

Rapid Story Development

How to Use the
Enneagram-Story Connection
to Become a Master
Storyteller

Jeff Lyons

A Focal Press Book

ROUTLEDGE


Rapid Story Development

This book offers a unique approach to storytelling, connecting the Enneagram system with classic story principles of character development, plot, and story structure to provide a seven-step methodology to achieve rapid story development. Using the nine core personality styles underlying all human thought, feeling, and action, it provides the tools needed to understand and leverage the Enneagram-Story Connection for writing success.

Author Jeff Lyons starts with the basics of the Enneagram system and builds on how to discover and design the critical story structure components of any story, featuring supporting examples of the Enneagram-Story Connection in practice across film, literature, and TV. Readers will learn the fundamentals of the Enneagram system and how to utilize it to create multidimensional characters, master premise line development, maintain narrative drive, and create antagonists that are perfectly designed to challenge your protagonist in a way that goes beyond surface action to reveal the dramatic core of any story.

Lyons explores the use of the Enneagram as a tool for not only character development but also story development itself. This is the ideal text for intermediate and advanced level screenwriting and creative writing students, as well as professional screenwriters and novelists looking to get more from their writing process and story structure.

Jeff Lyons is a published author, screenwriter, and story consultant in the TV, film, and publishing industries. He is a long-time creative writing instructor through Stanford University's and is a regular guest lecturer

through the UCLA Extension Writers Program. His writing on the craft of storytelling can also be found in leading industry trade magazines such as *Writer's Digest Magazine* , *Script Magazine* , *The Writer* , and *Writing Magazine* (UK).

Rapid Story Development

How to Use the Enneagram-Story Connection to
Become a Master Storyteller

Jeff Lyons

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Visit the eResources: www.routledge.com/9781138929708

First published 2020

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2020 Jeff Lyons

The right of Jeff Lyons to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice : Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-92971-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-92970-8 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-68101-6 (ebk)

Typeset in Garamond

by Apex CoVantage, LLC

This is for loyal readers past, present, and future. Because without you,
what's the point?

And for Kimberley.

Contents

[DEDICATION](#)

[LIST OF FIGURES](#)

[FOREWORD](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS](#)

[Introduction](#)

[PART 1 THE ENNEAGRAM FOR WRITERS](#)

[Chapter 1 It's All About Development](#)

[Chapter 2 What Is the Enneagram for Writers?](#)

[Chapter 3 Enneagram System Essentials](#)

[Chapter 4 The Enneagram Model](#)

[Chapter 5 Enneagram Character Styles](#)

[Chapter 6 Character Communication Styles](#)

[Chapter 7 Character Conflict Styles](#)

[Chapter 8 Character Evolution and De-Evolution](#)

[PART 2 THE ENNEAGRAM-STORY CONNECTION](#)

[Chapter 9 Character Beginnings and Endings and Change](#)

[Chapter 10 The Moral Component](#)

[Chapter 11 The Moral Enneagram](#)

[Chapter 12 The Middle: Moving the Story Forward](#)

[Chapter 13 Allies, Helpers, and Red-Herrings: Building the Supporting Cast](#)

[Chapter 14 The Structure of the Opposition](#)

[Chapter 15 Enneagram-Story Teams](#)

[Chapter 16 Enneagram-Story Team Roles](#)

[PART 3 THE SEVEN-STEP RAPID STORY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
AND CASE STUDIES](#)

[Chapter 17 The Rapid Story Development Process and Case Study](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)

[NOTES](#)

[APPENDIX 1: QUICK REFERENCE—RAPID STORY DEVELOPMENT
STANDING DEFINITIONS](#)

[APPENDIX 2: QUICK REFERENCE—THE NINE CHARACTER
STYLES](#)

[APPENDIX 3: QUICK REFERENCE—THE ENNEAGRAM WINGS](#)

[APPENDIX 4: EXAMPLE—TEAM DEVELOPMENT IN THE ACTION-
ADVENTURE GENRE](#)

[APPENDIX 5: EXAMPLE—TEAM DEVELOPMENT IN THE
ROMANCE GENRE](#)

[APPENDIX 6: ENNEAGRAM RESOURCES](#)

[APPENDIX 7: WRITER RESOURCES](#)

[APPENDIX 8: THE CONSCIOUS WRITER MANIFESTO](#)

[APPENDIX 9: E-RESOURCES](#)

[INDEX](#)

Figures

[2.1 Enneagram Symbol](#)

[3.1 The Three Emotional Centers](#)

[3.2 Head Center of Emotionality](#)

[3.3 Body Center of Emotionality](#)

[3.4 Heart Center of Emotionality](#)

[4.1 Focus of Attention](#)

[4.2 Survival Strategy](#)

[4.3 Core Fear and Poison](#)

[4.4 Core Desire and Distortion](#)

[4.5 Core Image](#)

[4.6 Parental Matrix](#)

[4.7 One Wings](#)

[4.8 Two Wings](#)

[4.9 Three Wings](#)

[4.10 Four Wings](#)

[4.11 Five Wings](#)

[4.12 Six Wings](#)

[4.13 Seven Wings](#)

[4.14 Eight Wings](#)

[4.15 Nine Wings](#)

[8.1 Hexad Circuit of Fear](#)

[8.2 Triad Circuit of Fear](#)

[8.3 Hexad Circuit of Safety](#)

[8.4 Triad Circuit of Safety](#)

[9.1 Protagonist Change Triangle](#)

[9.2 Protagonist Change Triangle—Ones](#)
[9.3 Protagonist Change Triangle—Twos](#)
[9.4 Protagonist Change Triangle—Threes](#)
[9.5 Protagonist Change Triangle—Fours](#)
[9.6 Protagonist Change Triangle—Fives](#)
[9.7 Protagonist Change Triangle—Sixes](#)
[9.8 Protagonist Change Triangle—Sevens](#)
[9.9 Protagonist Change Triangle—Eights](#)
[9.10 Protagonist Change Triangle—Nines](#)
[9.11 Protagonist Change Triangle Example—Ones](#)
[9.12 Protagonist Change Triangle Example—Twos](#)
[9.13 Protagonist Change Triangle Example—Threes](#)
[10.1 Passive Protagonist Loop](#)
[10.2 Active Protagonist Loop](#)
[10.3 Active Loop/Bottom Right](#)
[10.4 Active Loop/Bottom Left](#)
[11.1 Enneagram Fears/Poisons](#)
[11.2 Enneagram Core Desire/Distortion](#)
[12.1 Classic Story Middle](#)
[12.2 Pattern of Decline Parent](#)
[12.3 Pattern of Decline](#)
[12.4 Pattern of Elevation Parent](#)
[12.5 Pattern of Elevation](#)
[12.6 Enneagram Low Points](#)
[14.1 Enneagram Opponent Triangle](#)
[14.2 Enneagram Opponent Points of Attack](#)
[14.3 Opponent Triangle—Ones](#)
[14.4 Opponent Triangle—Twos](#)
[14.5 Opponent Triangle—Threes](#)
[14.6 Opponent Triangle—Fours](#)
[14.7 Opponent Triangle—Fives](#)
[14.8 Opponent Triangle—Sixes](#)
[14.9 Opponent Triangle—Sevens](#)

[14.10 Opponent Triangle—Eights](#)

[14.11 Opponent Triangle—Nines](#)

[15.1 Team Characteristics Table](#)

[17.1 The Three Centers](#)

[17.2 Enneagram Opponent Triangle Example—Fours](#)

[17.3 *The Godfather* \(1972\) Novel by Mario Puzo, Screenplay by Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola](#)

[17.4 *Twilight* \(2008\) Novel by Stephenie Meyer, Screenplay by Melissa Rosenberg](#)

Foreword

“Why did he do that?”

How often have you said that about a character on screen or in written form? The moment you question why a character acted in a specific way is the moment the story loses its power. Characters need to be consistent. Characters need to be understandable. Characters must behave according to who they are and what life experience they’ve had.

Another way of looking at this question is to examine what I call the storytelling chicken and egg problem. What comes first: character or plot? I’m not talking about the initial inspiration at the very beginning of the writing process. We might suddenly feel inspired by “A guy robs a bank.” But what’s more important? The fact that “the guy” robs the bank? Or is the story more about who this “guy” is and why he’s robbing banks to begin with? Perhaps we should think of it as “A twice divorced middle-aged single father up to his eyeballs in debt robs a bank as a last resort.” Now we’re still talking about plot but from the point of view of character.

I learned this lesson the hard way. For my first professional screenwriting job, I was hired by director Tobe Hooper (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) to adapt the Stephen King short story *The Mangler*. Oh, and Stephen King had script approval. So, no pressure. There were a lot of firsts with *The Mangler*. First paycheck. First time I’d written something that was not my original idea. First adaptation; first studio-producer notes; first horror script. It was Tobe who introduced me to the concept of story structure. He recommended a specific book on the subject (to remain nameless). Although in retrospect that technique is horribly dated and shallow, it still provided me with more than a few revelations about how stories are

constructed. I have since read every major screenwriting book. I've studied the techniques detailed in those books. I found them all to be more or less the same: variations on a story structure theme. And also limited in scope and usefulness.

I found they all had the same fundamental flaw: they were about plot, not characters. They were about story beats that need to happen at a certain point in the story, oftentimes on a specific page in a screenplay. But stories aren't about plot. They are about something more fundamental. And you can't begin a discussion about writing technique without addressing the core concept at the heart of all stories: character. *And character is the fundamental power of the Enneagram .*

Storytelling is a natural part of life. Everyone tells stories. We tell stories about something we saw, or the adventures of a friend. Storytelling is the way humans chronicle life in all its richness and diversity. It is said that life is a journey. Everyone who has ever lived or ever will live can be thought of as characters in the great cosmic story we call LIFE. And it is storytelling that mirrors the experience of LIFE.

Most people treat character and plot as separate components of a story. That is not the case. Plot is an emergent characteristic of what happens when characters interact. When one character wants to stop another character—that's conflict. When two characters want the same thing, the result is the same—conflict. And conflict drives stories. Therefore, the most fundamental tool for creating great stories is to make sure the characters are true to themselves. To their "type."

When we write, we create characters who reflect who we are or how we feel we should be. How we should react to the world; how to behave. So why not begin at the root level of human behavior: the Enneagram? The Enneagram describes human behavior in all its complexity. It is a powerful tool with which you can hone your talent and develop your skill set to the point where you can call yourself "a writer."

I used Jeff's approach to Rapid Story Development for my 2016 feature film *Flytrap* . The insights into the characters when viewed through the lens of the Enneagram are truly mind boggling. No one had ever put the two

systems (story structure and the Enneagram) together in such a clear and seamless way, and in Jeff's Enneagram-Story Connection, I saw patterns of behavior rooted in personality types that I hadn't even known existed. The Enneagram works. Rapid Story Development works. Jeff's approach to story and the Enneagram is not story guru smoke and mirrors but the real deal. Don't just take my word for it; audiences agree. My film, with its more than ten international film festival laurels, is living proof. My characters, however odd and alien in nature, behave according to their deeper motivations. They are true to who they are as people.

And it is behavior that drives characters in stories. All stories. From epic myths to modern rom-com screenplays. That is where the techniques detailed in this book will allow you, the writer, to create rich, believable characters and tell stories that structurally support those characters in every way possible. It will allow your inner storyteller to get to the root motivations and therefore logical behaviors that drive all good stories. And, if you're lucky, no one will ever give you the note: "Now, why did he do that?"

Stephen David Brooks—Director/Screenwriter,

April 2019

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the following individuals for their support, help, encouragement, infinite patience, faith, trust, belief, handouts, generosity, and small petty crimes undertaken to promote the success of this book.

- *Kimberley Heart* , *Michael Caress* , *Charlene DeLong* , and *David Allan*— thank you for being trusted beta readers, and for telling me the truth.
- *Lazaris* and *Concept Synergy* —thank you for allowing me to use the Lazaris Material as a reference for this book. As always, I am forever grateful (www.lazaris.com). The Lazaris Material is produced and copyrighted by Concept: Synergy, PO Box 1789, Sonoma, CA 95476, 1-800-678-2356 or 407-401-8990, ConceptSynergy@Lazaris.com
- *Dr. Ginger Lapid-Bogda, PhD* —thank you for your permissions to use your groundbreaking work. You are a true friend (www.theenneagramin-business.com).
- *Thomas Condon* —thank you for letting me paraphrase and base some of my character analyses on your great book *The Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0: How to See Personality Styles in the Movies 3rd Ed.* (The Changeworks, 2011). (www.thechangeworks.com).
- *Caroline Leavitt* —thank you for your keen eye, flawless analysis, and boundless passion (www.carolineleavitt.com).

- *Gwen Hayes* —thank you for permissions for using your romance story model ([www.http://gwenhayes.com](http://gwenhayes.com)).
- This book would not have been possible, in its present form, without my agents, *Janet Rosen* and *Sheree Bykovsky* (Sheree Bykovsky Associates Inc.).

Introduction

About this Book

This book is the marriage of two complex and disparate subjects: the Enneagram system and classic story structure. Both of these subjects are well studied and understood within their individual realms, but until now there has never been an integration of the two. Why? Well, simply because no one recognized the natural connection the two subjects had. There was no bridge or connector that pointed to what I call the Enneagram-Story Connection. This book is that bridge.

Rapid Story Development: How to Use the Enneagram-Story Connection to Become a Master Storyteller is first and foremost a book about story development *using the Enneagram*. This is critical to state up front, because it is very easy to assume this is “just” another Enneagram application guide or “just” another how-to creative writing book on character development. While I will discuss both those topics (Enneagram applications and developing characters), this book goes beyond pure Enneagram applications or character development techniques.

Writers have been using the Enneagram for 30-plus years to write characters, but they have never (until now) used the Enneagram to develop stories themselves from the ground up. And herein lies the great differentiator between this book and all the other writing books available in the marketplace today. *Rapid Story Development* is about story, story development, and storytelling; everything I will cover in the following chapters will serve these three things—either illuminating them, illustrating them, or demystifying them—and do so with an eye toward making you more productive and successful as a writer.

While you will learn a great deal about this thing called the Enneagram, this is not the book for you if you want to learn the Enneagram for personal growth, or spiritual development, or some other application than storytelling. As you study more about the Enneagram, you will soon realize

that it is a vast and complex subject spanning many areas of human concern, from psychology, to organizational development, to parenting, to countless other applications too numerous to list here.

There are many fine Enneagram teachers, books, and courses, as well as endless numbers of consultants who will gladly take your money to guide you through the labyrinth of Enneagram applications and the nuances of the system as a whole. *Rapid Story Development* is intended to explain a small subset of the wisdom of the Enneagram, i.e., only those components directly related to the function of storytelling. As you will see in the following chapters, the components are many, complex, and subtle; when I say “small subset,” make no mistake—you will get a substantive introduction to the Enneagram. But this is by no means a “complete course” or master class in the Enneagram. If this is disappointing to you, fear not. The good news is—you don’t need a complete course or master class in the Enneagram to be successful with what we are about to do in this book. You don’t have to get certified, or take any tests, or “prove” your worthiness. You will not be doing any psychotherapy, or management coaching, or counseling, or any such use of the Enneagram; so, you are not going to hurt anyone if you “get it wrong” or don’t do things according to some Enneagram guru’s rulebook. If you do in fact “get it wrong,” all you’ll be doing is taking your story a little into left field and maybe losing your direction for a while. That’s the worst that can happen. So, relax.

For our purposes, the Enneagram is just one more tool for your storyteller toolbox. As a writer who tells stories (not all writers do), you are always on the lookout for anything that can help you with the writing or development process. And there is no lack of flavor-of-the-month tricks, tips, or secrets available in the how-to marketplace hoping to attract your business with shiny baubles and quick fixes.

Know this: *Rapid Story Development* is not a flavor of the month. Story development and the Enneagram are not the next big things. No, story development is a staple, a keystone, an essential tool *every* writer needs in their armory. And the Enneagram is not a new fad, or craze, or in-thing; it is an old thing, an ancient thing, and learning about the Enneagram-Story

Connection puts you at the cutting edge of a process that few writers know about, let alone know how to utilize.

Ironically, even as I give you a disclaimer that you will not delve into personal growth, spirituality, or change, the fact is that any study of the Enneagram will give a student some insight into their own Enneagram style, motivations, and temperament. Indeed, storytelling and human nature are inseparable. Consequently, the study of any system designed to facilitate personal growth, which the Enneagram is, will unavoidably lead to some personal insights and awareness. And when you consider that you are mixing the powerful forces of storytelling, itself a window into your soul, with the Enneagram's spotlight on human nature, you are almost guaranteed to be touched and changed by the process.

In fact, as a storyteller, knowing your personal Enneagram style can have a powerful effect on how you write, what you write, and why you write. While personal transcendence is not the objective of this book—though you may have some transcendent moments (I hope you do)—transcendent storytelling is a goal. As my friend and mentor, *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author Caroline Leavitt, often says, “Stories can save lives.” So, tell transcendent stories; if you do that, then all boats will rise with your tide, because the very act of storytelling will change you.

This may be the first book of its kind on this topic, but I do not want it to be the last. I hope this work will spark new ideas, new applications, and generate a deepening of the subject by other writers. I encourage you, if you are so inclined, to add your contributions to this new approach to story—the topic is now wide open.

Who should Read this Book?

This book is for anyone who tells stories, but most obviously for novelists, screenwriters, and writers of creative nonfiction. There is also a broad range of individuals who work in various capacities in the entertainment and

publishing industries who could benefit from this information. There are many people working at production companies and agencies and in story departments, studio executive suites, literary agencies, and publishing houses who would find valuable tools in these pages to help them work more effectively with, and better manage, staff writers or freelancers, even though they may not consider themselves “creatives.” These include the following:

- Novelists and Creative Nonfiction Writers : Most of the issues discussed in [Parts 1](#) and [2](#) of this book also relate to prose fiction and creative nonfiction storytelling. Novelists and creative nonfiction writers, by definition, live all their creative lives in these arenas. All comments about inexperienced and experienced writers apply here, without question.
- New and Aspiring Screenwriters : Whether new to creative writing, or just to screenwriting itself, this book will give you a foundation you can use to become productive immediately and clear direction for further study and growth in the craft.
- Experienced Screenwriters : Even seasoned professionals can benefit from tailored and productivity-focused processes designed to leverage the keener insight and knowledge that come with experience. The processes taught in this book can add to the toolbox of even the most professional writer.
- Producers : When it comes to evaluating literary acquisitions, hiring writers, liaising with studio or network development departments, or working one-on-one with writers themselves producers need to have the same basic story skills as screenwriters to effectively manage the development process. They don't have to be writers, but having the same foundational skill set will save time, money, and development time.
- Script Analysts : Part of Hollywood's gatekeepers, film and television story analysts read many scripts and can be surprisingly unaware of the story best practices in their own industry. Story

analysts, often called “readers,” can benefit from all the material herein, as it applies to general narrative and story construction, especially since they read everything and anything that might be adaptable to film or TV (books, short stories, comics, blogs, etc.).

- Story Editors : Also part of Hollywood’s gatekeepers, story editors responsible for managing production company or literary agency story departments often need to fill in for analysts who drop the ball or fall short in their work. Consequently, the more a story editor knows, the better. This material will definitely help any editor up their story game.
- Literary Agents and Managers : Whether at a literary agency or talent agency, those individuals involved in packaging literary properties or acquiring projects for further development as sales opportunities will find that having stronger story development skills will ultimately cut overall development time.
- Creative Executives (CEs) : Individuals responsible for shepherding film, television, or new media projects through the production process at a film studio, talent agency, or new media company can benefit from knowing all the same tricks of the trade as the writers they work with every day. They may not be writers themselves, but they have to make creative business decisions about what projects to produce and which to pass on, so knowing the basics can help any CE do a better job.
- Creative Writing Teachers/MFA Programs : Because this material is foundational and not taught in most creative writing programs at the college or university levels, this book can be a solid addition to a new or established writing class that has heretofore not dealt with story development as a craft component of the creative writing process.

In short, this book is for you if you want to:

- Move past being a talented amateur and build on or move into becoming a working professional
- Improve your craft skill as a novelist or screenwriter
- Build a foundation in story development that can serve you your entire career
- Write novels and screenplays that will get past the gatekeepers and possibly find that elusive green light or publishing deal

How this Book is Organized

This book is organized into three parts. Each part deals with core concepts and processes needed to master the premise development process, as well as basic story theory required to master the material. The table of contents provides more detailed chapter contents.

Part 1: The Enneagram System for Writers

This part of the book introduces the reader to the basic concepts of the Ennea-gram system for writers and its history, applications, components, and mechanics. This presents the essentials needed to understand the Enneagram as it relates to foundational elements of character development and human motivation. It describes the nature of story development, the classical Enneagram model, summaries of the nine Enneagram personality styles, the Enneagram communication and conflict models, and the ideas of evolution and de-evolution in character development.

Part 2: The Enneagram-Story Connection

This part of the book takes all the learning from [Part 1](#) and reveals the Ennea-gram-Story Connection. [Part 2](#) brings into focus all the core story structure and story development components with their Enneagram counterparts to build various maps and tools you can use to plan and realize the full development of any story. This includes topics such as the “moral Enneagram,” building supporting characters using the Enneagram, character beginnings and endings, Enneagram principles related to building the best protagonist/antagonist relationships, how to build and plan the middle of any story, and story teams and the Enneagram.

Part 3: The Seven-Step Rapid Story Development Process

After learning the Enneagram and revealing the Enneagram-Story Connection, it is time to put all that learning into action. In this part of the book, you will execute the seven steps of the Rapid Story Development Process. This section walks you through each of the seven steps, pointing out key concepts and strategies, and giving numerous examples along the way. There is also a case study using a classic book and film, *The Lilies of the Field*, where the same seven steps are detailed to show how they apply to a classic story written before the term “Enneagram” was even a glimmer in the eye of the creative writing zeitgeist.

Appendices

There are substantial appendices at the end of the book that support all the covered topics and material, including: additional writer and Enneagram resources, extensive samples and examples of all the exercises used in [Parts 1](#) and [2](#), and numerous templates and forms to help readers create their own tools for use with future projects.

[Appendices 1 –3](#) are quick references to Enneagram and Enneagram-Story Connection tools and diagrams covered in [Parts 1](#) and [2](#). [Appendices 4 –9](#) contain resources that will help you learn more about the Enneagram and story structure.

Icons Used in this Book

To make this book more visual to read and use, I've included some icons to help you quickly find key information and resources.



KEY CONCEPT

This icon highlights key concepts and information that are fundamental to the learning.



EXAMPLE

This icon highlights examples illustrating learning concepts in action.



CASE STUDY

This icon shows where case studies are located in the text for easy access and reference for the future.



REMEMBER

This icon points out information that would be beneficial to remember going forward.



TIP

This icon gives a heads-up on valuable tips and techniques that may come in handy along the way.

What's Next?

The information in this book is more than enough to give you a solid foundation for developing any story using the Enneagram. If you are moved to keep learning through workshops, books, or webinars, then you might enjoy checking out the few resources I list. I only picked the ones I felt offer true value and not snake oil. But always remember, *caveat emptor* (buyer beware). There are some very smart and effective teachers out there with new ways of saying many of the things you will learn here; sometimes you just need to hear something said a little differently for it to sink in. Not bad or wrong—just a personal preference.

Whatever you choose—to continue exploring the very deep waters of the Enneagram, story development, and story structure, or just stop right here—my mantra is this: *Listen to everyone; try everything; follow no one. You are your own story guru .*

Now, go be brilliant!

Part 1

The Enneagram for Writers

1

It's all about Development



Development is the first step in the creation of any novel, screenplay, or creative work of nonfiction. When you get a new story idea, don't write—develop.

When you get an idea for a novel, screenplay, or any piece of creative writing, you probably do the same two things every writer does when a new idea takes hold: you get excited, and then you start writing. Maybe you just scribble down some initial index cards with character notes: “Protagonist: red hair, big nose, works on Wall Street, dies in the end—maybe not—yeah, he’s a dead man.” Or, perhaps you start extensive backstories about family lineages, childhood details, elaborate family trees, and create long spreadsheets of hobbies, interests, and emotional peccadilloes.

Maybe you even start an outline, trying to put some form around the chaos of ideas flooding into your head (but not too much form; you don’t want to stifle creativity, right?). Or perhaps you follow the age-old wisdom every serious writer learns from those great writers who have come before

them, “Writers write ... don’t think about it, don’t censor, don’t edit, just write... the first draft is always crap, just write and don’t stop... the story will write itself... the characters will write themselves... you’re just the typist, so get out of the way and let the story flow.”

In my experience working with thousands of novelists and screenwriters, I have found there is indeed a small subset of talented individuals who can follow this kind of advice and produce coherent and productive work. They are, in fact, the writers who are the most vocal in supporting the “just do it” approach to creative writing. After all, if it works for them, shouldn’t it work for everyone, or at least be a useful strategy for moving forward on a new project, when there may be no strategy in place at all? The reasonable response is yes. The considerate and fair-minded response is yes. But the truth is—no. For the vast majority of writers, regardless of their story form (novel, screenplay, short story, etc.), the “just do it” approach to writing is disastrous. Why? Rather than “tell” you, allow me to show you by describing what happens with most of us when we adopt the consensus philosophy of “just do it.”

The big idea comes; it drops in fully formed and exciting and filled with hope. After thinking long and hard (but not too long; the spark might go out), you finally have it and you know it will be a great story. Do you now sit with it and consider the complexity? Do you start to “feel” the mechanics of the tale, trying to get a sense of flow? Do you wait and watch and let it all settle? No, that’s not what creative people do; that’s not how writers write; that only stifles the natural creative flow and process. You know better than to delay and risk mucking it up with logic and reason and planning. “Writers write,” so you do what writers do. Your fingers fly, words flow; it’s all gibberish with moments of lucidity, but you knew that was going to happen. “The first draft is always crap,” so you shrug and let it be. “The story will write itself,” and you trust the process (such that it is).

As pages pile up, the writing slows, the flow gets a bit clogged, but random ideas are still coming, your protagonist is morphing back and forth between different images you have in your head, there is no clear through-line that you can identify, story tangents and episodic divergences are now

taking over the flow and pulling you which-way-and-that, and the ending is as muddled as a London pea soup fog, but that's okay, because *it will come, this is how it is supposed to be, this is creativity, this is writing* —you tell yourself as your anxiety and unease mount.

Finally, one hundred, two hundred, or three hundred pages into your opus, you stop and blankly stare at the word processor and realize: *The wheels have come off the cart . I have no clue where the hell this thing is going, or what the story is .* Welcome to the writing process equivalent of Dante's Inferno: "I woke to find myself in a dark wood, Where the right road was wholly lost and gone." Lost in writing's dark wood, now what do you do? You do what everyone does to recover their creative center—you backtrack to figure out where the wheels came off. If you can find that point, then you can just pick up again, right?

Sadly, no, because the backtracking always leads to the same place, regardless of the story, the form of your writing, or degree of "lostness." You will always end up back at the beginning, at the point of the premise idea itself, because this is where every story goes wrong, if it is going to go wrong at all. Coming back to this point is what I call "backing into the story." Everyone does it, and everyone ends up in the same place, starting over from scratch. Welcome to the "just do it" school of writing.

What I have just described is what most writers think story development is all about. And not just individual writers: MFA programs, film schools, and creative writing programs in schools of continuing education all promote this worst practice (vs best practice) scenario. But, as I mentioned earlier, the just-do-it approach can work for a small subset of writers, those talented, lucky few who have the development gene. And talented is the key, because this gene is a talent for those few. Talent is given. You cannot learn a talent; it does not come from practice, practice, practice, i.e., craft. Talent is part of your personal grace; it comes naturally to you, like flight to an eagle. Some writers are talented with development; they just "get it" naturally and can avoid the dark wood. Their process might not be the prettiest to look at, but they can elegantly navigate the development woods and produce coherent and productive prose—and for them it feels like

they're "just doing it." For the vast majority of writers, however, the process is anything but automatic. They may be talented writers, but they do not have the development gene, which is to say they are good at the writing function but not the story function.

In my first book, *Anatomy of a Premise Line: How to Master Premise and Story Development for Writing Success* (Focal Press, 2015), I wrote at some length on the distinction between storytelling and writing. I refer you to that book for a more in-depth analysis; suffice to say here that you don't need to be anywhere near a word processor or a pen and paper to tell a story. Stories can be written, danced, mimed, painted, sculpted, spoken, and conveyed in any number of ways that don't require writing or written language. Writing, by contrast, is the act of conveying emotion, thought, feeling (different than emotion), and ideas using the rhythms, patterns, and musicality of language. Writing can tell a story, but it is not needed to do so. Stories don't need writers, but writers need stories.

This is the context for my point that most writers may be good at writing, but not good at storytelling, i.e., the development function. Development is a function of story, not writing. Writing, like storytelling, is also a talent, as well as a craft, but it is the story skill that most writers lack. And just as you can learn the craft of writing, if you are a weak writer, so you can learn the craft of story. This idea is at the heart of this book, i.e., the idea that you can learn the craft of story development and thereby strengthen this critically important piece of your creative process. Even if you are one of those lucky few gifted with the talent, there is great value in taking an unconscious, or subconscious, skill and making it more conscious.

The Enneagram-Story Connection

It is in this spirit of opening the channels of creativity and making you a more conscious writer that the Enneagram-Story Connection finds its greatest value, because the connection is a natural one; it is not something

invented by me or anyone else. The Enneagram, as we shall see in the next chapter, is a natural phenomenon, not some modern creation of a pop-culture, self-improvement celebrity. The Enneagram is a model of human behavior created by us—humans. It exists because we exist, and because we are smart apes with exceptional powers of pattern recognition, over time we have discovered the nine core patterns of our human condition, patterns all humans conform to, regardless of sex, culture, age, or national origin, in the living of life. The Enneagram is the “story” of how we act out our humanness.

In the same way that the Enneagram is not a human invention, while stories may be created by people, they also have an objective realness all their own, a reality outside of the act of human manipulation (storytelling). As Bret Johnston of Harvard University has said, “Stories are not about things; they are things.” Stories are things unto themselves, and we humans discover those “things” in the act of storytelling. As you will learn later in this book, stories are metaphors for human experience; they are about us, of us, for us. Is it any wonder then that the most powerful model illuminating human experience in action should have a natural connection to the act of telling stories about human experience? It is this profound connection between the Enneagram and storytelling that is the basis of effective storytelling. Working with the Enneagram will make you a more self-aware person; telling stories will make you more aware of your human condition; bringing storytelling together with the Enneagram will make you a conscious writer. Being a conscious writer means you can know what you are writing, why you are writing it, and that you are empowered to resist the knee-jerk reaction to “just do it” in the face of the writing consensus’s pressures to write, write, write.

But, in a creative-writing marketplace glutted with quick fixes—top-ten writing secrets; guaranteed tips, tricks, and techniques; and flavor-of-the-month story gurus, coaches, mentors, and “storytelling thought partners”—how is a writer, conscious or otherwise, going to find a way to marry these two powerful tools into a useful and practical strategy for developing a story? The connection between the Enneagram and storytelling may be

intuitive and natural, but knowing how that connection can be translated into real work is not so easily perceived.

The Rapid Story Development Process

One of the guiding precepts of this book is that anyone can learn the craft of story development, regardless of their current level of story skill. The other guiding principle of this book is that anyone can learn the Enneagram-Story Connection, and with it a repeatable and proven methodology that potentiates story talent while facilitating the learning process and craft expertise of story development as a whole. In other words, the Enneagram-Story Connection is a natural doorway to learning story craft and blossoming story talent, and the Seven-Step Rapid Story Development Process is the tool that bridges the gap between talent and craft, assuring (not guaranteeing—there are no guarantees) any writer greater success in masterfully creating any story they have to tell.

So, to that end, the Seven-Step Rapid Story Development Process contains the following steps:

- Step 1: Build the Enneagram Foundation of the Moral Component
- Step 2: Define the Protagonist's Enneagram Style
- Step 3: Define the Protagonist's Evolution and De-Evolution Enneagram Styles
- Step 4: Identify the Common and Uncommon Pinches, Crunches, Blind Spots, and Distortion Filters
- Step 5: Define the Opposition
- Step 6: Build the Enneagram Elements of the Story Middle
- Step 7: Develop the Premise Line

In [Part 3](#) of this book, you will walk through all of these steps in detail, guided by numerous worksheets, templates, and illustrative examples from film and literature offered to you as learning aids. But before you plunge

into this work, we have to build a common ground, a solid foundation from which we can leap into the hard work of breaking out a working tale and uncovering the natural, right, and true story you want to tell. This means that we have to define some basic concepts, set up some agreed-upon terminology and development jargon, and build a conceptual framework that can act as an armature to support the premise development process as a whole.

This groundwork involves learning the basics of the Enneagram system and the fundamentals of story structure. As I stated in the introduction to this book, *you do not have to become an expert in either one of these areas to learn the craft of story development* . Both of these topics are deep and complex in their own right and could take many years to fully master, but you don't have to take years and you don't have to fully master them to be able to use them effectively in your creative work. This book will present just enough detail, theory, and practice to get you up and running; the rest is up to you. If you choose to dive into the Enneagram head first, and into story structure, then go for it. I highly encourage you to do so. The rewards will be limitless, and the depth such diving will bring to your work will be exciting. But, even if you "just" stay in the shallows, your creative efforts will be rewarded in ways that will astonish you.

So, let us begin.

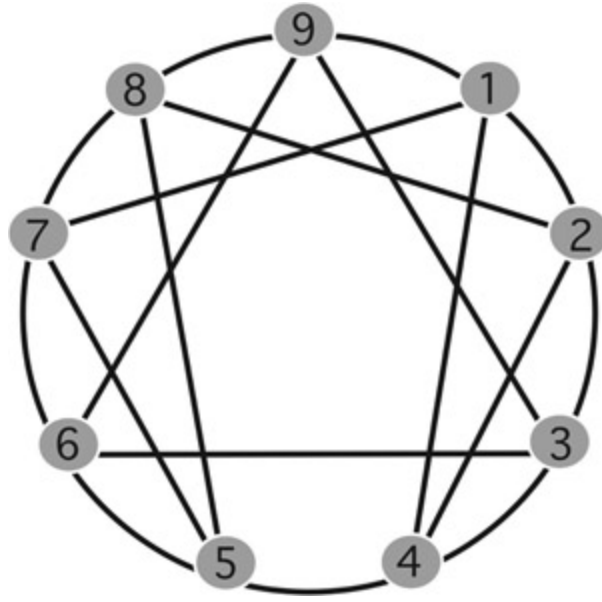
2

What is the Enneagram for Writers?



The Enneagram isn't just a tool used for character development; it's a power tool for story development.

The word *enneagram* comes from the Greek words *ennea* (“nine”) and *gram* (“something written or drawn”) and refers to the nine points on the Ennea-gram symbol ([Figure 2.1](#)). The nine different Enneagram styles, identified as numbers One through Nine, reflect individual styles of thought, emotion, and action, with each style following a unique configuration of change (evolution and de-evolution). While our individual core Enneagram style is unchanging throughout our lifetime, the mental, emotional, and behavioral characteristics of our core style may wax or wane depending on the ebb and flow of our lives.



[Figure 2.1](#) Enneagram Symbol

In the following chapters, I will begin to unravel the dynamics of that waxing and waning and to define the ebbs and flows that influence how our Ennea-gram style expresses itself in the world. Most importantly, I will discuss how the Enneagram works as a tool for writers, and how writers can leverage its power and depths to not only write true-to-life characters but also uncover the right, true, and natural structure of their stories. But first, it is important to understand a bit about the Enneagram universe: where it came from, what it's used for in the broader context of the world, and why it is preferable to other personality "typing" tools currently available today.

The Backstory

Like any protagonist in a good novel or screenplay, the Enneagram has a back-story. Populated by colorful characters, historical icons, and metaphysical intrigue, the story of the Enneagram stretches back in time through several millennia, transforming itself along the way from a piece of sacred geometry, devoid of any established code of belief, into the complex

and nuanced tool that it is today full of meaning, significance, and information about the human condition. The Enneagram's ancient roots are debated within the Enneagram community, but what is generally agreed upon is that the Enneagram symbol (circle with the nine points and lines), or variations on that symbol, dates back more than three thousand years to the time of the Greeks and the mathematician Pythagoras.

Over the eons, the Enneagram passed in and out of history, moving through diverse cultures, religions, and enigmatic personalities, including Greek paganism, esoteric Christians (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), middle-eastern Sufis (fourteenth century), and even Russian Theosophical Society charismatics (twentieth century). It wasn't until the 1950s that modern ideas of psychology and personality development were applied to the Enneagram, first by the Bolivian-born teacher and innovator Oscar Ichazo, and then later by Chilean psychiatrist Dr. Claudio Naranjo. Ichazo and Naranjo's seminal influences on the development of the modern Enneagram have deeply influenced subsequent Enneagram theoretical development and application design.

With the growth of the New Age movement in the 1970s and beyond, the Enneagram flourished as a popular tool for personal growth and spiritual awakening. But it was not long before the non-metaphysical worlds of business, education, and politics found powerful uses for the Enneagram as a tool for organizational development, diplomatic training, learning and development, conflict resolution, inter- and inter-personal communication, team building, and leadership development. Today, all of these applications are thriving, with the Enneagram used by major multi-national corporations, political organizations, governments, and major learning institutions, as well as across small companies hoping to improve external client relations and internal corporate cohesion.

In addition to all of this, there are now hundreds of Enneagram books in print worldwide, demonstrating the universal appeal of the Enneagram regardless of national borders, cultural diversity, or even gender differences. The Ennea-gram transcends many of the divisive and conflict-ridden

bigotries that plague so much of our human interactions, and this is one of the main reasons for its global popularity.

Other “Typing” Systems and the Enneagram

No doubt you have heard of many of the following: Minnesota Multi-Phasic Personality Inventory, Myers-Briggs Typing Inventory, DiSC, Insights MDI®, StrengthFinders, Global 5, 16PF Questionnaire—the list goes on. Even if you haven’t heard of these popular personality typing systems, they are out there, and they are used by writers to create characters. Granted, some of them are more writer friendly than others.

The central difference between the Enneagram system and personality typing systems is that the Enneagram focuses on motivation while also examining personality traits and behaviors. All the other systems, models, and inventories mentioned focus primarily on traits and behaviors and don’t really examine the motivations for those behaviors. The Enneagram describes how people act, but the emphasis is always on *why* they are acting the way they do, rather than just describing the actions themselves.

A perfect example of this can be seen in the human behavior of control. We all control other people in our lives, but there are only so many ways to control another human being. In fact, there are only two ways: intimidation or weakness. You either intimidate someone into doing what you want, or you wimp out, become weak, and “victim-out” someone into doing what you want. When the bullies are bullying, they almost always get their way through intimidation, until they come upon the weak victim. Then the control-by-intimidation behavior loses steam, because in the face of weakness the bully has to stop bullying and move on to the next person; there’s no point in bullying a person who has already lost the fight. But the weak victim always wins the exchange. Even if the victim gets beaten up, they just wimp-out and the bully will lose interest. In the chain of control, the weakest link controls the chain.

When you look at controlling behavior through the lens of one or another of these personality systems, the act of control pretty much looks the same from person to person. The controlling person will carry out predictable and identifiable behaviors to get their way. Regardless of personality type, controlling behavior essentially looks the same in action: intimidation (or some octave of it) or weakness (victimhood). The “why” of controlling behavior is not really the focus; rather, identifying the behavior alone is the focus. Clever therapists and doctors do their best to fill in the motivation piece based on their experience and therapeutic talents, but there is nothing endemic to their typing systems that help them uncover motivation *per se*.

The Enneagram departs from all the other systems by actually clarifying the *why* of the behavior, not just the *what*. An Enneagram Two can be very controlling, and in their control can look very much like an Enneagram Eight. The actions look the same, but under the hood the motivations are completely different. The Enneagram Two controls when their insatiable need to be needed fails, so they resort to control to manipulate others to need them (whether they want to or not). The Enneagram Eight might perform the exact same controlling behavior as a Two, but the Eight is controlling because they are striving to gain control of a situation, establish their dominance, and make themselves safe by controlling the people in their environment. They demonstrate the same controlling behaviors, but for very different reasons.

This powerful distinction between the Enneagram and personality typing systems is one of the key distinctions that make the Enneagram a perfect tool for writers and storytellers, because storytelling is all about motivation, not just behavior.

Emotional Intelligence (Eq) and the Enneagram

From a writer-storyteller’s perspective, overall the Enneagram should be seen as a tool for developing emotional intelligence (EQ). Peter Salovey

and John D. Mayer coined the term “emotional intelligence” in 1990 to describe “a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action.” EQ, as a form of social intelligence, refers to the ability to know and accurately respond to one’s own (*interpersonal*) states, as well as the ability to interact with and accurately understand other people (*interpersonal*) in social settings. Over the last 30 years, there have been many studies documenting the importance of EQ in any individual’s ability to be successful in living life. In fact, between intelligence quotient (IQ) and EQ, the one that has shown itself to be the most important is EQ. When measuring overall success at life, EQ can make up as much as 80 percent of that success compared to IQ’s 20 percent.

Why is this relevant to writers and storytellers? Because intra- and interpersonal dynamics are our creative lifeblood. Being able to accurately assess how our character’s behaviors, motivations, and actions affect each individually, and how those same behaviors, motivations, and actions affect other characters around them in a story, are both essential functions to effectively telling any story. A writer who is unable to develop a strong EQ factor in their own lives is going to find him or herself handicapped when it comes to writing meaningful fiction or nonfiction. The argument can also be made here that the more a writer develops their own EQ sensitivity, the better a writer they will be—and the happier.

Of all the tools available to writers to develop EQ, personally and for their own professional development and as artists to enhance their ability to develop characters and stories that ring true, the Enneagram system is by far the most powerful and dynamic model. When it comes to developing EQ, the Enneagram is not just a useful tool for writers; it is also a power tool.

How Writers have Used the Enneagram in the Past (and Present)

Writers have had a special relationship with the Enneagram for more than three decades as an established system and even longer as a natural function of human interaction. The fact of the matter is that the Enneagram is as essential a storytelling resource for writers as any word processor, thesaurus, dictionary, pad of paper, chocolate, or coffee. Writers use it all the time; they just don't know they're using it. Remember my earlier comments on the history of the Ennea-gram, how it is very old, and evolved into modern usage through rapidly finding acceptance in a wide variety of applications and venues.

One of those venues was the world of creative writing. Writers quickly recognized the power of the Enneagram for developing *characters that ring true*. Those words, "characters that ring true," can be pure cliché, or they can have deep significance if a writer interprets them to mean that a character is authentic, relatable, and predictable (to some degree). Writers who write characters with all those qualities are writing whole people, with recognizable characteristics we see in those around us every day of our lives. You see your loved ones, coworkers, acquaintances, and friends in the characters you write, and that is why your characters "ring true." That's what "ringing true" is all about.

If a writer accomplishes this, then they are using the Enneagram. They don't have to know it; they don't have to be Enneagram experts. "All" they need is the EQ to accurately observe and report on paper what they see, feel, and understand about the people around them. A writer with strong EQ is a writer that is using the Enneagram, whether they know it or not.

How can that be? How can a writer use something they may have no knowledge of? The answer is simple, and I've said this earlier: we are not the Ennea-gram, but it is us. What this means is that the Enneagram exists because we exist. It is an emergent property of the very existence of human beings. Over time, again because we are smart apes, we have watched ourselves and systematically categorized and compartmentalized our general behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and actions into recognizable and repeatable patterns. And, over time, these patterns were distilled into nine basic categories that we put into a structure that gave the patterns shape,

and function, and a number. The Enneagram is a model; it is a tool that we created. It did not create us; we created it. And so, we are not the Enneagram, but it is us.

So, when a writer creates characters that “ring true,” they have used their EQ abilities to identify the nine categories of the Enneagram and accurately represent them inside fictional characters. Even if that process is unconscious, they were using the Enneagram, because it operates in them, around them, in spite of them. Artists are some of the smartest animals in our species, so it should be no surprise that writers intuitively use the Enneagram as a matter of course in the normal act of creation.

But, this intuitive (talent-based) use of the Enneagram as an emergent property can also be conscious. This is where the last 30 years come into the story of how writers have traditionally used the Enneagram. As the model took on modern psychological interpretations, it became more accessible to writers with less talent for intuitively sensing the Enneagram’s ebbs and flows in daily life. The modern explosion of the Enneagram has given writers a physical tool they can study and learn, thus developing their own EQ abilities in the process, and in that process write characters that “ring true.” Whether the Enneagram is part of one’s natural EQ talent or needs to be consciously developed as part of one’s writing and storytelling craft, the final result is the same: the Enneagram becomes a powerful tool any writer can use to create authentic characters—and to develop stories that work.

Character development is not the only way writers have used, and continue to use, the Enneagram. In the last decade, more and more books, videos, and other media have been developed using the Enneagram as a critique tool of film and literature. Books such as Judith Searle’s *The Literary Enneagram* and Thomas Condon’s *The Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0* demonstrate how the Enneagram finds expression in popular culture across multiple entertainment mediums. One of the objectives of these authors is to make the point I made earlier, i.e., that regardless of their Enneagram expertise or knowledge, many creative artists are producing works that conform to Enneagram dynamics and principles. Stories are

being told that are enneagrammatically consistent, and dramatically coherent. Storytellers are using the Enneagram, and many of them don't even know they're doing it.

