



Story Rubric

Version 1.1 – October 2021

Author: Title: Genre: Length: Date:
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CHARACTER

Characterization

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Characters are not distinctive, are unrelatable, unlikable, have no distinctive voice or behavior.	Characters have a few unique characteristics but are too similar. Unique speech patterns were implemented but not effectively. Readers can tell them apart but aren't invested in the outcome.	Characters are distinct in speech, actions, mannerisms, and personal history. Readers can root for (or against) a character, often seeing themselves in the story.	Characters are unique, engaging, realistic, dynamic, and likable. Readers can become raving fans of the characters, quoting lines to their friends and dressing like them in cosplay.

Notes:

Dialogue

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The characters' voices are inconsistent, unrealistic, and seem to modulate haphazardly, the dialogue tags are hurting the reader's ability to engage with the story, and the usage of dialogue feels random to the reader.	Characters' voices all sound the same to the reader and voices remain flat regardless of where the character is or what they are feeling. Dialogue tags (or the absence of them) feel cumbersome to the reader, and the usage of dialogue in the story seems predictable and/or forced.	The characters sound realistic and different from each other and are each in line with their unique background and personality. These voices modulate based on what the characters are feeling and their circumstances. Dialogue tags are effectively used to communicate who is speaking without becoming a distraction, and dialogue is strategically used in the story to communicate information or move the plot forward.	The character's voices feel familiar to the reader, inform the reader about the characters' personalities and backgrounds, and several character voices stand out as memorable to the reader. The modulation of voices takes readers on an emotional journey at the scene and communicates character change across the larger narrative. Dialogue tags are used strategically to communicate how a character's voice should sound, and dialogue in the story artfully engages the

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			reader in the world and plot without the reader knowing.
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Notes:

Protagonist's Wants and Needs

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The wants and needs of the protagonist are unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character as robotic and stiff.	The wants and needs of the protagonist exist, but they're unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the narrative. Readers understand the character's motives, but they often defy logic.	The wants and needs of the protagonist are easily identified. Although they are defined, characters do not always act consistently on them. Readers understand the character's motives, but they're often too predictable.	The wants and needs of the protagonist are well-developed with an authentic nuance that creates complex and engaging situations. Excellent characterization creates antagonists and partners for the protagonist that naturally flow into themes of the story and push the protagonist toward maturity.

Notes:

Character Arc

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Characters exist within a sequence of linear events without evidence of growth. Nothing is learned by the characters, no knowledge gained.	Characters follow a flat arc where the highs and lows of development are moderate.	Characters grow and change from the beginning of the story to the end through intentional acts.	Characters actively pursue change or growth, often overcoming major obstacles that lead to a revelation.

Notes:

GENRE

Genre Expectations

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Genre is undefined or unrecognizable. The promise of the reader experience is unclear.	Genre is unspecific but with conventions or obligatory scenes for an identifiable genre. Reader satisfaction could vary.	An exact genre is defined without violating reader expectations. However, a lack of innovative elements could make the story unremarkable.	A primary genre is defined, honoring conventions and obligatory scenes while creating new and exciting elements within reader expectations.

Notes:

Setting/World Building

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>

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The setting is unidentifiable or indistinguishable. Worldbuilding is minimal and plays virtually no role in the greater story.	A unique world exists, or a unique setting has been created, but it lacks imagination or excitement.	A rich, interesting, and unique world has been created. Characterization and plot are directly connected to the characteristics of the world.	A deep and fascinating world has been created, which pulls readers into the story and propels the plot forward. The world contains elements unique to the story, even in a contemporary setting.
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Notes:

STYLE

Emotional Tone

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The emotional tone of the story is missing, flat, or inconsistent. Character emotions are presented in a jarring or unnatural way.	The emotional tone is established, but it does not change throughout the story.	Characters experience emotional peaks and valleys throughout the story to keep the reader engaged and connected to the story.	The emotional tone takes the reader on a journey using purposeful and intentional movements. Readers uncover or discover themes that relate to their lives through the emotional arc of the characters.

Notes:

Theme

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The theme is missing.	The theme exists but is generic or unclear.	A definite theme is expressed a few times by character action or dialogue.	A visible and polarizing theme exists throughout the story. Readers can manifest the theme with lessons that can be applied to their lives.

Notes:

Pacing

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The plot lacks transitions between movements of the story with scenes or chapters that are unrelated to the primary plotline. The story moves without modulation—too fast with no breaks or too slow with no peaks.	The plot keeps momentum moving forward, but scenes, chapters, or acts slow down or speed up, which can be jarring to the reader.	The plot moves forward at an appropriate pace, leaving the reader wanting more at the end of each scene or chapter.	The plot takes the reader on an experience that includes a satisfying combination of slow and fast story events. The addition of flashbacks or back story contributes to the experience, rather than detracting from it.

Notes:

MECHANICS

Showing vs. Telling

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The story contains too much info-dumping, back story, or general telling.	The story contains large sections of telling. Some narrative contains dialogue, although readers are still being told, not shown, how a character feels.	The story contains minimal telling with substantial use of “exposition as ammunition,” where readers receive important information through dynamic and appropriate dialogue.	The story contains almost no telling and only when appropriate. Readers can experience the story by being shown the emotional journey of the characters.

Notes:

Passive Voice

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Mostly passive voice.	Many instances of passive voice.	Minimal passive voice.	Almost no passive voice.

Notes:

PLOT

Global Conflict (from [Three Story Method](#))

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The protagonist does not face an initial Conflict. The event pushing the character out of the status quo is missing.	The initial Conflict is present but lacks the intensity to make a reader care. The protagonist can avoid or defuse the obstacle presented by the Conflict.	The initial Conflict propels the protagonist into a situation that forces a Choice. The character cannot go back to the previous state and cannot do nothing.	The initial Conflict catches the protagonist and reader by surprise. The event creates an unavoidable situation and should logically set the stage for a sequence of events leading to the Choice.

Notes:

Global Choice (from [Three Story Method](#))

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The protagonist does not face a Choice. The character is completely passive or reactive, acting without agency.	The Choice is too easy for the protagonist. The stakes for all the consequences are not equally positive or negative.	The Choice posed to the protagonist is difficult. The character struggles to determine the best path forward.	The Choice becomes incredibly difficult for the protagonist. The character cannot see a way out of the predicament, and neither can the reader, which

			should set up a surprising but inevitable Consequence.
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Notes:

Global Consequence (from [Three Story Method](#))

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Because the protagonist is passive or reactive, the Consequence is dull and one that the reader anticipated, creating an unsatisfying ending.	Because the Choice is too easy for the protagonist, the Consequence is obvious and easily predicted by the reader, but there is minor satisfaction when the reader correctly guesses the outcome.	When the protagonist struggles to determine the best path forward, the Consequence is often unexpected, which delights the reader.	With an incredibly difficult Choice for the protagonist, the Consequence strikes the perfect balance of surprising but inevitable. The reader never sees the end coming, but once it does, they realize they should have seen it all along.

Notes:



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If you find the Story Rubric helpful, please consider buying me a coffee at <https://ko-fi.com/jthorn>.

Thank you and best of luck with your story!

Sincerely,
J. Thorn