn of a building with a sign outside: “Macon’s Saloon.” In the middle of the street he turns and stares back at the bank. It is new, and ugly, and squat, and functional, and built like a tank.

BUTCH

It’s a small price to pay for beauty.

This second scene primarily defines Sundance, but it also defines Butch by showing him acting in contrast to Sundance.

The scene transcends the genre beat.

The key strategy for the scene: trick the audience about who Sundance is at the same time Sundance tricks his opponent.

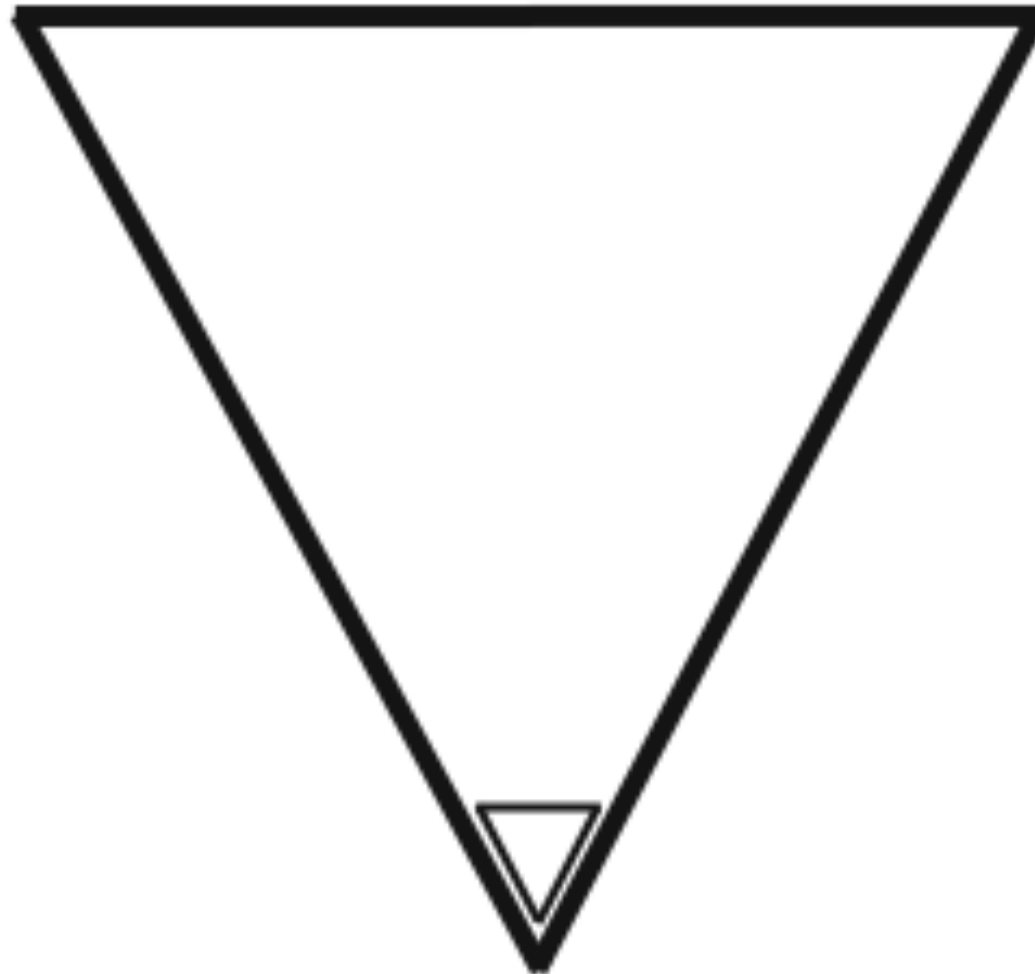
The key to the whole scene is the way Goldman constructs it around the reveals.

Sundance's first line in the film is one word, and its confident insolence defines him perfectly: "prayer."

Key: Goldman puts the key word of the line, “Sundance,” last.

That’s the explosion, for Macon and the audience.

Story



Final scene

The final scene gives you the ultimate funnel effect. That key word or line at the end sets off a huge thematic explosion in the hearts and minds of the audience.

The crisis shows their **similarities**: both men face death with extreme confidence.

The crisis shows their **differences**: Butch is still coming up with ideas, while Sundance has to get them out of the trouble that always ensues.

What really makes the audience love
this team is how they work together
comically.

Technique: crosscut the comic bickering over Butch's latest idea for dodging the future – Australia - with the arrival of what appears to be the entire Bolivian army.

Technique: the last line is the key line of the scene and the story.

Assignment for next class

IF YOU ARE WRITING SCENES FOR YOUR STORY:

1. write the next three scenes in the story where there is dialogue

Be sure to start by listing the premise in 1 line

2. write your hero's weakness in 1 line

3. write the endpoint of your hero's character change

ie, his or her self-revelation

Assignment for next class

IF YOUR STORY IS AT ANY OTHER STEP OF THE WRITING PROCESS

4. follow the instructions for that month's assignment

5. send in any question about story in general or about your story in particular.

Caution: don't skip a step in the writing process!

For each new story idea, start with the Premise assignment and work through the steps in order.

Remember: hand in only one assignment at a time.

Next class: Wednesday, September 20