The last area in which writers have used the Enneagram is the area of personal development, specifically in the creation of a creative voice. Remember, the Enneagram is all around us, showing itself to us through every relationship and every human interaction. As writers, we each have our personal Enneagram. As such, this impacts what we write, how we write, and why we write. Knowing your personal Enneagram style is an important component of becoming a conscious writer. A conscious writer is one that can strategically make narrative choices based on creative objectives and goals, not one that stumbles in the dark and lands in a story, clueless as to how they got there. Knowing your Enneagram style increases your EQ, helps you write characters readers and audiences will easily recognize, and helps you to overcome your personal Enneagram-related limitations (which we will cover in subsequent chapters), thus allowing you to write authentically and in your true creative voice.

Why the Enneagram is a Power Tool for Storytellers

Character development, literary/film criticism, and personal growth are all common avenues writers have navigated in their pursuit of the Enneagram and Enneagram-driven stories. But there is one last area that few have ventured into, and still fewer do so consciously. This is the area of story development.

Story development is not the same as writing, and few writers understand this dichotomy. Consequently, they think when they write they are developing their story, when in fact they are not. This confusion is pandemic, and it represents one of the great failures of creative writing programs at every level (college, university, MFA programs, etc.). Story

development has its own talent and craft, distinct from writing talent and craft, and as such must be approached as a separate function. In my first book, *Anatomy of a Premise Line: How to Master Premise and Story Development for Writing Success*, I describe in great detail the intricate dance between storytelling and writing and emphasize the separateness of the two functions of writing and story.

But that separateness reveals a relationship that has always existed between story and the Enneagram, one that many creative people may have sensed, but that until now no one has been able to quantify: the Enneagram-Story Connection. The Enneagram is a tool for both story development and character development; when basic story structure knowledge, premise development skills, and Enneagram essentials are combined, any writer can not only write characters that ring true but also uncover and discover the right, true, and natural structure of any story. The Enneagram is one of the most powerful story development tools available for evaluating, defining, creating, and executing the best stories possible.

Rapid Story Development

There are two challenges facing every writer that undertakes this adventure:

- You have to know the basics of how the Enneagram system works
- You have to understand the basics of story structure and story development

Rapid Story Development is an endpoint. It is the place you want to be after you know the theory and the craft of both systems (Enneagram and story development). To that end, the first part of this book will focus on teaching the essentials necessary for you to use the Enneagram as an application in the service of storytelling. It will teach you the Enneagram essentials and show you how to link the Enneagram to the storytelling process. [Part 2](#) of this book will then reveal the Enneagram-Story Connection and expand on

the linkages to reveal how story development and the Enneagram inform one another and organically connect at the level of every story's DNA. [Part 3](#) of this book will be the practicum portion, meaning this is the practice—the execution of a specific seven-step process to apply all the previous learning and knowledge to the act of a developing a story.

Rapid Story Development is the ultimate expression of those three essential bases of knowledge—story structure, premise development, and Enneagram essentials—that every writer can master as they expand their story development craft and unleash their own storytelling talent. “The Enneagram for Writers” is the first step to learning the intricate and natural connection between story development and the Enneagram system. The following pages will systematically reveal the inner workings of the Enneagram as a model of human behavior/motivation, but also the inner workings of how a story is developed from idea to fully formed structure using the Enneagram.

3

Enneagram System Essentials



The Enneagram is not a gift from the gods, nor is it some guru's invention. The Enneagram is a tool, available to and accessible by anyone—it belongs to all of us.

Many in the Enneagram community talk about how you need to first discover and understand your own Enneagram style before you can effectively use it as a tool in the world. When it comes to personal psychology, organizational development, spiritual counseling, or therapeutic counseling, I would agree. I do not agree, however, that writers “have to” know their own Enneagram style to use the Enneagram to develop stories or characters. Certainly, I believe there is great benefit to be found in knowing your own Enneagram style, as this can make you a better person and help you remove Enneagram-related blockages, blind spots, and detailers that might affect your creative process. But such self-knowledge is not essential; it is merely desirable.

What is essential is a basic understanding of what the nine Enneagram styles are, how they relate to one another, and what motivates each of them to act out the way they do in life or in a fictional story. Ironically, the more you study the Enneagram as a tool for story development, the more the study itself will rub off on you and the more you will learn more about yourself and your own Ennea-gram style. It's really not something you can avoid; the Enneagram will change you—for the better.

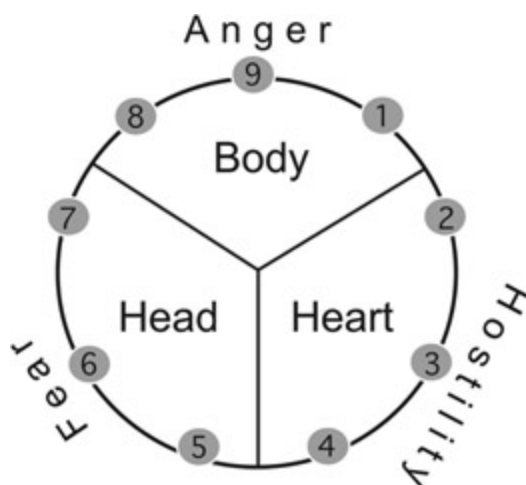
If you do any research on the Internet, you will see literally hundreds of web-sites, schools, teachers, gurus, books, videos, and all manner of tools and products devoted to teaching you all about the Enneagram. If you choose to jump down this rabbit hole, you may find the learning curve for Enneagram mastery to be quite daunting, if not downright discouraging. The good news, however, is that you don't have to be an Enneagram master to use the Enneagram as a writer. Learning the Enneagram essentials in [Part 1](#) of this book, and in this chapter specifically, will give you all the basics you need to effectively apply the Enneagram to story and character development.

After all, you are not studying this topic to become an Enneagram teacher or guru; you are a writer and want to tell stories, and to that end you want the best tools available to help you achieve that goal. As I said earlier, you're not doing therapy, or coaching business teams, or giving personal advice to people, so you will not hurt anyone or disrupt anything. So, you can make mistakes and use everything you will learn in this book in any way you feel makes sense for your story goals. This may drive Enneagram purists crazy, but that's the reality of this particular application of the Enneagram. If it makes dramatic sense for your story, use anything in the Enneagram in any way you want to get the dramatic effect you feel is best for your characters and your creative mission. Don't worry about "doing the Enneagram right"; there is no right, not in this context. Everything you learn from this point forward is at service to your storytelling and writing, rather than serving to validate some Enneagram guru, school of orthodoxy, or some sense of Enneagram political correctness. It is now all about your stories and storytelling.

While it may sound like I'm telling you to go crazy and ignore all conventions, that's not really what will happen.

You will find that the Enneagram's natural interrelationships and design will work perfectly for any story need you will have. You won't have to "go crazy" to find solutions. In fact, story solutions will emerge naturally from the Enneagram process by using its best practices and organic structures. The elegance built into the Enneagram will take your breath away, and the magic that emerges from painting within the lines, so to speak, will astound you as you find story structure connections based on Enneagram principles and best practices. The added fun comes in when you realize you can step outside the lines and still find creative answers to story development questions while maintaining your story's integrity and narrative design. The Enneagram and the story structure relationships that make up the Enneagram-Story Connection support just about any approach you can think up to get from the beginning of your story to its natural end. So, follow the Enneagram rules and conventions until you decide you don't want to—and it will still work out positively for your story.

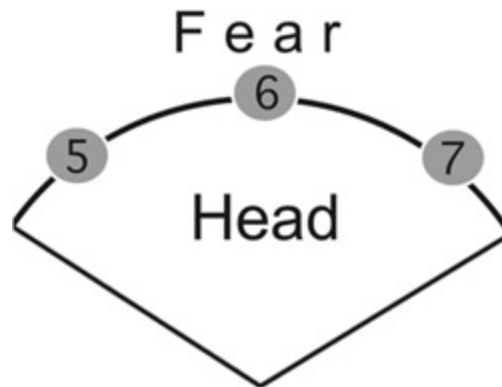
The Three Emotional Centers



[Figure 3.1](#) The Three Emotional Centers

The Enneagram is traditionally broken up into three emotional centers: *head* , *body* , and *heart* ([Figure 3.1](#)). In the Enneagram, the idea is that while each of us has a head, body, and heart, we each favor one center over the others for influencing how we react and interpret the world, internally and externally. Each center is run from an emotional core that elicits a specific emotional response from each of the Enneagram styles within that center.

The Head Center of Emotionality



[Figure 3.2](#) Head Center of Emotionality

Enneagram styles Five, Six, and Seven are grouped into this center ([Figure 3.2](#)). Each of these three styles is run from an emotional core fueled by anxiety and fear, and as a group all are predisposed toward mental process and thinking as a reaction to that emotional core.

Fives respond to fear and anxiety by withdrawing into the safety of their thought process, retreating into their mental ivory tower in order to assess, understand, and figure out their best response to danger. In many ways it could be said that the Five style overuses their mental predisposition, and consequently thinks too much, at the expense of connection with others.

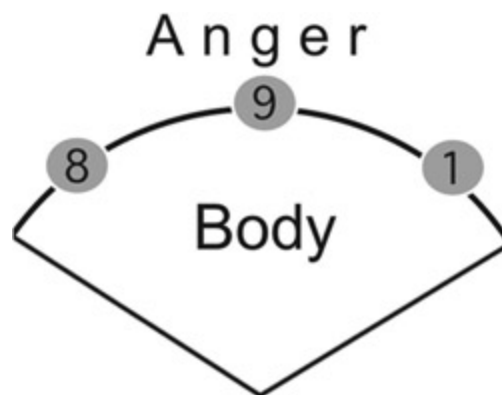
Sixes handle fear with worry and doubt and try to anticipate all contingencies to prepare themselves for all possible scenarios; they can

consequently get locked into mental machinations, intrigues, and plotting, resulting in mental vapor-lock and indecision. Sixes can be said to block their own mental processes by getting locked into loops of worst-case scenarios, at the expense of real progress.

Sevens react to fear and anxiety by shifting their own anxiety to pleasant scenarios, to which they run as fast as they can to escape any pain. Sevens can be said to abandon thinking for pleasure, and consequently think too little, at the expense of mental balance.

The Body Center of Emotionality

Enneagram styles Eight, Nine, and One are grouped into this center ([Figure 3.3](#)). Each of these three styles is run from an emotional core fueled by anger, rage, and resentment, and as a group all are predisposed toward relating to the world as a reaction to that emotional core. In this context, relating refers to the ability of these styles to viscerally connect with others and their world in a human way.



[Figure 3.3](#) Body Center of Emotionality

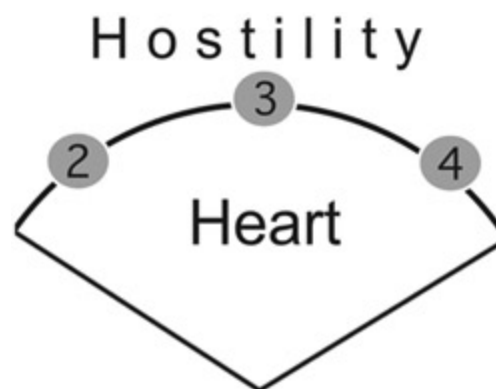
Eights respond to anger by expressing it directly and forcefully. They may “turn off” emotionally and become totally self-reliant, blocking out others completely, or become highly confrontative when faced with

injustice, weakness in others, or deceitful behavior by others. In many ways it could be said that the Eight style overuses their relational predisposition, and consequently relates too strongly, at the expense of real feeling.

Nines' anger erupts in the form of passive-aggressive behavior, or total sloth, and is triggered when they are ignored, dismissed, or become the direct target of another's anger. Nines can be said to block their ability to relate with others by shutting down emotional responses, at the expense of true harmony.

Ones react to anger with smoldering resentment that twists into blame and judgments. This reaction pushes them to withdraw from their ability to relate to others and the world and can spiral them into depression, sadness, and self-punishing criticism. Ones can be said to undervalue relating, at the expense of real connection.

The Heart Center of Emotionality



[Figure 3.4](#) Heart Center of Emotionality

Enneagram styles Two, Three, and Four are grouped into this center ([Figure 3.4](#)). Each of these three styles is run from an emotional core fueled by shame and hostility, and as a group all are predisposed toward using their emotions as a reaction to that emotional core.

Twos respond to shame by looking to others for confirmation of their likability and worth. To alleviate their own feelings of disconnection and hostility, their natural inclination toward being warm and optimistic can turn needy, controlling, and smothering. In many ways, it could be said that the Two style overuses their ability to feel by focusing too much on being loved and needed, at the expense of other emotions.

Threes react to shame by proving their value and worth through winning and achievement. Projecting a can-do image covers a panicked self, running as fast as it can to act out emotion rather than feel it deeply. Consequently, it can be said that the Three style blocks their own ability to feel emotions by performing them, at the expense of authentic feelings.

Fours respond to shame by projecting an image of specialness and uniqueness. Inwardly focused, the Four type overuses its emotional fluidity and sensitivity to defend against the ordinary and rejection. Fours can be said to underuse emotion by feeling nothing deeply, at the expense of emotional depth.

These are the three emotional centers of the Enneagram, along with the breakdown of each Enneagram style within each center. These are not complete descriptions of each style. Any complete description must take into account all of the various pieces of the Enneagram that will be discussed in this chapter and the next. What the three centers do, however, is convey an important underlying substructure that supports each of the nine Enneagram styles. Often just by thinking about which center you might fall into, emotionally, can be a big clue as to which part of the Enneagram diagram may hold your particular style number. You might want to take some time and do the “Three Centers Check-in Exercise” later in this chapter to explore more directly your own center preferences. The results may point your nose toward your personal Enneagram style.

The Enneagram-Story Connection

The three emotional centers are relevant to writers and storytellers because they can be your first clue as to the Enneagram style of your protagonist or other supporting characters (see [Chapters 9](#) and [13](#)). How many times have you created a protagonist and struggled with what emotional foundation to create for him or her? Sometimes it's obvious, but most times you are shooting in the dark. The emotional centers at least give you a starting point that makes dramatic sense based on real human motivations and core emotions.

But, just as with your own search for a personal Enneagram style, your first choices here may not be the most accurate. This is okay and is a natural part of the “typing” process. There will be many other roads into your protagonist's Enneagram style demonstrated throughout this book, but the three centers can often be the first glimmer of light pointing the way. All these roads and glimmers will eventually add up to a clear picture of a deep and complex protagonist, opponent, or supporting character member. And it all starts with examining the three centers and getting a gut-hit on where a specific character might land.

Three Centers Check-in Exercise

Note: This is a deceptively simple exercise that can quickly put you in the ballpark of your personal Enneagram style. It is not a guarantee, but depending upon the level of personal resistance at play, you can get accurate feedback as to where on the Enneagram diagram you may “live.” Regarding resistance: relax, we all have it. Personal discovery is always scary and makes you vulnerable. Often people do this exercise and get nothing at all, or they feel everything at once (another form of negating the experience). If that happens, go with it; don't judge it or get upset with yourself. Read more of the book, and if you can't see yourself in the Enneagram as you move through [Part 1](#) , then come back and try again.

The writing gods always gives you as many chances as you want (as long as you offer up coffee and chocolate).

It helps to stand up and not lean against anything. If you can't stand up, then sit and try to put your feet on the floor to ground yourself. Stand or sit and then close your eyes. Feel yourself grounded and connected to the Earth through your feet or your chair. Allow your mind to wander. There is no time limit or pressure to perform. Let your mind wander, and your attention to float, moving from head to foot.

At some point your attention will settle on or near one of the centers: literally your head, your heart, or two inches above or below your belly button (or close to it). Note where your attention lands. Then let your mind and your attention go to a second spot. Note where it lands. Then to a third.

The first landing is likely the triad where your personal Enneagram lies, but it could be the second landing spot. Just the note of the results and remember so you can refer back later on. This may end up being confirmation of later insights you have as you work through the rest of this book.

That's all there is to this exercise. It is very simple and straightforward but can yield surprising truths. If you got nothing out of the effort, do not despair, you will get there some other way later, or you can go back and try again later. As I've said, there are many ways to slay this particular dragon. Some will resonate with you; others will not. You will find your way, I promise.

4

The Enneagram Model



The Enneagram is an emergent property of being human. It exists because we exist. It is a model of how we think, feel, and act—we define the Enneagram; it does not define us.

The opening quote for this chapter says it all. I’ve already stated this in other chapters, using other words, but it bears repeating: the Enneagram was not invented by anyone; it exists because we exist, because we live, breathe, and have social relations. This is so important to understand, because if you approach the Enneagram as a “system” invented by some spiritual guru, psychologist, psychiatrist, or snake-oil salesman, then you may as well be applying a cookie cutter to the understanding of individual psychology and group dynamics.

The Enneagram is no cookie cutter; it is a complex, deeply human, and multifaceted matrix that tells the story of us. This is why the knowledge of the Enneagram is most effectively transmitted between people through a narrative tradition. You can’t really teach the Enneagram using charts, graphs, statistics, and scientific methodology. The Enneagram is a narrative; it is storytelling in the grandest sense of the term, because stories are about how we teach ourselves what

it means to be human, and no tool, model, or personality system is better equipped for teaching us about ourselves than the Enneagram.

This is the power of narrative, the power of stories, and the essence of the Enneagram. Not everyone is going to agree with this interpretation of the Enneagram, but this understanding best captures my purpose in these pages, and your purpose as a writer and storyteller. I believe it also captures the truth of what this wonderful tool is all about, but I will leave it to the Enneagram pundits to hammer out the fine points of that debate.

Although the Enneagram is more about narrative than statistics and graphs, there is an edifying side of it that can (and should) be studied in a didactic way. This side is the Enneagram as a model of human behavior, thought, and feeling. The *Psychology Dictionary* defines a psychological model as

a theory in psychology to predict outcomes and explain specific psychological processes... used to evaluate the performance of an individual utilizing a representation of cognitive and response characteristics.¹

The model of the Enneagram follows many of these descriptors: it is predictive of behavior, it describes specific psychological processes, and it can be used to evaluate the performance of individuals based on emotional responses, traits, and behaviors. In this practical sense, then, a model approach to the Enneagram can be helpful to identify its general working principles.

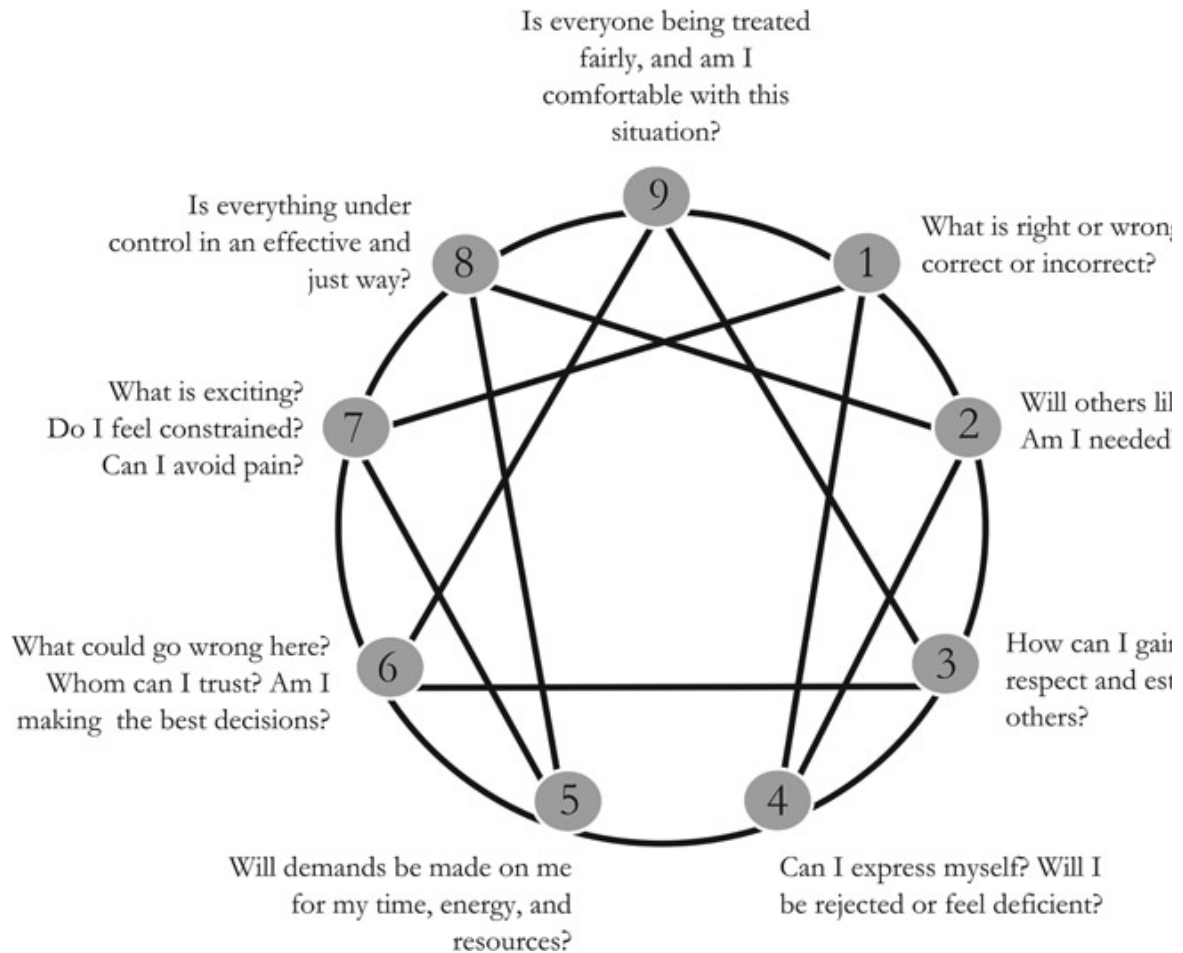
What follows in this chapter (and throughout this book) are various diagrams of patterns of emotional and behavioral schematics that describe the model of the Enneagram. These are by no means all the examples or graphic displays that can be created to represent the complexity of the Enneagram, but they do represent the essential elements that you will need to understand the big picture of how the system works for the purposes of story development. As always, as you read through the pieces, look for hints and clues for your own Enneagram style. If you look, you will find yourself sprinkled throughout these pages, so always keep one eye open.

Focus of Attention

Depending on Enneagram style, a person (or character) will pay greater attention to certain information, while dismissing or ignoring other information ([Figure 4.1](#)). What we choose to focus on as important says a great deal about what concerns, worries, fears, and doubts dominate our thinking and feeling. This focus of attention is not typically in our conscious awareness but rather lurks under the surface, triggering whenever specific circumstances arise (which we will discuss later). As you read through the descriptors, think about which ones stand out as relating to your personal focus of attention.

The Enneagram-Story Connection

In story development, the focus of attention represents the confluence of several story structure elements: moral blind spot, moral effect, character desire/goal, and character constriction. All of these terms of the development puzzle will be discussed in later chapters, but the point to take away here is that protagonists and opponents should also have a focus of attention. Sometimes these will be evident to you, sometimes not. When they are evident, look to the Enneagram for the closest style that matches your character's emotional focus; this will often give a big clue as to their Enneagram style.



[Figure 4.1](#) Focus of Attention

Source: Ginger Lapid-Bogda, PhD 2004

Survival Strategy

Survival strategy refers to the attitudes, thoughts, and feelings that color each Enneagram's style when faced with issues of safety and survival ([Figure 4.2](#)). This particular strategy is one that is adaptive, emerging from young childhood, childhood, and adolescence as we grow and mature. Your Enneagram predisposes you toward a particular viewpoint about how best to negotiate life and danger when faced with threats to belonging, or even against life itself. This is a constrictive adaptation, and one that children learn early and adapt to quickly.

The Enneagram-Story Connection

This particular pattern of belief has great importance for character development in stories. Given that these strategies operate throughout one's life, becoming less and less influential as we heal our emotional wounds and mature, fictional characters are not as lucky as we are. In any given story, you want your protagonist, opponent, and other key characters to start their journeys locked in a survival mindset. Why? Because if they are not trying to survive, what else are they doing? Being in survival mode makes them active and directed. Having them generically getting through their day is basically passive and uninteresting. But it's important to know that "in survival" does not mean they are scratching tooth and claw for food on a desert island. It can just mean they are going through their day, but their motivation is the Enneagram survival strategy. This is inherently an active position, dramatically, as you will see in later chapters.

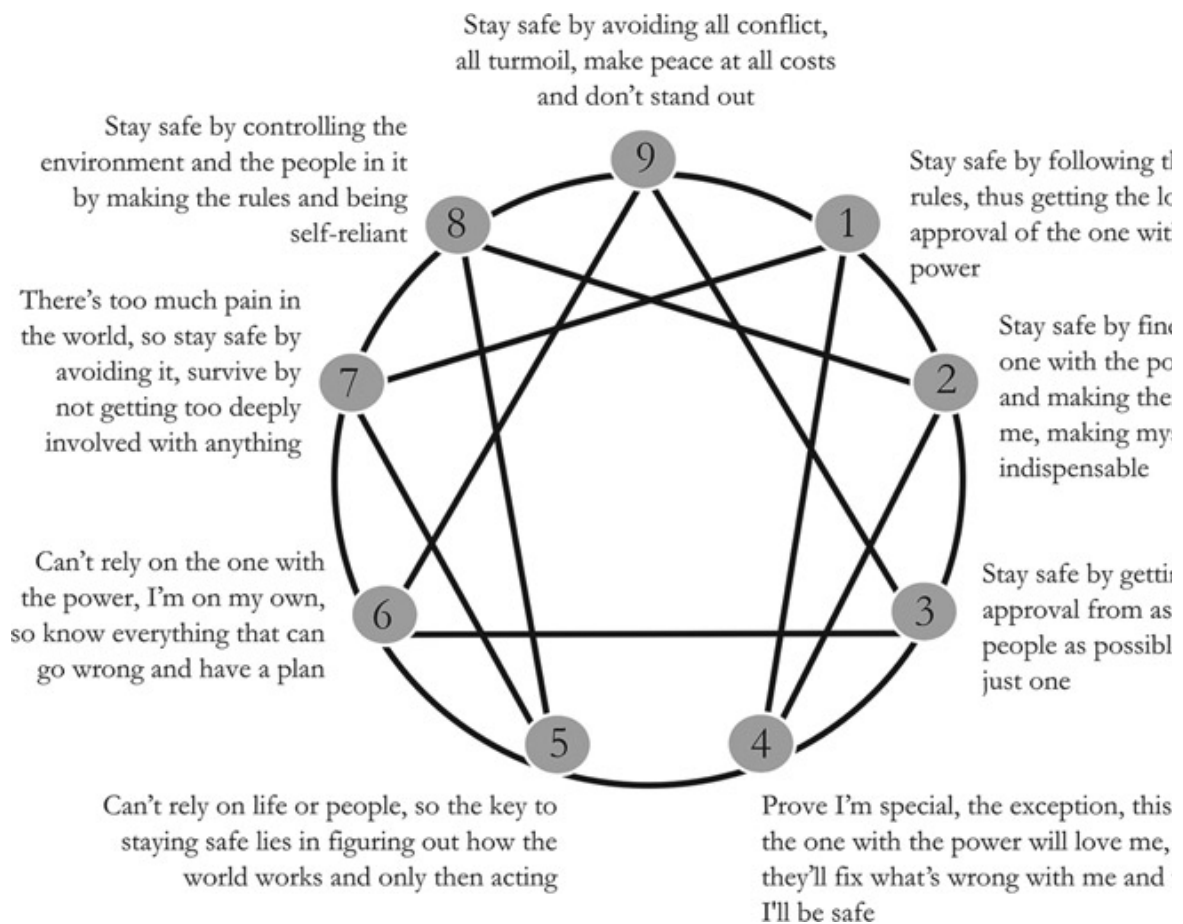
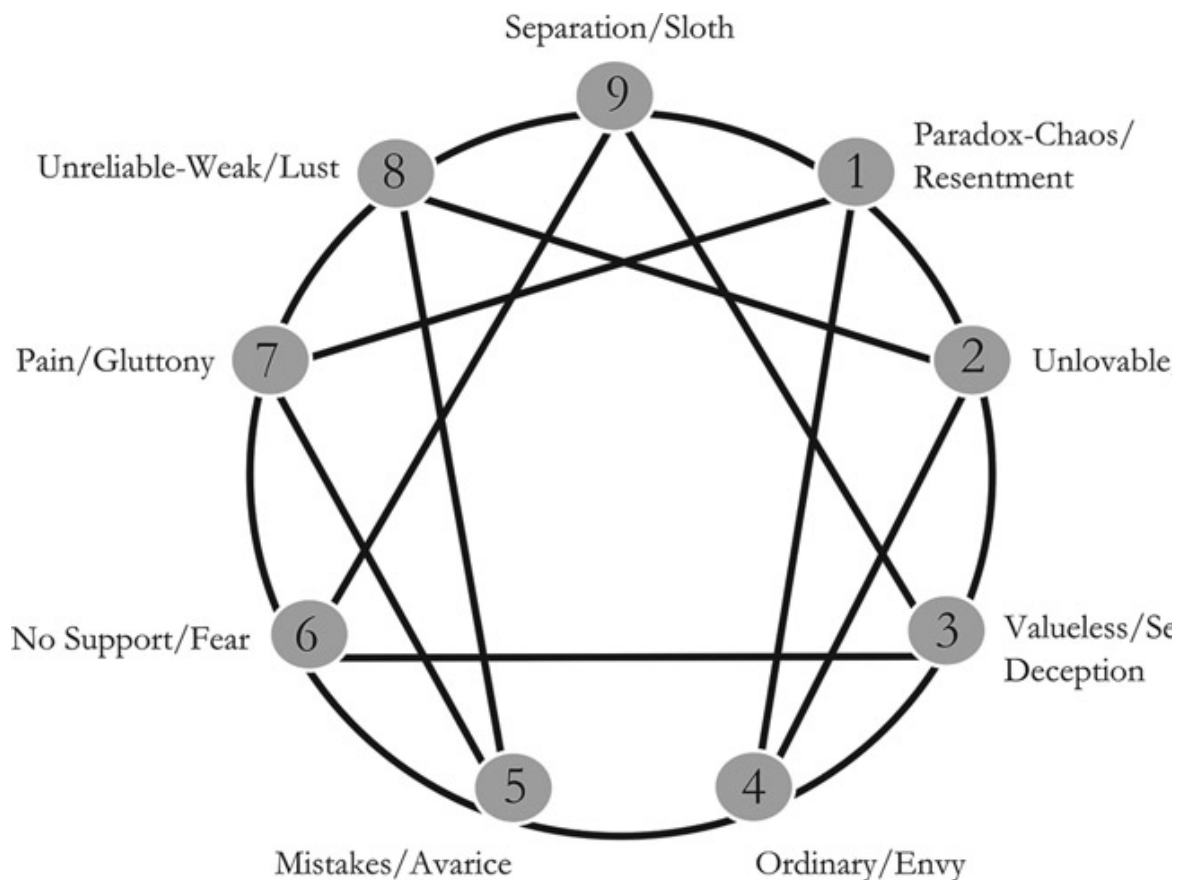


Figure 4.2 Survival Strategy

Core Fear And Poison

We all have fears in our lives. But some fears are bigger than others. Each of the Enneagram styles has a core fear that is consistent with their overall style ([Figure 4.3](#)). This fear reflects directly back to the focus of attention and the survival strategy. If you look at each of these examples, you will see they are all self-supporting and internally consistent with the emotional focus of that focus of attention. The “poison” aspect comes into play when the Enneagram core fear is never answered or responded to in a healthy way. The unattended fear, or the fear run amok, festers into a poisonous set of beliefs and/or behaviors that twist and undermine the ability of a frightened individual to pull themselves out of the toxic spiral that pulls them deeper into survival and emotional self-defense. If that sounds like a recipe for drama (and comedy), then you are getting the picture.



[Figure 4.3](#) Core Fear and Poison

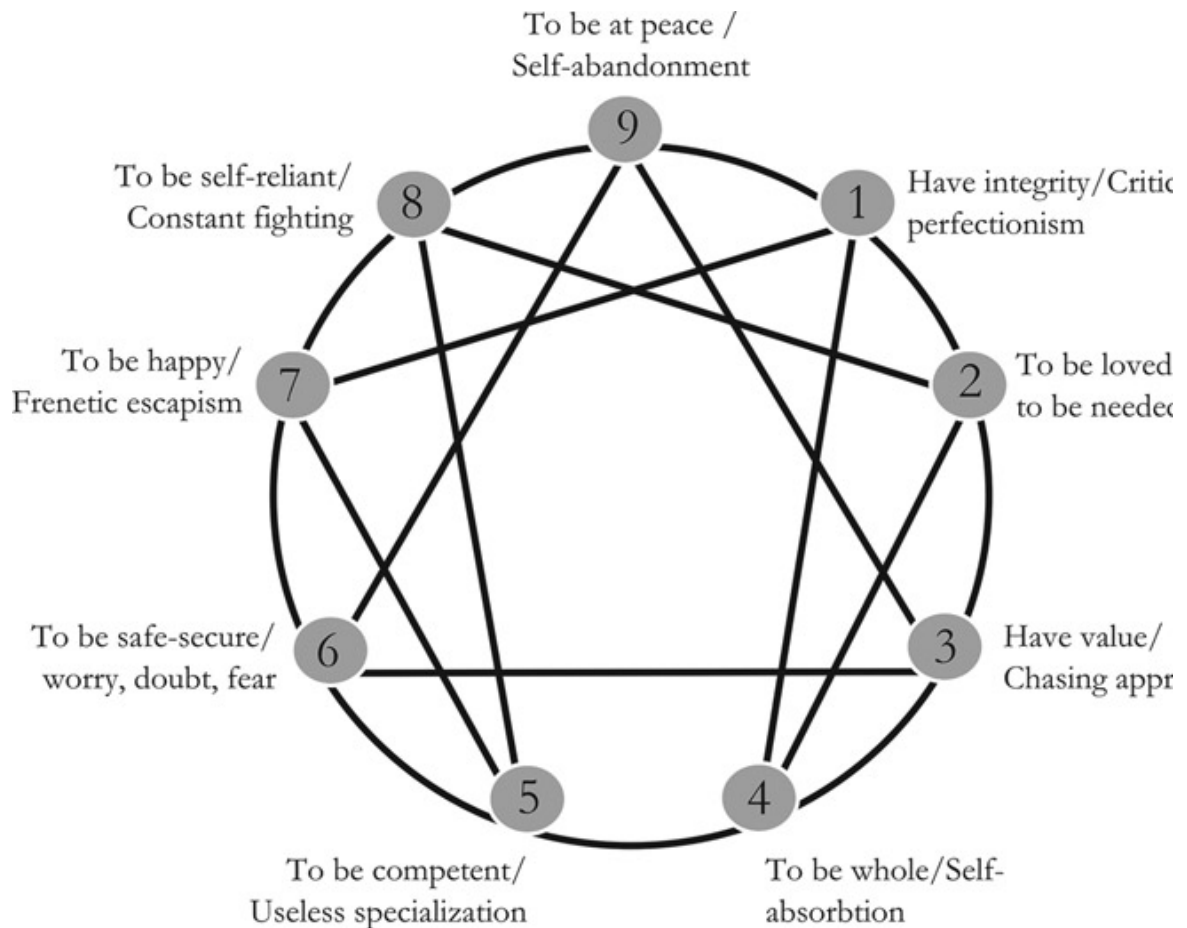
Source: Concept Synergy 2004

The Enneagram-Story Connection

It should be fairly clear already how valuable this particular chart can be to a writer. Characters grappling with fear and poisonous behavior are the stuff of great writing. The core fear and poison, however, can be very helpful in the critical process of designing and discovering the right moral component for your protagonist. I will cover this important topic in great detail in [Chapters 10](#) and [11](#). The moral component is so essential that it is one of the primary elements you need to have a story—period. If your story doesn't have a strong moral component, you will not have a story; you will have something else: a situation. Finding the right moral component, however, can be challenging. The fear-poison and the desire-distortion ([Figure 4.4](#)) can point your nose in the right direction and give you deep insight into the moral drivers of each of the Enneagram styles, thus helping you nail the right moral component for your protagonist. Again, this will be discussed in much more detail in [Chapters 10](#) and [11](#).

Core Desire and Distortion

Just as with a fear that turns into an emotional poison when not handled properly, each Enneagram style has a basic desire consistent with their style ([Figure 4.4](#)). When not satisfied in a constructive and integrative way, this turns into a distortion of the original desire, thus twisting and skewing a person's drive to get what they think they want. Each desire, at its core, is meant to help the individual find their personal equilibrium; however, when there are too many blind spots, blockages, constrictions, and self-sabotaging in the way, then the healthy desire distorts to a “dark” desire that only further warps a person's search for their true desire.



[Figure 4.4](#) Core Desire and Distortion

Source: Concept Synergy 2004

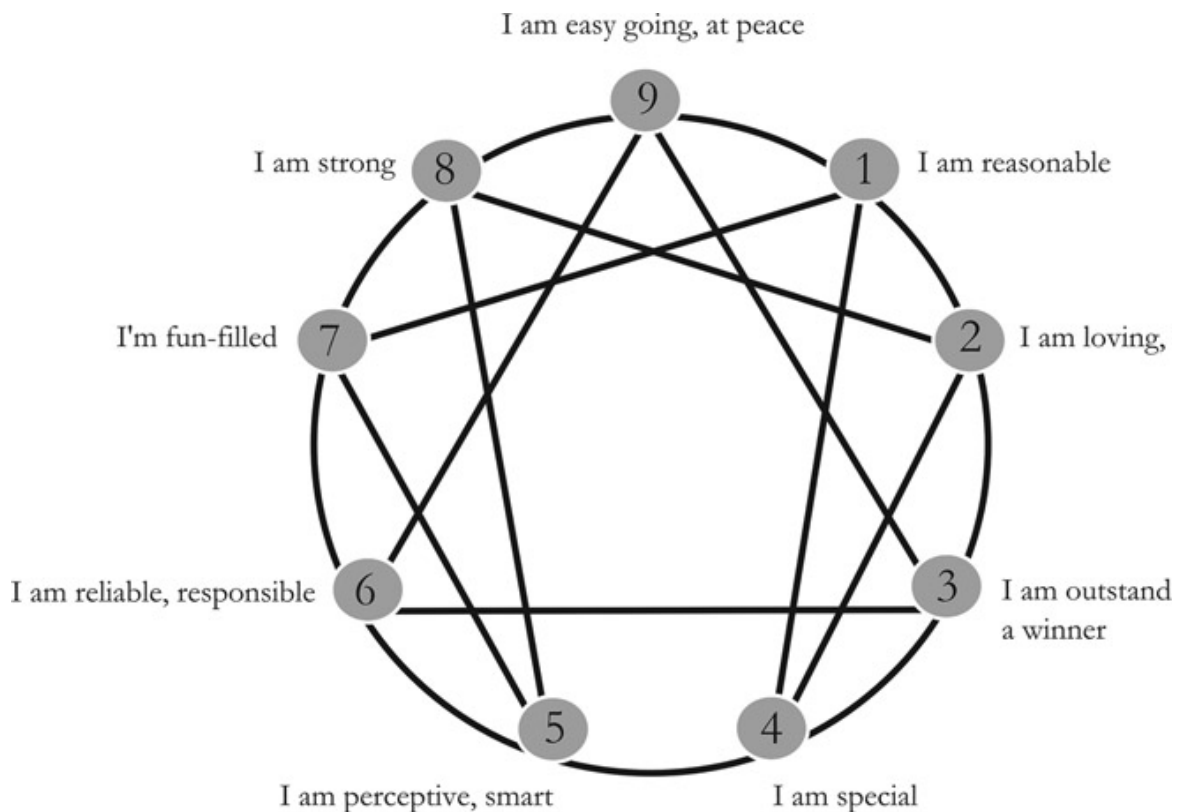
The Enneagram-Story Connection

As with the fear and poison, the core desire and distortion add a dramatic layer to any protagonist (or supporting character) that will deepen any story. After all, that's what every writer wants to do, i.e., dive down out of the dramatic shallows into the emotional depths to find the drama or comedy that will entertain and teach the reader/audience about what it means to be human. And, just as the fear/poison can help point your nose to the best moral component for your protagonist, so can core desire and distortion further clarify this component. What a character wants, and the specific way that desire gets distorted, is controlled by the moral belief/wound lying under the surface of the protagonist's actions. Knowing what they want, why they want it, and how twisted both might be gives

you a moral compass that can point to the true north of your protagonist's true motivation. This is story gold.

Core Image

All human beings have different images of themselves: your image at work; your image at home; your image in public; your image as mother, father, friend, etc. We also have an image of ourselves consistent with our Enneagram style. [Figure 4.5](#) shows the ideal image of each Enneagram style. Note how each image statement is consistent with all the other charts, demonstrating the same themes, focus of attention, and even aspects of the survival strategy. These image statements are expressions of the healthier development of each Enneagram style; in other words, they are not weighed down with the “what we don't like” qualities of any individual type. In that sense, it can be said that these images are more about what is expansive about each style, as opposed to what is constrictive about each style.



[Figure 4.5](#) Core Image

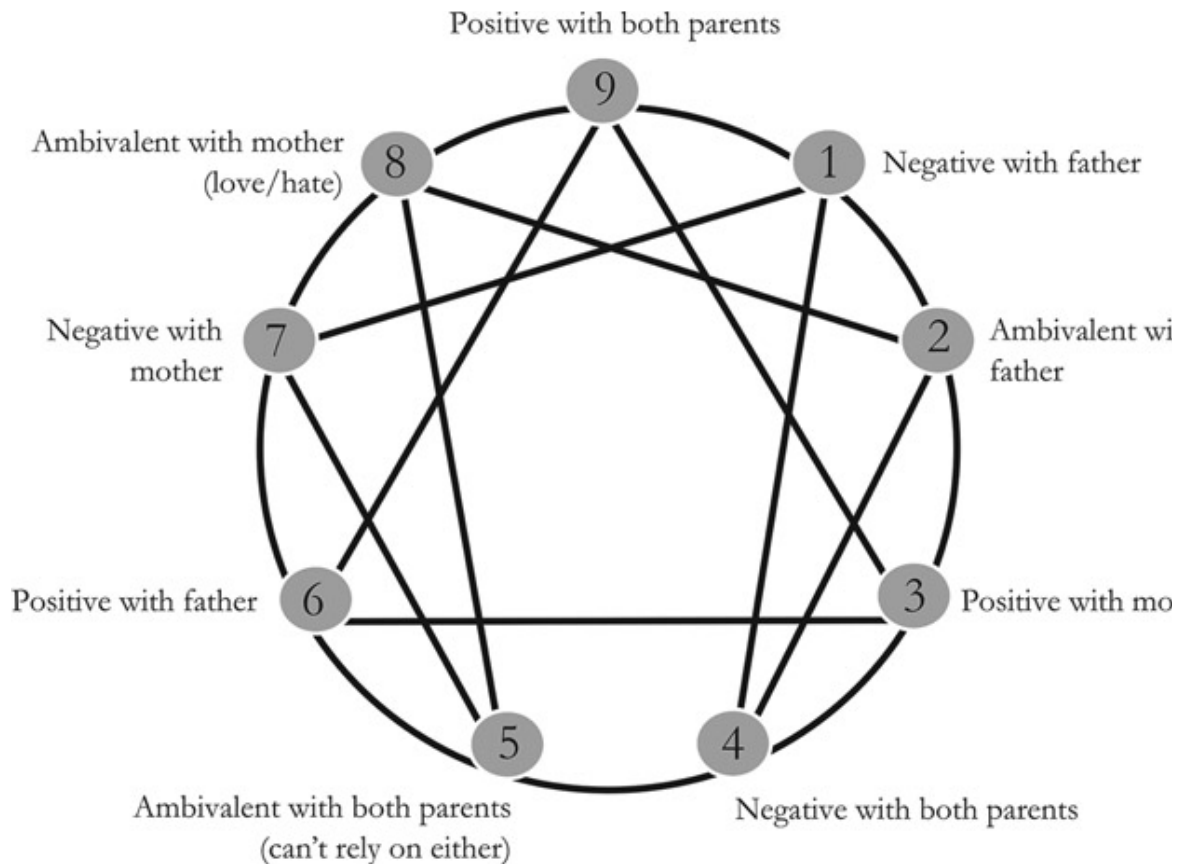
Source: Concept Synergy 2004

The Enneagram-Story Connection

The story connection to core image is one of character growth. As you will learn in [Chapter 9](#) , all protagonists need to change (either for good or ill) on their way to journey's end. The core image of each Enneagram style points your nose to the emotional change that might happen for your hero/heroine. The protagonist's actual growing moment may not be exactly the image statement for whatever Enneagram style they end up being, but when you are unsure where to take them emotionally, the image statement can sometimes help you see your options more clearly. This and the moral component are very useful tools for getting your protagonist to the proper emotional endpoint for the story.

Parental Matrix

The Enneagram is part nature and part nurture, or that is what many believe—I'm among them. I believe we have a genetic predisposition toward certain personality traits and behaviors, and I think this also goes for our core Enneagram preference as well. Regardless of whether you agree with this theory, we can all agree that nurturing plays a formidable role in our development as human beings, and that parents are among the most important of the nurturing roles that influence us.



[Figure 4.6](#) Parental Matrix

Source: Concept Synergy 2004

In the Enneagram, there is a particular relationship pattern that appears to play itself out with each Enneagram style. [Figure 4.6](#) illustrates those relationships. It is very important to understand one thing before memorizing this chart: parental roles don't always mean your blood parents. There are many people who give birth who are not our mothers. They may be our biological mother, but they did not play the mothering role in our upbringing. The actual "mothering" role could have been played by another woman or by a man, by aunts or uncles, grandparents, or complete strangers. It is the mothering function—the role of mother or father—that is critical to understand.

