

Does Your Theme Contain Character, Conflict, Resolution?

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By Nick Vernon

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Creative Writing Tips -

For a theme to work and the story, which will revolve around the theme, it has to contain three things...
Character Conflict Resolution

What's the reason for this?

If your theme doesn't contain these three essential elements, then you won't be writing a proper short story. It might turn out to be an essay instead.

Because without...

1)Characters

You can't achieve emotional depth. Readers become engrossed in stories because of the characters in them. They either become the character (sympathize), or read about an interesting person (empathize).

Emotional depth is achieved when readers use their imagination and senses and/or experiences to live the story through the characters.

2)Conflict

Your story will be boring. Why? Without conflict, something to stir things up, nothing happens. And a story, in which nothing happens, is one not worth writing about.

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Your characters don't lead carefree lives. Well, not in the instance you are writing about them. In that part of their lives they are faced with a problem. They want something and can't get it because of the conflict, which is preventing them to do so.

And it's that conflict and the struggle the characters has to undergo that keeps us readers interested and in suspense. Will the character succeed or won't he? And when is this all going to happen? And how is it all going to happen?

3)Resolution

Something that starts has to finish, one way or another.

Once you have created great characters, which the reader will come to care about, and you have placed them in conflict, that conflict at the end of your story has to be resolved. The characters will achieve their goals or they won't.

That doesn't matter.

You can end your story as you please and as it suits your story - but you have to end it. Ending the story means resolving the conflict.

Does your theme contain character, conflict, resolution?

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Does Each Element of Your Story Further The Theme?

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Creative Writing Tips -

Whichever theme you choose, all the elements, which make up your story, dialogue, conflict, scenes, etc should be written with the theme in mind.

Your theme should progress the story.

If you find that anything in your story doesn't progress it, it should be cut when you are in the editing stage.

Before we see an example of elements written with a theme in mind, let's think of a theme and a story....

The theme is...

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'Arrogance Leads To Humiliation'

Very briefly, this story is about a character that believes he is better than his colleagues.

His goal is to get promoted to a managerial position. What will prevent him from reaching his goal, is the fact that management are aware of his arrogance and they don't believe, with his attitude, he is the right person to manage the staff.

To meet his goal, the character will take on more work than he can handle. He will do this to prove to management, that he is the right man for the job. But in the end, he will make a grave error and his arrogance will lead him to humiliation.

Now let's take a look at the elements of this story...

Dialogue

The character's dialogue will show his arrogance, by the tone of his voice and the words he chooses to express himself.

Characterization

I will show my character is arrogant by the way I describe him and from how other characters see him.

Motivations

I will explain what makes him think he is better than everyone else.

Goal

I will state his goal and show how it arises from the fact that he believes himself better than everyone else.

Setting

The setting is going to be in an office environment. I can show his arrogance through the setting by perhaps describing the contents of his desk (trophies) and his desk area in general (diplomas on the walls.) etc.

Conflict

The conflict will come from himself. He is the one that creates it by doing and saying things, which create dislike.

Climax

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The climax is the highest point in my story where the conflict and his arrogance will come to their peak. Here we will see how he tries to overcome the conflict and reach his goal by taking on more work.

Ending

I will end my story with my character's humiliation. He takes on more work and makes an error in judgement. Which not only prevents his promotion but also gets him fired.

My theme here would have run its course.

Does each element of your story further your theme?

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