John Truby’s Story Rescue Worksheet

Here are seven of the most powerful techniques in story. Use the tests and the fixes to clarify how that technique works in your story.

Then fill out each box being as specific as you can. When you’re done, post the answers in front of where you work for quick reference. Above all, have fun!

**Technique 1: your hero is an underdog who must overcome extreme odds.**

Test: does he have a disadvantage that makes him uniquely unsuited to being successful in this particular fight?

Fix: Besides giving your hero the strongest opposition possible, give him a personal quality or weakness at the beginning that makes it even harder for him to win.

The added weakness I’m going to give my hero is:

**Technique 2: give your hero a specific goal**

Test: is there a moment near the end when the audience knows whether the hero accomplished the goal or not?

Fix: in a scene near the beginning of the story, have your hero state exactly what he wants.

The scene I’m going to have him state this is:

Dialogue I may use includes:

**Technique 3: give your hero the most intense desire possible**

Test: how far is she willing to go to get her goal?

Fix: have her take actions to win the goal she would never have thought possible at the beginning of the story.

The thing(s) she does to demonstrate she is serious about this is (are):

The reason we know this is different from when she started the story is:

**Technique 4: your hero should have one main opponent throughout the story.**

Test: is there one character who is your hero’s nemesis?

Fix: ask yourself, who is most determined to stop my hero from reaching her goal?

Who is your hero’s nemesis?

How will he try to stop the hero from getting her goal?

**Technique 5: there should be at least 2 other characters who strongly oppose the hero as well.**

Test: do they also want to prevent the hero from getting his goal?

Fix: try to introduce at least two other opponents, but hide how they are connected to the main opponent.

Who are the other characters who fill the role?

How are they connected to the main opponent?

Genres are **plot forms** that work by taking the 7 major story steps and twisting them in a unique and specific way for each genre.

**Technique 6: base your story on a mix of 2-3 genres.**

Test: does your story idea suggest story beats from 2-3 genres?

Write down the 2-3 genres you think are present in your premise.

**Technique 7: while popular stories usually mix 2-3 genres, you always want to make one genre your primary story form.**

Test: is there one genre that clearly is the most important in your story?

Fix: choose only one genre to provide the spine of the story, and add story beats from the other genres only when they support the main genre.

Write down the primary genre of your story.

To learn tons of other techniques for increasing narrative drive in your stories and getting maximum read through, check out my

“Story for Novelists” course

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