The parental matrix is not just about your biological parents; it speaks more directly to the parental influences in our lives, biological or otherwise. Again, this is critical to understand, because many Ones had a positive relationship with their fathers, and many Threes had negative relationships with their mothers. Many external factors go into the nurturing influences that affect Enneagram

development; the parental matrix is just (an important) one of them. Don't get caught up in literal designations for each parental situation, as individual experiences with this will vary widely. But know that these patterns are more common than not and may be one more indicator as to your own Enneagram style.

The Enneagram-Story Connection

There is not a whole lot to say about the Enneagram parental matrix and story development, other than—use it. It doesn't matter if your personal configuration is accurate in the diagram, or whether you even buy into the accuracy of this chart (some don't). All that matters is that you know these configurations do reflect real Enneagram relationships and thus real people. This means that when you are trying to develop your own characters' backstories and you need a plausible relationship with one or both parents, if you have no clue where to start, the Enneagram parental matrix can give you a clear starting point. Try it out, see if it works for your story, and if it does, you have benefitted from the process.

The Enneagram Wings

Each of your characters has a core Enneagram style (and so do you). This we have established, along with many nuances and details as to each of their traits, characteristics, and central patterns of emotion and behavior. But, notice, as you look at the main diagram of the Enneagram, that each style has another style to its right or left. The Nine has Eight and One, the Two has One and Three, and so it goes around the entire diagram.

These are called the Enneagram Wings; they represent two additional pools of emotion and behavior each style has available to it. The wings are resources that are immediate due to their natural proximity to the core drive of any style; thus, there is an elegant connection between the wings and their core.

When an Enneagram core style accesses any of the qualities of its wing, it will do so based on its degree of fear or security in the moment. What this means is that every Enneagram style fluctuates through various levels of fear and security

in any given situation. Consequently, when a core style “leans” into one of its wings for support, it will lean into either the expansive qualities of the wing (security) or the constrictive qualities (fear). This tendency adds tremendous complexity to the core style, as the following examples will illustrate.



[Figure 4.7](#) One Wings

Safety Position : When feeling safe, Ones with a Nine wing may present as more calm, cooperative, discerning, and less judgmental. Ones with a Two wing may present as more giving, helpful, and less focused on being right and more on doing right.

Fear Position : When in fear, Ones with a Nine wing may become less present, passive aggressive, harder to pin down, and indecisive. Ones with a Two wing may begin to micromanage, obsess about other’s lives/work, and become harsher in their judgments of self and others.



[Figure 4.8](#) Two Wings

Safety Position : When feeling safe, Twos with a One wing may be more serious and altruistic toward others rather than an individual and be more critical of their emotional responses. Twos with a Three wing can be

comfortable in the spotlight, goal oriented, and more willing to play well with others.

Fear Position : When in fear, Twos with a One wing will be quick to judge, driven by quixotic expectations, and hold themselves to stringent standards. Twos with a Three wing may become obsessive about how others see them, demanding of attention, and more strategic in their helpfulness.



[Figure 4.9](#) Three Wings

Safety Position : When safe, Threes with a Two wing may be more people-focused and less task-focused; they may be more aware of their own needs; and their normally selfish drive to succeed may be tempered with empathy toward others. Threes with a Four wing may come off as less as performing and more authentic in their emotions, and they may demonstrate real insight into self and more sensitivity to the moods of others.

Fear Position : When in fear, Threes with a Two wing may find their approval-seeking magnified by the caretaking of the Two; achievement can quickly twist into resentful disappointment when unacknowledged; and they may exhaust themselves trying to meet the needs of others. Threes with a Four wing may be moodier and less socially engaged, and they may react with an inflated sense of importance and superiority when demands are made for introspection.



[Figure 4.10](#) Four Wings

Safety Position : When safe, Fours with a Three wing may come out of their introversion and be more energetic. The Three's focus on achievement may balance the Four's love of drama; the Three's need to protect their image helps the Four to stay real and counter their need to ruminate. Fours with a Five wing will find their intuition and subjectivity balances with logic and reason; the Four may take things less personally and more objectively, and as their emotion becomes tempered with the Five's thinking, they may be less impulsive.

Fear Position : When in fear, Fours with a Three wing may appear less genuine in their self-expression, influenced by the Three's tendency for emotional performance; achievements and successes may be more smoke than substance, focused more on appearance than real work; and the Three's pressure of success may exacerbate the Four's natural affinity for melancholy and ennui. Fours with a Five wing may find their natural introversion deepened by the Five's desire for privacy and isolation; their need for connection with others might be derailed into feelings of being marginal or an outlier; and they may overthink situations, further disconnecting them from human connection.



[Figure 4.11](#) Five Wings

Safety Position : In safety, Fives with a Four wing may find a nice balance between their thinking and feeling. They may also be able to connect more deeply in human interactions, and the Five's tendency to sit back and observe may find a balance with actual involvement through action. Fives with a Six wing may resource the Six's natural courage to find a stronger sense of presence; they may become more committed to people and ideals rather than information, and the Five's ability to assess data and evidence may help them take positions on principle, not just on the facts.

Fear Position : In fear, Fives with a Four wing may withdraw even deeper into their mental machinations and analysis; the Five's inner sense of separateness may lead to moodiness and depression. Appearing emotionally distant, the Four's influence may feed their fear of rejection and generate a need to stand out in a unique way. Fives with a Six wing may find the Six's mistrust and doubt pushing them more into withdrawal; they may find their thinking unbalanced toward fear and worst-case scenarios, and the Five's already strong tendency for planning might become obsessive and neurotic.



[Figure 4.12](#) Six Wings

Safety Position : When feeling safe, the Six with a Five wing may be more inclined to trust their inner voice, rather than seek outside evidence; their anxiety and fear may become more balanced with the Five's cooler objectivity; and the Six may have more confidence in their ability to assess situations, making them more open to multiple viewpoints. Sixes with a Seven wing will often be more optimistic and less prone to catastrophizing; the Seven influence may make the Six quicker in their

thought process and more willing to risk, and they may actually be able to take themselves less seriously and laugh at their own fears.

Fear Position : When feeling afraid, the Six with a Five wing may find the Five's wariness escalating their own fear and anxiety; the Six may start to live more in their head, trusting their intuitions and experience less, and rather than trusting themselves, they may turn to outside sources of information for safety and security. The Six with a Seven wing may find themselves more avoidant and unwilling to deal with issues front-and-center; the Seven's fear of pain may influence the Six to withdraw through distraction and diversion, and they may deflect with plans and ideas to delay painful decisions.



[Figure 4.13](#) Seven Wings

Safety Position : When safe, Sevens with a Six wing may be more deliberative and studied in their decision-making. Their drive for total freedom may be balanced by the Six's inclination to work with a trusted group of people, and the Seven's tendency not to get pinned down may become grounded by the Six's planning and foresight. The Seven with an Eight wing will find themselves more assertive; the Eight's drive to action will move the Seven from the realm of possibilities to the realm of doing, and the inner strength of the Eight will help the Seven to be less afraid of pain and being hurt.

Fear Position : When fearful, the Seven with a Six wing may find their fears exaggerated, making them fickle and erratic. The Six's self-doubt and anxiety may make the Seven's planning and doing even less effective; and the Seven may find themselves burdened with an oppressive sense of duty and obligation, rather than feeling free. The Seven with an Eight wing may find their need for immediate satisfaction distorted by the Eight's

need for control, resulting in the Seven's potential for using others to their own advantage. The Seven may become haughty and superior toward others, influenced by the Eight's self-reliance and confidence; and the Seven may generally appear more aggressive and forceful in pushing their free-flowing ideas.



[Figure 4.14](#) Eight Wings

Safety Position : When safe, the Eight with a Seven wing may find their drive to act first and plan second balanced by the Seven's big-picture view. The Eight's "go it alone" knee-jerk will often be tempered by the Seven's willingness to engage people and share ideas, and they may find themselves generally happier with life and less hard-nosed and unrelenting. The Eight with a Nine wing will definitely appear softer and relaxed; they will be more willing to allow events to unfold, rather than make them unfold; and the Nine's natural inclusiveness will balance the Eight's single-mindedness and self-reliance.

Fear Position : When in fear, the Eight with a Seven wing may find themselves less self-aware of their impact on others; they may be more prone to addictive behaviors, and the Seven's tendency to think quickly and broadly may undermine the Eight's natural strategicness. The Eight with a Nine wing may cause the Eight to lose connection with their inner confidence and strength; the Nine's tendency to self-abandonment may push the Eight into neglecting themselves in favor of "getting it done." They may also become dissociated, depersonalizing their actions and disregarding their impact on others, sometimes cruelly.



[Figure 4.15](#) Nine Wings

Safety Position : When safe, the Nine with an Eight wing may appear more decisive, focused, and direct in their communication and action; the Eight’s sense of autonomy may balance the Nine’s natural tendency to merge with others; and the Eight’s boldness may give the Nine a sense of safety when facing potential conflict with others. The Nine with a One wing may find their easy-going outlook more structured and principled; the Nine may find themselves more willing to right what is wrong, rather than “settling” for things the way they are; and the Nine, in pursuit of peace, may do so with the real belief they are doing something to reform the world.

Fear Position: When in fear, the Nine with an Eight wing may find their repressed anger explosively and aggressively expressed. The Nine’s natural passive-aggressiveness may take on a more direct and hurtful character, and the Nine’s tendency to disassociate can become exaggerated when influenced by the Eight’s emotional coldness and dispassion. The Nine with a One wing may find themselves obsessing over whether they are doing something “right,” resulting in increased passive-aggressive behavior, procrastination, and tumult; the One influence of “should” and “ought” may derail the Nine’s focus on their true goals and desires, and the Nine’s already low-energy expressiveness may be further diminished by their fear of alienating others.

The Enneagram-Story Connection

Each Enneagram style will interact with its various wings when in fear or in safety. They will also often favor one over the other, but not always. Sometimes a

person will vacillate between their wings on a situational basis. But for storytelling, you do not have to worry about that. Your main concern will be whether your character is more in fear or more in safety. That situation is all you need to drive your decision-making as to behaviors and emotions for a scene. I will cover this more in depth in [Chapter 13](#), where the power of the Enneagram Wings will be demonstrated in their most useful function, i.e., that of writing great supporting characters. It is very important, as you read the various wing descriptions, that you understand that there are infinite ways of defining their qualities and characteristics. The previous descriptions are my take on defining these relationships, but the wording of my descriptions is secondary to the principle guiding the actual descriptions themselves. That principle is simply this: look to the essence of the styles themselves and let those guide your intuition of how best to formulate specific traits and behaviors for the wings. Perhaps the wings definitions will apply to your characters as-written, but probably not. What is more likely to be true is that the spirit of the definitions will apply, meaning that you should look at each of these wings and their descriptions as points of departure for your character development. Let the definitions work on you subconsciously, intuitively, and creatively and search between the lines for deeper connections and more accurate representations for your individual stories. As I said, maybe they will work as-written—great—but if they don't, that doesn't mean they don't apply to your work. What it means is you have to sit with them a bit and let them work on you to reveal the right, true, and natural expressions—within the spirit of the definitions—that will work best for your characters.

Closely reviewing and studying each of the graphics in this chapter, and understanding how they relate to and reflect one another, can give you powerful markers for discovering your own Enneagram style, but they can also assure (not guarantee; there are no guarantees) developing characters that ring true to readers and audiences. All of these images have a strong story connection that can help you navigate some of the thorniest areas of story development: character beginnings and endings, moral components, and emotional vulnerabilities, to name just a few. The more you can understand the essentials of the Enneagram as a system of human behavior and change, the deeper you can delve into the stories you want to tell and write characters who do more than just dangle their toes and feet in the clear water of the emotional shallow end, instead diving head first into

the murky water of the deep end, where the sirens of the deep wait to lure them to their fate.

5

Enneagram Character Styles



The Enneagram has traditionally been taught using an oral tradition—this has always been the most evocative method of knowledge transfer when teaching esoterica or the so-called “soft” sciences.

The Enneagram has always been handed down from teacher to student using a Socratic and oral narrative tradition. There is something visceral present when the Enneagram is spoken through stories, vignettes, and parables vs graphics, statistics, and charts. This is not to suggest that a more intellectually rigorous or scientific attitude toward learning the Enneagram is of less value—certainly not. Both approaches yield positive results for students and teachers. But there is something very human that happens when the narrative of the Enneagram gets spoken out loud, one person to another. That “something” is the same “something” that happens when we tell one another stories. This is one of the reasons why the Enneagram-Story Connection is so powerful and significant.

As you review these small narratives, look to yourself. Look for things that speak to your strengths, your weaknesses—to things you absolutely don't like about yourself, but also to things that you do like. It is that visceral feeling you are looking for as you read each Enneagram style's "little story." You want to feel them in your gut, or in your heart, or have them ring true in your mind's eye. Are these complete pictures of each Enneagram style? Absolutely not. But they are enough to give a balanced view of each style: what is likable, what is unlikable, and what is purely natural. The language may not be exactly the way you might describe yourself, but the ideas, concepts, and qualities should be similar.

While I'm suggesting you can use these summaries for self-identification and self-typing, know that these are really going to be useful in the story development process when you are trying to come up with the emotional core of a character. These are more "character Enneagram typing" summaries, rather than "personal Enneagram typing" summaries. Whether used for personal typing or for story development, these snippets of narrative will give you a strong gestalt awareness of the essences of each Enneagram style.



What We Like About Ones : Eye for detail, keep word, responsible, diligent, highly principled, know how things are done, powerfully discerning.

What We Don't Like About Ones : Judgmental, resentful, controlling, hyper-critical, perfectionists, rigid.

Key Motivations : Do it right because the rules say so, self-justification, to be beyond criticism themselves, to have

integrity.

How a One Would Tell Their Story: “Growing up, I had a negative relationship with my father. You’re supposed to like your parents; it’s the correct thing to do. Especially when you follow their rules and behave properly. And I did, perfectly—in my opinion. There were very clear expectations of me growing up; I wrote them down. I still have the list. A long list. Even today I keep lists. Safer, I think, so you can point out when others don’t follow directions properly. You see, it’s easy for me to see what needs to be done, and what’s right or wrong. Improving things comes naturally to me, so I must hold myself to a higher standard. I feel responsible to meet that standard. Consequently, I can be demanding, critical, and diligent as I pursue a task to its right and correct end. I have to admit that sometimes it’s like I have a little voice in me that is constantly reminding me of what I’m doing bad or wrong. Even so, I doubt there is anything more beautiful than perfection, so I strive for this aesthetic and expect those close to me to do the same. I say what I mean, and I do what I say. I expect the same in return. Act irresponsibly or unfairly and you will get onto one of my lists, and not one you want to be on. I won’t necessarily show my resent and disgust, but that’s what’s going on inside me.”



What We Like About Twos : Real interest in others, good networkers, empathic, motivate others, service oriented, genuinely nice.

What We Don't Like About Twos : Needy, clingy, orchestrate others, hidden agendas, hostile, possessive.

Key Motivations : Want to be loved, appreciated/needed, to get others to respond to them positively.

How a Two Would Tell Their Story : “Growing up, I had an ambivalent relationship with my father; he just didn't make much of an impression either way. Fortunately, that didn't affect my natural talent for being responsive to the needs of other people. I just really love being of service, especially when it results in others being productive and successful. I really do have a genuine interest in people. I'm so sensitive to it that I can even pick out a stranger in a crowd in need of help. It's like they're waving an invisible flag crying for help, and only I can see it. Good relationships matter, and I strive to build them. I think it is my innate warmth, friendliness, and generosity that makes it so easy for others to let me give to them. I have to say, though, that when someone refuses my help, and I know they need it, I can get frightened, feel unappreciated, or even hostile. I have been known to work around people's refusals of my assistance, sometimes going behind their backs to help them, or convincing others to do so for me. It's true, I can be adamant, even when my own situation is compromised, or when I might need some help.”



What We Like About Threes : Efficient, goal oriented, know how to get things done, successful, quick on their feet, authentic, winners.

What We Don't Like About Threes : Vain, phony, crave approval, phobic about failure, bad losers, resentful of others.

Key Motivations : Need affirmation to distinguish themselves from others, crave attention to impress others, want to look good.

How a Three Would Tell Their Story : “I was Mommy’s favorite. Needless to say, we got along great all through childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Dad was good, but Mom was great. Probably because I succeeded at pretty much everything she had me do. And she had me hopping ballet, soccer, glee club, swim team, acting club, you get the idea. And I was either president or the star performer in all of them. Talk about positive reinforcement. I thrived on approval, and that is true right up to today. More than anything else, winning and achievement gives me the most satisfaction. Striving to be the best is nice, but being the best is the best. If I’ve learned anything, it’s that a person’s value is really based on how impressive their resume is—the real resume, not the fake one everyone gives to potential employers. Accomplishments speak louder than dreams or wishes. Because I’m so goal oriented, I often postpone taking care of my own emotional life in order to get real work done. How my successes look is important to me, so I don’t take kindly to people who might slack off and make me look bad. I work well with others, but it’s still a competition, one I’m intent on winning.”



What We Like About Fours : Sensitive, aesthetic, have a deep ability to connect emotionally, highly authentic, emotionally

expressive, inquiring.

What We Don't Like About Fours : Self-absorbed, self-referencing, melodramatic, needy, always longing, never having.

Key Motivations : To be special, to express themselves authentically, self-protective of their core emotions, find a rescuer.

How a Four Would Tell Their Story : “Sadly, I had a bad relationship with both my parents. I just never connected with them deeply enough, I guess. It always felt that something was wrong or missing, maybe with me, I don't know (deep sigh). I've always tried to create real and meaningful relationships, but frankly, people just don't “get” me. This makes me sad and even angry at times, but I just keep searching out there for the answer. I'll find it—someday (deep sigh). I'm highly sensitive to the emotional states of others and am happiest when I can connect deeply with someone, even in a workplace setting. Truth be told, I find being sad strangely comforting. I love the feeling of longing-to-long. There's a specialness in longing, in the unavailable, and in the far-away promise of things. Keep the ordinary of life; give me the special life.”



What We Like About Fives : Smart, analytic, systematic, fast decision makers, cautious, visionaries.

What We Don't Like About Fives : Withdrawn, paranoid, greedy with information, aloof, detached emotionally.

Key Motivations : To possess knowledge, to understand how the environment works, to defend the emotional self with intellect.

How a Five Would Tell Their Story : “I was ambivalent toward both my parents growing up. Mixed feelings to be sure. Bottom line: I couldn’t rely on either of them. So, I learned, as a kid, to trust my keen sense of analysis and my natural smarts to figure out how my world worked and got through life by using my mind and not my emotions. This serves me well, even today. I prefer to watch situations unfold, rather than get sucked into them; being detached makes it easier to pick my battles. I do better alone than with others, and rarely get bored in my own company. But I also enjoy interacting with people, when they don’t make excessive demands on my time or resources or get too emotional—which is most of the time unfortunately. I have to admit, one of my favorite statements is, ‘The world would be a great place, if it wasn’t for all the darn people mucking everything up.’ I want a simple and thoughtful life and try to be as self-contained as possible. I can get very siloed, this is true, but just leave me alone to figure things out and I just might surprise you with my wisdom and vision when I come out of my ivory tower. So, be patient; I’m worth the wait.”



What We Like About Sixes : Critical thinkers, proactive, loyal, courageous when it counts, good allies, troubleshooters, strategic thinkers.

What We Don’t Like About Sixes : Catastrophize, always look for worst-case scenarios, worry, doubt, frozen fear, nay-sayers, distrustful of authority.

Key Motivations : Looking for the safe and secure, to feel supported, to find community and belonging.

How a Six Would Tell Their Story : “I had a great relationship with my father. Mother was nice, but Dad was the one I trusted most. This might be the reason why I am so distrustful of authority in general; because so few seem as worthy of my trust as my father. Trusting others is a big issue for me, and I definitely operate from the idea, “untrustworthy until proven otherwise.” But, once you win my trust, I’m the best friend you’ll ever have. Safety and security are always in the forefront of my thinking, feeling, and action. Before making choices, when danger is present, I will scan the horizon for all possible scenarios that might go wrong, often dwelling on worst-case. This can cripple my mental and emotional processes, and freeze me in fear, worry, and doubt. But normally I am insightful, intuitive, sharp-minded, and highly strategic in my approach to life. Sometimes the worry and doubt that lurks constantly under the surface can be relieved by my confronting danger before it confronts me, but usually I do my best just to avoid it by having a solid plan, before my security is threatened. Be prepared, have a plan, and only trust those who earn it.”



What We Like About Sevens : Enthusiastic, fun-loving, enjoy life, lively, engaging, full of ideas, fast thinkers, glass-half-full people, synthesizing minds.

What We Don't Like About Sevens : Addictive, obsessive, “do” before thinking, unfocused, can be scattered and judgmental.

Key Motivations : Crave freedom/happiness, don't want to miss anything life has to offer, to keep distracted/busy, to

avoid/discharge pain.

How a Seven Would Tell Their Story : “Mother and I didn’t get along. You could say we had a negative relationship. I don’t like to talk about it, it’s too painful. What I do like to talk about is just about anything that’s exciting, fun, or fascinating. My mind runs in high gear, ideas fly, and I feel energized and happy when I can bring disparate ideas together into a big picture that works. My natural optimism and freeform thinking can make me appear flighty to some, but the truth is I’ve already run through most scenarios when everyone else is still working on just one. I’m not flighty—I’m fast. The problem is I get bored with routine or predictable tasks. I need variety and ‘the new’ in order to maintain my energy to help others stay enthusiastic and engaged. I have lots of super-close friends; you can’t have too many of those. And when things get uncomfortable, painful, or rocky, I shift my attention to pleasurable things and the future possibilities over the horizon. You never know what big thing is waiting out there for you, so don’t dwell on the pain of life. That’s why I like lots of options and do my best to never be boxed in by rules or boundaries. Life is too short—so, have fun.”



What We Like About Eights : Self-confident, decisive, protective of the weak, leaders, champions, highly developed sense of justice, fair minded.

What We Don’t Like About Eights : Dictatorial, dismissive, willful, confrontational, punishing anger.

Key Motivations : To be self-reliant, to not show weakness, to be important in their world, to protect the defenseless.

How an Eight Would Tell Their Story : “I had a hate/love relationship with both my parents. Sometimes they were the best; other times, I wanted to just run away and start over with new ones. I’m sure this is why I developed such a high sense of independence and self-reliance. I found that being strong, honest, responsible, and dependable was a recipe for success in life, even at a young age. Take on life face-to-face, head-on. I like that quality in myself, and I like that in others. I have a highly developed sense for when people are lying to me or being deceitful. This is the kiss of death. I will cut you off at the knees and leave you for the flies, so don’t even go there. But if you are innocent or naive, I will defend and protect you. I will be a champion when it’s called for, or a dictator when that is called for. I have no problem stepping in, rewriting all the rules, and taking absolute control from incompetent people, or worse, those abusing power. I have no problem showing you my rage and anger, especially around injustice, but I have little tolerance for weakness or phony vulnerability in others. Even with all my strength and self-reliance, I have a soft, gooey center that betrays my own vulnerability, which I protect and keep invisible. Few get to see that side of me, but if I let you in, then you are more important to me than you know.”



What We Like About Nines : Good listeners, flexible, compromising, accepting, can find the common ground, consensus builders, peacemakers.

What We Don't Like About Nines : Self-abandoning, procrastinating, avoidant, passive-aggressive, easily distracted, merging.

Key Motivations : Avoidance of conflict and tension, to maintain homeostasis of life, to find peace.

How a Nine Would Tell Their Story : “I was lucky as a kid; I actually had a positive relationship with both my parents. We got along. That feeling—getting along, i.e., peace—is one I value more than anything else. I’m good at seeing all sides of a situation and have a natural talent for helping people resolve their differences. I can find a common ground from which to resolve conflict, and this brings me a true sense of my own inner peace when I accomplish it. I can take any side in a discussion, and some see this as indecisive or craven, but it actually helps me to be nonjudgmental of others and move the conversation. I hate conflict, and I will sometimes go to extreme lengths to avoid it, especially when directed at me personally. When faced with conflict I can sometimes withdraw from others and become invisible, to the point of abandoning my own needs and well-being; or so identify with another person’s positivity that I lose myself in their energy. I can be easily distracted and can develop blinders when engrossed in activities that bring me pleasure and forget my priorities and immediate responsibilities. Even so, I am an authentically nice person, easygoing, and likable, and all I really want is to have a harmonious and serene life.”

In many ways, the nine narratives offered here, along with their accompanying data, constitute the basic building blocks of any character you might want to create. If you never learned another thing about the Enneagram, or about the function of character development itself, these

little stories of very flawed and complicated people would serve you well in any development efforts. Fortunately, there is much more coming your way that will add to and augment these basic building blocks. As we layer on more nuance, depth, and complexity, you will see that the Enneagram-Story Connection goes way beyond pure character development and embraces the full dimensions of story development and storytelling themselves.

6

Character Communication Styles



Most writers end up with characters who all sound and talk the same. The Enneagram can show you how to write original, unique, and identifiable characters that stand out from the crowd.

Given the depth of the Enneagram that we have already uncovered, it should come as no surprise that each of the nine Enneagram styles has their own unique patterns of communication. Human communication can be broken down into many parts and pieces, as it is a complex process involving the sending and receiving of information. The sender of communication has his/her own set of biases, as does the receiver. These biases are all consistent with sender-receiver core Enneagram styles and conform to the established Enneagram behaviors and traits that we have identified in earlier chapters. For our purposes, we are concerned with three main components of communication relevant to storytelling and how characters might communicate with one another in a story: communication *blind spots* , *speaking styles* , and *distortion filters* :

- Blind Spots : Unconscious behaviors or unintentional information that we telegraph to others that is visible to them but invisible to us. For fictional characters, this usually takes the form of specific behaviors that unintentionally reveal character.
 - Speaking Style : Established patterns of word choices, rhetorical displays, or modes of speech that not only transmit information but also identify how we talk. Speaking style also includes a *speaking attitude* that sets an emotional tone that can encourage or discourage communication. Think of someone who is aggressive, opinionated, and hostile in their speaking style vs someone who is quiet, accommodating, and open-minded when speaking. The first one discourages communication, while the second encourages it.
 - Distortion Filters : Unconscious beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, or feelings that make assumptions or create mental models that act to distort how we hear what others communicate.
-

The Nine Enneagram Communication Styles



Blind Spots : Appear critical, impatient, or angry. Tenacious regarding their own opinions.

Speaking Style : Precise, direct, exacting, concise, and detailed. Share task-related thoughts. Use words such as *should* , *ought* , *must* , *correct* , *excellent* , *good* , *right* , and *wrong* . React quickly to ideas and are defensive if criticized.

Speaking Attitude : Self-constrained, unblemished, directive, inflexible, confident, stolid.

Distortion Filters : Being criticized by someone else. Preoccupation with their own ideas. Whether, in the One's view, others are behaving correctly and responsibly.



Blind Spots : A secondary or hidden intention may lie beneath their generosity, helpfulness, and attention giving. If uninterested in the other person, they disengage quickly.

Speaking Style : Ask questions, give compliments, focus on content of another person. Few references to self. Angry or complaining when they dislike what others say.

Speaking Attitude : Soft-spoken, enticing, clingy, flirtatious, flattering, attentive.

Distortion Filters : Whether the other person likes them. Whether they like the other person. Whether they want to help the other person. The degree of influence the other person has. If the other person is dangerous to someone they value.



Blind Spots : Impatient with others if they perceive them as not capable. Avoid discussing their own failings. Appear driven. Seem to rush to dismiss others.

Speaking Style : Clear, efficient, logical, and well-conceived. Quick other feet. Avoid topics in which they have limited information. Avoid topics that reflect negatively on them. Use concrete examples. Impatient with lengthy conversations.

Speaking Attitude : Abrupt, dismissive, superficial, stony, high energy, slippery.

Distortion Filters : Whether the information will make them look good. Whether the information will interfere with their goal achievement. The apparent confidence and competence of the other person.



Blind Spots : Pull the conversation back to themselves using self-referencing behavior. Need to fully complete a conversation even when the other person no longer wants to discuss an issue. May appear overly dramatic or contrived.

Speaking Style : Use words like *I* , *me* , *my* , and *mine* frequently. Talk about self. Discuss feelings. Share personal and/or painful stories. Ask personal questions.

Speaking Attitude : Fluid, exaggerated, mercurial, emotionally charged, pensive, wistful, longing.

Distortion Filters : Personal rejection. Being slighted or demeaned. Not wanting to appear defective. Being misunderstood.



Blind Spots : May not exhibit warmth. May appear aloof or remote. May say too much and lose listeners. May use too few words and so may not be understood by others. May appear condescending or elitist.

Speaking Style : Speak tersely or in lengthy discourse. Highly selective word choices. Limited sharing of personal information. Share thoughts rather than feelings.

Speaking Attitude : Detached, aloof, self-contained, thorny, intellectual, distant, off-putting.

Distortion Filters : Other's demands and expectations. Feeling inadequate or unprepared. Intense emotions from others. Trust in the other person to maintain privacy. Physical proximity that feels too close.



Blind Spots : Negative scenarios appear to others as negativism, pessimism, and a “can’t do” attitude. Self-doubt and worry can cause others to question the Six’s competence. No matter how hard the Six tries to mask the worry, it is still apparent.

Speaking Style : Starts with analytical comments. Alternates syncopated, hesitant speech with bold, confident speech. Discusses worries, concerns, and “what ifs.”

Speaking Attitude : Mentally energetic, hyper-vigilant, uptight, contrarian, diagnostic, on guard.

Distortion Filters : Whether others’ use of authority is proper or improper. Projection of thoughts and feelings onto the other person. Issues of trust related to the other person.



Blind Spots : May not have absorbed all the information and knowledge they believe they have mastered. Fail to see that their own behavior may cause others to take them less seriously. Constant shifting of ideas and body language is distracting to others.

Speaking Style : Quick and spontaneous, with words released in a flurry. Tells engaging stories. Shifts from topic to topic. Upbeat, charming, avoids negative topics about themselves. Reframes negative information.

Speaking Attitude : Rapid moving, light and unthreatening, upbeat, unpredictable, scattered, distracting.

Distortion Filters : Having their competence demeaned. Think they know what the other person is going to say, so they stop listening. The possibility of having limits placed on them. Being forced into a long-term commitment they do not want.



Blind Spots : Many people are intimidated by them. Their energy is far stronger than they realize, even when they are holding back. Not everyone can grasp the big picture as quickly as they can. Their vulnerability may show when they are not aware of it.

Speaking Style : Statements designed to structure or control a situation. Impatient with detail. Raise the intensity of their language until they get a response from the other person. May display anger directly. May use profanity or body-based humor. May say very little. Blame others if they feel blamed.

Speaking Attitude : Intense, directive, bossy, terse, powerful, intimidating, in control, strategic, authoritative, confrontative.

Distortion Filters : Protecting others the Eight believes truly need protection. Weakness in others. Control issues. Truthfulness and feeling blamed.



Blind Spots : Prolonged explanations cause the listener to lose interest. Present multiple viewpoints, which negatively affects their degree of influence and possibly their credibility. Fail to make true wants known to others.

Speaking Style : Give highly detailed information in a sequential style. Make the effort to be fair and present all sides. May say yes but mean no. Use agreeing words, such as *yes* , *uh-huh* , *okay* as filler for actual communication.

Speaking Attitude : Deliberate, slow, non-confrontational, easy going, incessant questioning, disengaging, collegial.

Distortion Filters : Demands on them to change or do something. Being criticized, ignored, or put down. Someone having an opposing view to their own. The possibility that anger from another person will be directed at them.

(Partially excerpted from *Bringing Out the Best in Yourself at Work: How to Use the Enneagram System for Success* (McGraw Hill, 2004) by Ginger Lapid-Bogda, PhD; character examples partially referenced from *Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0: How to See Personality Styles in the Movies, 3rd Ed* . (The Changeworks, 2011) by Thomas Condon.)

The Enneagram-Story Connection

When it comes to communication, all stories need two things: communication and miscommunication. Communication is the simple transfer of information that moves situations or story moments forward in the narrative through-line. For example, in order to get from A to B, the protagonist needs to talk to the grizzled old wizard and find out the secret words to use to open the magic door. The information is given, the door is opened by the protagonist, and the story moves to the next moment that will establish some new story milestone. Or, the wizard is hard of hearing and thinks the protagonist is asking for something else and gives the wrong information (intentionally or unintentionally), and the consequences are dire and life-threatening for the protagonist when the wrong words explode the door and havoc reigns.

Maybe the protagonist was an Enneagram Seven and was distracted with their own thoughts, and so misheard the wizard's instructions, thus bringing ruin down upon them, all because of his communication style; or perhaps he was an Enneagram Six who distrusted the wizard out of hand because he was an authority figure unworthy of trust, and so decided that he would experiment with his own set of secret words, resulting in unexpected and unpleasant consequences.

When communication and miscommunication are based on the nine Ennea-gram communication styles, story moments can become more than mere situational complications with predictable or linear solutions (i.e., problem solved or not); they become moments based in characterological peccadilloes that point to, and are dependent upon, the Enneagram nature of human behavior. This is a critical relationship for writing characters that are engaging and entertaining, because how they communicate, or miscommunicate, makes all the difference on the page when the reader is looking for engagement and entertainment.

In addition, the nine Enneagram communication styles may not help you structure your story, but they will help you to solve the big problem stated in the opening quote for this chapter, i.e., the problem of having all your

characters sounding and speaking alike. The Enneagram communication styles can direct you how to design consistent dialogue that reflects the actual behaviors driving each of the characters in any story. Your verbal and nonverbal communication will “ring true” with readers or audiences because they will have heard these nine patterns of communication in their daily lives from the people around them at home, in school, or at work. That’s what “ring true” is all about when you are trying to develop characters. You want your characters to be identifiable and relatable to your readers.

By basing their communication styles on an Enneagram foundation, you will assure (not guarantee; there are no guarantees) that readers will recognize themselves, and others, in those characters, and you will avoid falling into the black hole of bland, repetitive, and unoriginal character communication. Instead, you will create dramatic or comedic moments that not only communicate information but also open windows into individual character motivations, fears, and desires. In short, character communication becomes another development tool that you can use as a writer to deepen your story, your relationship with your characters, and your reader’s connection to you and the story being told.

7

Character Conflict Styles



Conflict is the main source of comedy and drama in all storytelling, and the Enneagram points your nose to the nine deepest pools of conflict that all characters resource when their heckles get raised, and they get ready to rumble.

William Faulkner said, “The only thing worth writing about is the human heart in conflict with itself.” A brilliant and poetic observation, and one that will forever and always be true. I would only add one caveat: conflict with oneself, regardless of the organ in conflict, is not enough. I don’t believe Faulkner would disagree with this caveat one bit. I don’t believe he was talking about having a person sitting alone in an empty room internally conflicted in her own heart, with that being enough to carry a story. His insight was about the driver inside any character that moves them into conflict with their own impulses, and then into conflict with an external world with its own competing impulses. Many writing gurus distinguish between internal and external conflict, as though there is some dichotomy

that a writer can use to parse how conflict will play out in a story. I believe this is unproductive and certainly at odds (dare I say in conflict) with the spirit of Faulkner’s sentiment.

There is internal and external conflict, but they are the same conflict-coin, just different sides. If you have a story, then you must have both internal and external conflict. You will have no choice in the matter; the story will dictate this through its structure. You might get the privilege of flipping the coin a few times and focusing on whichever side lands face up, but you’ll inevitably be writing both internal and external conflict. The two cannot be separated. This is why when writers say they are writing an “internal” vs “external” conflict story, meaning they have a protagonist focused more on their navel than the external world, they thus make this distinction. It is a false dichotomy. If you have a story, you will have both.

Internal conflict, that human heart at war with itself, is always sourced from the moral component of the protagonist, which *always* finds its expression in the external world of the protagonist through relationships with other human hearts. I will discuss this crucial story structure element, in relation to the Enneagram, in [Chapter 11](#) . Suffice to say here that the world of conflict for any protagonist is always a multidimensional world of inner-life clashing with an external world that throws up obstacles and complications that make the internal war all that more difficult and consequential. A character’s inner conflict has no dramatic meaning unless it finds expression on the page in the external world of the story through behavior and human relationships. This speaks to the nature of dramatic conflict itself: *characters overcoming obstacles as they all strive to resolve their heart’s desires—essentially opposing desires—and where each has a personal stake in the outcome of the conflict* .

The Pinch-Crunch Conflict Model for Writers

Understanding the nature of dramatic conflict is one thing, but at some point, you have to implement conflict in an actual story. To be sure, there are countless tools available in the writing how-to marketplace designed to aid in solving this practical problem. But you don't have to search high and low for the perfect tool to create conflict in a story. It turns out that real life reveals the best tool available for modeling how human beings "do" conflict. It is called the pinch-crunch conflict model. It also turns out that the Enneagram system conforms to this model, making it elegantly utilitarian for writers and storytellers.

Based on "Planned Renegotiation: A Norm-setting O[rganizational] D[evelopment] Intervention," developed by John J. Sherwood and John C. Glidewell (1973, 1975) and expanded by John Sherwood and John Scherer (1975), the pinch-crunch conflict model is based on the concept that social interactions—between persons, within a group, inside an organization, or involving an entire community—rarely go as planned but can still be salvaged should relations go south, so long as intervention can occur before things crunch into conflict.

In her groundbreaking work using the Enneagram in organizations, Dr. Ginger Lapid-Bogda, PhD, a leading Enneagram teacher and author and a master organizational development consultant, describes the pinch-crunch conflict model as follows (paraphrasing):

- Start-Up (Hope) : Everyone starts a relationship, communication, or professional-personal interaction from a position of hope, assuming things will go well and that individuals involved will demonstrate goodwill. The start-up period usually lasts around three months and is the time to share expectations, including areas in which pinches may occur. But this rarely happens.
- Grace (Honeymoon) : Pinches typically do not occur in the first part of a new relationship, because everyone is trying to create a good impression and is acting in good faith. But over time, minor disruptions or pinches arise, knowingly or unknowingly inflicted by the parties.
- Irritation (Pinch) : Anger triggers, or "pinches," occur when one person violates another person's expectations. Pinches can be felt as knots in the stomach, or small jolts in the head, or pangs in the chest. Along with the pinching sensation comes a thought that says *this person should not have done that!* And a feeling of hurt, anger, or fear. Most people don't say or do anything—yet—preferring to hope the other's bad behavior will abate

and worry that sharing our displeasure might just make things worse, i.e., generate conflict.

- Conflict (Crunch) : As pinches begin to accumulate, they change from irritation into a conflict reaction called a “crunch.” Feelings become more heated, sensitivities heightened, and the risks inherent in a discussion of the brewing conflict rise exponentially. While it usually takes at least three pinches to create a crunch, sometimes it can be less. If pinches are not addressed early in the relationship, it is far more likely to become a major disruption. When expectations and pinches are discussed early on, the parties have more choice and control over how they react and behave when anyone feels pinched. When resolutions of conflict are left until the problem has reached the crunch stage, emotions and tensions are higher, more issues have built up, and the situation becomes more stressful and higher risk. It is essential to raise issues at the crunch point.
- Start-Over (Hostility) : Unresolved conflict—conflict that is either avoided or handled ineffectively—usually damages the individuals involved. People can refuse to work together anymore, or quit jobs, or end relationships. Unresolved conflict negatively affects everyone, and the pain it causes can often only be relieved by leaving the situation (literally or figuratively), or by starting over. If people start over, they had better talk about how they got into this mess in the first place, or they will just repeat the pinch-crunch pattern.

(excerpted from *Enneagram Communication Tool* (2004), by Dr. Ginger Lapid-Bogda, PhD)

This is how we do conflict in relationships, personal and professional. It’s human, it’s predictable, and it’s pure Enneagram. It should be obvious, looking at how this unfolds in life, that the same process should take place in fictional stories. In good stories, the characters pinch and crunch each other constantly, and the consequences are never pretty. In life, the strategy of keeping communication lines open, talking through pinch points and crunch moments, serves to dissipate future conflict situations and to keep things harmonious and workable. Emotionally intelligent people learn how to talk to one another and thereby avoid crunching themselves into hostile and calamitous situations (or at least they try). Not so in storytelling. You don’t want your characters working things out too early. You want them beating the emotional crap out of one another so that everyone is pinching everyone else, and crunches explode like bombs all over the story space.

Emotionally savvy writers intuitively know how to do this; they recognize the pinch-crunch dynamic in their own lives, and so can translate it into dramatic situations. But many writers are not conscious of this

conflict model and often find themselves grasping for straws trying to figure out how people can be in conflict, and what that will look like on the page. Because they are unfamiliar with pinches and crunches, most often characters are set against one another in the form of arguments, and this is seen as conflict. Having an argument is not being in conflict. Arguments might be loud and even get physical, but they are not what I described earlier: *characters overcoming obstacles as they all strive to resolve their heart's desires—essentially opposing desires—and where each has a personal stake in the outcome of the conflict* .

I mentioned a bit ago that the pinch-crunch model is pure Enneagram, and so this is the case. Pinches and crunches are human behavior, and we all do them. The Enneagram is a model of human behavior, and this includes conflict behavior. All nine Enneagram styles have favored ways in which they are pinched, resulting in corresponding pinch behaviors. I call these *conflict buttons* . If you push specific buttons for any one Enneagram style, you will elicit specific behaviors favored by them in conflict situations. The pinch-crunch conflict model, when combined with Enneagram insights into conflict behavior, is thus a powerful blueprint for guiding you to the most effective character development strategies when designing conflicted relationships in your stories. The Enneagram and the pinch-crunch model give you a solid starting point from which to draw realistic and believable human reactions to conflict that readers will recognize and buy into, saving you from second guessing or reducing real conflict down to manageable (but dull) arguments that kick up a lot of dust but get little done in terms of moving a plot forward.

Next, I offer descriptions of the common pinches and pinch behaviors for each of the nine Enneagram styles. But before you look these over, it is important to know that when it comes to pinches and pinch behaviors, you are not locked into the limited list the Enneagram suggests. In other words, you get to make stuff up if you need to. Later in the chapter, you will see how this plays out with our detailed example using one of the characters from J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

There are common pinches, which are the conflict buttons common to each style, but there are *uncommon pinches* as well. Uncommon pinches are those pinches you just make up because you want them as part of your character's makeup. You will always have the common pinches and pinch behaviors at your disposal, because they are always a part of the conflict style for any Enneagram you choose for a character. If you don't have a clue what to pinch, or how a pinched character will behave, you can reliably fall back on the listed pinches and behaviors. But, invariably (as is the case with the example later), as the writer you will want to add to this list. Nothing stops you from adding individual pinches and behaviors particular to your character, be they a protagonist, opponent, or supporting character.

The thing you have to be conscious of, however, is that the uncommon pinches you create should be as consistent with the character's Enneagram style as possible, so that they ring true and do not give the reader the feeling that they have just been tacked on, applied out of the blue. Once again, look at the example following the conflict styles list, and use it as a guide for how this can be done.

The Nine Enneagram Conflict Styles



Common Pinches : Being criticized. Another's lack of follow-through. Another's non-collaborative changes to a plan. Feeling deceived.

Pinch Behaviors : Curt statements. Accusations related to other issues. Nonverbal cues of anger. Saying nothing.



Common Pinches : Being taken for granted. Feeling unappreciated. Not being heard.

Pinch Behaviors : Keep feelings to themselves for long periods. Intensely emotional when they do say something. Think through what they will say in advance, which will include how they feel, why they feel that way, and what they believe the other person has done wrong.



Common Pinches : Being put in a position of likely failure. Not looking good professionally. Being blamed for the poor work of others. Not receiving credit for work.

Pinch Behaviors : Ask a short sequence of structured questions. Unlikely to say that they are upset. Body language unlikely to give clues. Over time, tone of voice becomes sharp. Over time, sentences become clipped.



Common Pinches : Being ignored or slighted. Being asked to do something contrary to personal values. An event that elicits the

Four's envy.

Pinch Behaviors : May say something in blunt way. Become extremely quiet. Experience multiple feelings simultaneously and intensely. Excessively analyze the situation in order to understand. Hold on to feelings for long periods of time.



Common Pinches : Breaking confidences. Being surprised. Dishonesty. Out-of-control situations. Overwhelming tasks.

Pinch Behaviors : Say little. Pull back but may not show this outwardly. Retain the experience mentally. May express anger as outrage during an intense pinch or during a crunch.



Common Pinches : Pressure. Lack of genuineness. Lack of commitment. Abusive authority.

Pinch Behaviors : May withdraw. Engage in intensive analysis. May be highly reactive. Conjecture and project own thoughts, feelings, and motivations onto the other person.



Common Pinches : Boring and mundane tasks. Feeling dismissed or not taken seriously. Unjust criticism.

Pinch Behaviors : Avoid the situation by thinking of pleasurable alternatives. Rationalize their own behavior. Blame or condemn others.



Common Pinches : Injustice. Not dealing directly with the issues. Others not taking responsibility for their own behavior. Being blindsided. Another's lack of truthfulness.

Pinch Behaviors : Feel surges of anger that propel them to action. Sift and sort information and feelings quickly. Avoid feeling vulnerable or out of control, if possible. Seek the counsel of individuals they trust or respect. Dismiss and discard those for whom he or she lacks respect.



Common Pinches : Disruption of peace and harmony. Being told what to do. Feeling ignored. Rudeness in others. Overt hostility. Feeling taken advantage of. Being confronted. Not feeling supported.

Pinch Behaviors : Say nothing. Facial tension may give a slight indication of anger. May be unaware of own anger. May displace anger onto someone not involved. Anger may remain with them for periods of time.

(Partially excerpted from Bringing Out the Best in Yourself at Work: How to Use the Enneagram System for Success (McGraw Hill, 2004) by Ginger Lapid-Bogda, PhD.)

Example of Pinches and Crunches in the Movies



EXAMPLE *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*
(Warner Bros., 2007)

Character Name : Dolores Umbridge (Imelda Staunton)

Character Enneagram : One

Common Pinches : Being criticized, non-collaborative changes to a plan.

Uncommon Pinches : Loyalty, lack of order, hating children.

Common Pinch Behavior : Curt statements, accusations related to other issues, nonverbal cues of anger.

Uncommon Pinch Behavior : Cruelty, intimidation, nervous laughter.

Pinch #1 : Dolores and Harry have their first big row. A fun and light-hearted class is immediately pulled into proper order when Dolores walks in and destroys an innocent piece of magical distraction, a paper bird that can fly. She then establishes her intimidating authority by making it clear the Dark Arts must be studied abstractly, not by actual practice, and this is the will of the Ministry of Magic. But she quickly

comes into conflict, first with Hermione, then with Harry, who talks over her and is disobedient and contrarian on the issue of Cedric Diggory's death and Voldemort's existence. Dolores is pinched and pinched, finding herself challenged, and then finally snaps (a small crunch) when she orders Harry to detention.

Common Pinch "Conflict Button" Pushed : Being criticized.

Uncommon Pinch "Conflict Button" Pushed : Lack of order.

Common Pinch Behavior : Curt statements.

Uncommon Pinch Behavior : Intimidation, nervous laughter.

* * *

Pinch #2 : Professor Minerva McGonagall confronts Dolores on the steps leading to the cavernous dining room and they get into an argument about Dolores's flaunting Hogwarts disciplinary standards. They spar on the steps, each moving up one step to lord over the other as they yell back and forth. McGonagall finally goes too far when she calls out Dolores's methods as medieval. Dolores tells Minerva she is a tolerant woman but will not tolerate disloyalty, and that questioning her practices is the same as questioning the Minister of Magic himself. She then rattles off multiple concerns about Hogwarts that have nothing to do with their original issue and uses this as her way to get her one-upmanship over McGonagall.

Common Pinch "Conflict Button" Pushed : Being criticized.

Uncommon Pinch "Conflict Button" Pushed : Loyalty.

Common Pinch Behavior : Curt statements, accusations related to other issues.

Uncommon Pinch Behavior : Intimidation.

* * *

Pinch #3 : Fred and George Weasley disrupt the OWLs when they fly into the exam room on broomsticks and light fireworks. Fred and George wreak havoc on the room, scattering papers, books, and students, and then let loose their big trick—a massive dragon-head firecracker that chases Dolores out into the hall, “biting” down on her and letting loose a storm of more fireworks that obliterate the Hogwarts rules and regulation plaques she had Filch nail to the walls outside the exam room.

Common Pinch “Conflict Button” Pushed : Being criticized; non-collaborative changes to a plan. Clearly theirs was an act of disrespect and was a public statement by the Weasley brothers about how much they didn’t like her. Dolores’s plan was to have an orderly and quiet exam; everyone knew this, but the Weasleys made no attempt to warn her (or anyone) of their planned disruption. Of course, they would never have done so, as that would have spoiled the whole point of the prank.

Uncommon Pinch “Conflict Button” Pushed : Loyalty, need for order. As a One, Dolores saw the incident as a violation of trust and disloyalty, as she was “quite plain” in her expectations of their group and individual behavior during the test. And, clearly, the chaos created by the boys violated her sense of order.

Common Pinch Behavior : Curt statements, accusations related to other issues.

Uncommon Pinch Behavior : Cruelty. This incident led to an increase in her application of punishment, especially toward Harry Potter.

* * *

Crunch Moment : After capturing Harry, Hermione, Ron, and the other resistors, Dolores tries to use an illegal spell to force Harry to tell her what she wants to know but finds herself put

off by an uncooperative Snape and an uncooperative Harry. She senses deceit is thick in the air, and when she moves to torture Harry for the truth, Hermione continues the misdirection by suggesting they can show her Dumbledore's "secret weapon." She demands to be taken to it, which Harry et al. agree to do. In the Forbidden Forest, they lead Dolores closer and closer to the "secret weapon"—which is no weapon at all, but a simple-minded giant supposedly waiting innocently for them deep in the forest. When they get to the spot, Dolores realizes she has been played and shows her true colors as she tells them the truth about herself, namely that she has always hated children. When the centaurs arrive, she attacks them and screams that she will have order, just as all hell breaks loose and she is undone by the gentle giant and handed over to the centaurs to an uncertain fate.

Common Pinch "Conflict Button" Pushed : Being deceived.

Uncommon Pinch "Conflict Button" Pushed : Loyalty, hating children.

Common Pinch Behavior : Curt statements.

Uncommon Pinch Behavior : Cruelty, intimidation.

Examples Summary : There were obviously more than three pinches for the Dolores Umbridge character throughout the book and the movie, so don't get the impression that the three used here are all that were present in the narrative. Remember the real-life statistic regarding pinches: it usually takes three to create a crunch. Sometimes fewer, sometimes more—it's up to you. In this case, there were only a few pinch categories and pinch behaviors operating with this character, but they were more than enough to create a clear conflict style and plenty of dramatic interactions as each pinch and pinch behavior drew her closer to the crunch point. You don't need a lot of these

pinches and related behaviors; you only need enough of them to establish a clear pattern of emotional reaction and response when under threat from the outside world.

The creative challenge will lie in coming up with innovative and dramatically consistent ways to show the conflict style of the character without getting repetitive, scene after scene. In this case, the author was clearly capable of doing a lot with a little. The central takeaway here is that when you don't know where to begin with building conflict between characters, the pinch-crunch model and the Enneagram give you a strong foundation from which you can create convincing conflict styles that can grow beyond mere paint-by-numbers approaches into organic, true-to-life human conflict.

The Enneagram-Story Connection

The example in the previous section illustrates how J.K. Rowling handled one character's conflict style. I doubt very much that Rowling knows the Enneagram (I may be wrong), so her innate emotional intelligence and skill as a storyteller guided her beautifully into enneagramatically consistent style behaviors and the pinch-crunch model.

When it comes to the "common pinches" for each Enneagram's style, it is important to understand that the common pinches refer to those that are common to everyone of that particular style. Individuals, in life, may be more or less affected by any one pinch scenario, but the commonality feature simply means they are pinches that are likely to be sensitive to any particular Enneagram style. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, along with the common pinches there are the uncommon ones, or the individual pinches that you may wish to add to the mix because you want them in your character's makeup.

For example, loyalty and order are not common pinches for the Enneagram One, but they are particular to Dolores Umbridge. She states clearly that these are issues for her, and when either of them gets pinched she reacts accordingly. This is something J.K. Rowling wanted to have as part of her character makeup, and you get to do the same thing. Nothing stops you, as the writer, from making up your own pinches and pinch behaviors for your characters. But, if you do, give them a lot of thought and make sure they feel consistent with the overall Enneagram style you are using for the character.

For Dolores Umbridge, for example, having a sense of loyalty and a need for order as her uncommon pinches fits nicely with a One Enneagram's overall style. And her pinch behavior of ratcheting up her cruelty in the form of ever-increasing punishments is also consistent with the One's judgmental nature and their penchant for reprimanding transgressors of the rules. In the case of Dolores Umbridge, the author touched on some of the common pinches and added in a couple of her own for good measure.

We will see this later on in our test case example, *Lilies of the Field* , when we examine the seven steps of the Rapid Story Development process. The protagonist, Homer, also has a combination of common and uncommon pinches, and the author of *Lilies of the Field* used them to masterful dramatic and comedic effect.

8

Character Evolution and De-Evolution



Nothing and no one is static, including fictional characters. The Enneagram, if it is anything, is a metaphor for human change—either expansive or constrictive change.

In the world of the Enneagram, change is taken seriously. Coaches, therapists, and business consultants all make their livings showing individuals and organizations the most elegant paths to change and growth in order to promote personal happiness, satisfaction, and productivity. Change, or the change process, can have stages, levels, phases, or other designations, but while change itself may take place in an instant, getting to that instant takes time, is complex, and requires expertise and a deep understanding of the Enneagram to achieve success. Change is serious business in the Enneagram, and so it should be.

Change in storytelling is also a serious business, and it is a requirement for a story to be a story. But, unlike therapy, coaching, or business consulting, there are no levels, stages, or shades of grey. In stories, change

just happens, and it happens in a reasonably black-and-white and obvious way. Even when characters change in the most subtle of stories, it is obvious the change is going to happen (most times), and it comes on relatively quickly in the scope of the narrative. Basically, characters start a story in some constricted emotional space and then that space gets more constricted over the middle of the book or movie, until it bottoms out and the character reaches their lowest point in the journey and then rallies back to save the day and change for the better (or for the worse, depending on the story).

And that is very good news. As writers, we don't have to follow change process protocols, best-practice therapeutic techniques, or organizational development process procedures (unless these things are part of your narrative). You can simply let your characters change and get there as fast as you need to in order to maintain pace and reader engagement. This is one of those situations I mentioned early on in this book where you don't have to worry about hurting anyone in the real world, so you can pretty much do whatever you want, in any timing you need to make it happen. From an Enneagram and story development perspective, the only elements of change that you have to be concerned with are how expansively will the character grow, or how constricted will be their retreat. We will discuss other story development elements that will come into play, like the "Protagonist Change Triangle," but enneagramatically speaking, all you have to know is how high will they rise, or how far will they fall—unlike in the real world, in the world of fiction there are no levels, or degrees, or percentages of change—there is only change.

Enneagram Reactions to Fear and Safety

In the Enneagram world, it is generally accepted that each of the styles have their own individual reactions to both fear and safety, though many in that community use different terms to describe the same phenomena: success

and failure, stress and security, integration and disintegration, tension and relaxation, etc. The dynamic is still the same: an individual reacts in specific ways to these combinations, and their reactions are consistent with their Enneagram style. In fact, when a particular style grapples with fear or security, they do so in very particular ways.

When dealing with fear, an individual's behavior typically becomes an accentuated version of the perceived negative qualities of that person's Enneagram style. Ones may become more critical, perfectionist, and rigid, while Twos can become possessive, controlling, and angry when their need to be needed fails; Sixes may become caught in analysis paralysis and immobilized by fear. Similarly, when a person is feeling safe, the perceived positive aspects of the style will be accentuated. Ones may become diligent and flexible, Twos may give with no agenda and do so generously, while Sixes may share more insights and have confidence in their choices.

Enneagram Movement During Fear or Safety

What is fascinating to observe in the Enneagram is that when this happens, this constriction or expansion of behaviors actually illustrates how each Enneagram style moves across the Enneagram as a whole to accomplish these patterns. For example, as mentioned previously, Twos can become possessive, controlling, and angry when their helping and caretaking fails to secure them the safety they seek from taking care of the one with the power. In the language of the Enneagram, it is said that when faced with fear, Twos will move to Eight. When they "move," they don't move into the upside, or the perceived positive qualities of the Eight; rather, Twos take on the perceived negative qualities of the Eight.

When faced with safety, Twos do the opposite of what they do in fear; they move into the perceived positive qualities of the Four. Similarly, when faced with fear, Sixes may become caught in analysis paralysis and immobilized by fear, doubt, and worry. They are said to move into the

downside of the Three, where they begin resenting people, losing their sense of value and mattering, and become frozen. But when Sixes are faced with safety, they move into the upside of the Nine, finding connection and consensus, bringing people together, and resolving conflict.

These are just several examples, but they illustrate the so-called movement that happens to each Enneagram style when they deal with increasing conditions of fear or safety. You may have noticed there are two different “circuits” on the Enneagram: the hexad and triad circuits. [Figures 8.1](#) and [8.2](#) offer diagrams illustrating each circuit, and the Enneagram styles on each circuit, and their lines of movement. Where these circuits originate and their function in the overall scheme of the Enneagram is beyond the scope of this book, but it is important to know that they exist, and that each plays a role in the evolution and de-evolution of individuals (and characters).

A natural question everyone has when they consider this movement of Enneagram styles across emotional states is, “Where should they start?” People, and fictional characters, all move from some emotional starting position to their direction of evolution or de-evolution. That starting position is what I call their *emotional baseline*. Some characters might already be well along their path toward emotional destruction when the story opens (à la Blanche Dubois, *A Streetcar Named Desire*), or they may be relatively happy and healthy emotionally, but then are plunged into the emotional abyss of a story that will challenge and change them for good or ill (à la Michael Corleone, *The Godfather I/II*).

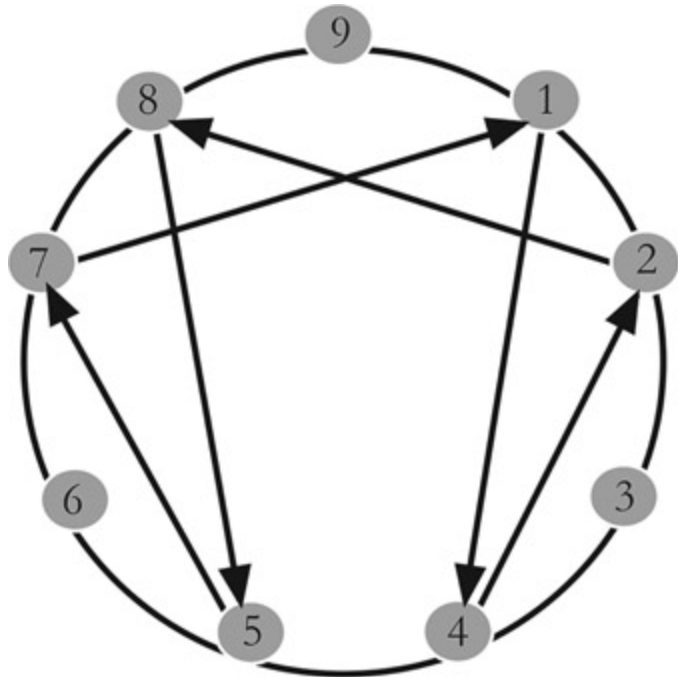
My point is that all characters who will make the evolution or de-evolution journey in your stories will have some starting point from which they will embark on their adventure. This emotional baseline will be different from character to character but will always be there. In [Chapter 9](#), we will examine how to determine what baselines might be available for your characters, as you develop them, per the Protagonist Change Triangle. This tool will give you a starting point for building your protagonist’s growth or decline based on their established Enneagram style. But for this chapter, as you read through the examples that follow, know that whenever

you see the term “baseline,” I am referring to this concept of the emotional baseline, i.e., the characters’ starting point in their emotional journey of change.



Character change in fiction does not, under any circumstances or in any meaningful way, resemble real human change in life situations.

Hexad Circuit for Fear (1,4,2,8,5,7)



[Figure 8.1](#) Hexad Circuit of Fear (1,4,2,8,5,7)

Note: the arrows move in the direction of de-evolution.

Caught up in fear, Ones move into the downside of Four, and this usually happens when perfectionism fails them, responsibility becomes oppressive, and chaos reigns. Here Ones sometimes move into their own special fantasy world where they can control every detail or nuance and thus manage the threat posed by change or chaos.

Fours in fear move into the downside of the Two, typically when they are feeling isolated, rejected, or locked in envy. Here Fours can start acting like constricted Twos, losing sight of who they really are and frantically trying to be what others want them to be (a twisted form of giving).

Twos move to the downside of Eight when they are afraid, which occurs when helping others fails to get them the support they seek, or when they find themselves unappreciated and rejected. They can often become controlling and forceful like an Eight, as they plot to regain favor with the one in power.

Eights in fear move to the downside of Five after they have exhausted themselves in losing battles or exposed too much of their own vulnerabilities. They will retreat inside themselves, rejecting others, and become resentful of demands on their time or resources, preferring to just go it alone.

Fives move to the downside of Seven when all that thinking and figuring things out doesn't work and the demands of others become too much; they abandon thinking altogether in an attempt to relieve the discomfort of their mental vapor-lock by trying to have fun. But this still doesn't bring relief, and they can spiral into excess, lose their focus, and become mentally lost.

Sevens move to the downside of One, often when they feel trapped, constrained, or under pressure. When they can't escape the pain through fun, they will sometimes move into critical righteousness, micromanaging details and people and becoming their own form of perfectionists.



Hexad Circuit of Fear Examples

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (Warner Bros., 2007)



Dolores Umbridge : Senior Undersecretary to Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, and Grand Inquisitor of Hogwarts. A rule-bound, punishing, and perfectionist persecutor of Harry Potter. When her perfectionism fails, when her responsibilities become oppressive, and when chaos threatens from all sides, she moves from her safe position as moral compass of her world into her own special fantasy nightmare where all control, all rules, and all perfection seem lost, and her true vulnerability is exposed: she really hates children.

De-Evolution : Moves from the baseline of One to the downside of Four.

A Streetcar Named Desire (Warner Bros., 1951)



Blanche Dubois : Blanche, who defines herself by her desirability and fragility for living in the hard, cruel world, slips steadily from wistful, self-absorbed melancholy to complete detachment from reality as she becomes more and more isolated, disconnected, and desolate over her unhealable wound (having “killed” the boy she loved) and the failure of the world to save her.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Four to the downside of the Two.

Fatal Attraction (Paramount Pictures, 1987)



Alex Forrest : Alex has an adulterous weekend with her colleague, happily married New York lawyer Dan Gallagher, and moves from merely wanting to please the object of her obsessive love but needing to control that love, to the point of killing the object itself if he will not love her the way she demands to be loved—i.e., exclusively.

De-Evolution : Moves from the baseline of Two to the downside of Eight.

The Godfather I/II (Paramount Pictures, 1972/1974)



Michael Corleone : Michael begins his story as a peripheral member of the Corleone family (by design to keep him “clean” of criminal activity). But the thing he wants most, i.e., a close family, soon becomes an attainable goal when circumstances pull him into the family business. To preserve his growing sense of belonging, he moves from comfortable outsider into a Machiavellian, paranoid dictator with the power of life and death over anyone who threatens “the family” he has maneuvered so carefully to create.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Eight to the downside of the Five.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf (Warner Bros., 1966)



George : George is a button-down, emasculated college professor running as fast as he can to keep his quick-witted and quick-mouthed wife, Martha, from spinning out of control during a booze-filled, emotional slugfest when a new professor and his wife come calling. George moves from the calculating, emotionally controlled sparring partner of his increasingly vicious Martha into a drunken,

mean-spirited betrayer of their worst secrets, ignoring all the boundaries and constraints he and Martha have constructed around their fragile marriage.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Five to the downside of the Seven.

***A Face in the Crowd* (Warner Bros., 1957)**

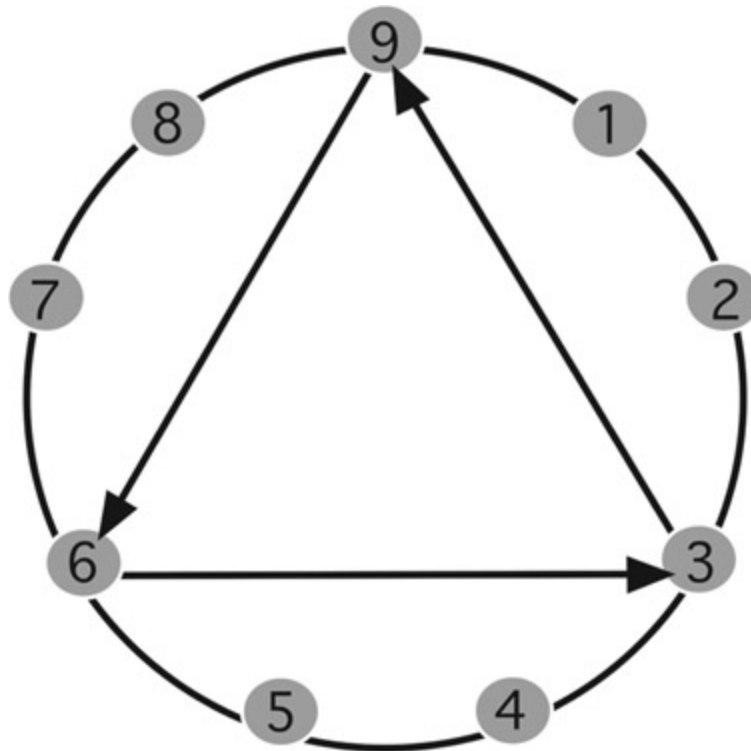


Larry “Lonesome” Rhodes : Lonesome is a talented, itinerate musician who finds himself lifted from obscurity to become a media sensation, political powerbroker, and superstar. His star falls when his refusal to be constrained (to have fun) by convention and rules, or even basic social conventions, exposes his hubris and insatiable need to be applauded by an audience he has grown to judge and despise. He goes from a wild, fun-loving spirit to a reproachful, punishing, and righteously critical fallen demigod.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Seven to the downside of the One.

(Character examples partially referenced from *Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0: How to See Personality Styles in the Movies, 3rd Ed* . (The Changeworks, 2011) by Thomas Condon.)

Triad Circuit of Fear (3,9,6)



[Figure 8.2](#) Triad Circuit of Fear (3,9,6)

Note: the arrows move in the direction of de-evolution.

Fearful Threes move to the downside of Nine when success and achievement fail to bring the esteem they crave; they can become resentful and punishing of those whose approval they once craved and mired in a sense of not mattering and having no value; all achievement stops.

When feeling fear, Nines move to the downside of Six and become locked in anxiety, worst-case scenarios, worry, and doubt; they become frozen in fear, unable to act, and in some cases even unable to speak.

When Sixes become fearful, they move to the downside of Three. When all their planning and doubting fails to make them safe and secure, they may become focused on getting something done—just get a win—and end up turning resentful and feeling persecuted by and punishing of people for whom they are trying to achieve results.



Triad Circuit of Fear Examples: Threes

***Network* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1976)**



Diana Christensen : Diana is an up-and-coming television producer married to her work, getting high ratings and little else. When a celebrity, Howard Beal, has a meltdown on-air, ratings skyrocket and Diana is catapulted into turning this disaster into ratings gold. She goes from a merely ambitious, tough-nut producer to a win-at-all-costs, emotionally desolate woman who finds no value in her life, or herself, other than the ratings she can get. For her, you are literally only as valuable as your last Neilson's score.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Three to the downside of the Nine.

***The Graduate* (Embassy Pictures, 1967)**



Ben Braddock : Recently graduated from college, Ben is searching for what's next. He has no vision for himself, or of himself, so he listens to everyone else's take on what his life might become. Pleasing Elaine, pleasing Mrs. Robinson, pleasing his family, numbly moving through his life, he finally takes a stand, stakes a claim, and runs away with Elaine on her wedding day. And, in the back of a bus, he realizes that even this act of taking what he wants isn't what he wants; it's what's expected of him. He's right back where he started.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Nine to the downside of the Six.

Psycho (Paramount Pictures, 1960)



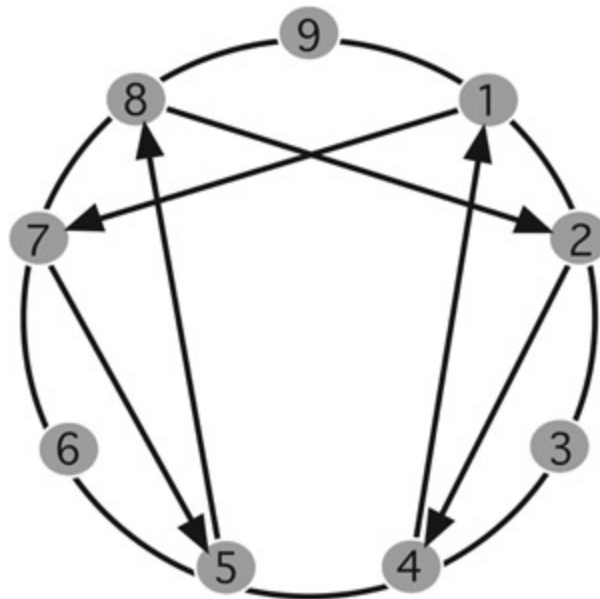
Norman Bates : We meet Norman late in his story arc, having already descended into madness and murder, but he still has one final level to go before he sinks into total Six de-evolution. Having killed his last victim, and with "Mother" harping and condemning him from the house on the hill, Norman is finally exposed as a psychopath. He escapes his relentless insecurities by completely abandoning himself

and his own sense of being and merges with the persecuting mother-image that had been his security and safety all his life.

Movement : Moves from a very unhealthy and de-evolved Six to the lowest expression of Three.

(Character examples partially referenced from *Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0: How to See Personality Styles in the Movies, 3rd Ed* . (The Changeworks, 2011) by Thomas Condon.)

Hexad Circuit of Safety (2,4,1,7,5,8)



[Figure 8.3](#) Hexad Circuit of Safety (2,4,1,7,5,8)

Note: the arrows move in the direction of evolution.

Twos move to the upside of Four, where they can experience the full range of emotion, rather than just focusing on one (love). With a full emotional palette, their natural ability to connect with others grows from creative impulses, not from a need to be needed.

When safe, Fours move to One, giving them the opportunity to focus on the external world rather than their own internal world. Instead of being special, they can focus on creating something special in the world. Instead of being the exception, they can become exceptional. Through self-discipline and diligence, they quiet their internal turmoil and find real emotional equilibrium.

When safe, Ones move to the upside of Seven. When this happens, they have learned to appreciate the beauty of life, and to relax and let go of their rule-bound agendas, and to see that life is more than pressure and oppressive responsibility.

Sevens move to Five when safe, because they feel distant enough from the threat of pain to take the time to think and consider choices and actions. They can savor solitude instead of being constantly distracted by people, tasks, or spinning plates of ideas.

Fives move to Eight when safe, where they feel secure enough to be visible and contributory knowing they can be in control of their environment, rather than controlling of it. Fives often exert a strong presence, become assertive, and bring their knowledge out of their ivory tower and into the world to provide vision and even leadership.

Eights move to Two, usually when they have learned that leadership sometimes means being vulnerable and giving to others is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Their attention turns to helping others, not directing them, and this can help the Eight release their natural intuition and emotional core.



EXAMPLE

Hexad Circuit for Safety Examples

'night, Mother (Universal Pictures, 1986)



Thelma Cates : Thelma is an over-involved mother of Jessie Cates, who has told her mother she plans on killing herself before morning. Thelma dismisses the claim, but over the course of the evening, as the two women unravel Jessie's misery, Thelma comes to realize her daughter is indeed going to take her own life. She goes from a needy, smothering mother to a loving mother who sincerely cares about loving her daughter, rather than getting love, but it's a bit too late in the game for a happy ending.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Two to the upside of Four.

Moonstruck (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1987)



Ronnie Cammereri : Ronnie is convinced love ruins everything; that his brother, Johnny, destroyed his life; and he's pursuing Johnny's

fiancé, Loretta, while Johnny is out of the country. Despite Ronnie's constant speeches about how life is doomed, and how he's such a victim of circumstance, Loretta falls for him, and as all the family secrets, rivalries, and nonsense come to a head, Ronnie goes from self-absorbed, complainer to realizing that if he gets off his soapbox he might actually find real love in Loretta. Which is exactly what happens.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Four to the upside of One.

Lilies of the Field (United Artists, 1963)



Mother Maria : A self-righteous, rule-bound, inflexible German Mother Superior hires a free-spirited drifter, Homer Smith, to build her nuns a chapel in the middle of nowhere. As the chapel is built, she finds her crusty perfectionism and entitled demands challenged by Homer at every turn, eventually bringing her to a place where she can appreciate him and the community he has helped build for her.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of One to the upside of the Seven.

Lilies of the Field (United Artists, 1963)



Homer Smith : In his search for that grass-is-always-greener future, Homer stumbles upon a group of nuns in the middle of nowhere and, needing money, promises to build them a chapel. Homer just wants to move on, get to the next shiny bauble “out there,” but his nemesis, Mother Maria, knows just how to hog tie him and keep him working on the project. They spar and joust, Homer injecting fun and optimism into Mother Maria’s black-and-white world. He moves from a man distant from human relations and distracted by his own running away from life to one that finds his place in the world and who appreciates the solitude of slowing down to value accomplishment and human connections.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Seven to the upside of Five.

The Nutty Professor (Paramount Pictures, 1963)



Prof. Julius Kelp/Buddy Love : Socially inept and manliness-challenged Kelp decides to fight back against bullies and invents a concoction that transforms him into the chick-magnet, hipster Buddy Love. When his nerd/hipster transfigurations finally catch up with him, he is forced to admit the error of his ways, but this only endears him to his love interest, who expresses her preference for

the nerd, not the hipster. He goes from internalized, socially awkward geek to confident, self-reliant, authentic self and gets the girl.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Five to the upside of Eight.

Malcom X (Warner Bros., 1992)

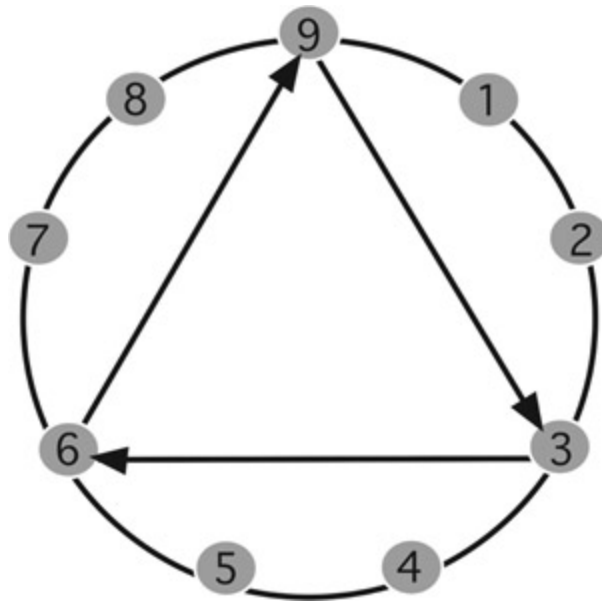


Malcom X : Sweeping biography of the leader, militant, champion, and self-declared enemy of racism and white privilege. Malcom X goes from self-contained, domineering, controlling, I-follow-my-own-rules leader to a man who, near the end, becomes more considerate and understanding of those he battled against, even as he develops a deeper and devoted relationship with Mohammad.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of the Eight to the upside of the Two.

(Character examples partially referenced from *Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0: How to See Personality Styles in the Movies, 3rd Ed* . (The Changeworks, 2011) by Thomas Condon.)

Triad Circuit of Safety (3,6,9)



[Figure 8.4](#) Triad Circuit of Safety (3,6,9)

Note: the arrows move in the direction of evolution.

Safe Threes move to Six, where they are no longer bound by an insatiable search for self-esteem; they can achieve, not to get approval, but to make others feel safe and secure around them. It is here that Threes can let their keen insights about people and relationships emerge.

When feeling safe, Nines move to the upside of Three, finding their sense of personal presence, focusing on achievement and success, and becoming highly productive.

When Sixes become safe, they move to Nine. No longer filled with anxieties about what might go wrong, they can find some peace and let their minds relax to enjoy their work and leisure.



Triad Circuit of Safety Examples

The Firm (Paramount Pictures, 1993)



Mitch McDeere : An ambitious legal superstar recently graduated from law school wins a coveted position with a prestigious but low-profile law firm. Mitch's ambition and drive to win score big points with the firm's partners but end up getting Mitch in serious trouble when he realizes he's part of a corrupt law firm and he and his wife could be killed. He goes from a cocky, ambitious, and image-conscious legal eagle to winning the good fight in order to create safety and security for his wife and his brother.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Three to the upside of the Six.

American Beauty (Dreamworks Distribution, 1999)



Lester Burnham : Lester is having his mid-life crisis and questioning everything, bemoaning the fact that he's sick of being treated like he

doesn't exist. He takes steps to un-sedate himself. Quitting his job, blackmailing his boss, and negotiating a critical, brittle wife (who's having an affair), he develops an infatuation with his teenage daughter's friend, ultimately leading him to realize that his stupid little life matters, but not before his psycho-homophobic ex-Marine neighbor blows his brains out with a revolver. But Lester is okay with that in the end, because he's found himself and now sees the beauty he'd been missing in the world.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Nine to upside of the Three.

***The Apartment* (United Artists, 1960)**



C.C. Baxter : Team player and all-around trustworthy employee C.C. lets his superiors use his apartment for their extra-marital affairs. He will do anything to please his bosses, including rationalizing their bad behavior. C.C. is rewarded, like a good dog, but his resentment and self-loathing finally take their toll until he falls for one of his boss's mistresses, the "Elevator Girl." In the end, he recovers his integrity, quits his job, and chooses love over crass ambition, finally bringing a sense of peace to his existence.

Movement : Moves from the baseline of Six to the upside of the Nine.

(Character examples partially referenced from *Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0: How to See Personality Styles in the Movies, 3rd Ed* . (The Changeworks, 2011) by Thomas Condon.)

The Enneagram-Story Connection

Driven by fear, or attracted to safety, each Enneagram style reveals a great deal about itself in the emotional and behavioral patterns previously mentioned. But one of the biggest reveals is the one writers and storytellers are most concerned with, and that relates to the ideas of evolution and de-evolution. I could instead use other words, like grow, change, mature, etc., but these words don't really capture the power of what needs to happen to a protagonist (or opponent) as they experience the crucible that is their personal story. Those words don't possess the dramatic force of the essence of what a story is, i.e., a metaphor for human change.

The terms evolution and de-evolution do speak to the nature of what a story is and suggest that characters don't just change over the course of a story but rather become a different version of themselves, almost a new species of self (not in all stories, but in good ones). The transformation a character experiences in a story can be for the better (evolution), or for the worse (de-evolution). There is no rule in story development that your hero/heroine has to always evolve for the better. They can just as easily descend into madness, or criminality, or horror; it really all depends on what you want as the writer.

The Enneagram-Story Connection, however, illustrates nine patterns of how characters both evolve and de-evolve. The pattern of fear demonstrates how each Enneagram style de-evolves. The pattern of safety shows, in turn, how each style evolves. I can't tell you how many times I have worked with a screen-writer or novelist and the writer was unsure how their protagonist was going to change. But, as soon as we talked about the Enneagram and went over the evolution and de-evolution patterns for each style, the answer almost always revealed itself. Using the Enneagram, you can know not only how your protagonist (or any character) can change but also that any such change will "ring true" to readers or audiences, because the Enneagram is a model of how we all move across the Enneagram in our own patterns of fear and safety.

Any character that follows the movements of the Enneagram, when in fear of safety, will thus be following patterns we all see every day in our own lives; consequently, your characters will be relatable and recognizable to readers. Even if you choose not to follow the natural lines of movement of the styles themselves, as long as you use the Enneagram and can make your choices work dramatically, readers will identify with your choices and your characters will be believable.

Story structure and the Enneagram are linked in the most fundamental way possible—through real human behavior, as modeled though the Enneagram. This connection is a character development tool, but more fundamentally it is a story structure and story development tool, because character development is only a reflection of solid story structure development.

Part 2

The Enneagram-Story Connection

9

Character Beginnings and Endings and Change



Character change is not a cliché; it is an imperative. For a story to be a story, there must be character change.

“Character arc” is one of those creative writing *terms d’art* that everyone uses without question, assuming the meaning and purpose are clear to anyone with a brain in their head. A character arc is the shape of the story, specifically defined as how a character grows, discovers, adapts, develops, or transforms as a story progresses, and all this happens in a particular form called an arc. I suppose there is a visceral imagery that works with this definition, meaning that when one visualizes an arc, one imagines starting on one end (left side), climbing the arc upward to some midpoint, and then descending down the other side to the endpoint. It is a natural motion for those accustomed to reading or writing left to right (some 100-plus languages do so), so the concept itself takes on a bit of a western-centric tinge and handicaps all those who read or write from right to left or up and down (some 50-plus languages). This fact alone makes the very idea of a character arc suspect.

The author Kurt Vonnegut (*Cat’s Cradle* , *Slaughterhouse-Five*) used to give a now famous presentation on the shapes of stories, based in the idea that “stories

have shapes which can be drawn on graph paper.” His approach was much truer to the reality of how characters move through their evolution or de-evolution in a story. If you’ve never seen these lectures, I highly recommend you find them online and enjoy them. They are instructive and entertaining.

But character change is not a rising line of complication leading to a simplistic highpoint, followed by a gradual decent toward the inevitable ending. Character change is a circuitous wiggle of wrong choices, bad choices, and missed opportunities. The path does not rise and fall but rather is a full-on, downhill slide until a sudden burst of moral choice abruptly changes the direction or produces a hairpin turn of new choice. Arcs don’t capture this in any way, shape, or form. If there were a single shape that could act as a physical metaphor for character change, it would be more like a cardio-encephalogram, that jagged line that rises and dips precipitously indicating a heart attack, not a smooth curve or parabola. It is counterproductive, in this sense, to think that your protagonist (or any character) has some smooth arc-line of change from start to finish. It never happens that way and, in fact, given the nature of character development, it can’t happen that way.

So, if you can’t rely on the concept of a character arc, and the idea of a heart attack is too daunting for you to visualize for your hero or heroine, then how do you get them from start to finish in a way that makes productive and dramatic sense? It just so happens that the Enneagram-Story Connection shows you how, by way of the Protagonist Change Triangle.

Beginnings and Endings

Evolution and de-evolution are endpoints in the movement patterns of all Enneagram styles when they are operating in safety or fear, but they are also steps in the normal development of a story’s structure. Characters grow and change, or they constrict and regress (e.g., Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*). It’s all fine and good to know where your protagonist is headed at the end of the story, but what is the best way to present them at the beginning of the story?

One of the biggest challenges in developing a story is figuring out the “arc” of your protagonist. Where do they start? Where do they end? How do they get from the start to the end (i.e., what’s the arc of development)? Writers who subscribe to the “just do it school” of writing don’t concern themselves with these questions;

they just write, assuming the writing will reveal all (it seldom does), and the character(s) will reveal their own arc of development (they seldom do).

By now you have probably discerned my attitude to this particular school of creative writing: I loathe it. Suffice to say here that questioning where your protagonist starts his or her journey at the emotional beginning of your story, and where they end up emotionally at the end, are two critical questions that must be asked—and, more, must be answered.

“But what if I don’t know the answers?” comes the natural response. “Shouldn’t I just start writing and the answers will come?” No and no. As I have stated elsewhere in other writings, there is a small percentage of writers who can fly by the seat of their pants, cross their fingers and toes, and hit the target, but this is because they have what I call the story gene. They have a natural sensibility of where to go, how to get there, and how to stay on the development/character path without straying and getting lost in the story woods. The vast majority of writers might be good writers, but they are not good with story (yet), so the “just do it” approach is usually disastrous, and the percentages are high that they will end up wandering in the story wilderness for a very long time.

Consequently, it is critical that you understand that it is not only important to ask these basic questions but also critical to find answers to them; leave nothing to the writing gods, because they won’t help you—they don’t exist. Asking the questions, and getting answers, saves you from getting lost and teaches you how to think about character development so that you get better and better, over time, with each story you develop. Your skill set becomes seamless and the effort feels as if it is natural; you thus appear to someone watching from the sidelines that you are “just doing it.” To get to that level of elegance in execution of craft requires understanding the truth about “character arcs” and understanding how the Enneagram-Story Connection can be your go-to tool for answering these basic questions.

Protagonist Change Triangle

I am always surprised by the momentary pause that follows the question, “So, how does your protagonist change in the end?” Most writers, when faced with this question early in the development process, are clueless how their hero or heroine will change at the end. The pause is then followed by some fumbling and throwing out different options until it feels like one might stick. The final answer is usually

unsure and tentative, but most writers can guesstimate how they want their main protagonist to end their dramatic journey.

Once you know where your protagonist is ending up at the end of any story, it is a simple matter of connecting the dramatic dots to figure out how they need to begin the story. If they end the story realizing the importance of love, then they have to start the story as someone who cannot love. If they end the story learning they are enough and deserve simply because they exist, then they have to start the story as someone who doesn't believe they are enough or deserve to be happy. If they learn in the end that their lifelong sense of guilt and shame was unwarranted and they were blameless (for whatever), then guess how they have to start the story. Once you have the end, it is not rocket science to figure out the beginning. But what do you do when you don't know the end? Do you randomly throw out possibilities until something sounds good and then go with that? You could, but I would suggest there is a better way.

The Protagonist Change Triangle is a tool that gives you a solid beginning and endpoint for your protagonist based on that character's Enneagram style. The principle is simple: the character has an Enneagram style. This style has a baseline of behavior at the start of the story, and then that character evolves or de-evolves according to their Enneagram pattern of safety or fear (see [Chapter 8](#)). All you have to know is the Enneagram of your protagonist. The developmental pattern of their change will follow according to pure human behavior. The triangle tool gives you a clear starting point and then gives you options for how you might want to end your character's journey emotionally (and behaviorally).

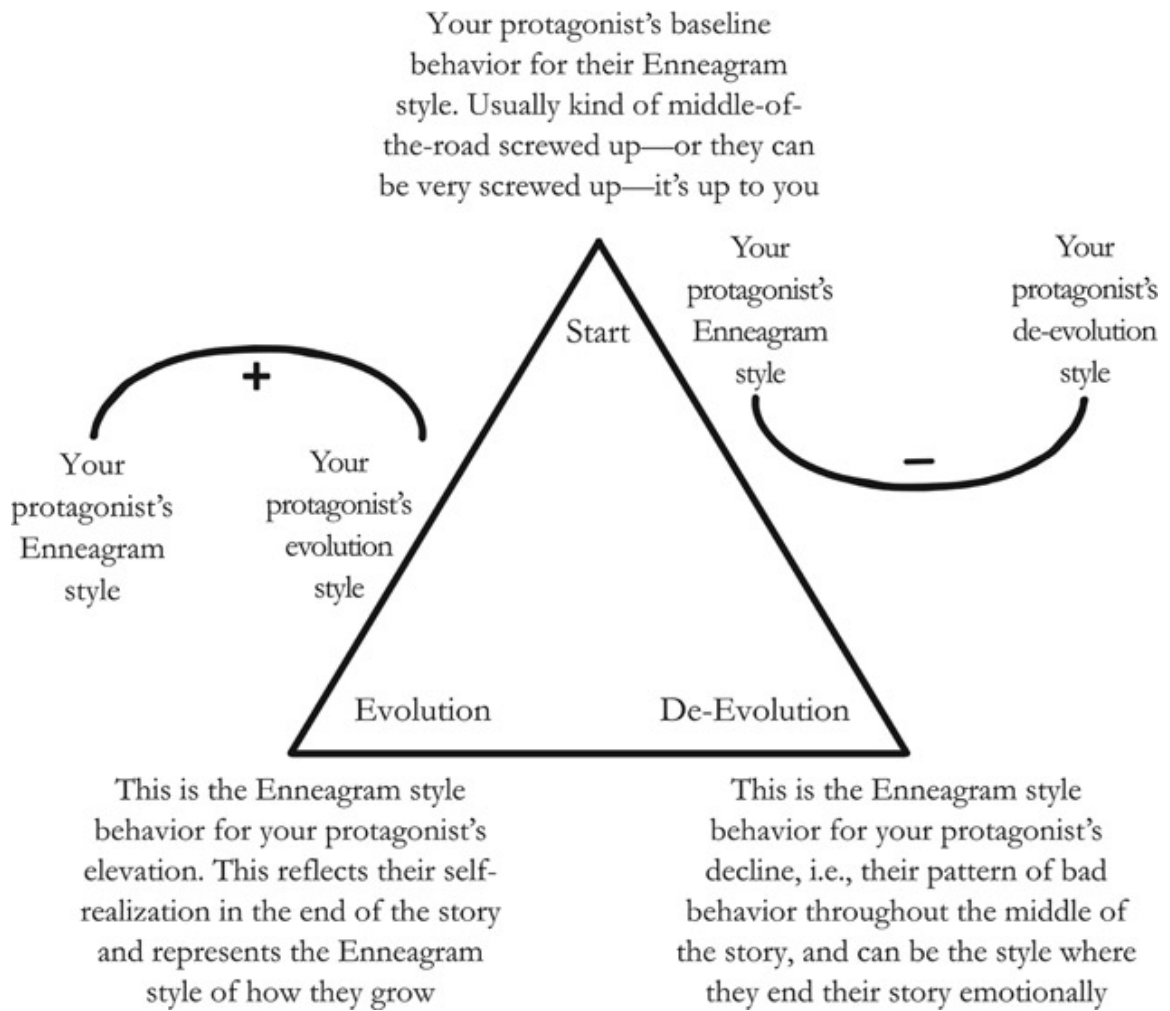
Even if you know how you want your protagonist to end their story, this can be a clue to you about what Enneagram style they may have (assuming you don't know it from the start). Perhaps you want a character that learns that they don't have to be controlling and domineering to get love in the world. You look to the various Enneagram styles to see which styles have this particular issue with control, then decide which one fits your protagonist. The triangle tool then shows you specifically how you can design the emotional and behavior journey of that character based on Enneagram patterns.

Even if you decide to veer off from the formalism of Enneagram behaviors, whatever you do in the end will be more grounded and dramatically consistent with believable human dynamics because you started in the Enneagram and then worked your way around it. The protagonist, in this case, will still ring true and be more

identifiable to the reader than if you just threw options against the proverbial wall—seeing what sticks, or not.

As you will see from the following tools, and their examples, when you are unsure or clueless of where to begin or end, this is a valuable and reliable strategy for finding your protagonist’s pattern of change within any story.

How the Triangle Works



[Figure 9.1](#) Protagonist Change Triangle

[Figure 9.1](#) illustrates the individual components of the “Protagonist Change Triangle.” Let’s go through it from top to bottom, left to right, and explain each component and how you can approach each in your development efforts.

Start (Top) :This is where your protagonist begins their emotional journey in the story. Who are they? How do they act? How does their moral flaw/problem/wound manifest itself? This is the component that tells you (and the reader) the answers to all of these questions. If you know your protagonist's Enneagram style, then this piece of the triangle is that basic survival strategy for their style playing itself out on the page. Refer back to [Chapter 4](#) , "The Enneagram Model," and refamiliarize yourself with the focus of attention, core image, and survival strategy for each style; these three things will inform you most clearly what your protagonist's baseline emotional state will should be for your story.

You don't have to slavishly follow these patterns for attention and survival. But any baseline you settle on should be based on some Enneagram style's survival strategy at minimum. The reality will be, if you have a convincing moral component to your story (see [Chapter 10](#)), you will invariably have one of the nine styles operating for your protagonist. If you do not, or if you find that your protagonist feels too generic or wishy-washy and unconvincing, then that is a clue that your moral component is weak or missing.

So, identify your protagonist's Enneagram style and then devise a clear statement that works for you that captures the essence of that style's focus of attention and survival strategy. Work this statement as much as you need to into the specifics of the context of your story, but try to be diligent not to lose the spirit of these Enneagram elements in creating a clear emotional starting point.

Plus Downward Curve (Left Side) :This is simply a physical reminder to you of the Enneagram style number of your hero or heroine and the Enneagram style number to which they evolve (grow). The plus sign indicates a "positive" growth disposition, meaning, they change for the better. The number on the left of the downward curve is the Enneagram number of your protagonist and the number on the right side of the downward curve is the Enneagram number of their evolution.

Center Triangle (Center) :This is the basic construct holding the other pieces together. It is purely a visual framework to help your orient to how the other pieces relate to one another.

Minus Upward Curve (Right Side) :This is the same as the other curve, only this one represents the de-evolutionary relationship for your protagonist's change. The "negative" sign indicates the change is not for the better. The

number on the left of the upward curve is the Enneagram number of your protagonist and the number on the right side of the upward curve is the Enneagram number of their de-evolution.

Evolution Text Box (Lower Left) :Just as you will devise a general statement describing how the protagonist will start their emotional journey, based on their Enneagram style, so you should create a general statement about how they will feel and act if they change in a positive direction. Once again, rely on the focus of attention, core image, and survival strategy information, but not for the Enneagram style of the protagonist; rather, you should focus here on the Enneagram style of their evolution. In addition to these three resources, you should also use the information from the Hexad Circuit for Safety and the Triad Circuit for Safety in [Chapter 8](#) , “Character Evolution and De-Evolution.” These will give you the positively disposed qualities that will generate a protagonist destined for a change process of growth.

The point of all this referring back to foci of attention, survival strategies, images, and triads and hexads of safety is to show you that there is no guesswork here. Using the Enneagram, you can confidently generate a powerful and clear statement of your protagonist’s evolutionary change in any story. Again, even if you ignore most of this information, you will be farther along than most other writers who just “wing it” and hope for the best.

De-Evolution Text Box (Lower Right) :This is the same thing as the evolution text box, but for the negative pattern of change that might result for your protagonist, if you are writing a story where they descend into darkness or failure (i.e., Walter White, *Breaking Bad*). All the same resources are applicable here for you to piece together your statement for de-evolution, except here you will replace the security hexad and triad from [Chapter 8](#) with the Hexad Circuit for Fear and the Triad Circuit for Fear.

Besides pinpointing the emotional and behavioral endpoints for your protagonist, this particular component of the triangle gives you a clear path to follow in designing the downfall of your hero or heroine. Remember, the middle of any story is about emotional decline or constriction for the protagonist, not expansion and ascension. Your protagonist is fighting against internal and external forces that push their emotional (Enneagram) blind spots, hot buttons, triggers, and weaknesses.

They will make bad decisions all along their way until the end, when they will see the light and start to change (or not, as in this case with de-evolution).

How they decline, how they make bad choices, and how they become more emotionally constricted is their pattern of de-evolution and so is relevant to any story, even if your protagonist evolves in the end. They will still need to fall apart, or be undermined, or find themselves tested in the middle of the story. This piece of the triangle shows you, with the help of the mentioned resources, how to construct that pattern of decline so that the end of your protagonist's journey is the most satisfying ending possible.

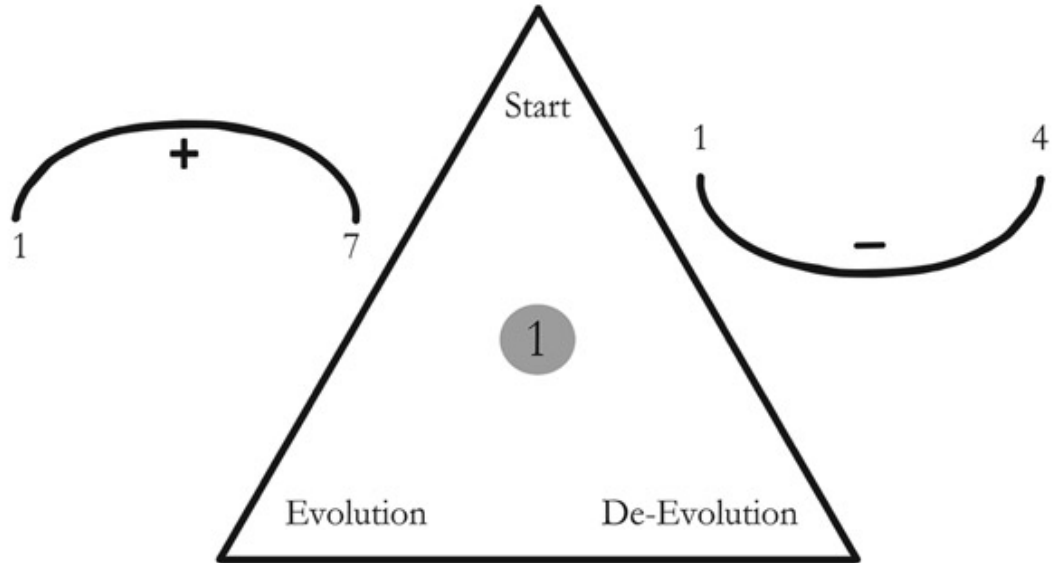
Review :Filling in each of the components of this tool, and doing the review and analysis of the Enneagram model resources listed in [Chapter 4](#) (foci of attention, image, survival strategy, hexads and triads of security and fear), will give you a solid snapshot of where your protagonist should start their journey emotionally, how they decline toward their final self-revelation leading to change, and the emotional endpoint of that entire process. If you learn this tool, use it, and rely on it, then you will never again have to cross your fingers and toes hoping for the story to write itself, or for characters to tell you what you should be telling them (you're the writer!), or brainstorming, mind mapping, picking straws, or "dreaming of" character arcs.

Enneagram Style-Based Protagonist Change Triangles

This section gives the Protagonist Change Triangles for each of the core Enneagram styles. What this means is that these triangles reflect the Enneagram patterns for each style, not story-specific applications. They are not meant to represent specific characters in any story, but they can help get you on the right development path when you know a character's Enneagram style. To get your character change triangles working for specific characters in specific stories requires more work, i.e., applying the Enneagram model resources listed in [Chapter 4](#) (foci of attention, image, survival strategy, hexads and triads of security and fear). But any story-specific applications for your character triangles must start with these, so it is important to know the "pure" foundation for each triangle before you start customizing them to your unique story requirements.



Do it right, by the book, the correct way, and that will make the world a better place—and safe—follow the rules



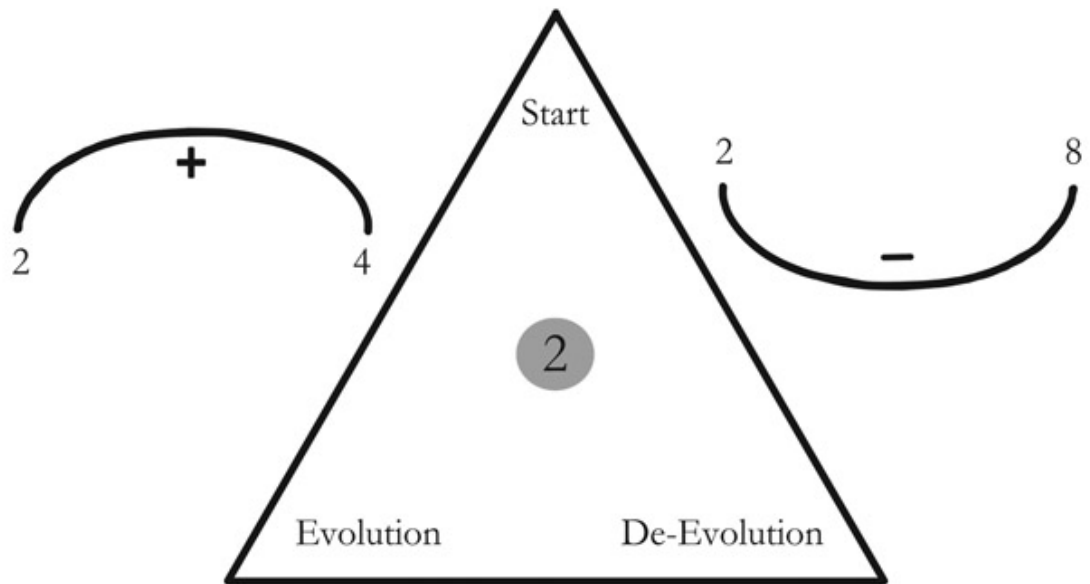
Doing the right thing because it's the right thing; realizing they can lighten up and have fun and appreciate life along the way

When doing the right thing fails, slip into perfection, blaming; live in fantasy of their own perfect little world, shutting out others

[Figure 9.2](#) Protagonist Change Triangle—Ones



Needing to be indispensable to the one in power in order to know they are safe and loved in the world



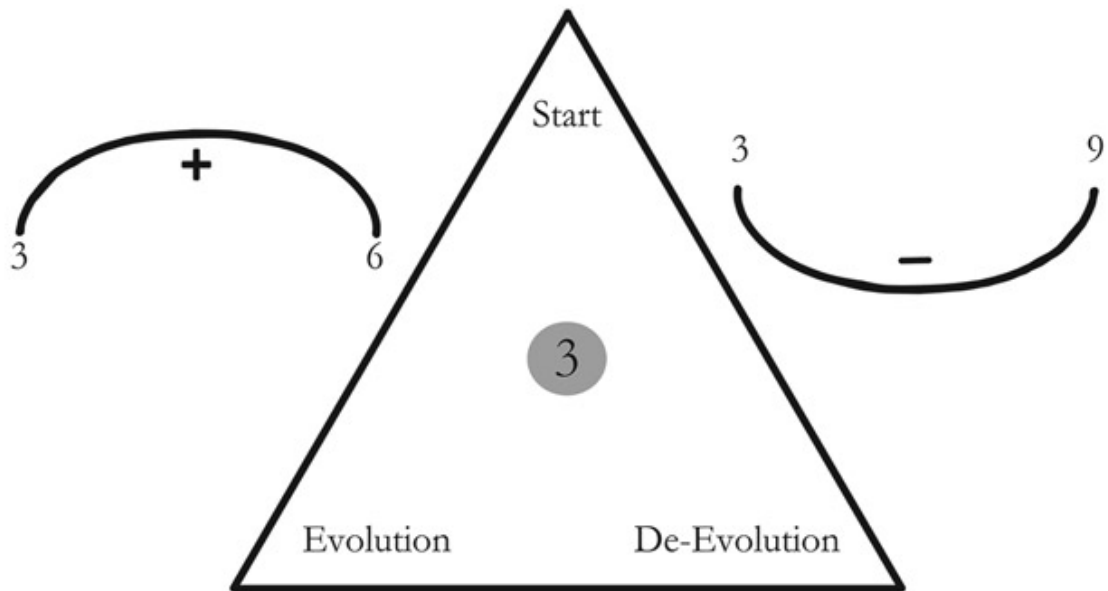
Rather than needing to get, they genuinely care about others, i.e., it's about being loving, not being loved

Manipulative, controlling, "I need you and I'm going to make you love me"

[Figure 9.3](#) Protagonist Change Triangle—Twos



Performing achievement to look good and get approval, so the world is a safe place



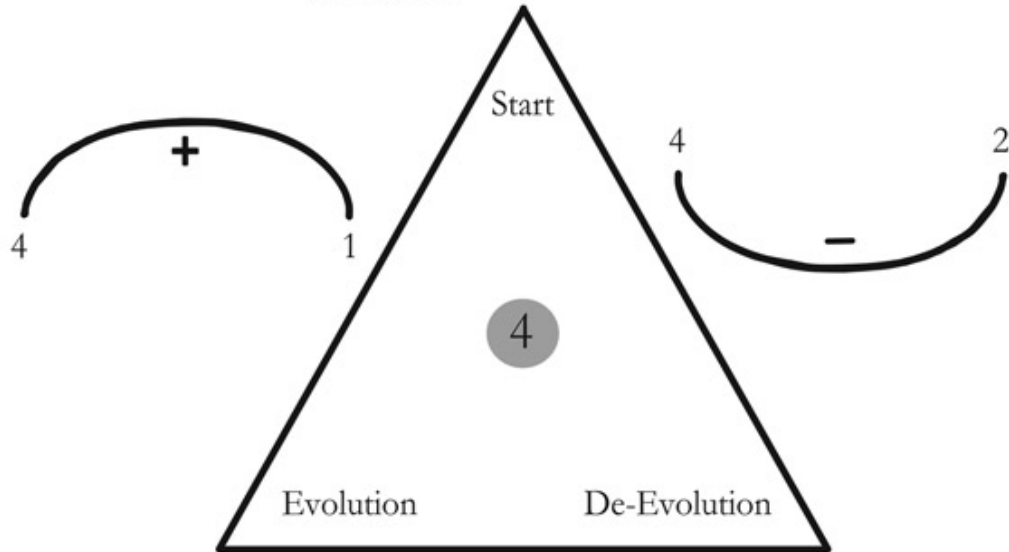
Self-valued, authentic, and successful so others feel safe and secure

External validation is insatiable, so resent needing it; there's nothing valuable here, after all, including me

[Figure 9.4](#) Protagonist Change Triangle—Threes



Get the one with the power to fix/heal what's broken or missing in me, then the world will be safe



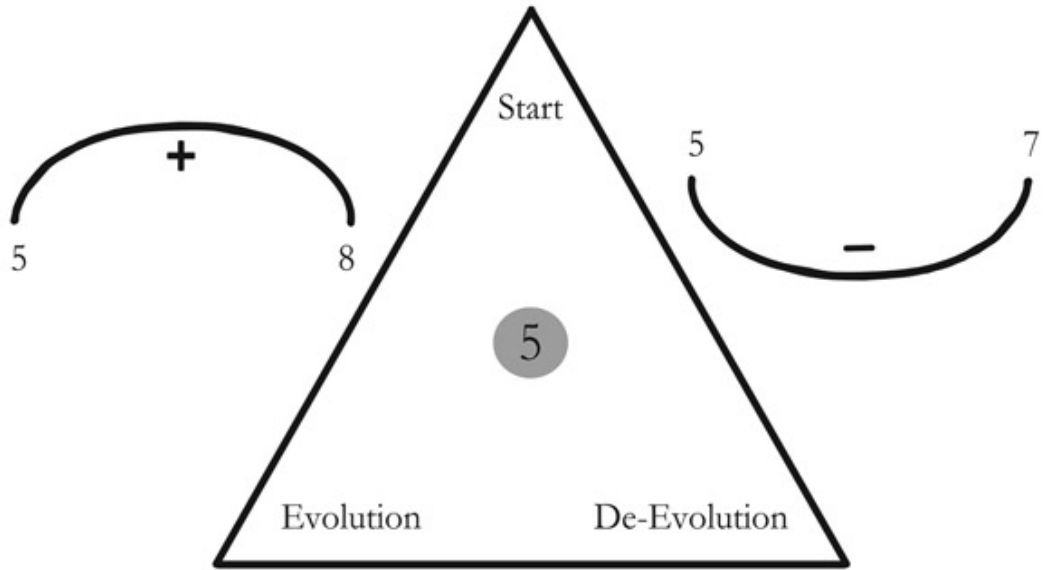
Don't be the exception, be exceptional; don't be special, create something special in the world

Entitled specialness; manipulative, self-serving, bitterly resentful; somebody love me, damnit!

[Figure 9.5](#) Protagonist Change Triangle—Fours



Make the environment safe by controlling the information; people will just muck things up



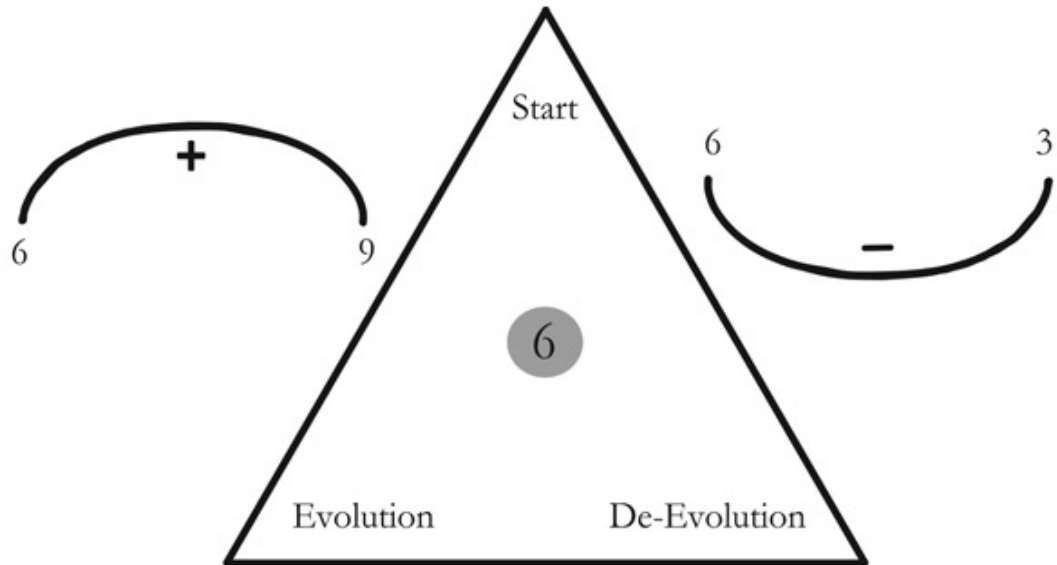
Taking their knowledge and leading through vision; seeing people as resources, not problems

When hoarding information no longer works, bail on the pain of it —get relief! Anything to stop thinking!

Figure 9.6 Protagonist Change Triangle—Fives



I'm on my own, so have a plan;
don't trust authority; know every
land mine, every pothole of life—
watch your back



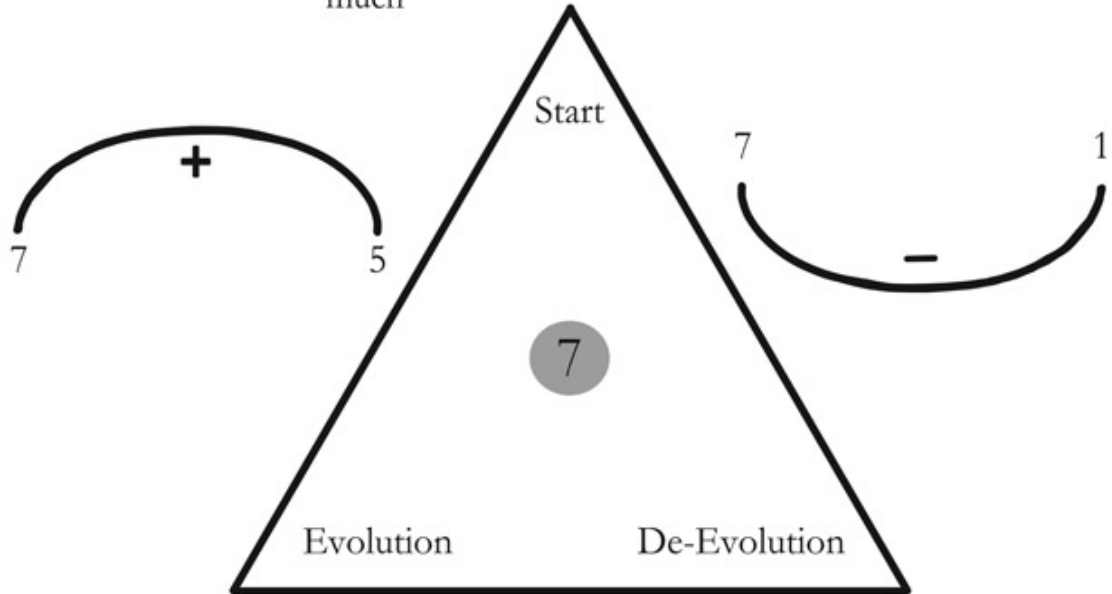
Present, self-confident, and trusting self;
autonomous and so can trust others free
of doubt, worry, and fear

Unable to satisfy the sources of the
fear (people), they grow hostile and
resentful of those people and
eventually freeze in fear, unsure how
to move

[Figure 9.7](#) Protagonist Change Triangle—Sixes



Run from the pain; avoid constricting routine; lighten up and distract with excess, don't think so much



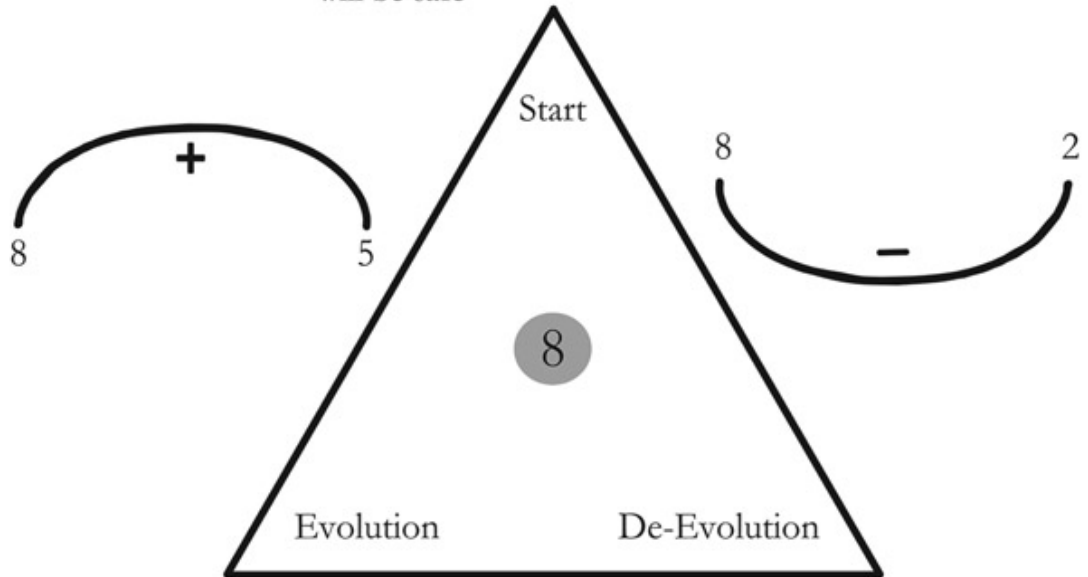
Assess, discern, slow down, think and look at life, appreciate the fun of living, stop running from and run to something

Dissatisfied escapism is replaced with righteous, blaming, judgemental, obsessive perfectio

[Figure 9.8](#) Protagonist Change Triangle—Sevens



Rely on no one; make the rules,
control the people, then the
environment will be safe; then I
will be safe



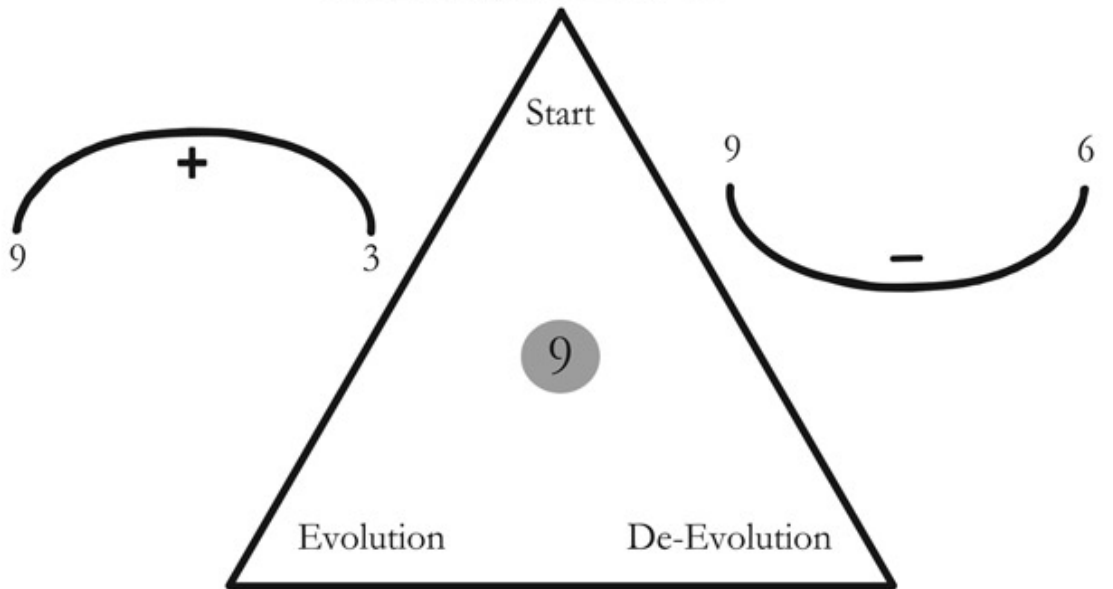
Self-confident, self-restrained; they
realize being loving does not equal
weakness

Convinced of their fatal weakness,
they get paranoid, afraid people wi
take advantage of their vulnerabilit
so they become dictatorial

[Figure 9.9](#) Protagonist Change Triangle—Eights



Find the common ground; keep the peace; avoid conflict; my needs come second, don't stand out



I matter and my voice counts, sometimes first; only through achieving can I step up and be heard and have presence

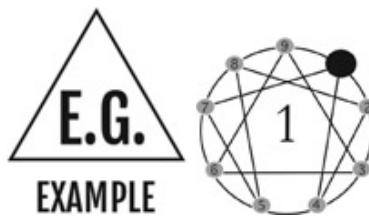
When peace fails, the fear of the failure freezes them—do nothing, it's not worth it, I'm not worth it

Figure 9.10 Protagonist Change Triangle—Nines

It is important to repeat here that the triangles provided in [Figures 9.2 – 9.10](#) are not specific characters; they are blueprints for any character that falls within the confines of specific Enneagram styles. Just as a blueprint guides the architect in creating a fully dimensional structure, so these blueprints are guides to help you customize the oppositional relationships that are natural to each Enneagram style to your purposes. Don't follow these slavishly; instead, use them so that you keep faithful to the broader patterns within each style but are not so constricted by them that you miss creative opportunities.

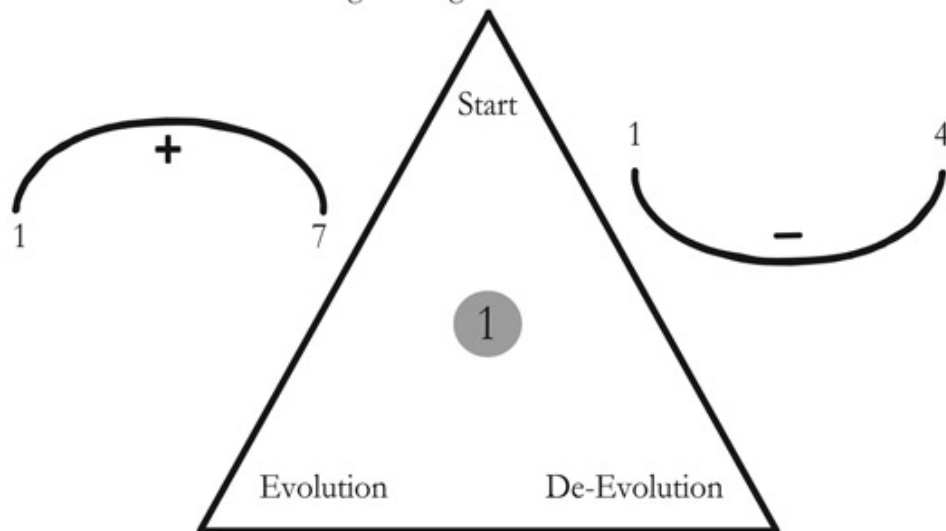
Enneagram Story-Based Protagonist Change Triangle —Examples

What follows are some examples of protagonist change triangles for specific characters from stories in literature and film. These examples illustrate how to use the tool and also demonstrate how it is not a cookie cutter, but rather a flexible aid in solving one of the biggest problems in story development, i.e., how to figure out your protagonist’s emotional journey.



EXAMPLE

The world has an order to it, everything in its place, including people. Routine is good and if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The safe world is the familiar one; don't change a thing



Lighten up, smell the roses, let people in; change doesn't mean chaos. Things change for the better, including people. Being right isn't the same as doing right

Keep distance, don't let in those who are different, hold the moral high ground, and give no quarter when it comes to doing things correctly. If things go wrong, then others are to blame

Driving Miss Daisy (Warner Bros., 1989)

Quick Synopsis : Cranky ol' Miss Daisy crashes her car, demonstrating her inability to drive herself, and her son Boolie gets her to hire an African American driver, Hoke, who she distrusts completely. One the years, her bigotry and pettiness give way to Hoke's generous nature and a loving friendship forms.

Protagonist : Daisy Werthan

Start Statement : The world has an order to it, everything in its place, including people. Routine is good and if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The safe world is the familiar one; don't change a thing.

Evolution Statement : Lighten up, smell the roses, let people in; change doesn't mean chaos. Things change for the better, including people. Being right isn't the same as doing right.

De-Evolution Statement : Keep distance, don't let in those who are different, hold the moral high ground, and give no quarter when it comes to doing things correctly. If things go wrong, then others are to blame.

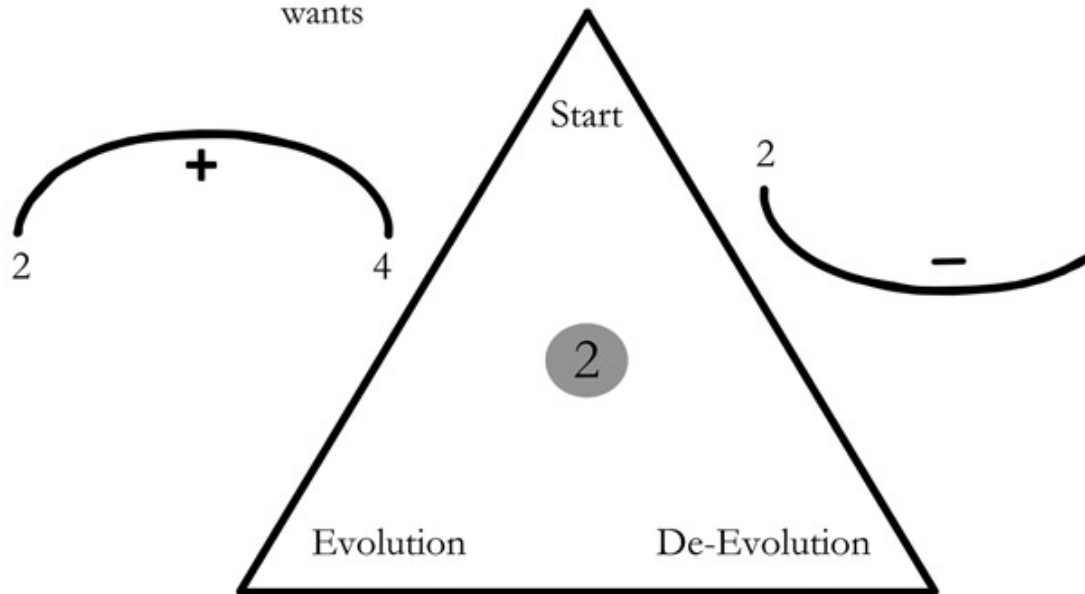
Resources : (Enneagram parameters influencing these statements.)

- Focus of Attention : *What is right or wrong, correct or incorrect?* This speaks to a character concerned with rules and protocols and following them. Including social rules. In this case about race and social status.
- Core Image : *I am reasonable* . This person thinks their worldview is sensible and normal and have no reason to apologize for their attitudes. Pride is an issue.
- Survival Strategy : *Stay safe by following the rules and thus get the love/approval of the one who has the power* . In this story, the person is concerned not so much with getting an individual to approve of their following the rules, but rather with not rocking the boat socially and standing out or being an outlier. They want to stay within the safe lines with which they have circumscribed their life. Anyone who threatens those lines is not to be trusted.

- Hexad Circuit of Safety : *When safe, Ones move to the upside of Seven. When this happens, they have learned to appreciate the beauty of life, and to relax and let go of their rule-bound agendas, and to see that life is more than pressure and oppressive responsibility . This is exactly what Miss Daisy does in the long run. She can't fight the basic good nature of Hoke, or her real desire for intimacy, so she drops her pretenses and judgments in the end.*
- Triad Circuit of Safety : N/A
- Hexad Circuit of Fear : *Caught up in fear, Ones move into the downside of Four, and this usually happens when perfectionism fails them, responsibility becomes oppressive, and chaos threatens. Ones move into their own special fantasy world where they can escape the chaos . Miss Daisy doesn't escape into mental confusion in the end as a way of escaping the threat of change brought on my Hoke, but she does slip into a fantasy world in the end. It is not a reaction formation in some threat, as it is with say Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* . But Miss Daisy's pattern of decline is one of "pretending" what she is doing is right and correct, fooling herself (but not anyone else) that her way is best. This is a kind of self-delusion fitting in with this negative pattern of fantasy creation, or a refusal to see what is in front of her.*
- Triad Circuit of Fear : N/A



The world is slipping away, but it is not gone. It's possible to rally and re-establish the security of the past and become indispensable once again to the world. All that matters is giving the audience what it wants



There are many ways to be in the world and connect deeply with others, without the requirement of being needed. There are other emotions to feel, not just love, and countless way to express the fuller range of human feeling

When all giving to get fails to deliver love and safety, when most valuable thing you have give is rejected by the "other" then make them love you, or least force them stay so you not be abandoned

[Figure 9.12](#) Protagonist Change Triangle Example—Twos

Sunset Boulevard (Paramount Pictures, 1950)

Quick Synopsis : Norma Desmond, faded silent film star, refuses to accept that fame has passed her by. Clinging to the fantasy of a career comeback, she hires an ambitious, manipulative young screenwriter, Joe Gillis, to help her regain her former glory. But Norma's ever-increasing neediness to be loved and admired clashes with Joe's ambition and feigned affection, leading to Norma's descent into full-on madness, and Joe lying face down, dead, in Norma's pool.

Protagonist : Norma Desmond

Start Statement : The world is slipping away, but it is not gone. It's possible to rally and re-establish the security of the past and become indispensable once again to the world. All that matters is giving the audience what it wants.

Evolution Statement : There are many ways to be in the world and connect deeply with others, without the requirement of being needed. There are other emotions to feel, not just love, and countless ways to express the fuller range of human feeling.

De-Evolution Statement : When all giving to get fails to deliver love and safety, when the most valuable thing you have to give is rejected by the "other," then make them love you, or at least force them stay so you will not be abandoned.

Resources : (Enneagram parameters influencing creation of these statements.)

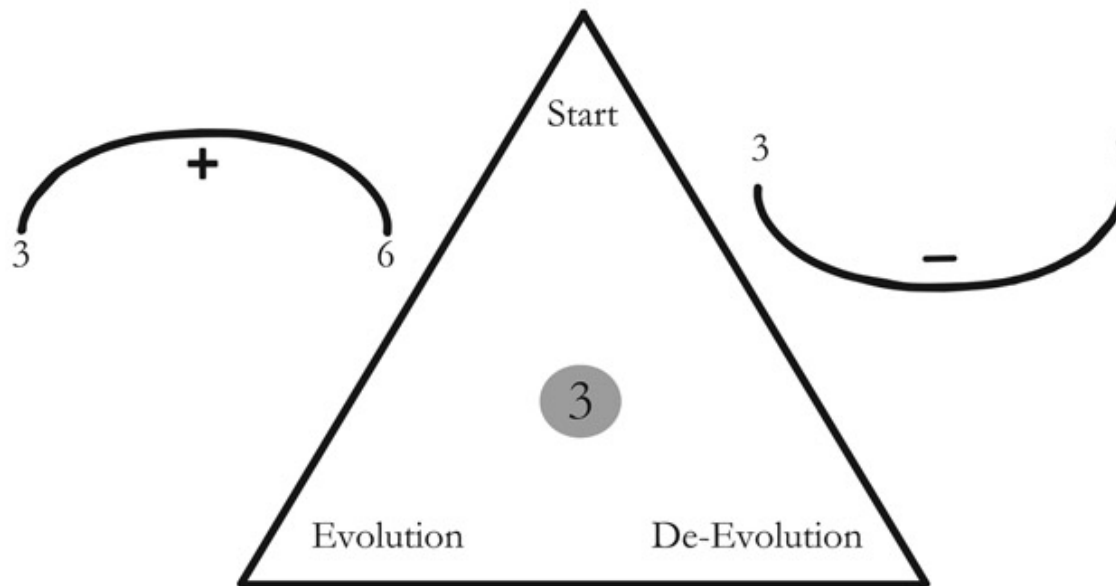
- Focus of Attention : *Will others like me? Will I be needed?* This speaks to a character locked into the need to be needed. It's not a single power-person, but an amalgam of people: the audience.
- Core Image : *I am loving, helpful* . This person thinks they have something unique to offer, something that is irresistible. When they give, it is the highest form of loving and helping.
- Survival Strategy : *Stay safe by finding the one with the power and making them love me, making myself indispensable* . In this story, the "one with the power" is the protagonist's perception of the audience. Without their (its) love, she does not matter, doesn't belong, is not seen. Her life serves the single function of giving everything she has to the all-powerful audience.
- Hexad Circuit of Safety : *Twos move to the upside of Four, where they can experience the full range of emotion, rather than just focusing on*

one (love). With a full emotional palette, their natural ability to connect with others grows from creative impulses, not from a need to be needed . Norma never quite gets there, but there is a moment in the story where she feels hope and love from her gigolo. She feels her old self again and feels more than the constricting narrows of need and desperation. The moment passes, however, and she slips deeper into her fear.

- Triad Circuit of Safety : N/A
- Hexad Circuit of Fear : *Twos move to the downside of Eight when they are afraid, which occurs when helping others fails to get them the support they seek, or when they find themselves unappreciated and rejected. They can often become controlling and forceful like an Eight, as they plot to regain favor with the one in power. As all hope is lost; as Joe pulls away, as her world constricts around her, Norma abandons helping or seeking support. Instead, she becomes controlling and forceful, with the help of a gun, and projects all her resentment and rage at her failure to secure love towards the hapless screenwriter, who ends up face-down in her pool.*
- Triad Circuit of Fear : N/A



Win. Image is all. Impress. Get the powers that be to notice you and keep winning. Don't fail



Winning the good fight to do the right thing for those you love is better than getting approval. Achieving so others can feel secure, rather than so you can look good, can be win-win

Jumping through hoops and getting approval never ends and just gets more of the same. There is no real way to win; it is all a facade and there is no value here. It's a trap

[Figure 9.13](#) Protagonist Change Triangle Example—Threes

***The Firm* (Paramount Pictures, 1993)**

Quick Synopsis : Mitch McDeere, an ambitious legal superstar recently graduated from law school, wins a coveted position with a prestigious but low-profile law firm. Mitch's ambition and drive to win scores big points with the firm's partners but end up getting Mitch in serious

trouble when he realizes he's part of a corrupt law firm and he and his wife could be killed. He goes from cocky, ambitious, and image-conscious legal eagle to avenging champion as he maneuvers to save himself and his family from the firm.

Protagonist : Mitch McDeere

Start Statement : Win. Image is all. Impress. Get the powers that be to notice you and keep winning. Don't fail.

Evolution Statement : Winning the good fight to do the right thing and create safety for those you love is better than getting approval. Achieving so others can feel secure, rather than so you can look good, can be win-win.

De-Evolution Statement : Jumping through hoops and getting approval never ends and just gets more of the same. There is no way to really win; it is all a façade and there is no value here. It's a trap.

Resources : (Enneagram parameters influencing the creation of these statements.)

- Focus of Attention : *How can I gain the respect and esteem of others?* This speaks to a character concerned with impressing others to get validation and a sense of worth. In this story, it's all about approval and demonstrating a winning character. You're only as valuable as your last win.
- Core Image : *I am outstanding, a winner* . This character thinks they can charm or manipulate their way out of any situation, win any challenge, and look better than anyone else in the process.
- Survival Strategy : *Stay safe by getting the approval of as many people as possible, not just one* . In this story, the protagonist's world is dog-eat-dog. The only way to stay safe, to have a future, is to stay on top. The firm is a collective, and if you want to survive, you have to keep all of them happy.
- Hexad Circuit of Safety : N/A
- Triad Circuit of Safety : *Self-valued, authentic and successful, so others feel safe and secure*. Mitch has to realize his value outside of the firm to his family, and his achievement has to be for them, not others. This can only happen if he values who he is, rather than looking for external validation.
- Hexad Circuit of Fear : N/A

- Triad Circuit of Fear : *External validation is insatiable, so resent the validation and the people; there's nothing valuable here after all* . Mitch is on a treadmill and can never get off. He's trapped and so is his family. He sees no value in what he is doing and resents those he once revered. He has no future after all.
-

The Enneagram-Story Connection

The central lesson to take away from this tool is that you have a great deal of latitude using it. You can easily get caught up in formalism and Enneagram boilerplate and end up with cookie-cutter statements, or you can use the Enneagram elements for each style as guideposts to inform your creative choices.

The statements you devise (start, evolution, de-evolution) for your protagonist's triangle should reflect the Enneagram and all of its information, but not literally word for word. Use your power of discernment, your ability to assess, and your power to make informed choice as a creator to translate the Enneagram data into meaningful and story-relevant statements that reflect the essence of the protagonist's Enneagram, but only in so much as they have meaning for the context of your story.

Maybe you will be eerily close in your reflections of the Enneagram for your character. Perhaps you will have to alter your approach and veer off track to find the best representations for your protagonist. The three examples in the previous section reflect this situation well. The triangle for *Driving Miss Daisy* generally captures the Enneagram elements of a One protagonist, but there are some elements that stretch connections a bit but do not break them. The triangle for *Sunset Boulevard* depicts a classic degenerated Two, in many ways right out of central casting, whereas the triangle for *The Firm* follows closely the Enneagram elements for a driven and image-crazy Three protagonist.

So, be flexible in your approach and you will find the right tone, context, and wording. Regardless, you will be better off using this tool to find the development path for your hero or heroine than if you were to just wing it, hoping for the Muse to deliver clarity.

10

The Moral Component



The moral basis of a story will make or break any story—every story needs a strong moral component.

Screenwriting gurus, script doctors, creative writing teachers, and successful writers in film, TV, and prose fiction have all written about the moral aspect of storytelling. They all tell you, “You need a protagonist who is flawed,” or “Your characters have to be broken in some way,” or “Your hero/heroine has to be damaged goods.”

The idea, of course, is that the more damaged the goods, the more vulnerable and sympathetic they will be—and with something broken, there is something to fix. Even with characters who are evil to the core, like Hannibal Lecter (*Silence of the Lambs*), or Michael Corleone (*The Godfather Trilogy*), their evil has an unconscious quality to it that makes them likable beasts—they are oblivious to their madness, and this gives them the patina of innocence.

Entire books have been written about the moral underpinnings of storytelling and the need to have a moral heart to your story expressed through theme, or some moral argument sewn throughout your story. So, the idea of a moral premise

is nothing new, and for many, it may be a tired and overplayed subject that has been written about adequately.

I disagree, though not so much because what has previously been written about the topic has been wanting or lacking substance—quite the contrary. There is a lot of great writing and teaching available on the subject of moral storytelling. What is lacking is not the expression of the need to do it in stories, but rather a clear demonstration of how to execute it on the page and in a piece of writing. Very few teachers and commentators articulate a clear strategy for creating characters with convincing and sustainable moral components.

Mostly what you will get are protagonists straight out of central casting: the self-pitied, alcoholic lawyer crying in his beer because no one believes in him anymore; or the lonely, embittered hired assassin questioning the meaninglessness of life; or the neurotic, obsessive-compulsive, plucky comic relief who is the sad-clown under all the affected happiness.

All of these tropes are tropes for a reason; they are the easy road, or as they say in business, they are the low hanging fruit. Why climb the tree and risk falling when the effortless sweets are hanging right there in front of you? The reason you want to climb the tree is that you see more from the top and the light is much better to see what you're grabbing. There is more risk, but no one ever wrote anything great playing it safe.

What does “Moral” Mean?



“Moral” refers to the principles, behaviors, and conduct that specify a person’s sense of right and wrong in themselves, and in the world, and that

define their impact in the world as a human being.

This particular definition works best for creative writers and storytellers. It is worded in a particular way to cover three key areas of any moral premise: motivation, action, and dramatic tension. These are the three essential elements you need to construct a moral component for any story.

Beyond this definition, I would suggest that there is an actual construct that can help you identify, develop, and deliver a powerful moral premise for any story. This construct I call the *moral component*. The term “component” refers to a particular part of some larger whole: a part that contributes to the function of that whole and to its efficiency. The moral premise, like any complex piece of machinery, is not a single widget working in isolation, but instead made up of many widgets working in harmony to achieve a sole purpose: tell a story.

The moral component of any story is not a single quality or trait you strive to achieve in your novel or screenplay. The moral component is an amalgam of three core elements that work together to achieve the kind of storytelling that lifts any story from the mundane to the memorable, while satisfying the definition of morality as defined earlier. The three elements of any story’s moral component consist of the following:

- The moral blind spot
- The immoral effect
- The dynamic moral tension

Moral Blind Spot

The moral blind spot is literally a blind spot in the protagonist’s sense of right and wrong, not only within themselves, but also in the world. The blind spot is a core belief that the protagonist holds that twists their moral compass in such a way as to poison all external relationships. This *core belief* is generated by a *base fear* about themselves, a fear to which they are blind but that nonetheless colors all their *choices*, *decisions*, *attitudes*, and *actions* —all of which results in the hurting of other people, not just themselves. The main character knows their core

belief (superficially), is blind to their base fear, and is in denial about the negative impact he/she is having on others.

Characters act out of motivation, and their actions are consistent with those motivations. The moral blind spot is the fuel of character motivation, so any actions a character carries out must be consistent with those motivations. They take on a moral tone because the character's choices, decisions, attitudes, and actions negatively affect other people. It's not only inner torment and angst directed against the self (though this could be going on as well). Their behavior emotionally hurts others.

Blind spots are behaviors we do not see in ourselves but that others see all the time when they encounter us. The protagonist in a story is blind to their moral blind spot, meaning they are not consciously aware of it. They do not know it, feel it, sense it, worry about it, etc. They are blind to it, but it is entwined into the very fabric of their being. The moral blind spot is the source of why the protagonist acts in the world the way they do, i.e., harming others—all because they hold a false belief about themselves as a person (which is fundamentally wrong), a belief that throws them into fear and survival, and that acts as the driver for all scene-level motivation. Making the blind spot visible is the purpose of the story; it is the brass ring at the end of their journey. It is what makes change possible.

Motivation is not about wanting something—motivation is the thing that makes the wanting exist at all. Characters want to find tangible objects that can feed the motivation driving their need to want whatever it is they want. Motivation sources from the inside out, not the outside in—it comes from the heart and soul of the character, and everything in the story is at service to this inner driver.

The key thing to understand is that this driver, while sourcing from the inside, is never purely interior to the character. It must find its physical expression outside the character in the form of scene-level action on the page. This idea is at the heart of the old motto and cliché “show, don't tell.” The act of showing in a story is not just about making scenes visual; it is about tangibly externalizing, on the page, the internal drive that wreaks havoc with the protagonist's moral compass (i.e., the blind spot).

Immoral Effect

The immoral effect is the moral blind spot in action; it is how you “show, don’t tell.” There is no point in having your protagonist suffer from a skewed moral compass unless that skew demonstrates itself in action at the scene level in the novel or screenplay. If your protagonist is hurting other people, then the audience needs to see it happen and not merely know intellectually about the moral blind spot. To reiterate: your protagonist has a base fear that feeds a distorted belief about the world that, in turn, produces actions consistent with that fear and belief.

An excellent example of this is Joe, the bank robber. Joe has a core fear that he is fatally broken and flawed, and he’ll never figure out what’s wrong with him on his own (moral blind spot). So, he develops a sense of entitlement (skewed belief): “The world owes me an answer to my problem. Somebody ‘out there’ has to fix me.” In a sense, Joe is waiting for the cavalry to come over the hill to rescue him, but in the meantime, he develops a twisted perception and belief that he’s owed something because of he is “the exception”; he’s the broken one. His core fear is that he is unfixable; his distorted belief is that this makes him entitled; and the immoral effect is that he forcibly takes what is owed him and screw the consequences.

Joe has a blind spot of feeling unfixable and flawed, which he slathers over with a sense of entitlement to assuage the emotional pain of being hopelessly broken. He is unaware of his fear and core belief about himself; all he knows is how he compensates for it (entitlement), and this directs his actions in the world (“I’ll take what I want”).

Most writers would settle for Joe being a bad guy and robbing banks. So, he’s a guy who has to learn how not to be a bad guy. He has to learn not to be greedy and selfish. Or in the parlance of the standard story guru world, he has to figure out his want (money) and his need (to not be selfish/greedy).

This need/want model is nowhere near what he needs to learn and is not even in the ballpark in terms of clarifying or establishing this character’s real moral problem. But, using the cookie-cutter approaches of most story gurus, this is what most writers think is the direction to take Joe as a character. It should be obvious, even with this introductory discussion of Joe, that the blind spot/immoral effect components already deepen his character and will lead to a much more personal and satisfying conclusion for his growth trajectory in the story.

Dynamic Moral Tension

While the moral blind spot is the driver that generates the immoral effect, the dynamic moral tension is the engine that keeps it all running. Throughout your story, your protagonist will have to make choices—serious choices. He or she will not be choosing vanilla or chocolate, or pizza with or without pepperoni. No, the choices will be: do I cheat on my wife or not, do I kill this person or not, do I rob the bank or not, do I save myself or the infant baby on the train tracks?

The choices are moral, in the context we have established with our definition of a moral premise. And the choices stem from the other two elements of the moral component we have covered, i.e., moral blind spot and immoral effect. Character choice does not exist in a vacuum; it is generated by the engine of dynamic moral tension that is constantly testing, prodding, and challenging your protagonist to change and grow, or to disintegrate and spiral into a worse moral condition.

This is critical to understand because the dynamic moral tension, or the lack thereof, is what gives you a passive or active main character in your screenplay or novel. You want your hero or heroine to be active, not passive. What is the difference between the two? An active character is one that generates scene-level action based on the moral component. The active protagonist causes, directly or indirectly, everything that happens in your story. The passive protagonist is the main character that generates nothing, but who is always in reaction-mode, responding to external events that force him/her to act. Passive main characters tend to be dull and boring because they get pushed around by events, rather than create the events of the story themselves.

Moral Component Examples



Let's consider four examples from literature, theater, and film that illustrate this blind spot/immoral effect and dynamic moral tension interrelationship to

see how they play out in well-known stories.

***Sunset Boulevard* (screenplay by Billy Wilder, 1950)**

Protagonist : Joe Gillis (William Holden)

Moral Blind Spot : Joe feels he has no real value.

Immoral Effect : Joe uses people for advancement, even as he demeans himself; manipulates others to look good.

Blind Spot-Immoral Effect Connection : Because Joe's lack of self-worth haunts him, he seeks out situations that remind him how "less than" he is, despite his hunger for achievement and the need to be admired. It is his ironic lack of value that drives his lust for being valued by others.

Dynamic Moral Tension : Joe is continually being offered the choice to honor himself and leave this dysfunctional relationship and go with the younger woman or stay and play out his old pattern. He keeps making the bad choice, to his doom.

***Amadeus* (play by Peter Shaffer, 1980; screenplay by Peter Shaffer, 1984)**

Protagonist : Antonio Salieri (F. Murray Abraham)

Moral Blind Spot : Salieri feels he lacks talent, real genius—he's ordinary.

Immoral Effect : Salieri cannot tolerate anyone excelling at his expense, so he must destroy them.

Blind Spot-Immoral Effect Connection : Because Salieri is driven by a core fear, he is mediocre (i.e., ordinary); when faced with real genius in the form of Mozart, he obsessively drives Mozart toward his ideal of perfection—and Mozart's doom.

Dynamic Moral Tension : Salieri is continually being offered the opportunity to treat Mozart as a more-talented colleague and be supportive or continue his plan of manipulation and self-centeredness. He constantly chooses to act in his self-interest.

***Of Mice and Men* (novel by John Steinbeck, 1937; screenplay by Horton Foot and John Steinbeck, 1992)**

Protagonist : George Milton

Moral Blind Spot : George fears he will be obliterated by the world if he lets down his guard.

Immoral Effect : He must compulsively protect Lennie from the world, or else it may destroy him—Lennie being a metaphor for himself.

Blind Spot-Immoral Effect Connection : Even while he resents his role as protector, he so thoroughly identifies with Lennie's vulnerability to the world at large that he dooms both of them to a tragic end, when he is forced by his fear of the world to "protect" Lennie in an ultimate way: taking Lennie out of the world that threatens to destroy them both.

Dynamic Moral Tension : George consistently faces the opportunity to face his fear of the world and let Lennie experience his relationship with life, or maintain his obsessive control, and keeps making the bad choice, leading to the worst possible outcome.

***The Verdict* (novel by Barry Reed, 1980; screenplay by David Mamet, 1982)**

Protagonist : Frank Galvin

Moral Blind Spot : Frank is blind to the fact that he sees himself as valueless and not mattering.

Immoral Effect : He sees people as targets and easy prey for money; people don't matter; they're a means to an end.

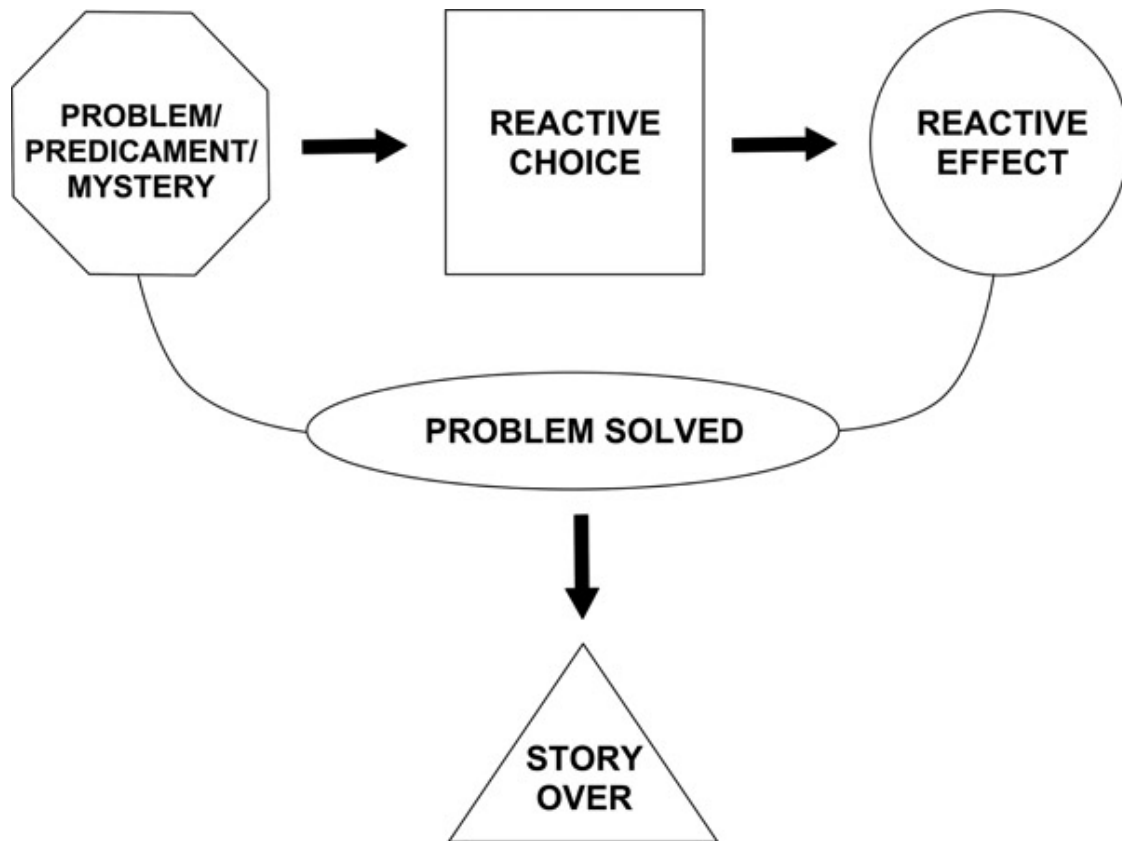
Blind Spot-Immoral Effect Connection : Frank takes advantage of people because they have no value to him beyond what he can manipulate out of them, but he feels this about other people because he has no sense of worth about himself. He would not hurt other people if he found himself valuable; this is exactly what he does by the end of the story, reclaiming his humanity.

Dynamic Moral Tension : Frank is offered multiple opportunities to do the right thing because it's the right thing, rather than going for the easy money and the selfish payout, and ultimately realizes he has dignity and value as a human being and that that's worth fighting for.

These four examples illustrate the subtle and complex relationships between the three elements of the moral component. This single construct is the engine of any story's middle (or at least a big piece of the middle, as we shall see in [Chapter 12](#)); it is the thing that drives the narrative forward, helping the writer to raise dramatic stakes and throwing a story's protagonist into ever deeper and dangerous emotional waters. The proactive vs passive nature of a protagonist is what makes or breaks the middle of any story. And how active or reactive a protagonist is depends on how well these three elements play together.

To more clearly see this dynamic relationship, it will be helpful to examine how it plays out graphically in the Passive Protagonist Loop and the Active Protagonist Loop. These illustrations show clearly why the moral component acts as the main line of demarcation between any story and situation.

The Passive Protagonist Loop



[Figure 10.1](#) Passive Protagonist Loop

In a narrative with a passive protagonist, the hero/heroine faces a problem-mystery-predicament ([Figure 10.1](#)). They did not create the problem themselves; the problem finds them, and they have to decide how to act. Their response to the problem, however, is reactive, not proactive. The situation is leading them; they are not leading the situation. Situations (and not stories) tend to have passive protagonists for this very reason. The situation drives the hero/heroine in situations, not the other way around. The passive protagonist is forced by events to make a reactive choice, which then leads to a reactive effect (their choice in action).

The bottom part of the loop shows how this problem leads to a choice, then to an effect, and then keeps looping around back onto itself, thus generating a kind of engine that fuels the passive choice/decision-making process of the main character. When the problem or mystery gets solved, the loop is interrupted, and the situation is over.

Situations tend to evolve into episodic storytelling, which can be distracting and off-putting to audiences (and readers). Episodic writing is writing that is plagued by many narratives starting and stopping, disconnected and standalone events, and mini-stories or situations within stories.

Sometimes, protagonists can appear to be the instigator of things and so the events appear to be generated by them, but this is not the case. They do something stupid or make a blunder “out of the blue,” and then an ensuing cascade of events forces them to react. The blunder or stupid mistake does not source from their moral component (i.e., their character); it is merely something they randomly do. Stories that portray the good and moral person caught up in the no-win scenario (*All Is Lost* (Lionsgate, 2013), *Gravity* (Warner Bros., 2013)) follow this passive loop structure.

These situations test the protagonist’s stamina, will, or perseverance to see if they have the mettle to survive the crucible they’ve been thrust into by random chance, or by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Underdog stories follow this loop, unless they break out and make the story about why the protagonist is an underdog, examining the moral driver behind their passivity or underachievement (*Straw Dogs* (Cinema Releasing, 1971), *Falling Down* (Warner Bros., 1993)), and this—not merely surviving the situation—is the real lesson to be learned.

The Active Protagonist Loop

In stories (not merely situations) with active protagonists, all action is generated from the main character’s moral component ([Figure 10.2](#)). When the hero/heroine is driven by that core fear (moral blind spot) and then acts consistently with the fear (immoral effect), then all events in the story are directly or indirectly sourced from character, not generated as random external events.

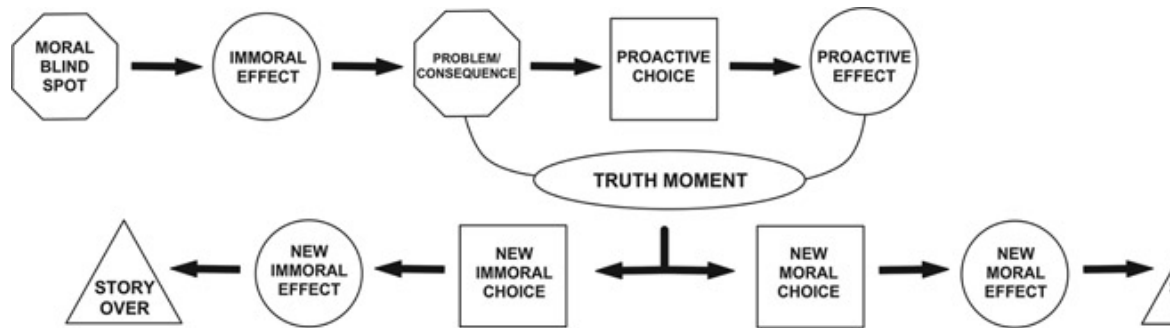


Figure 10.2 Active Protagonist Loop

Let’s look at how this plays out with an example: Joe, the bank robber. Joe robs the bank because of his sense of entitlement, i.e., “the world owes me, so I get to take what I want” (*moral blind spot*), and he commits a crime (*immoral effect*); he does not blunder into a bank randomly and then pick up the wrong bag (filled with money), thus accidentally robbing the bank. Joe is the unwitting architect of his fall from grace. He is now a bank robber and on the run (*problem/consequence*), and must now figure out the best way to escape and not lose everything.

So, Joe calls up the best fixer he knows and arranges for his whole team to be snuck out of the country (*proactive choice*), leading to the entire gang becoming international criminals and targets for global law enforcement—something the gang did not sign up for! Joe’s action creates a whole new complication: the gang becomes resentful and starts to conspire to perhaps turn Joe in to save their own skins (*proactive effect*). Joe continues around the loop, making choices that lead to complications that lead to effects that lead to new problems, and so on, until this loop is interrupted by Joe’s moment of personal change, i.e., the truth moment. Joe is the source of the loop’s action. Joe drives events; events don’t drive Joe.

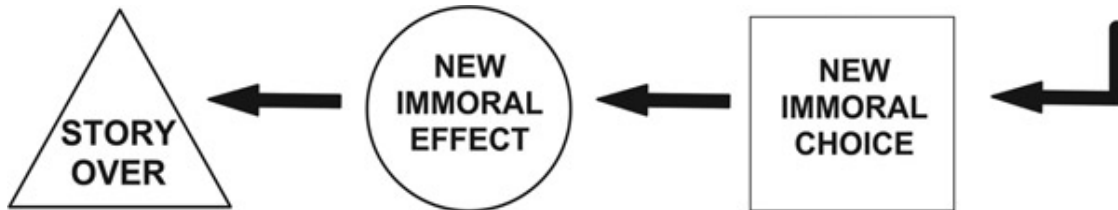
Active Protagonist Loop Bottom Right



[Figure 10.3](#) Active Loop/Bottom Right

Through the course of choices, actions, and effects, Joe realizes he isn't owed anything by the gang (*entitlement blind spot*)—he owes them. He owes them a chance to live normal lives and not go to jail because of him, so he does the right thing and sacrifices himself for the gang that has done so much for him (*truth moment*). This change then leads Joe down the right side of the bottom portion of the diagram: he turns himself in (*new moral choice*), the gang escapes, and their lives aren't ruined (*new moral effect*)—and the story is over.

Active Protagonist Loop Bottom Left



[Figure 10.4](#) Active Loop/Bottom Left

If, however, Joe doesn't have a true moment of growth but decides that he must become even more self-centered in order to survive (à la Al Pacino in *The Godfather*), then he follows the left side of the bottom portion of the diagram: he sacrifices not himself but the gang (*new immoral choice*), takes all the money, and then lives a life on the run, never sleeping in the same place more than one night, trusting no one (*new immoral effect*). The story ends with him alone in a cheap motel, surrounded by piles of money he can't spend, watching bad game shows in the dark and eating junk food—story over.

In the active protagonist loop, the protagonist has a blind spot in their moral outlook—a blind spot that leads them to generate a false belief about the world that in turn generates action that hurts other people (*immoral effect*). This hurtful action leads to a problem or consequence.

The *problem* or *consequence* is not some random, external thing forcing a reaction; no—quite the opposite—the problem only exists because of the moral component in action. This problem forces the protagonist to make a *proactive choice* /decision, leading to a *proactive effect* (they've created this mess now they

better do something about it). The loop portion of the diagram shows how this feeds back on itself, generating more choices and more effects that act as an engine to create and source scene-level conflict.

It is only when the protagonist has their moment of growth (truth moment), where they figure out what they are doing wrong morally and heal their base fear (moral blind spot), that they can then make a new moral choice and take further moral action, effectively ending the story. If they do not have a positive growth moment, then they disintegrate down the path of de-evolution, and their moral crisis deepens, perhaps to the point of self-destruction (again, think of the Al Pacino character in *The Godfather*).



Conflict in any story sources from the protagonist's moral component, and this fuels the active protagonist loop, which drives the middle of any story—thus helping to avoid mushy middles and episodic writing.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the moral component is so important that it can stand alone as the keystone supporting all other story development and story structure elements in a story, regardless of the story system, guru, or writing method you may prefer. Without a moral component, you have a passive protagonist (even if they are shooting everything in sight), and you run the risk of episodic writing. With a moral component, you have an active protagonist and a bulletproof engine for generating character-based drama or comedy readers and audiences will come back to time and time again.

11

The Moral Enneagram



The moral basis of a protagonist will make or break any story—every story needs a strong moral component.

Before we look at how you can use the Enneagram to piece together a moral component for any protagonist, it is important to understand how the Enneagram system relates to the issue of morality, and thus the moral component of storytelling. The “moral Enneagram” is a topic that has been written about in some depth by Enneagram gurus and teachers, especially since the 1970s and the birth of the New Age, self-help movement. You can do the research necessary to dig up all that commentary and wade through it, if you are so inclined. I would suggest that if you are wanting to get more in-depth with the Enneagram as a holistic system, then there is value in doing so. But you do not have to become an expert in Enneagram moral theory to use the moral basis of the Enneagram in story development.

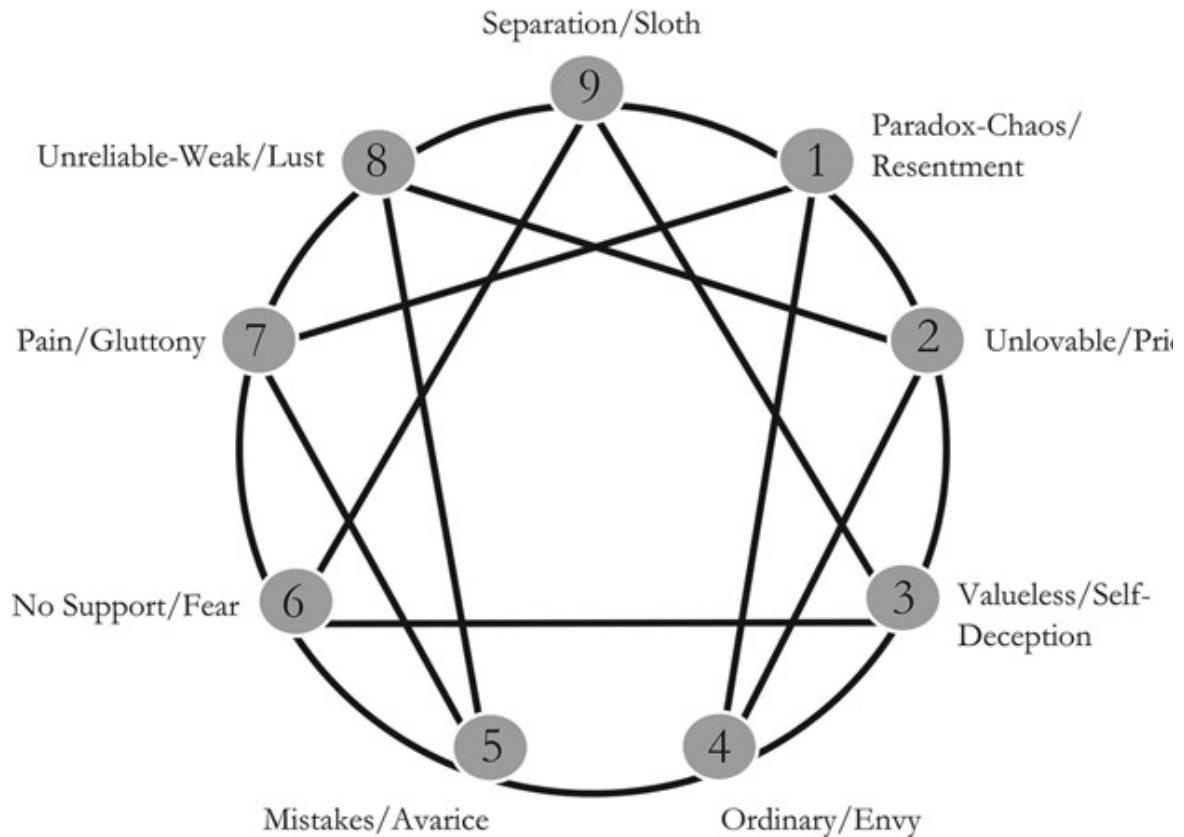
When it comes to any belief, behavior, or inclination, each of the Enneagram styles operates out of its own distortion filters, blind spots, and behavioral pinches. I covered these concepts in “[Part 1](#) : The Enneagram for Writers.” Each style has multiple agendas for self-preservation, seeking safety, finding love, and

resolving conflict. It should come as no surprise, then, that each style also views moral questions of goodness, badness, compassion, altruism, and rightness or wrongness relative to their style's filters and blind spots. In other words, as with story theme, morality must be grounded at the character level and is influenced by all the behavioral pieces that make up the Enneagram puzzle as a whole. It's not that morality is relative; rather, morality is distorted through the lens of individual Enneagram-style points of view.

Armed with knowledge of the mechanics of the moral component (*blind spot* , *immoral effect* , and *dynamic moral tension*), the clearest way you can develop a conceptual understanding of the moral Enneagram as a tool for your writing is to become intimate with two of the Enneagram essentials that we covered in [Chapter 4](#) , “Enneagram Core Fears and Poisons” and “Enneagram Core Desires and Distortions.”

Often by looking at these two configurations of the Enneagram, you as a writer can glean the first inklings of your protagonist's moral blind spot. Once you have the blind spot in view, it is a fairly straight path to figuring out how that blind spot needs to act out on the page in character behavior, and it likewise becomes relatively clear how to keep the moral decision-making loop active instead of passive (see the previous chapter). In a very real way, the “Enneagram Core Fears and Poisons” and “Enneagram Core Desires and Distortions” can act as building blocks that give shape and substance to your protagonist's moral component. What I describe next is not the only way into the blind spot, but it is often the fastest and best way. Other strategies will be offered at the end of the chapter.

Enneagram Moral Component Building Blocks



[Figure 11.1](#) Enneagram Fears/Poisons

Source: Concept Synergy 2004

As I said in [Chapter 4](#) , the core fear of each style reflects that style’s focus of attention and their survival strategy. The “poison” aspect comes into play when the Enneagram core fear is ignored or responded to in an unhealthy way. The unattended fear, or the fear run amok, festers in a poisonous set of self-reinforcing beliefs and/or behaviors that twist and undermine the ability of a frightened individual to pull themselves out of the toxic spiral deeper into survival and emotional self-defense.

Fear/Poison Dynamics by Style



Ones fear change and paradox and the chaos that always precedes both, and when this fear isn't responded to, they grow to resent the very rules that once kept them safe. That resentment often turns punishing and judgmental when the world does not share their zeal for reform, and they may sink into poisonous feelings of being defective, self-loathing, even turning against themselves; or believing they are taking the moral high ground when in fact they are only being obsessively fixated.

A Man for All Seasons (Columbia Pictures, 1966)



Thomas More : Henry VIII wants to marry Anne Boleyn, and Thomas is the only member of the Privy Council opposing Cardinal Wolsey's petitions to the Pope for a divorce. His opposition leads to a dangerous confrontation with the King, and after refusing many chances to "change" his mind, Thomas stands by his religious principles and refuses to endorse the King's plans. This leads to his being framed for bribery and beheaded for treason. But he dies defending his morality and that of God.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : He starts in the benign One state of being a "cross your t's, dot your i's" house lawyer, but moves from ideas of what is "right" legally, to what is moral, to an overly rigid and de-evolved defense of a morality that trumps all legality.



Twos ultimately fear that despite all their caretaking they are unlovable, and when this fear is left to grow it poisons them into self-deceptive and prideful overvaluing the self at the expense of real relationships or self-nurturing, sometimes to psychotic consequences.

All About Eve (Twentieth Century Fox, 1950)



Eve Harrington : An ingenue seduces her way into the company of an aging actress (Margo Channing) and becomes her greatest fan and indispensable in every way. Then, fueled by her own ruthless pride and self-image, and seeking her own fame and adoration, Eve uses deceit, ambition, and sabotage to slowly outshine her mentor, using Margo as a stepping stone to her own career.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : She starts the story in a Twoish, sympathetic mode of being eerily helpful, and then moves to a full-on, ruthless extortion of love to fuel an insatiable (almost psychotic) need for adoration.



Threes are haunted by the fear that despite all their achieving and winning, they have no value and don't matter. This fear, when unresolved, can poison them to become self-deluded about how much better they are when compared to all the losers they once sought approval from.

***The Verdict* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1982)**



EXAMPLE

Frank Galvin : Ambulance-chasing, former-wunderkind lawyer

Frank is hired to defend a woman in a coma. Everyone knows Frank is a drunk and money-hungry, so he's "offered" money to settle out of court by the guilty parties. He has to decide whether to take the money and run or do the right thing.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : This is an example of a story where the hero/heroine is at their lowest Enneagram expression at the start, so there is nowhere "lower" for them to move, enneagramatically speaking. In this case, the movement is toward the evolutionary position, to the upside of Six, achieving success, not for personal glory, but to create safety and security for others.



Fours, for all their sense of specialness and being the exception, ultimately fear their innate ordinariness. This fear eats away at them and poisons them into envying all those who seem more whole and happier than themselves, making them self-absorbed, moody, and clingy/needy.

***Amadeus* (Orion Pictures, 1984)**



Antonio Salieri : Convinced that his own musical talent and success are a reflection of God's reward for his piety, Antonio's piety itself is challenged when he meets Mozart. Antonio cannot reconcile God's favor of the "monkey," Mozart, over himself, having gifted Mozart with genius, but only gifting Salieri the ability to recognize genius in others, rather than have it himself. This cruel joke spins him into cruel and murderous revenge against the "monkey," but also against God, leaving Salieri in a fanatical delusion that he is the patron saint of mediocrity.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : Starts the story in a safe state of smug, Four specialness, but quickly moves to the anxiety and panic that comes with the Four's terror of realizing they are simply ordinary.



Fives fear that their real incompetence will blunder them into mistake after mistake, making their world unsafe, and if this fear is unresolved, they can grow panicky, helpless, and scattered, leading to an avaricious pursuit of relief from the haunting feelings of loneliness, emptiness, and compulsive wanting.

***Silence of the Lambs* (Orion Pictures, 1991)**



EXAMPLE

Dr. Hannibal Lecter : Dr. Hannibal “The Cannibal” Lecter consults with Clarice Starling to give insight into the behavioral profile of a serial killer. He develops an affection for the fledgling FBI agent, Starling, and uses his charm and intellect to orchestrate his escape from prison, but not before establishing an intimate, if disturbing, connection with Agent Starling. Once loose in the world, he promises not to pursue her; she cannot promise the same in return.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : He starts the story a pure thinker who appreciates the deeper meanings in life, music, and art, and a good human liver with fava beans. An emotional enigma, he gives nothing up, and uses information as a weapon to control his world and all in it. He exhibits the worst aspects of the Five, including the inability to show compassion, though he does develop a soft spot for Clarice.



Sixes fear that despite all their planning, despite all their caution and their loyalty to others, they are ultimately alone and unsupported, which when gone unchecked poisons them into a reactive petulance and competitiveness where they spin into negating hyperactivity, eventually degrading into a state of torpor.

Hamlet (Warner Bros., 1990)



EXAMPLE

Hamlet : Hamlet (Mel Gibson) returns to Denmark when his father, the King, dies. His mother, Gertrude, has married Hamlet's uncle Claudius, and Hamlet is being pressured to marry Ophelia. The ghost of Hamlet's father appears and tells Hamlet that he was murdered by Claudius and Gertrude, and Hamlet must choose between acceptance and vengeance.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : Hamlet spins in agitated circles trying to decide how best to act. Sixishly vindictive, antiauthoritarian, and seething with anger, he grapples with a vow of loyalty to his dead father and the consequences that may come from revenge. In true Six style, his core is fear and anxiety.



Sevens fear they will be consumed by their own pain, or the pain of others, and when this is not relieved, they are poisoned into gluttonous excess and/or critical, exacting, and perfectionist ideals that they delude themselves into believing will eventually free them from the agony of their present situation.

***My Dinner with Andre* (New Yorker Films, 1981)**



EXAMPLE

Andre Gregory : Andre meets his old friend Wally at a dinner reunion to discuss old times. Andre rambles on with a fantastical account of his nervous breakdown and spiritual crisis. He tells his tale with big, imaginative leaps that freely associate unrelated events, dropping names and hipster, New Age adventures, irritating Wally with increasing smugness and superiority, even as he unravels in his own personal anguish at the big questions he cannot answer. Eventually their individual worldviews clash, masks fall away, and each man must get a bit more authentic with the other.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : Andre's Sevenish behavior is evident in his rapid and shifting storytelling, focused on esoteric subjects, jumping from idea to idea, confounded by his smug superiority at how clever and erudite he is, compared to his plain-Jane friend. Andre's Sevenish struggle trying to understand the pain of an undefined, existential crisis belies his fast and footloose storytelling.



Eights fear their own internal weakness and unreliability, and when this is left to fester, they become poisoned with defensive, confrontational preoccupations with power and control of others, often lapsing into excess and self-indulgent numbing behaviors to isolate themselves into morbid inaction.

Lean on Me (Warner Bros., 1989)



Principal Joe Clark : Joe returns to the school from which he was fired as its new principal and proceeds to turn the degraded school back into the idyllic school he remembered. Using arrogance, inventing his own rules, intimidation, tough love, and rattling the cages of the powers-that-be, Joe is a one-man wrecking crew, tearing down what is broken and rebuilding his own vision of what “should be.” It all works out in the end, despite his dictatorial and my-way-or-the-highway philosophy.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : Joe starts as an arrogant and self-reliant boss and doesn’t really change, though his Eight vulnerability shows itself in his loyalty and real caring for the kids he’s ruling over. He will move heaven and earth for these kids, whether they like or it not, using his own high standards, changing the rules as needed to meet his vision, and screw anyone who disagrees (watch out for his bat!), especially the powers-that-be. Joe moves from a classic dictatorial, controlling Eight to benevolent dictator and champion.



Nines fear separation and disconnection from others, and when this fear is exacerbated, they will often spiral down into a poisonous brew of lethargy, sloth, and pathological self-abandonment in order to avoid the deep and primal dread posed by moving forward—or moving at all—forever deer caught in the headlights of life.

***My Dinner with Andre* (New Yorker Films, 1981)**



Wallace Shawn : Wally meets his old friend Andre for dinner and the two catch up. Wally listens over dinner to Andre's *avant garde* life and their two worldviews clash. Andre pushes Wally to be less robot-like in his life, and Wally pushes back, defending the virtues of a mundane existence. In the end, Wally leaves, content that he appreciates a bit more the world he lives in but has no great need to change anything. He just wants to go home and tell his girlfriend about his dinner with Andre.

Fear/Poison Dynamic : Moves from the anxiety of the threat of change and disconnection from the life he knows, into the familiar safety of sloth and the peace that comes from same ol', same ol'. He's less the human robot he used to be, thanks to Andre's lecturing, but still doesn't want to change anything.

(Character examples partially referenced from *Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0: How to See Personality Styles in the Movies, 3rd Ed* . (The Changeworks, 2011) by Thomas Condon.)

The Enneagram-Story Connection

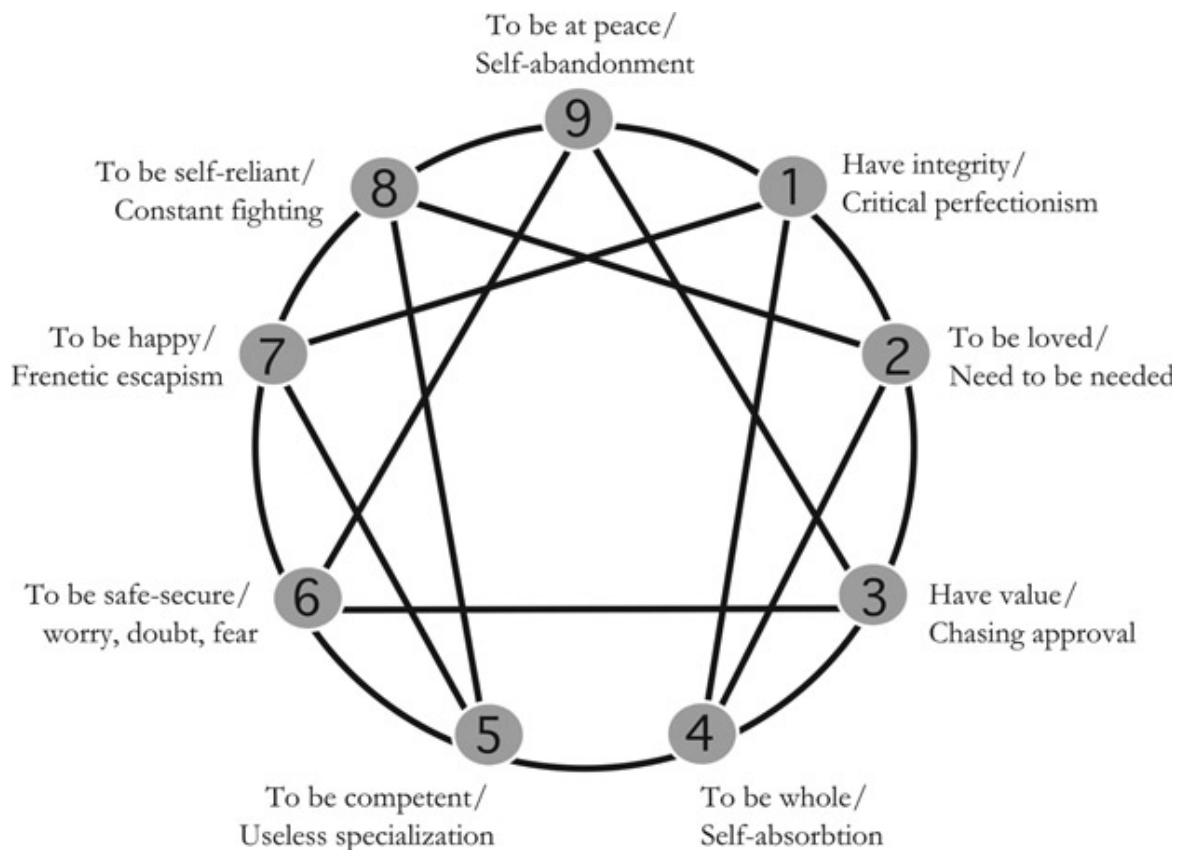
It is very important to note that the fear/poison relationship is a fluid dynamic not only in people but also in fictional characters. For writers (as you will see in the examples), this means that the descriptions of how a particular fear becomes poisoned into specific constricting behaviors may not manifest in some beat-for-beat, linear way. For example, an Eight protagonist may start off being very controlling of others, confrontational, and defensive, but they may not lapse into numbing behaviors or morbid inaction. The writer might just want to emphasize one or another aspect of the fear/poison relationship, not the entire constellation of possible fear/poison degradation.

An extreme example of this “cherry picking” approach is Dr. Hannibal Lecter (*Silence of the Lambs* , 1991), as pure an evil Five Enneagram style as can be imagined. Here the writers focused on only a few of the Five's darkest poisons, and none of the positives. This worked for their dramatic purposes, and brilliantly so. So, you don't have to hit every piece of Enneagram behavior when you write

your characters. All you have to do is find the developmental components (in this case, fear/poison) that work for your character and emphasize those.

As you consider the examples earlier in this chapter, you will see that all of them do exactly that: i.e., they focus on specific aspects of the fear/poison dynamic and ignore the fuller expression of what might be available to the character. The advantage of this to you as a storyteller is that you don't become a slave to some cookie-cutter approach, and so can pick and choose what works best for your characters in any given situation.

Seeing how pains and poisons might relate to issues of morality is not difficult. When our pain is poisoned into toxic pain, it doesn't take a huge leap of imagination to understand how this might negatively affect a person's interactions with others. But there is another area that contributes to this toxic brew or pain and poison: desire.



[Figure 11.2](#) Enneagram Core Desire/Distortion

Source: Concept Synergy 2004

Each Enneagram style has a basic desire consistent with their type that, when not satisfied in a constructive and integrative way, turns into a distortion of the original desire, thus twisting and skewing a person’s drive to get what they think they want ([Figure 11.2](#)). Each desire, at its core, is meant to help the individual find their personal equilibrium, but when there are too many blind spots, blockages, constrictions, and self-sabotaging in the way, then the healthy desire distorts to a “dark” desire that only further warps a person’s search for their true desire. This is compounded when you figure in their fear and poison, layering over additional constriction and emotional turmoil. *(Perhaps you are sensing how these fears/poisons and desires/distortions can work together to create very complicated people?)*

This section goes on to provide the core desires and their associated distortions by style (also see [Chapter 4](#) , “The Enneagram Model”). For consistency, I will use the same examples as fears/poisons for each desire/distortion, because fears and desires and poisons and distortions function within each style along similar dynamics; using the same test examples shows these dynamics across a consistent character.

Core Desire/Distortion Dynamics by Style



The core desire of the One is to have integrity: i.e., having the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles, saying what you will do, and doing what you say. But, when this desire is colored by fears of change, chaos, or unhealthy strategies of control, it distorts into critical perfectionism and judgmental intolerance.

A Man for All Seasons (Columbia Pictures, 1966)



Thomas More : He wants to do the moral thing, the right thing.

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : As Henry brings ever more radical change to the Church in England, forcing Thomas into a political corner, Thomas's opposition to Henry twists into moral perfectionism and intolerance. Thomas becomes intransigent and ultimately self-destructive.



The core desire of the Two is to be loved. The love of one person is their preference, the person they feel is most important for their own survival. But when all the caretaking and helping fails to bring the love they seek, wanting love twists into an insatiable need to be needed and helping distorts into controlling manipulation.

***All About Eve* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1950)**



Eve Harrington : Eve wants to be a star and the love of the crowd.

This is not seen by her as being loved by many individuals, but by a single thing—the audience (not unlike Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*).

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : Eerily helpful, Eve slowly ingratiates herself into Margo Channing's life, escalating her manipulations until her insatiable need to be needed is achieved; when Margo and those around her have been marginalized, Eve can stand alone as the star she always wanted to be.



The core desire of the Three is to matter and have value. To accomplish this desire, they identify all the sources in their life where potential approval might be found and then do everything they can to please those sources by winning, achieving, and proving their value. When this fails, the desire distorts into resentment and hostility toward those very sources, all achievement stops, and the Three descends into a lethargy of worthlessness.

***The Verdict* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1982)**



EXAMPLE

Frank Galvin : Despite his wallowing in self-pity and alcohol, Frank desperately wants to win at life, matter again, and reclaim his lost wunderkind status.

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : Broken down by failures, booze, and life, the former legal golden-boy licks his wounds by buying into his own bad press. He sees himself as a loser, preying on innocents as an ambulance-chasing lawyer. Resenting the very people from whom he once sought approval, he now resents people in general, and all achievement has stopped.



The Four's greatest desire is to find a sense of wholeness; to be fully themselves and connected, but when they cannot find this, they slip into neurotic self-absorption, searching for "the one" who can fix them.

***Amadeus* (Orion Pictures, 1984)**



Antonio Salieri : As court composer, Salieri has found a place in life that finally validates his special nature. He lives in a bubble of delusion more fragile than he knows, which bursts with the arrival of Mozart. Salieri's main desire is still to be special, but reclaiming his place will mean eliminating Mozart.

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : His once secure feelings of being whole (as court composer) become destroyed when real genius enters his world: Mozart. His former security degenerates into total self-absorption and vengeful self-validation at the expense of everyone around him, especially God. His distortion from feeling exceptional to becoming the exception is complete when he christens himself the patron saint of mediocrity.



Wanting more than anything to always appear competent, never to make mistakes, and free from the emotional demands of others, when the Five's basic desire for competence fails, it distorts into useless specialization in order to feel accomplished.

Any Sherlock Homes Movie or Story



Sherlock Holmes : Wanting to be precise, correct, and competent are the central drivers of this man, and when these are unattainable, he degrades into self-indulgence, hyper-specialization, and self-absorption.

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : Holmes is never happier than when he is working a case. Boredom is the killer, but there is only one thing he can do impeccably well and that is solve crimes. When he can't solve a crime, the fear of failure, looking incompetent, or having someone else beat him to the punch drives him to obsessive specialization in what he does best: deduce, to the point where nothing else matters—his own health, the well-being of others, or even the morality of the case he might be investigating.



Being safe and secure is the ultimate desire of the Six, but when plans and preparations fail and people become unreliable, the Six's planning and strategic thinking turns to worry, fear, and doubt, throwing them into catastrophizing scenarios and paralysis of inaction.

Hamlet (Warner Bros., 1990)



Hamlet : Hamlet's desire is for revenge, pure and simple. For satisfaction? No—well, maybe a little. For pleasure? Not really. It is revenge that will bring safety and security for himself others. But all his planning and plotting is for nothing as he spirals into increasingly agitated circles of fear, paranoia, and despair.

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : Hamlet is doomed from the moment he meets his father's ghost. Out of Sixish loyalty, he takes on the vow of avenging angel, but it becomes clear that his motivations slip from noble ones of loyalty and righting wrongs to anger, revenge, and aggressive punishment. Hamlet does not descend into the paralysis of fear most Sixes suffer, but he loses his way due to vindictiveness, self-doubt, and a refusal to own his own power. His end is, needless to say, Shakespearean.



Seeking to be happy is the core desire for all Sevens, but when it fails, when all the diversions and shiny baubles cannot keep back the pain of life, the Seven descends into frenetic escapism, addiction, and distraction.

***My Dinner with Andre* (New Yorker Films, 1981)**



EXAMPLE

Andre Gregory : In an attempt to help Wally learn the big lesson Andre is there to teach, namely be less of a robot and wake up, Andre in Seven style waxes on with a fantastical account of a recent nervous breakdown and spiritual crisis. He tells tales of his wild adventures sprinkled with episodic leaps of imagination and freewheeling connections to unrelated events. Fast thinking, fast talking, and hard to pin down, he drops names and annoys Wally with a smug air of superiority.

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : Throughout Andre's initial lecturing to Wally, his veneer of ego cracks as he sees his friend's anguish in trying to keep up, and Andre betrays his own self-doubt about his stories and becomes self-critical of his own salvation-seeking behavior. As his defenses crumble, Andre doesn't descend into the entrenched escapism of most Sevens, but rather mellows and becomes less patronizing, wondering how he might slow down all the "doing" and "be" more in his authentic self. The classic Seven distortion is there, but subtle and understated, much like the movie as a whole.



Wanting to prove their self-reliance and strength, Eights write the rules and control everyone around them, but when their controlling fails, they fall back on constant fighting and emotional combat to defend themselves and regain supremacy.

12 Angry Men (MGM Studios., 1957)



EXAMPLE

Juror #1 : Wants to come to a quick verdict on what he thinks is an open-and-shut case, so the jury can go home early. But his strong assertions are challenged by Juror #8 and the war begins. Juror #1's moral high ground and certitude get slowly worn away by Juror #8's logic and compassion, marginalizing Juror #1 and bringing out the combativeness and aggressive hostility seething under his surface. As jurors turn against him, one by one, he sinks into constant fighting and efforts to bully his way to being right.

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : Juror #1 sees the case at hand in clear terms and makes his views known: the kid is guilty, and they should quickly come to a verdict. But things get messy when his control of the jury room is challenged by Juror #8. Slowly he finds himself being undermined and marginalized. At first, he tries to cajole, then flatter, then make alliances, then intimidate; as Juror #8 wins more and more support, Juror #1 is longer able to dominate the people and thus loses control of his environment. No longer feeling safely in command, making all the rules, he resorts

to all-out war and becomes vicious and threatening, which only exposes his inherent weakness and vulnerability in the situation.



Wanting a peaceful, harmonious environment is all that matters, but when this is disrupted and conflict looms, the Nine tries to pull things back to equilibrium by giving up more and more of themselves to avoid deeper conflict, ultimately abandoning themselves in the process.

***My Dinner with Andre* (New Yorker Films, 1981)**



Wallace Shawn : Wally agrees to disrupt his normal routine and go to dinner with his flamboyant friend, Andre. Wanting only to get back to his plain life, he listens patiently to tall tales and fanciful ideas, until even his calm and patience are tested and he lashes out in confusion and self-defense at the assertion that he is a robot who is not exercising free will. In the end, Wally finds some common ground with Andre and leaves the dinner surprisingly more alive than he was when he arrived.

Desire/Distortion Dynamic : Wally just wants to read his *New York Times* and be with his girlfriend Debbie. But Andre presses his case that people are robots and Wally is one of these, just walking through life and not living. Wally slowly loses ground in his Nineish attempt to stay emotionally asleep (self-abandonment), while Andre pushes more of his emotional buttons. In the end, even an entrenched Wally finds that he has to push back, and he

rejects Andre's main arguments and frankly tells him he has no idea what Andre is even talking about. Rather than abandoning himself completely, in normal Nine fashion, Wally steps up and surprisingly reveals that he is not a robot and that he has the will to tell Andre that he's full of crap. The men end up finding some common ground, and when they part company, even Wally is aware that he is more awake than he was when they started talking.

(Character examples partially referenced from *Enneagram Movie & Video Guide 3.0: How to See Personality Styles in the Movies, 3rd Ed* . (The Changeworks, 2011) by Thomas Condon.)

Many writers stress over the challenge of creating a moral flaw for their protagonist. Indeed, this task can appear so daunting that many simply opt out of any real attempt, assuming that there must be some deep well of moral resources from which to choose, and that choosing is consequently too complex and impenetrable to fathom. How does one find that moral component? Once found, how do you know you have the right one? Where do you begin the choosing? The questions appear forbidding, and the answers feel a million miles away.

The truth is that the moral component not only is readily available but also craves to be found. Once you begin the search, you will be hard pressed not to trip over it out of its sheer eagerness to be discovered. But, in order to allow this search for moral flaws, blind spots, and bad behaviors to be productive, it is critical you understand one key thing about human beings: there are a very finite number of ways we can be jerks toward one another. In other words, the number of candidates for a powerful moral component are small; in fact, you can count them on two hands.

People Acting Out, Badly

Always remember how “moral” is defined, in the context of fictional characters and storytelling: *“Moral” refers to the principles, behaviors, and conduct that define a person’s sense of right and wrong in themselves, and in the world* . When we come right down to the essence of it, any moral flaw of a character *must*

express itself in *behavior* on the page through character actions—and not just any actions (as I discuss in [Chapter 10](#)), but behavior that is hurtful to others. Moral flaws that are simply internal angst, or emotional turmoil, or personal questioning of motivations, or nail biting, etc. are all useless as moral flaws, because these are not moral issues. They are just neurotic behaviors. If the protagonist isn't hurting other people through their actions, then there is no moral impact, and the “moral flaw” is simply not there.

But what does hurting other people mean? Are we talking about physical violence, major crimes, cruelty? Well, certainly those are on the table as options, but hurting others can also take the form of being emotionally withdrawn, thus keeping others at an emotional distance and hurting them by not giving them access; or telling “little white lies” to everyone, thus fostering distrust and emotional distance. “Hurting” can be anything along a complex continuum of possible behaviors, from torture to passive-aggressive smiling.

So, where on the continuum do you begin? You begin by understanding that when it comes to humans acting badly toward one another, there are only two options; it's not really a continuum at all. All negative human behaviors (and characters) can be distilled down to the function of emotional control: the battle to get emotional control, or to keep emotional control. You can think of all immoral behavior as a chain of control. And as with any chain, the weakest link controls the chain. The biggest, baddest bully can beat you down and dominate you emotionally, but at the end of the fight it is the wimp that wins when they collapse into a whimpering mass pleading for their lives. The bully will stop bullying and walk away, and the wimp “wins.” The weak link breaks the chain by controlling through weakness.

You know people like this in your own life: the person who is always needing, or wanting, or begging, or pitiful in some way and thus getting others to jump through their wimp-hoops so they get their way. Being weak is just another side of the control coin, whether it is the coin of *domination/weakness* , or *intimidation/passivity* , or *power/impotence* . They're all just manifestations of the same thing: the all-too-human need to control. The reality of human behavior is that you can never really control anything or anyone; all you can do is be in control of your own behavior.

Being controlling and being in control are two very different things. The first one comes from a position of fear; the latter comes from a position of safety.

When people are afraid, they become controlling; when they feel secure in themselves, or their circumstances, they exhibit self-control and are in control of themselves. When you understand the real nature of how and why we act badly toward one another, then it is a simple thing to see that moral flaws are just coping mechanisms for dealing with being in or out of emotional control. Any bad behavior (*immoral effect*) you choose, regardless of the form of manipulation involved, will be about some need to control another person, or some situation.

In a similar way as the immoral effect, the moral blind spot (emotion/belief) will always have a long list of generic emotional-feeling states from which to choose. In other words, the emotional basis of the core misbelief a character has about their true self (the blind spot) will always begin as subjective for the writer, in the sense that he or she can literally pick any negative self-belief they want. But for that “pick” to work, it has to make sense in terms of your protagonist’s Enneagram style and your dramatic objectives as the writer.

There are many strategies for writing a morally challenged protagonist, but I believe the vast majority of those strategies miss this critical piece we are discussing here, i.e., how to make the moral component personal and the foundation of motivation. Almost everyone skims along the moral surface and avoids going deeper into the real character development that must be done. So, while many writers start off in the right direction, they cut themselves off at the knees by not following through with the tough character questions that deepen their protagonist.

In order to transcend the generic moral-theme problem, make sure to do as the following section describes.

Basic Strategy for Developing a Strong Moral Component

In [Part 3](#) of this book, I will cover this same topic as part of the Rapid Story Development Process, the story development methodology that this entire book exists to support—or perhaps more correctly put: the process that best leverages the Enneagram-Story Connection in support of any story development process. The three steps listed here will be handled in much great detail in [Part III](#), but I

want to introduce them here to prepare you for what is to come and to demonstrate that there is an application of all this theory that can facilitate real story progress.

1. *Ask the key personal questions that will uncover the real motivation for why your protagonist is acting the way he/she is acting* . Always start with, “What would they have to believe about other people (the worldview) to justify acting badly in the world?” and “What would they have to believe (incorrectly) about themselves to justify that particular worldview (view of people)?” Remember, your protagonist has a behavioral blind spot that is influencing how they act in the world, and how they act in the world is hurting other people.
2. *Look to the final lesson, self-revelation, character change at the end of the story* . In a story, the protagonist always changes in the end, for good or ill. How your protagonist changes, i.e., the lesson they learn about themselves in the end, is the manifestation of the healed moral blind spot. In other words, if they hadn’t healed their blind spot, they would never have made the change. One gave rise to the other. The lesson learned is a direct reference to the moral blind spot. What your protagonist learns about himself or herself is a direct pointer back to the moral flaw they suffer from, and the bad behavior they exhibit in the middle of the story.
3. *Look to the building blocks of the moral component contained in the Enneagram* . There are four patterns in the Enneagram that separately and combined can inform you about the moral basis of any character.

- Enneagram Core Fears and Poisons ([Chapter 4](#))
- Enneagram Desires and Distortions ([Chapter 4](#))
- Enneagram De-Evolution ([Chapter 8](#))
- Enneagram Low Points ([Chapter 14](#))

All of these Enneagram components touch the moral heart of each Enneagram style. The more intimate you become with these four areas of the Enneagram, the more elegantly you will intuit and piece together qualities, traits, and behaviors that will support a realistic and dramatically consistent moral component for any

protagonist. As stated earlier, each of these three points will be detailed with examples in [Part 3](#) of this book.

12

The Middle: Moving the Story Forward



Everyone has great openings and endings, but gets lost in the middle. It doesn't have to be this way—you can have it all.

We've all heard the phrase “move the story forward.” That's what the middle is supposed to do in any story. That's what every scene, story beat, or sequence of scenes is supposed to accomplish. The first quarter (beginning) of any story sets up the protagonist, the parameters of the adventure, and the core relationships that will drive the middle of the story. The last quarter (ending) of the story ties up the subplots, resolves the big question(s) established by the first three-quarters of the story, and resolves the internal and external needs of the protagonist (emotional change, getting the story goal). The middle half (or more) of the story is where you move things forward and connect the beginning to the end.

Like the arrow of time inexorably moving in the direction of the future, the story arrow must move inexorably into the story's future. But what does “move the story forward” really mean? I believe this is one of those story platitudes all writers use but don't think too much about, because there is an innate understanding about the meaning. What's not to “get”? Move it forward—next.

There is more here than a visceral understanding, however. I think “move the story forward” means something very specific, and if a writer can understand that meaning, then he or she will be more successful at actually accomplishing the task. “Move the story forward” is accomplished by doing one (or more) of three things:

- Increased Knowledge of the Causal Connection of Events : The reader learns more and more about how the events unfolding are not random but are in fact connected, and that a cause and effect relationship exists. This knowledge increases as the story moves forward; in fact, it is this increase in knowledge that pulls the reader forward by creating a sense of anticipation, mystery, or suspense. This cause-and-effect relationship is the foundation of the “what” of what happens in a story.
- Increased Understanding of the Motivation or Emotional and Behavioral Reasons for a Character’s Actions : The reader learns more and more about why a character acts the way they do, thus deepening their understanding about why a character’s actions are happening at all. More than this, however, this understanding creates a deeper connection between character actions and actual events, so that the “what” of what is happening is also connected to “why” characters act the way they do. This deeper understanding, at the character level, is the “why” of what happens in a story.
- Increased Awareness of Stakes, Jeopardy, and Uncertainty : The reader becomes increasingly aware that things will be won or lost and that danger is on the rise, both emotionally and physically. As well, outcomes become less certain and the variables affecting the future increase. The ever-increasing risk and personal peril build on any suspense, anticipation, and mystery already established, and thus give a feeling of forward motion.

These three factors are what move any story forward. They can stand alone or work in unison to push the story arrow into the future, but these are the elements that contribute to narrative drive and the feeling of inexorable forward momentum that are necessary to engage readers and tell a great story. When any one of them is missing or muddled, the sense of forward drive will be diminished and the reading or viewing experience will be dampened.

The good news is that developing a strong middle is not only attainable but also predictable and unavoidable if you understand the Enneagram-Story Connection and how it relates to building narrative drive and the two key structures necessary for building a solid middle for any story.

Developing the Middle

Developing a strong middle for your story is one of the hardest problems in story development. If the story wheels don't first come off the cart by beginning with a bad premise idea (which is where all weak stories first go off the rails), then they will most often come off during the writing of the middle, when story structure weaknesses force you to fall back onto episodic writing in an effort to right a listing ship.

Let's be honest: the middle of any novel or screenplay is the story. The first quarter of the narrative and the last quarter are just bookends. The meat, the real story, all the juice and human conflict, happen in that middle half (or middle two-thirds). It's the middle of the story where we learn who the protagonist really is as a man or woman, who the opponent really is as a person, what the personal story is going to be, how the hero or heroine will be set up for success or failure—not to mention all the supporting subplots that will unfold to shine brighter dramatic lights or cast deeper dramatic shadows over the mainline story. I cannot tell you the number of writers I've worked with who invariably lose their way after they write those great opening three or four chapters, or first 15 or 20 pages of their feature screenplay, only to find themselves lost in the story woods, scrambling to find dramatic pathways that can lead them out of the weeds of episodic writing.



Episodic writing is the last gasp of a story's attempt to find sound footing and is marked by many narrative starts and stops, disconnected and standalone events, and mini-stories or situations within stories. Episodic writing is the hallmark of "the mushy middle."

It's called the "mushy middle." This is what you get when your story has no narrative engine or weak narrative drive, which is to say it is missing or has a poorly developed moral component and no enneagrammatically consistent pattern of character decline and elevation. I talked about the moral component in [Chapter 10](#) ; suffice to say if you do not have a strong moral component rooted in the Enneagram, then the middle will be lackluster at best and straight-up boring at worst, and your writing will almost certainly descend into episodic storytelling. I also introduced the concepts of the patterns of decline and elevation in [Chapter 9](#) , i.e., the pattern of behavior and emotion that defines the manner in which your protagonist falls apart over the course of the story, and the pattern by which they pull themselves back together again and rise from the ruins.

So, this is the problem, and the central question: can a writer consciously plan, execute on the page, and deliver a solid middle for any story regardless of genre or format (prose or screenplay)? Is this problem one of chance and having the talent and craft skills that allow one to stumble along and "luck out" in pulling it off? Or is there a clear path, strategy, and methodology that can guide the writing process, assuring (not guaranteeing; there are no guarantees) success?

I submit there is a path: there is a strategy and a solid methodology that can deliver a great middle for any story you might want to write. This strategy, though intricate and subtle, is not hard. Following this path requires sound story structure knowledge and a firm grounding in the principles of the Enneagram. But with that knowledge and grounding, any writer can take control of the middle portion of their stories with confidence and aplomb.

What follows is a systematic breakdown of how the middle of any story works, from both a structural perspective and an Enneagram-Story perspective. We will examine all the moving parts at work in the story foreground and background that together build a layered and character-rich narrative that not only connects your great opening with your power-punch ending, but that also delivers the human

factor so essential to making your story relatable, personal, and irresistible to any reader or viewing audience.

The Structure of the Middle

The middle of any story has two layers operating in unison. The first layer is structural; the second layer is behavioral/emotional.

- The Classic Story Middle Layer
- The Narrative Engine Middle Layer

I refer to these as layers because they function and unfold in the same story space (the middle) and they do so in a close, interdependent way that is self-supporting of both action plotting requirements and character development requirements. They are more akin to layers than any other metaphor, as they lie on top of one another and at times become indistinguishable.

The behavioral/emotional layer is made of two embedded patterns, both of which are Enneagram-based:

- The Pattern of Decline
- The Pattern of Elevation

I say embedded patterns because they are indeed patterns of behavior consistent with Enneagram style characteristics (patterns of fear, security, blind spots, conflict styles, etc.). They are embedded in the sense that they are endemic to the character of the protagonist, internal and motivational, not material- or information-centric. You will see these patterns indirectly, because they generate visual behavior and push the unfolding structural beats of the story from the emotional core of the protagonist, not from some external source. Are there instances when these embedded patterns might cross the line and take on very tangible (structural) characteristics? Of course; there are no absolutes here. But it is not their nature to do so.

Let's look at each of these structures and patterns to see how they work together as development tools and as extensions of the Enneagram-Story

Connection to help assure that the middle of any story will work on all the levels necessary to tell a great story.

The Classic Story Middle Layer

The classic story structure beats for the middle of a story have been adequately written about by other authors and story gurus. There are many books and experts out in the story zoo who have covered this topic *ad nauseam*, but it will be valuable for us to review the classic structure here because the next piece, the narrative engine middle, will illustrate how weak this classic approach can be without the power of the Enneagram-Story Connection. Don't get me wrong; if you write a story and "only" have the classic story middle present, you will still be better off than not having it. But the consequence of only having this structure in place is that the story's action will remain surface, goal-oriented, and one-dimensional, lacking a human core. This is what many writers settle for when they write. Not bad or wrong—they don't know any better, and they may lack the emotional observing devices (EQ) to sense the missing human factor.

Again, this is called "classic" for a reason. The seven components are well known to the creative writing world and have been explained and expanded upon for many years. And if you never use any other development tools in your stories for fleshing out your story's middle, you will be far more successful in your writing than if you don't use it.

The following constitutes the classic story middle for any story:



[Figure 12.1](#) Classic Story Middle

- Inciting Incident
- First Reversal/Complication
- Midpoint Complication
- Second Reversal/Complication
- Doom Moment and Low Point

- Final Battle
- Resolution

Inciting Incident : This is the moment in the story where the real adventure kicks off. Something happens that moves the protagonist from their pre-story life and puts them squarely on the path of the story's adventure.

First Reversal/Complication : This is often considered the turning point that launches the second act of the story (for those who use act structures). Some piece of information, or role reversal, or shocking revelation/complication turns the story—meaning dramatic stakes begin to rise. The hero or heroine is in a bit more danger and consequences get more serious.

Midpoint Complication : Roughly halfway through the story, the stakes rise for all concerned, but especially for the protagonist. This is the moment where there is no going back, and the way forward is more dangerous or risky than before. Normally this is a pure “plot-driven” incident or complication, meaning action trumps character. There are, in fact, two components to the midpoint complication: community stakes and protagonist stakes. We'll look at these in [Part 3](#) , where I'll break out the midpoint in more detail.

Second Reversal/Complication : Similar to the first reversal/complication, but more consequential and challenging. This is the moment when the protagonist is pushed inevitably toward the darkest moment in the story and options begin to dwindle.

Doom Moment and Low Point : The protagonist is apparently defeated by the enemy. He or she is abandoned, rudderless, a failure, and the bad guys appear to have won. Hope seems lost. The Doom Moment and the Low Point are often made interchangeable, but they are different things. The Doom Moment is more of a story plot beat, while the low point is a character window (emotional beat) into the state of the protagonist. The two are interdependent in a story, however in a situation their interdependence is weak or nonexistent. I'll look at this interdependence a bit later in this chapter.

Final Battle : Having pulled themselves out of the darkest moment and risen from the ashes, the protagonist confronts the bad guys in the final conflict

that will settle the central argument of the story. The hero or heroine usually prevails, but not always.

Resolution : The final solution to the basic challenge facing the protagonist.

This is the moment of change that shows not only how the protagonist will defeat the villain and win the day, but also how they will move forward in life as a new person (higher moral ground).

These are the broad strokes of how every story expert approaches the problem of developing the middle of any story. They might add multiple stages or additional steps along the way, but everyone teaches this basic seven-step approach. But there is a serious deficiency lurking in the background if you solely rely upon the classic story approach. This lack rests squarely on the fact that the overall structure, by itself, is devoid of or sorely lacking in character depth and motivation. The resulting middle will end up being what many like to call “plot-driven.”

It should be noted that there is no such thing as a plot-driven story vs a character-driven story. All stories, if they are stories and not situations, are both character- and plot-driven because plot and character are essentially the same thing.

Plot is what happens on the page, and what happens on the page is determined by what characters do, and what characters do is dependent on who they are as people. Thus, what happens in a story (plot) is a function of what kind of person a character is—they “do” things because of who they are, not because of some external reason. In other words, Joe the bank robber robs banks not because you’re writing a heist story and you need a bank robber. Joe robs banks because it’s who he is; he is the kind of guy who takes and never gives. He is “owed” by society, so he feels entitled, so your money is his money; Joe takes what’s owed him. The “what” of what happens on the page in Joe’s story is a direct function of who Joe is as a man (character). Plot is a reflection of his character and is essentially character in action.

I digress on this theoretical point not to split story structure hairs but rather to emphasize the critical point that you must learn to rethink the ideas of plot and character if you are going to make your story’s middle stand out and transcend mere action requirements. It is the narrative engine structure that gives the middle of your story the human juice that not only conveys deeper meaning to the action

elements but also pulls readers (or audiences) deeper into a story in a way where they will see themselves, and thus connect at an emotional level.

The last point concerning the classic story middle is that because it is rooted in classic story structure, it will always be present if you have a story. Every story has a structure; it has no choice in the matter. Put more correctly, the writer has no choice but to conform to a story's natural structure. If a writer is in sync with their process and the story they are writing, then the writer will tap that structure and successfully represent the narrative therein. This will include the classic story middle. If you have a story, this structure will be there; your job is to find it. But don't settle for this alone. To take the classic middle to a deeper human level and out of the shallow surface, you will need the next structure in play.

The Narrative Engine Middle Layer

The narrative engine layer has eight components: (There is no high-level flow chart for this; it will be broken out into smaller diagrams below.)

- Immoral Effect
- Problem/Consequence
- Proactive Choice
- Proactive Effect
- Offer to Change
- Refusal to Change
- Doom Moment
- Moment of Truth

The first thing you will notice about this list is that the first four items are shared by the active protagonist loop from [Chapter 10](#). *Immoral effect*, *problem/consequence*, *proactive choice*, and *proactive effect* are all critical pieces of the story process that make a character active vs passive. If these are unfamiliar to you at this point, go back to [Chapter 10](#) and review their descriptions, because understanding their role in this context is essential.

Of these four already familiar components, the immoral effect is the lynch pin, because it represents the bad behavior (based in the moral blind spot) the

protagonist is exhibiting in the story that gets him or her into trouble—constant trouble. It is this bad behavior (bad because it is hurting others) that helps to generate the active loop described in [Chapter 10](#) . It is also the lynch pin for generating the overall pattern of decline that marks the central feature of the protagonist’s emotional and behavioral journey through the middle of the story.

The classic story middle is the “what” of what happens; the narrative engine structure is the “why” of what happens. As I said earlier, this layer represents the internal, personal dynamics driving the protagonist that make it possible for him or her to undertake the specific actions described by the classic structure beats. This “why” layer of the middle is what is missing in the vast majority of stories, especially genre stories. Before I break down in detail how the narrative engine components work together, first let me define the last four unfamiliar components (*offer to change* , *refusal to change* , *doom moment* , and *moment of truth*).

Offer to Change : This is not necessarily a specific plot moment in the story, but it needs to be present even if it is implied and indirect. The “offer” is the thing that always follows after the hero or heroine makes a false move, meaning they are not acting out of their whole, healed, and integrated self, but rather out of their fear-based, constricted, and inauthentic self. Whenever they act out of their immoral effect (immoral action) and get hurt, or hurt another person, or create chaos or increased threat due to their bad choices, then the offer is made. The offer is: “Okay, you just screwed up. Are you ready to change?”

Who makes this offer? The story does. Maybe it comes through a literal character saying those words (probably not since it’s just bad dialogue), or maybe it is merely a logical next question the reader comes to as a consequence of watching the train wreck playing out on the page that is the protagonist’s life. Whichever the source, the offer is always there. And now for the key point: *the offer is almost always refused* . I say “almost” because at some point the offer is accepted, but not until the protagonist has been through the emotional and behavioral wringer. Only then do they realize, “Yeah, I’m ready. I can’t keep going on like this.” (I’ll revisit this in the last component.)

Refusal to Change : The offer is made but refused. Why? Why would the protagonist not do the obvious thing and change? Well, the story would

then be over, and you would have a very short book. But the real reason is that they have not healed their moral blind spot—remember, the blind spot is the source of their bad behavior. It is the motivation for all the protagonist’s emotions and behaviors. It is the real human engine of your story, and it is the thing that gets healed at the end, thus allowing for the change and new moral life of the hero or heroine.

Why do they refuse? Because they cannot accept until they realize they are acting badly, and they cannot come to this realization until they have been through a long, hard slog of failure and crashed relationships. At some point, the protagonist turns around and sees the wake of emotional destruction they have left behind them and the final domino falls: they realize they can’t go on like this; they have to change. But they don’t know yet what that means. They don’t know what change looks like. They are not even sure what change is required of them in order to get out from under the bus that has hit them. But the good news is they have at least come to the awareness that change is not just an option; it is essential if they are to salvage the love affair, or friendship, or save the innocent, or whatever it is they have to do by the end of the story. In other words, they finally realize that their ultimate story goal will not be achieved unless they do things differently. They have no clue what that means yet, but they have switched tracks, moving from the *pattern of decline* into the *pattern of elevation* .

When the refusal occurs, it throws the protagonist back into the narrative engine loop and they have to move through it again and again until they decide it’s time to change. This is critical to understand, because this is the actual engine. Each time the protagonist refuses the offer, the result is a new problem with concomitant consequences. The new problem/consequence raises the stakes, complicates relationships, pushes the protagonist closer to their breaking point, and weakens them in relation to their central opposition (more on this in [Chapter 14](#)). Then, in response to the new problem, they make a new decision for action (proactive choice), which leads to a new behavior (proactive effect). The story then presents a new offer to change.

This engine is what defines the emotional middle of a story, as opposed to a situation where the protagonist is merely reacting to external events and making a calculated guess about how to fix the situation. In the narrative engine structure, the hero or heroine confronts the problem they’re facing because of how they

have been acting. They have put themselves, in a literal sense, into their own pickle, and now they have to get out of it. But there is no way out, unless they change, but they're not ready to change—and around and around we go. (For a detailed explanation of stories vs situations, refer to my book *Anatomy of a Premise Line: How to Master Premise and Story Development for Writing Success* .)

Bad behavior begets poor choices that beget new problems that spawn more bad choices, and so on; and all of it is on the protagonist's shoulders, not due to some external monster, storm, invading army, or meteor hurtling toward them from outer space. This is the holy grail of writing a middle that works: a protagonist who is their own worst enemy, flawed from the start with a powerful moral blind spot that pollutes every thought, feeling, and action—not a protagonist who is in the wrong place at the wrong time and then has to get out of the mess presented to them by the Fates.

Doom Moment : The protagonist acts badly, makes bad choices, and refuses to change; this cycle goes on until their refusal to see the truth about themselves leads them to the breaking point. This point has many names in the story guru zoo: low point, visit to death, dark night of the soul, dark moment, etc. Regardless of the term used, the purpose of this moment is the same: the protagonist has hit rock bottom emotionally and it appears they have lost all hope of getting what they want. He or she is the farthest distance possible from their story goal, and the opponent appears to have won the day.

How did they get here? For many situations masquerading as stories, the protagonist arrives at this point through no real fault of their own; they have just been dealt a bad deck of cards and they are coping as best they can, but events have crushed them. This is the familiar setup of the “basically good person crushed by events” scenario.

In a story, however, the protagonist brings this sorry state upon themselves. They do so by (unconsciously) refusing to grow and change, relying instead on constricted patterns of fear in response to ever-increasing threats through the story's middle. In the end, the moment comes when all is indeed lost and they find themselves alone, apparently abandoned by the lover/friend/team, and hopelessly without options—the moment of doom.

What has brought them to this point in the story is their pattern of decline, which is based purely on their Enneagram style. Their blind spots, pinches and crunches, greatest fears, poisons, and all the constricting patterns defined by the Enneagram for their style have played themselves out in every choice, relationship, and action they have exhibited throughout the previous story events. All these constricting Enneagram characteristics constitute an overall pattern of emotional and behavioral decline that inevitably bring them to a condition where they are not only at their lowest point emotionally, but also at their poorest point materially. They have not just declined to the bottom of their emotional well, they have also lost all the significant physical support that buoyed them up during the middle of the story.

This is a critical feature to understand about the doom moment. It accomplishes two things: emotional devastation and physical isolation. These two elements set the protagonist up for their eventual rise back to life itself (the pattern of elevation). The degree to which the protagonist suffers emotionally and materially at this story structure point is subjectively set by the writer.

Not every protagonist will be sitting in a river of fire, tortured, alone, and hopeless. Some may just find themselves temporarily alone and out of sorts. The decline does not have to be through the nine circles of hell; it might just be a nasty one-nighter getting drunk and waking up in the alley next door. The degree is dependent on the story and the writer; it is not necessary to devastate your protagonist, but it is necessary for them to have some recognizable decline toward a moment of emotional and physical loss strong enough to justify their need to “come back” and rejoin with the world in a new way. That is the purpose of the doom moment, to establish the basis for the moral regeneration of the protagonist and the new moral basis for their newfound self.

Moment of Truth : The Moment of Truth is that point in the story where the protagonist realizes they are being tested for the last time by the opposition. They have been through hell, fighting for what they want, for those they love, or for whatever goal they have set for themselves. They have risen from the ashes of the Doom Moment and are now facing the literal Moment of Truth where they must decide if they are ready to take on the bad guys/gals once and for all.

This classic structure moment is significant because it provides the first hint that they are ready to change. They haven't changed, they won't do that until the final battle, but at least they see the inklings of change on their horizon. This is the last step in the other embedded pattern we will discuss later, the Pattern of Elevation. But first, let's look at the embedded pattern that leads from the inciting incident to the Doom Moment.

Pattern of Decline

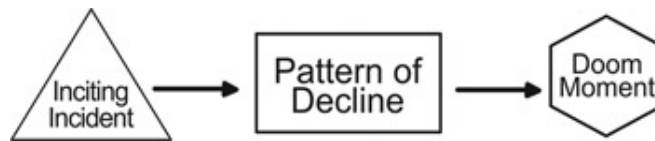
As stated earlier, the pattern of decline is the pattern of behavior and emotion that defines the manner in which your protagonist falls from grace over the course of the story. This process is not random or haphazard. It's not just you, the writer, figuring out bad ways to make your protagonist bleed emotionally. Just as you shouldn't make a character do something in action on the page out of your whimsy or caprice ("Hey, let me stick in a car chase here because I think it's cool"), so you never want to have your protagonist (or any character) end up in emotional pain just because you think it's a fun thing to do. There should always be a story reason for the pain, or the action, and that reason should always source (as much as possible) from the moral blind spot of the character.

This is where the Enneagram comes to the rescue because, otherwise, how is a writer to know what constitutes a valid story reason? How do you find dramatically meaningful dots to connect that lead to great moments of drama or comedy? At first glance, it appears to most writers that this is just a fly-by-the-seat process, because there is no roadmap. But, as the Enneagram has demonstrated, there is a roadmap; in fact there are many maps and pathways (nine of them, to be exact) down which you can send your protagonist—making them the architects of their own emotional demise in a way that will strike readers as authentic.

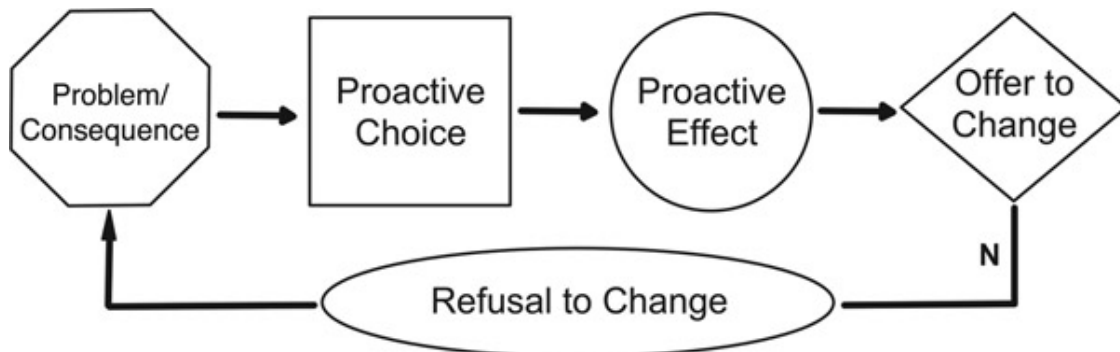
The pattern of decline is a concrete way to visualize how all the constricting patterns of an Enneagram style work together to paint a picture of a character in crisis. The first thing to understand is that the overall pattern of decline is embedded in the larger structure of the basic workflow of the story's middle. It is the pattern that gets the protagonist from the start of the adventure (inciting incident) to their emotional low point and the Doom Moment ([Figure 12.2](#)).

As you can see from the figure, the pattern of decline is embedded between the Inciting Incident and the Doom Moment. This is what I meant earlier when I said the two layers (structural and behavior) are both part of the middle of any story, they just overlap and support one another. While the Classic Story Middle is unfolding according to reversal beats, midpoint complications and the like, the embedded patterns of the narrative middle (decline and elevation) are also playing out simultaneously giving emotional life to all the action beats and scenes within the story.

The Pattern of Decline follows the loop created in the problem/consequence, proactive choice, proactive effect, and offer-refusal workflow segment of the narrative engine middle ([Figure 12.3](#)).



[Figure 12.2](#) Pattern of Decline Parent



[Figure 12.3](#) Pattern of Decline

The key to remember is that the protagonist, with each pass through the offer-refusal loop, is moving closer and closer to their point of de-evolution (see [Chapter 8](#)). The pattern that unfolds should be consistent with that path. In other words, when a protagonist who is a Two Enneagram style moves toward their de-evolution, they do not move toward another style's low point; they follow the path natural to their style. The Two protagonist would become increasingly like a badly behaving Eight, becoming authoritarian, overbearing, controlling, etc.

Knowing that this is their path toward decline is a huge benefit for the writer because you know where to start. You know how you can write this character, and when you come up with new problems/consequences for them to face (each time through the offer-refusal loop), you know the proactive effect has to demonstrate their becoming a little more Eightish in the bad degree. Then when you fold in all the other constricting patterns of fear, communication blind spots, conflict pinches, and other embedded Enneagram characteristics common to their Twoish nature, you have a clear pattern of how they will break down and slip closer and closer to their emotional low point.

This is what is meant by a pattern of decline that builds and squeezes a character by demonstrating their unwillingness to grow and change out of fear of their moral blind spot. They will have to face it in the end, but in this middle of the story it is all about avoidance and the consequences of their remaining ignorant.

The pattern of decline is usually the missing piece in stories that focus on flash-bang and action-heavy scenarios. They may be fun and entertaining, but because they lack this offer-refusal loop, these stories are incapable of deepening at the character level. Not bad and wrong, but not fully formed stories with a human core. They will also be missing the next embedded pattern, the pattern of elevation.

Pattern of Elevation

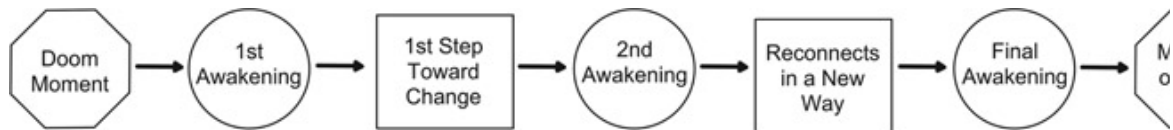
This is another embedded pattern that is completely based in Enneagram styles. Similar to the pattern of decline, the pattern of elevation is sourced from the general structure of the middle of any story ([Figure 12.4](#)) and falls between the Doom Moment and the Moment of Truth. Between these two points, the protagonist begins their ascension toward change (or descension into deeper decay).

A flow chart can be misleading, because it may give the impression that not a whole lot goes on between the Doom Moment and the Moment of Truth. This could not be farther from the truth. Whereas the pattern of decline was defined mainly by the offer-refusal loop, repeating itself in the form of the familiar components of the active protagonist loop, the pattern of elevation has sequential

steps that support the pattern, and all of these steps occur roughly between the Doom Moment and the Moment of Truth. How these steps play out in actual page count is not set in stone. You can spread them out or condense them as you see fit. You should be more concerned, however, with how the structure beats are unfolding and making sure the pace feels right for the story. The pattern of elevation will help you with this pacing.



[Figure 12.4](#) Pattern of Elevation Parent



[Figure 12.5](#) Pattern of Elevation

As you can see in [Figure 12.5](#) , there are seven elements that define the pattern of elevation:

- Doom Moment
- First Awakening
- First Step Toward Change
- Second Awakening
- Reconnection in a New Way
- Final Awakening
- Moment of Truth

The first and last bullets are actual story structure building blocks, but I include them here to demonstrate the full pattern from start to finish.

Doom Moment : This was defined in detail in the pattern of decline earlier.

First Awakening : When the protagonist gets to this point, he or she has been wallowing in the swamp of the doom moment for some time. They have had some time to think and feel and have come to their first personal insight: “I can’t keep going on this way. Something has to change.” They

don't know what that means yet. All they know is that what they've been doing hasn't worked—in fact, quite the opposite.

First Step Toward Change : Knowing things have to change, but not knowing what that should look like, the protagonist takes their first step in the right direction. What that step looks like and how you as the writer express this movement all depends on the story you've written, and on the Enneagram of the hero or heroine.

The story matters; what you want as a writer matters; what you have constructed up to now matters. This is not a cookie-cutter step that you are doing because some story guru said, “On page so-and-so there is the first step toward change.” No, no, and no. This step should happen, and it should lead to an action, but you decide what that needs to look like and pretty much where in the last quarter of the story it needs to happen.

The movement toward change is critical because it means the protagonist has shifted paths. They were on the path of decline and de-evolution; now they shift and start moving toward their expansive self, i.e., the path of evolution. Whatever story action they take down this path, however you decide this needs to look physically on the page to satisfy story requirements, should be consistent with the character's pattern of growth or evolution.

Following our example of the Two protagonist: after falling down the rabbit hole and landing in his or her worst expression as a controlling Eight, they choose to shift to the path of the Four (their natural point of evolution). This means they become more aware of the emotions of others and are no longer solely focused on their need to be safe or loved, or however that obsessiveness expresses itself. With a full emotional palette, their natural ability to connect with others grows from creative impulses, not from a need to be needed. As long as whatever you do with them, as far as action on the page, reflects these expansive qualities in some way, you are using the Enneagram to move them forward in their development and setting them up for emotional change that will enable the next steps.

When writers don't use the Enneagram as their guide, what they often do is simply have the protagonist make some huge emotional leap, and then it's a dead run to the final battle and the end. But, when you use the Enneagram to draw this process out, with all the steps, you build a layered and deeper pattern of change for the character that will be more satisfying to readers.

In this case, the Two protagonist makes this subtle shift of emotional focus and then puts that into concrete action on the page with some decision (pro-active choice of your choosing), and while not fully changed yet, because they have started this new path, they come to the next awareness.

Second Awakening : Feet firmly on the path of evolution, the protagonist comes to the awareness that they can't do this change-thing alone. This accomplishes two important story structure beats: it drives them back to the other characters with whom the protagonist had relationships, and it sparks a new hope that they might be able to get their original goal met (if they can get some help).

Reconnection in a New Way : This is the moment when the protagonist risks rejection and real failure. They decide to reconnect with those who they have pushed away, or with those who chose to walk away. If the old lover, or buddy, or old teammates should reject the protagonist, then they're done. All will be lost. But, lo and behold, the protagonist has grown enough to know he or she can't be their bad-self in this reconnection. They have to be their better-self, so they show humility, or make the big apology, or *mea culpa* ; they do whatever they have to do to give the message, "I'm not who I was, and I need you." The "new way" part of this step means the protagonist is acting wholly from their path of evolution. They still have not healed their moral blind spot, but they are at least on the road to getting there. How you express this in scenes or story beats is, again, dependent on what you want and the requirements of the story you have written.

Final Awakening : The lover, buddy, team are back together and operating at peak efficiency (or at least non-dysfunctionally), and everyone is on board with a new plan for moving forward to beat the bad guys, or complete the mission, or whatever action is needed to bring the hero and opponent eye-to-eye for the final battle. But the emotional component of this reuniting and coming together is almost always accompanied by some "talk" or confrontation or intervention by the lover, buddy, or team that helps the protagonist finally see the truth about what they need to change about themselves. They now see the blind spot for the first time, and while they may not like what they see, they know what they must do—change.

Moment of Truth : Change, however, is easier said than done. Knowing that you have to walk through the door is not the same thing as doing the walking. It is not until they are forced by events to come face-to-face with the ultimate consequences of what not changing will look like that they make the choice to change. This is the point where the central opponent pushes the hero or heroine for the final time to break them, and the protagonist must decide if they are strong enough to heal the blind spot and defeat the opponent or fold and give up the fight.

The moment of truth is a classic story structure moment where the protagonist faces the last serious threat of losing the thing they have fought so hard to attain (the love, the money, the new family), and the only one standing in the way of their victory is themselves—so they walk the path of evolution, step into their better-self, heal the blind spot, and win the day over the opposition. These seven elements of the pattern of elevation are rooted in classic story structure, but also in the Enneagram.

When you don't know where to begin to get your hero or heroine out of the muck and mire of their doom moment, the pattern of elevation—grounded in the protagonist's Enneagram point of evolution—not only shows you the story beats that will set them free, but also supplies the emotional and behavioral basis for the changes that will occur between the doom moment and the moment of truth.

The Low Point and Doom Moment

I have talked a great deal about low points and doom moments in this chapter. As I stated earlier, the low point is about the emotional state of the protagonist, and the doom moment is more about physical action and the story scenario on the page. For example, Joe the bank robber comes to his emotional low point in the story when he moves into the downside of Four (the One's point of de-evolution), perfectionism has failed, all his right planning has failed, the responsibility of being the boss has become oppressive, and chaos reigns (Ones hate chaos). Joe has arrived at his story (and Enneagram) low point.

But the actual doom moment is when he and the gang are trapped in the big bank, with hundreds of cops outside and nowhere to run. The gang blames Joe for

their failure and even the hostages in the bank are talking back and making trouble—and the SWAT team is about to smash through the skylights and rain rubber bullets down on everyone (and throw some flashbang grenades). His nemesis, the vengeful corrupt cop who has tracked him for months and knows Joe as well as Joe knows himself, is gloating and is preparing for Joe’s arrest and humiliation. This is the scenario of “all is lost” for Joe, but it is the pattern of decline that put him here, and he has no one but himself to blame in the end.

This is the difference between low point (character) and doom moment (scene action). The two go together, like hand and glove, but their differences are critical to understand. The doom moment is very much a product of your storytelling and imagination. You decide what hell you want your protagonist to end up in at this moment. But it should be consistent with their Enneagram de-evolution, meaning it should push those emotional buttons and trigger those predictable behavioral patterns.

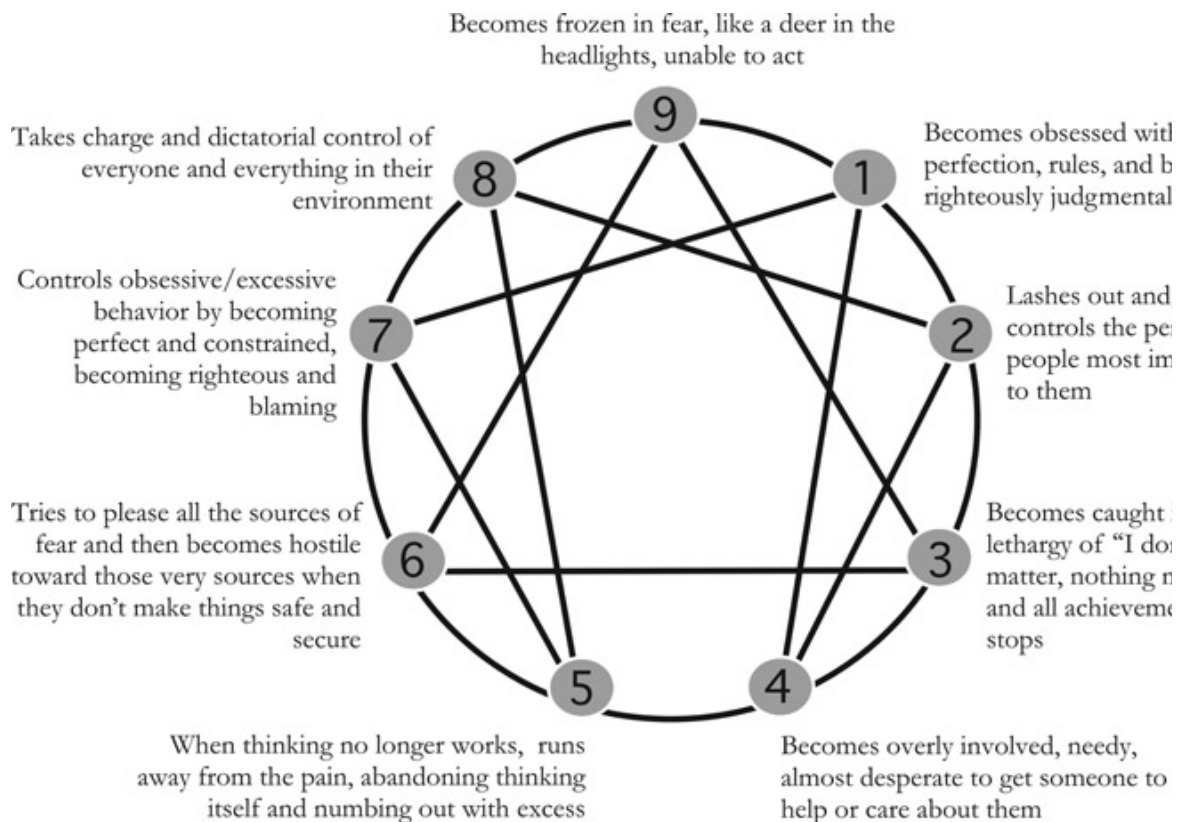


Figure 12.6 Enneagram Low Points

The piece you may struggle to specify is the low point. What does that look like for each Enneagram style? How do you know where exactly the pattern of decline needs to end up? To address these questions, first, let's look at each of the Enneagram styles to see where their natural low points end up in any story ([Figure 12.6](#)).

Ones : Become obsessed with perfection, rules, and being righteously judgmental. The One protagonist doesn't have to exhibit all of these qualities, but the essence of it is that they become entrenched in their fear about not doing things the way they are supposed to be done. They have lost a lot by this point in the story and are terrified of losing more, so their pattern of decline has led them to the ultimate expression of this fear, a Four's fantasy of micromanaging the chaos (e.g., Dolores Umbridge, *Harry Potter: Order of the Phoenix*).

Twos : Lash out or control the person or people most important to them. The Two protagonist has been pushed by events into a corner where merely being helpful or indispensable is no longer working and their fear of losing love or safety degenerates into Eightish control and domination: "I'm going to make you love me" (e.g., Alex Forrest, *Fatal Attraction*).

Threes : Become caught in the lethargy of "I don't matter, nothing matters," and all achievement stops. Approval has been withdrawn, successes have vanished, personal image is destroyed, and the Three resents the very people they have been trying to win over all their lives. This brings them to the Nineish paralysis of self-loathing and powerlessness (e.g., Frank Galvin, *The Verdict*).

Fours : Become overly involved, needy, almost desperate to get someone to help or care about them. When the relentless search for help, for understanding from others, and for emotional connection fails to deliver the promise of a better life, the Four lands in the Twoish overwhelming need-iness and obsessive focus on making others notice them and care (e.g., Blanche Dubois, *A Streetcar Named Desire*).

Fives : When thinking no longer works, they run away from the pain, abandoning thinking altogether and numbing out with excess or obsession. The demands on the Five's time, life, or emotions become increasingly oppressive, and their ability to think and figure out the world fails to bring

them clarity or relief, so they bail into a Sevenish abandon to excess and numbness, leaving them unable to think or see clearly (e.g., George, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*).

Sixes : Try to please all the sources of fear and then become hostile toward those very sources when they don't make things safe and secure. After relentless trips and traps, broken trust, miscalculations, and oppressive levels of insecurity, the Six descends into Threeish desperation just to get a win, find relief from the fear, and do whatever it takes to find something or someone they can trust (e.g., Norman Bates, *Psycho*).

Sevens : Control obsessive/excessive behavior by becoming perfect and constrained, becoming righteous and blaming. Events destroy all the fun-loving, light-hearted, and pain avoidance of the Seven, leaving them stuck in Oneish judgment and righteousness agony (e.g., Larry Rhodes, *A Face in the Crowd*).

Eights : Take charge and control of everyone and everything in their environment. After repeated defeats and failure to control events and people, after ever-increasing exposures of their feared personal weaknesses and vulnerabilities, the Eight either cracks down and becomes punishingly controlling, or rejects everyone and goes it alone, either way leading to a disastrous end as they fall into Fiveish paranoia and analysis-paralysis in a last effort to protect themselves and survive (e.g., Michael Corleone, *The Godfather*).

Nines : Become frozen in fear, like a deer in the headlights, unable to act. Story events continually betray the Nine's increasing attempts at accommodation and the search for common ground, and the peace they seek gets replaced by chaos, conflict, and anger, mostly directed inward. Terrified where this might lead, the Nine freezes, fearful of making a false step that might be their last and hating those who have put them into this losing position, as they descend into the frozen lethargy of the panicked and overwhelmed Six (e.g., Ben Braddock, *The Graduate*).

All of these examples of Enneagram low points are merely starting points for your development. When you don't know where your protagonist should end up at this point in your story, look to the pattern of decline and to these low points, because these are the places your characters have to land when they hit emotional

rock bottom. Even if you adjust these low points to accommodate your particular context, your character's behavior must actualize their essence.

You will see that some of these examples do not conform exactly to the low-point statement associated with the Enneagram style. For example, Norman Bates and the Six style. Norman doesn't become hostile toward the sources of fear (as stated previously). Instead, he becomes overly accommodating, literally abandoning any self of himself to accommodate Mother. The example of Norman is still a great example of a Six low point because the essence of the low point for Norman is that safety-security is the focus, which is the central concern for all Sixes. If you are writing a Six protagonist, you don't have to conform perfectly to any definition of characteristics; all you have to do is make sure that the character is concerned primarily with issues of safety and security. How you execute this on the page is up to you and the story. Norman is a good example of how you can still be using the Enneagram-Story Connection to create a meaningful low point, but not do so in some cookie-cutter fashion. This process is about flexibility, not conformity, and capturing the essence of the Enneagram characteristic most relevant to the immediate application; in this case, finding the best low point.

Conclusion

In many ways, this chapter exemplifies the central idea of this book: *flexibility, not conformity*. It gives many details, flow charts, recommendations, and process procedures given here for how you can best develop the middle of a story. And you don't have to do any of it. That's right—you can ignore every piece of advice in this chapter, wing it and cross your fingers and hope everything turns out alright. This is how most writers write, because that's how they have been taught by consensus to do so. "Just do it" is the number-one creative writing myth. If you just write, it will work out (or not), but if you don't "just do it" then nothing will happen, so what do you have to lose?

What you have to lose is time, money, creative energy, passion—the list of losses is long and deeply personal. You don't have to do anything this chapter (or book) suggests, but if you ignore it—and have nothing else to replace it with—then your chances of succeeding with the middle of your story are grim indeed. The same may be said for the beginning and the end.

Flexibility, not conformity, is the watch word. Find what works for you, reject what doesn't. If you don't know where to start, pick a spot and dive in; at least you will start with some real information. If you find something better that works better for you, use it. The point is that when you are facing the long-haul journey of writing, and you have no clear landmarks or guideposts, the Enneagram-Story principles presented here at least give you a solid place to start development. Not just any old place, either, but one rooted in real human behavior, emotion, and personality. These principles and tools are human nature in action. They will always ring true, because they reflect how we all function in the world.

The middle is the hardest problem in story development. But you don't have to be stymied by it ever again. The Enneagram-Story Connection and the natural structure of the middle of any story can guide you out of the story woods and into the wide-open grasslands where vistas are far and wide and story possibilities abound.

13

Allies, Helpers, and Red-Herrings: Building the Supporting Cast



The term “supporting characters” poses the question: supporting what? The answer is the protagonist.

There is a theory in psychology related to dream interpretation where the dreamer is asked to imagine that everyone in the dream is some version of themselves. Everyone in the dream is at the service of the dream and the dreamer; all that must be done is to properly interpret their function in the dream in order to reveal deeper truths about the one dreaming.

It is the same in storytelling. In any story, the supporting cast is at service to the story (dream) and the protagonist (dreamer), and their subplots are equally at service to the larger picture of the mainline story. More than just being of service, supporting characters are like the dream characters in dreams; they are representations of the protagonist emotionally, behaviorally, and thematically. “Supporting character” means something

specific: they are supporting something. That something is the protagonist and their story. When supporting characters and their individual subplots do not support the protagonist's storyline, they tend to feel tangential, episodic, and disconnected.

This is how most writers approach subplots. They do not design them with the larger picture in mind, meaning that their first impulse is not to design a sub-plot that will open hooks into the protagonist's direct story and directly impact that story late in the mainline. Rather, the general approach is to tell a subplot like a little mini-story within a story; maybe it affects events, maybe not—if it does impact things, then that's a happy accident.

Writing subplots and supporting characters, and having those subplots and characters actually contribute to the mainline story, is one of the hardest parts of writing a novel or screenplay. Screenwriters typically don't worry about subplots, as a two-hour feature film does not have the story real estate to accommodate much more than an "A-line" story. Television series writers, however, have a much broader experience writing subplots, as television writing is much closer to long-form prose storytelling than feature film writing. In a typical television show you will commonly see "A," "B," and "C" storylines, and it is not uncommon to have "D," "E," and "F" lines as well (think *Game of Thrones*, HBO). Subplots are endemic to prose fiction writing; any good novel will almost certainly have several significant subplots running in parallel to the mainline story. It should be noted that television writers learned how to do proper subplotting from long-form prose fiction. But writing for television and writing novels are very different processes; TV writing, in particular, has evolved into its own quirky animal and requires a very different mindset (and skill set) from that of the novelist.

Nonetheless, writing supporting characters and subplots is subtle, daunting, and incredibly exciting if pulled off well. Characters deepen, mysteries get solved, stakes and consequences take on more significance, and the entire story lifts to new levels of entertainment value and dramatic or comedic brilliance. Unfortunately, this topic (subplots) is beyond the scope of this book, and in fact warrants a separate book all by itself. What is

within the scope of our discussion is the idea of supporting characters and the roles they play in any story. This has Enneagram-Story relevance, and until you as a writer fully appreciate what constitutes a supporting character and how they can be leveraged to actually support the protagonist's story, you will likely be less able to write effective and powerful subplots for your stories.

Supporting Character Defined

Type the words “supporting character” into an Internet search engine and you will get lots of search results, and some of them are not half-bad. They will talk about character types, major and minor characters, and a lot of this information is useful and accurate, but the noise of it all can be distracting and confusing. The next section offers an actionable definition of what constitutes a supporting character that writers can use with confidence. This is a definition, not a list of all the things a supporting character should or shouldn't do in a story, or the various types of characters they can be (trickster, old man, gatekeeper, etc.); these are the definitional features that constitute a supporting character. There is no litmus test in terms of how many pieces of the definition need to be true for a character to be considered supporting; this is simply a guideline to help assess a character's role.

Supporting Character Definition for Writers

A supporting character in fictional stories is defined as:

1. A character in a fictional story that is not the dramatic focus of the story, and:

- May or may not have a subplot of their own
- Can be an ally or an opponent

2. A supporting character:

- Opens windows into a protagonist's weaknesses and strengths
- Generates dramatic or comedic conflict and complications
- Challenges values and presents alternative points of view
- Supplies backstory and additional exposition, or otherwise reveals story information to the reader unavailable or unknown to the protagonist
- Has dramatic or comedic effect on the outcomes of the protagonist's mainline story

The first part of this definition may fly in the face of some common definitions for a supporting character, so let me break this out with a bit more explanation.

May or may not have a subplot of their own: Supporting characters don't always have to have a subplot. A bit later I will describe the three categories of supporting characters, and you will see that there are some characters who support the protagonist's story by being neutral arbiters, or information brokers, or who have no agendas or stories of their own to tell. They can simply pop into a story, supply some crucial piece of story data (where the killer was last seen, what the monster looked like, produce the missing candlestick holder with the blood on the base), and then disappear, never to be seen again. This is a category of character and is considered supportive because they help move the story forward by supplying needed exposition or story details. You see this kind of character a lot in genre stories (detective, mystery, legal, thrillers, etc.).

Can be an ally or an opponent: Supporting characters can also be an ally or an opponent, or a little of both. As long as a character acts as a catalyst for action, chaos, or inaction (which is just another form of action, i.e., the choice not to act is still an active choice), they must be considered as

supporting the story, and by association the protagonist, regardless whether they are an ally or an opponent. Think about it: the main opponent in any story fits all of the criteria given in the definition for a supporting character. If it were not for the main opponent in a story, the protagonist would not change. In the most literal sense, the main opponent supports the development of the protagonist by their very antagonism. Think of it as a kind of literary tough love. Don't let the term "supporting" throw you; the word does not have to mean friendly or helpful—quite the opposite.

The last part of the definition is focused on the functions of the supporting character. Many of these bullets are commonly held functions supported by modern creative writing best practices, and so do not need any more explanation. It is the first and second parts together, however, that present what I consider to be a more fully defined and articulated concept of how a supporting character presents in a story, and how they function as characters. This fuller definition is what is missing in most people's understanding of the more common definitions.

The Three Groupings of Supporting Characters

All supporting characters will fall into one of three groupings in any story: messenger/helper characters, complication/red-herring characters, and reflection/cautionary tale characters. This may seem reductionist to the extreme, but when you consider the three groupings that constitute the functions of supporting characters, these groups make sense. Groupings, like categories, define divisions along shared or common characteristics, so in that sense the divisions being made here are along function, not personalities or character traits (à la types). For a more detailed discussion of the three groups of supporting characters, with extensive example breakdowns of each, please refer to my book *Anatomy of a Premise Line: How to Master Premise and Story Development for Writing Success*, Focal Press. (It should be noted that these groups are not character types. I will

discuss types and archetypes in the next section, but types are not what we are discussing here.)

Messenger/Helper Characters

Messenger/helper characters are the characters that show up; deliver some crucial piece of information so the audience has what it needs to follow the mystery, puzzle, or complicated situation; and then, after delivering the message, they disappear, never to be seen again, unless they are found dead in a snow bank. After all, sometimes they do kill the messenger. These characters exist simply to help you, the writer, keep the protagonist (and the audience) in the plot loop, so they have just the right details about the mystery, puzzle, or situation.

They don't do anything except deliver information, facts, or clues to help move the problem-solving process forward. These kinds of characters are most clearly present in police or detective procedural stories, where the protagonist is busy gathering clues and information to solve the mystery or puzzle. Television police procedurals demonstrate great examples of messenger characters through shows like *Law & Order* (1990–2010, NBC Universal Television) or *Lie to Me* (2009–2011, Fox Television Network). Messenger characters are essential in any situation script, but they are also important in a story. Often, they can also supply important context that heightens comedic or dramatic moments in the script. Sometimes, however, they may not bring any new information or promote the plot in any concrete way, but still fill a needed function in the flow of events, acting in a purely helping or facilitation capacity.

Examples



Movie/Book : *The Producers* (AVCO Embassy Pictures, 1967)

Character : The Concierge

Group : Messenger

Movie/Book : *World War Z* (Paramount Pictures, 2013)

Character : Ex-CIA Agent

Group : Helper

Movie/Book : *The Exorcist* (Warner Bros./Book, 1973)

Character : Karl

Group : Helper

Complication/Red-Herring Characters

Complication characters throw monkey wrenches into the works and create havoc and chaos at the worst possible moments. They don't bring important information, they don't drop pithy clues to the mystery, and they don't do anything to move the plot forward. All they do is enter a scene, do the wrong thing, or what they think is the right thing, and then all hell breaks loose. Their actions usually raise the stakes for the protagonist by initiating the first crisis in the story or adding to that crisis and making it worse. These are often the characters that exist mainly to die horribly, and in their grisly ends they reveal just how awful things are going to get for the protagonist and other characters.

Another variant is the complication character that needs saving or rescue. Their situation is a complication, and sometimes their situation is the whole goal of the action line of the story. As a result, this character falls along a continuum of importance in the story from low to high. Genre stories use complication characters in abundance, as you can tell from the following examples.

The red-herring variety of this group represents characters who are not what they seem. A “red herring” is a clue or a character that deflects attention from the truth to a false conclusion about the truth. It seldom if ever deepens a story by contributing substance; it is almost always pure story slight-of-hand designed to create a moment of surprise or shock. Red herrings, if done badly, can anger readers and audiences, as they will feel manipulated rather than pleasantly surprised by the reveal of the truth behind the distraction. When this happens, using a character as opposed to a clue or some bit of business in a scene, then such characters can fall out of favor and you can begin to lose your audience. Always use red herring clues with caution, but be extra careful using a red herring character.

Examples



Movie/Book : *The Blob* (Paramount Pictures, 1958)

Character : Old Man

Group : Complication

Movie/Book : *Aliens* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1986)

Character : Bishop

Group : Red Herring

Movie/Book : *28 Days Later* (Twentieth Century Fox, 2002)

Character : Nameless animal rights activists in the opening

Group : Complication

Reflection/Cautionary Tale Characters

Reflection characters are the ones that relate directly to the issue of the moral component. They may bring messages or help, they may die horribly to ratchet up the tension, or they may only appear once or twice in the story. However, they play a crucial role because they reflect some aspect of the moral component of the protagonist and thus represent “windows” into the behavior and motivation of the protagonist that the audience can “look through” to get a deeper perception of who the hero/heroine is as a person. If the protagonist is dealing with a moral blind spot associated with forgiveness, then you could have a character working a subplot that mirrors some thematic expression of giving or being forgiven. If your protagonist is acting out in the world in such a way as to demonstrate a problem with greed, then another character could demonstrate the positive consequences of having everything taken from them, as they refuse to be defeated by greed, while another character might provide a window into the opposite behavior, i.e., losing everything and then blowing their brains out in despair.

The reflective quality of this character can also take the form of the “Greek chorus,” meaning that one or more of these characters can be feeding the protagonist encouragement, warnings, hope, reminders of the better angels of their nature, etc. These are all subtle reflections of things the hero or heroine need to remember or reacquire as part of their personal makeup.

All of these examples show how characters around the protagonist can act as mirrors reflecting back to the protagonist different aspects of their moral component in action in the story world. On some level this may seem

obvious, but many writers populate their stories with characters who have minimal or no behavioral connection to the protagonist of the story. This is not bad or wrong, but it does miss an opportunity to connect story action directly to behavioral and motivational drivers that deepen an audience's understanding of who it is they have invested so much of their emotional time in. Every significant character in the story should be a reflection of some aspect of the protagonist's moral dilemma.

The cautionary tale variety are characters that reflect a specific aspect of the protagonist's personal story: they represent what kind of person the protagonist will turn into unless they change, i.e., unless they heal their moral component. These can be reflective characters as well, but the mirroring is more profound than a "simple" window into character or motivation. The message from these characters is: "Be careful, I'm your negative future if you don't make a change in your core self." This caution does not have to only be in the negative direction of growth. The cautionary tale character can also give the message, "Be careful, I am a positive future you can have, if you wake up and change." Either of these cautionary messages is best delivered by the central opponent or the focal relationship character because these are the characters who spend the most time with the protagonist during the story, and through whom the protagonist will grow and change, or constrict and de-evolve.

Examples



Movie/Book : *The Dark Knight* (Warner Bros., 2008)

Character : The Joker

Group : Reflection and Cautionary Tale

Movie/Book : *The Odd Couple* (Paramount Pictures, 1968)

Character : Felix Unger, Oscar Madison

Group : Reflection

Movie/Book : *Frankenstein* (—TriStar Pictures, 1994)

Character : Victor Frankenstein

Group : Reflection

(Note: This film version of the Mary Shelley book captures better than any other film adaptation the spirit of the novel.)

I want to make a point about categories, types, divisions, etc. of characters. I say there are three categories, others say there are ten categories, or they list all kinds of “types” and character functions that might be possible. There is nothing wrong with this in my mind, but I find that merely three categories are not only more manageable, but more practical. I guarantee you that any character purpose you can come up with will be covered by these three categories.

Why even bother with figuring out types or categories? Isn't it a useless intellectual exercise? No—there is a single, practical reason for wanting to know where your character belongs in a story: if they are not in one of these categories, then they aren't doing anything of consequence in the story. This is more of a problem than you might imagine. Many writers put characters into their stories who end up being quirky and interesting personalities, but they contribute nothing to moving the story forward.

So what? Does everyone in a story have to contribute, comes the next, logical objection? No, they don't. As with everything in this book, you don't have to listen to a word of it or follow any of the advice. But there are consequences to not doing so. There are consequences to your story for ignoring or bypassing development best practices—without something

better to replace them. And that's what all this is—best practices. Not rules, not laws, not “the word” according to some guru. This is all about best practices and being a conscious writer.

Character Types and Archetypes

Human beings are built to categorize, type, and put things in boxes. Our brains are built for pattern recognition, and try as we might not to go overboard, it is hard for us to help ourselves. The Enneagram is a great example of this human capacity to pigeonhole. As a tool, it is the epitome of pattern recognition for human motivation and behavior. We figured this thing out just by watching ourselves over millennia and came up with this amazing system. But this ability we have to type things can get excessive, and in some ways, this is well demonstrated in the creative writing world when it comes to character types.

I am a fan of character typing, obviously due to the Enneagram. So, I agree there is great value in typing and using personality styles as aids in developing characters. There is no shortage of lists, guidelines, and various personality typing inventories for writers to utilize as resources. And out of all the myriad character types that have evolved over time, some have risen to prominence and popularity: the trickster, wise man, plucky comic relief, geek, herald, good cop, bad cop, innocent, ally, magician, the warrior, the peacemaker, the rebel, the seductress, and the list goes on.

In this small list of character-type examples, you will notice there is a mix of two things: popular culture memes and traditional archetypes. The character types that arise from popular culture are not really much concern, in that they are memes, and so they may come and go as culture shifts—which it is wanting to do. But these culture memes share that same problem I alluded to earlier with the traditional archetypal types, a problem that I believe disqualifies them and the archetypes from being reliable primary

sources for character development. That problem is this: they do not represent characters; they represent pieces of characters.

This may not sound logical or reasonable on the surface, so let me break down the functional reasons why this is the case, and then offer an alternative that works powerfully to solve the problem. To understand what “disqualifying” means, it will be helpful to look at archetypal characters and why they don’t work well as the basis of character development (everything I will say about the archetypes also applies to any cultural character memes).

What is an Archetype?

I doubt there are many, if any, writers reading this who have not heard of archetypes, especially in terms of creative writing and storytelling. The word “archetype” can be broken down into two parts: *arche* and *tupos* (type). *Arche*, from the Greek, means origin, beginning, primal, and *tupos* means pattern, stamp, or model. So, an archetype is a primal stamp, the first or original pattern of something, usually describing a human behavior or characteristic (i.e., trickster, magician, herald, etc.).

The great Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung made the term famous. Jung’s analytic psychology broke away from the rigorous mechanics of Freud’s psychoanalytic approach around 1912; indeed, Freud was Jung’s mentor for many years, before the two had an intellectual falling out. Nonetheless, Jung went on to found his own “school” and is responsible more than any other person for popularizing the idea of the archetypes in everyday life (i.e., father complex, anime-animus, etc.). His version of the archetypes is the basis of the popular personality typing system, often used by writers, called the Myers-Briggs Typing Inventory (MBTI), and much of the source of the famous television series, *The Power of Myth*, hosted by Bill Moyers in 1988, featuring the famous mythologist Joseph Campbell. It comes as no surprise that writers would be quick to take up the banner of the archetypes

as tools for storytelling, especially when people like Joseph Campbell demonstrated how they are the basis of mythic storytelling across all time and human cultures—and so they did, with gusto.

What do the Archetypes have to do with Writing?

A lot. There are many fine books written about the archetypes and their relationship to writing, especially in developing characters. The archetypes represent the essential patterns of human behavior and personality (according to scholars). The archetypes are a part of every human being, and we find them in every culture on the planet. They represent part of the “*monomyth*,” i.e., the common myth that can be found weaving its way through every human culture throughout time. For Joseph Campbell, that monomyth was the hero’s journey. What better tool to use to create characters, right?

According to many story gurus who advocate using the archetypes as foundations for character development, every story is populated by archetypes. They are the *repeating patterns of human characteristics symbolized by standardized types of characters* in any story. A few more examples you have no doubt become familiar with in your writing are the following:

- Heroes
- Shadows
- Mentors
- Heralds
- Threshold Guardians
- Shapeshifters
- Tricksters
- Allies

There are actually many more traditional archetypes than these eight, but even if we restrict it to eight, it does not take a rocket scientist to see the potential benefits from using these “primal patterns” to help shape and build fictional characters. Indeed, for many the archetypes help shape the very structure of a story itself, as in this case with Christopher Vogler’s *The Writer’s Journey*, the popular book based on the work of Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey concepts.

But this text (“*repeating patterns of human characteristics symbolized by standardized types of characters*”) red-flags up the central flaw in this approach. Any approach relying on archetypes must be reductionist, not additive. Characters are based not on their complexity but rather on “standardized types” and “repeating patterns of characteristics.” This is a house of cards waiting to fall, in my opinion. Where is desire? Where is motivation? Where is choice? Where is the complexity of a human personality fully formed and neurotic as all get-out? Nowhere, that’s where. There’s nothing wrong with using patterns and recurring characteristics, but they can’t be the starting point for real characters. Why? Because they are not characters, they’re archetypes.

This is the essence of the problem. Archetypes are by definition not people. They are aspects of people, aspects of being human, fragments of emotion and behavior. Archetypes make for great traits, characteristics, qualities, but they do not make for whole characters. They make pieces of characters. All of this is equally true for character types based on popular culture. These are all shadows without substance, not real characters with meat and bone and grizzle.

Stories are about us. Stories are about human beings and the human condition. Every story, any story, all stories *must* be about a person on a journey. If the story is not about a person on a journey, it is not a story, it is something else: a situation, a problem, a predicament to be solved, whatever—but it’s not a story.

A human being is a character. A character has traits-characteristics. The human is an aggregate of behaviors and these traits-characteristics. Taken separately, as in pieces (i.e., an archetype), these traits-characteristics-

behaviors cannot stand alone. They do not have choice, they do not have will, they cannot act in pursuit of a goal, they cannot be flawed by some moral conflict that speaks to an inner lesson to be learned (or not). Only a fully formed human being, a multidimensional person, a protagonist, can stand alone to drive a narrative forward. Archetypes help, but they do not drive. Motivation drives a story and a protagonist. Motivation is the crankshaft of every story (or at least the best kinds of stories). Archetypes reflect motivation (i.e., a trickster is motivated to trick), but they are shallow reflections in this regard. Without human desire and choice, the motivation is weak and thin. Only a human gives meaning, significance, and purpose to motivation—not archetypes.

So, herein lies the problem. All those great writers out there who have written books on this, who have built careers on pushing the archetypes as the foundation of all storytelling, who have banked their entire story-development theory on the primacy of archetypal development—they are not bad and wrong, but they are gilding the lily, in my opinion. You can write a great trickster character, but that will take you just so far. You can write a great villain, but that will take you just so far. You can write a great ally, but—you see my point. You can't use a pattern or template when the substance of the thing is needed first. Maybe this metaphor will help clarify the relationship between a pattern (archetype) and the substance it generates (behind human).

Say you are a knitter and you want to make a quilt. So, you buy a knitting pattern that comes in the mail and when it arrives you open it and hold it in your hand. You are not holding a quilt; you are holding a pattern for a quilt. The pattern is a piece of paper with instructions, knitting code, and directions: i.e., it is an abstraction of something it will help to create. It is the raw material for making a “real” quilt, which is something you can use to warm yourself or lay on a couch to look pretty for the neighbors when they come over to spill coffee on it. Let's take this one step further. You are a writer who wants to write a story about a quilt. Which is going to be the most useful to you as a storyteller: the abstract pattern, or the physical quilt? Obviously, the latter and not the former. Having a big, warm, wooly

quilt gives you a fully dimensional object that you can describe and interact with as a writer. A pattern for this object cannot do those things; it's just a pattern.

The Enneagram is the fully dimensional and realized object that functions in the world with form and substance. The pattern (archetype) is the function without form. The pattern is essential, the pattern will inform, the pattern will guide, but the pattern is not as rich or useful as the thing it helps to create. This is why using archetypes (or cultural memes) as the foundation of character building can derail and undermine your process rather than support it. Using patterns of human behavior to cobble together a whole character is not unlike a Victor Frankenstein approach to storytelling. You can't piece together a great character or a great story like a quilt. You must find the crankshaft for motivation and you must find it in the full dimensionality of a protagonist, if he or she is going to drive a story from beginning, through the middle, to the end. Archetypes give wonderful, recognizable, and universal conceits all humans can recognize despite culture or upbringing. But they can't carry the narrative. For that you have to find what I call the "narrative crankshaft," which the moral component based in a fully functional Ennea-gram style.

The Enneagram-Story Connection

When it comes time to write a story and develop characters, a writer needs to be able to see the whole picture, not just pieces of what is under the hood. Archetypal models won't do the job, nor will running characters through some personality-typing test. What will do the job, however, is the Enneagram, because only the Enneagram shows you the narrative crankshaft of human personality; it is not personality, but it is the driver of personality.

Writing supporting characters, with this understanding, means relying on a very specific area of the Enneagram, one that I covered in [Chapter 4](#) ,

“The Enneagram Model: The Enneagram Wings.” The wings are a powerful resource to begin developing any story’s supporting cast. Recall that the wings are the Enneagram styles that lie to the immediate right and left of each core style: Ones have Nine and Two wings, Twos have One and Three wings, etc. Any wing you choose belongs to a fully developed Enneagram style, so you have available to you the full range of emotional, behavioral, and motivational aspects for that style.

How to Work with the Wings

What the wings provide are ready-made supporting characters. How you mix and match them is almost endless, given you have 27 combinations to start with (groups of 3 times 9 styles). It is important, however, to understand that the wings are not some random character generator (close your eyes, point, and pick). There is method to this particular madness, and if you can master this method, then your chances of designing cracking good supporting characters is very high (not guaranteed—there are no guarantees in life or storytelling). In order to find the right supporting cast, you have to know who your central character is. What is their Enneagram style? What is their moral component (blind spot, immoral behavior, dynamic tension)? What are their Enneagram core fears, desires, image, etc.? What non-Enneagram features are you going to add into the mix (custom fears, desires, blind spots, and so on)?

Only after you have created a reasonably clear picture of your protagonist, from an Enneagram perspective, can you begin using their wings to create allies and opponents. For example, if you have an Enneagram Nine protagonist, then the natural styles for creating supporting characters will be Six, Eight, and One. Six is the de-evolution and pattern of decline Enneagram style for the Nine, and Eight and One are the natural wings for the One.

Remember, the wings are natural because they represent alternative strategies for dealing with the root emotion of the emotional center for your protagonist. In this case, that would be anger (the root emotion of the 8–9–1 body center). Eight overexpresses anger, Nine is the most blocked feeling anger, and One does not allow enough feeling of anger. So, the Eight and One wings give immediate clues for how supporting characters could deal with anger related to their relationship with the Nine protagonist. This helps you to write scenes, come up with complications, and open windows in the Nine’s ability to feel (see [Figure 3.1](#)).

The next step in leveraging the wings involves knowing, when you are writing a scenario or scene, what the position of the protagonist is vis-à-vis fear or safety. If they are more in fear, then they will be accessing the constricted side of the Eight or the One. If they are in safety, then they will access the expansive qualities of the Eight or the One (see [Figure 4.15](#)).

After you have these basic pieces in place, you look at any other Enneagram styles that you think may have qualities you want to use to bring out the best or the worst in your protagonist. Maybe you want them to have the negative paranoia of a Five when they are pushed against the wall with people’s demands and emotional outbursts, or a Seven’s refusal to follow rules or have any structure for fear of being trapped by convention, or maybe you want to now fold in an archetype or good-cop, bad-cop. After doing all this Enneagram work, don’t be surprised if the shallowness of the archetypes starts to make them less appealing as resources. Picking a trickster quality is pretty much a one-trick pony (pun intended) when compared to the full range of possibilities you get by dipping into the ups and downs of a full Enneagram Wing. At this point, if all you have is half the elements previously described, you will create a supporting character with legs, and stronger legs than if you used an archetype as your foundation.

What I have just described is only one example of how you can use the Ennea-gram and Enneagram Wings for developing supporting characters. The idea is not to abandon other strategies (archetypes, cultural memes, etc.), but to put them in their proper place in the development process. First

figure out the Enneagram relationships and nuances, and then fill in with the less variable and dramatically flat archetypes. It should be obvious now how not using the Ennea-gram to develop supporting characters will most likely lead to cookie-cutter and one-dimensional character development.

14

The Structure of the Opposition



The opposition will make or break your story. The story may depend on a protagonist, but they depend on the opposition.

Everyone agrees: any good protagonist is only as good as the antagonist in any story. A weak villain means you will have a weak hero or heroine. How do we know this to be true? Through experience; through the books we've read, the television shows we've seen, and the movies we've watched. If you've been alive in a technological environment in the last 60 years, then you have been exposed to countless examples of good and bad stories, and you have developed an innate sense of what makes a good story and what makes a bad one. Readers and viewing audiences may not have the technical vocabulary to identify what is or is not working in a book, film, or TV show, but I assure you, their critical instincts are pretty accurate when they give a generic response to the quality of entertainment as "it just didn't work for me," or "I don't know, the story just felt weak," or "the main character sucked, and the bad guy was too thin."

If you press the question as to what exactly "sucked" or was "too thin," the person would probably respond with more vagary and generalities, at no fault of their own. They have not been steeped in the theory of storytelling as you have

been, and they wouldn't know a story structure beat if it came up and introduced itself. Nevertheless, they are usually right in their admonitions, and writers ignore these kinds of critiques at their peril.

It is no coincidence that when readers or viewing audiences trash a book, movie, or TV show they invariably single out the hero, heroine, and antagonist. When story structure is not working, it always shows itself in the performances of the central cast (on the page or screen). Their actions are shallow, their desires predictable, their conflicts are overly familiar, and the dramatic payoffs are few and far. Why? Because the writer has fallen short in many areas of story development; the one that concerns us most here is the development of a compelling opposition.

Most of this book is focused on the central character of any story, the protagonist. And I have detailed many areas herein that will be helpful to any writer in developing deep, personal, and relatable heroes and heroines. It would not be out of the question, or inappropriate, for me to write an entire book on the subject of the opposition—and perhaps one day I will—but for this journey we must at least spend one chapter delving into the meaning of the opposition, the development challenges of the opposition, and the Enneagram-Story Connection of the opposition, because you need to have an antagonist in your story at least as compelling as your protagonist—and if you are following this book closely, your protagonist is going to rock.

Story opposition is one of those story-guru topics everyone has an opinion about, and there is no end of DVDs, classes, books, and YouTube videos detailing the various theories as to the best development approach to writing the opposition—not unlike the information and advice generally available about how to write the middle of a story. But recall from [Chapter 12](#) the problem almost everyone has when talking about the middle of a story is that they focus on the classic story middle and not the narrative engine middle. They have a middle, but it is classic structure only, meaning that it focuses on beats, structure milestones, action, and scene building and is devoid (or mostly so) of the deeper human factors needed to tell a story.

Consequently, in this chapter, I want to explain what story opposition is and why it is important. Then we'll look at how the opposition is typically developed in most stories, meaning we'll look at the consensus approach, with examples. At that point, we'll shift gears and explain what the Enneagram-Story Connection is

with regard to the opposition and how it can be used not only to structure the opposition but also to find the optimal human factors needed for a dynamic protagonist/opponent relationship. This is part white magic, part art, and part science, so let me start building the foundation that will lead us to the magic.

The Nature of the Opposition

We all know what it means to be opposed. Someone or something is stopping us from getting something we want. And, indeed, this is the classic definition of the central opponent in any story: the one who is trying to stop the protagonist from succeeding in their desire, goal, quest, whatever. But the opposition can take many forms (and does); some of those forms are true opponents, others straddle the line between ally and opponent, and each serves a purpose and gives the writer clever opportunities to advance the story while making the life of the protagonist miserable.

At the risk of overlaying too many definitions in this book, there is one last one I believe would be beneficial to offer, i.e., a definition for the main opponent. Why try to nail this down with some formal definition? Because this particular form of supporting character has very defined parameters distinct from other opposition characters. The main opponent is one of a kind, in the same way your protagonist is one of a kind. The main opponent stands alone, but in the same breath as I state this, it is also true that this character literally has no purpose without the protagonist. Yes, you can say this about all the supporting characters; indeed, you can say that about the entire story. But my point is that the main opponent is pivotal and essential for a real story to be a story. And so, a clear definition of this special species of character is helpful.

Main Opponent Definition for Writers

A main opponent in fictional stories is defined as:

1. A character in a fictional story that is not the dramatic focus of the story, and:

- Is a supporting character in the story
- Is human, not an inanimate object, concept/idea, or force of nature
- Is not the protagonist's self

2. A main opponent:

- Does not need the protagonist, and wants to stop them from succeeding and beat them to the goal
- Needs the protagonist in order to achieve a mutual win, but on the opponent's terms
- Can be known or a stranger to the protagonist
- Has an Enneagram style that reflects the worst qualities of the protagonist (de-evolution)
- Reflects and mirrors the moral component of the protagonist in some way
- Actively preys on the moral blind spot and the Enneagram vulnerabilities, emotional hot buttons, and behavioral weaknesses of the protagonist
- Directly contributes to the personal growth or destruction of the protagonist
- Can change or not change at the end of the story

Is a Supporting Character in the Story : The first part of the definition establishes who can be an opponent (or any character in a story). Remember the definition for supporting character in the previous chapter? It stated that a supporting character could be an ally or opponent to the protagonist. This feels counterintuitive to many people, with the obvious objection being, "How can someone whose function is to oppose be considered supportive?" The answer is that "support" in the context of an opponent is not about supporting the goals, aspirations, or even the life of the protagonist. It is about supporting the overall story, meaning that their existence in the story is about being of service to the protagonist's

unfolding journey, and in this general context they are supporting the telling of the tale.

In fact, their participation is essential to the telling and represents one of the most supportive aspects any character can offer. Once again, don't get confused by the word "supporting," as it has nothing to do with being helpful or nice or nurturing to the protagonist. It is all about supporting the progression of the mainline story from the beginning, through the middle, to the end. This is how a supporting character supports, and the form that may take is that of an ally or opponent—including the main opponent.

Is Human, Not an Inanimate Object, Concept/Idea, or Force of Nature : The second and third bullets in the first part of the definition refer to similar topics covered in the general definition of supporting characters. Remember that supporting characters need to be humans, not abstractions, and while stories have been written with opponents in the form of the protagonist's inner self, these are not wise choices and tend to fail miserably as stories. When it comes to the main opponent, these failures will be exponentially worse if your main opposition is the self or inanimate abstraction.

Does Not Need the Protagonist, and Wants to Stop Them From Succeeding and Beat Them to the Goal : The next part of the definition focuses on the functions of the main opponent. The first bullet is one of the more common functions, one that many stories use as a matter of course. The main opponent is simply an opposing force in its purest sense. They want to stop the hero or heroine from succeeding, and they want to get the goal before anyone else. It doesn't matter what the goal is; in many ways it is just a "MacGuffin" (the thing in a movie or a book that merely triggers the plot, nothing more).

Needs the Protagonist in Order to Achieve a Mutual Win, but on the Opponent's Terms : The second bullet is another function of the main opponent and is a better option for a story if the writer wants a more complex and interesting protagonist/antagonist relationship. An opponent who just opposes, opposes, opposes grows boring after a while. The best protagonist/antagonist pairings occur when, in some way, the two need each other. Their relationship is more complex than simply "opponent tries to stop protagonist." In other words, the opponent's plan isn't served

by destroying the protagonist or denying him his wish. There isn't a "MacGuffin" they both want and that only one can obtain. The antagonist needs the protagonist in some way, albeit for twisted and selfish reasons. They may even help bring the protagonist closer to their goal. But, in the end, the final objective of the main opponent is dominance. Their goal is to have their agenda rule the day and any victory will be on their terms, not the protagonist's. Thus, the hero or heroine may get what they want in the end, but at what price, and what collateral damage will they have to suffer? The dramatic or comedic advantages of this bullet point should be obvious, especially how it can lead to multidimensional and complicated story consequences.

Can Be Known or a Stranger to the Protagonist : The third bullet relates to how personal the opposition is. "Personal" does not mean social, or interpersonal, but rather how personally close are they to the protagonist. How well known? How intimate, close, tender, etc.? The best choice here is to have the main opponent know the protagonist to some degree. This opens up more possibilities for dramatic interaction, reversals, and complications (à la bullet number six). Far too many stories—and these are mostly situations posing as stories—fall back on simplistic, one-note villains obsessed with winning, hurting, beating, or undoing the protagonist, with no personal stake in the winning. When the bad guy or gal and the protagonist have some kind of personal connection, many dramatic opportunities become available to shine light on those connections to better understand both characters. This is a basic principle of writing great oppositions: personal connection. This bullet also ties in nicely with the previous idea about the opponent needing the protagonist in some way. If they have a natural connection, then this need will feel unforced and natural to the story. Later in this chapter, I'll look specifically at how to build these connections using the Enneagram.

Has an Enneagram Style That Reflects the Worst Qualities of the Protagonist : The fourth bullet is one that many writers try to work into their stories but struggle with due to a shaky emotional connection between protagonist and antagonist. Normally what most writers settle for is a shallow cause-and-effect setup pitting one character against another, for example having a protagonist suffering from crippling guilt over some

past mistake they have made, and the bad guy bent on blind revenge for having been hurt by that mistake. The only emotional connection is the guilt/punishment dynamic. This is not bad and wrong; it's just thin and has been done to death. What makes better dramatic sense is to give the protagonist and antagonist a natural emotional common ground. What this means is that both characters are acting out in the world in a similar way, and that acting out is not for the betterment of others.

For example, both characters could be acting in a very controlling way toward others. Their personal motivations for doing so might be different, but their emotional strategy for acting in the world mirrors the worst qualities of the protagonist when the hero or heroine is thrown into fear. In other words, when the main character is pushed against the wall and all the knives are out and they are in mortal danger, they will retreat to their defensive position, which is their worst Enneagram-selves. Remember, each Enneagram style has a de-evolution point where they go when fear rules. This is the Enneagram style that is their de-evolution (see [Figures 8.1](#) and [8.2](#)), and this is the Enneagram style you should give your antagonist. Why? Because they are—in action—the behavioral cautionary tale of what kind of person the protagonist threatens to become if they don't change.

An Enneagram Nine protagonist, when buried under their fear, moves to the Six style because the Six style's root emotion is fear, and this is their primary emotional position. A Nine Enneagram hero would not move to Two or Four or Seven naturally. They might if you decide to do that, but you as the writer would have to have some compelling reasons for doing this, not to mention some clever ideas about how to make it work. The Nine-Six connection, however, would take no fancy footwork or clever workarounds; the movement is there and natural—instant opponent.

For all those writers who struggle with the basic question, “Who should my opponent be?” the Enneagram answers the question. You don't have to do this; you can pick any old villain straight out of central casting, if that's what you want. But the Enneagram-Story Connection gives you a natural and dramatically consistent resource for building an opponent who will truly reflect your protagonist's behavioral, emotional, and mental state

throughout the story. When a writer does this, even unconsciously (which is how most writers do it), the results are unforgettable on the page or screen.

Reflects and Mirrors the Moral Component of the Protagonist : The fifth bullet is one that is not even on the radar of most other definitions of the main opposition. Recall at the beginning of [Chapter 13](#) , I talked about how everyone in a dream represents some aspect of the dreamer. So, supporting characters are all reflections or mirrors of, or windows into, the protagonist, including the main opponent. In the case of this character, however, what is being reflected is very specific: the moral component of the protagonist. In Enneagram terms, this means relying on the protagonist having a strong moral component, particularly a clear moral blind spot or immoral effect. This distinction is important, as the next example will demonstrate. If the main opponent is suffering from the same blind spot, but from some different emotional perspective, then the two characters are profoundly connected on an emotional level that can play out as the immoral effect in both their lines. In other words, they will be hurting people in similar ways, but from different perspectives. Consider this example:

The Dark Knight (Warner Bros., 2008)



Bruce Wayne is an Enneagram Five. But he plays Batman and presents as an Enneagram Eight when he is the caped crusader. The Joker is an Enneagram Seven, and the two characters both operate from similar immoral effects. They both use violence and vigilantism to impose their will on those they feel are “guilty.” In Batman’s case, he

punishes the bad guys who are guilty of preying on the innocent, and who are at the heart of the corruption in Gotham City. This vengeful dark angel persona stems, of course, from the trauma when he was 8 years old of witnessing the murder of his parents in an apparently random act of violence. Batman is above the law, because the law is corrupt (or at least the lawmakers are), so he has to be outside the law to bring it back into moral rightness. You can't work in a broken system; you have to get rid of the system and replace it with a better one.

The Joker is a bit of a black box. We don't know about his backstory (in this version), so we can't speculate on his trauma or reasons for acting the way he does. We are left only with his actions (immoral effect). If you look at those actions, they are no different than Bruce Wayne's: feeling above the law, believing the system is broken, a plan to punish the guilty (each has a different understanding of what "guilty" means). For the Joker, the system is corrupt, but he doesn't care about that; what he cares about is that it's hypocritical. The guilty are the good guys and the bad guys, and they are guilty of being phony. The rules don't matter; only chaos can remake the world and put things right (whatever that looks like). The Joker acts in ways Bruce Wayne would never, i.e., killing without remorse, but this is one of the weaknesses he goes after, i.e., Batman's one rule not to kill. (In fact, Batman has killed many times in the comic book canon, but in the movie remakes they are telling a different mythology.)

Bruce Wayne/Batman and the Joker have a lot in common, even as they are at opposite ends of the moral spectrum. Their "similarities" stem from the impact they are having, how they are acting badly, and the consequences if they don't change. We can't know if their immoral blind spots are influencing this situation, as we don't know the Joker's internal world well enough. But we can glean a great deal from their actions and watch the carnage both inflict on one another to appreciate just how close their morality could become.

This version of Batman and the Joker demonstrates a very common configuration in movies, and genre fiction, that have strong

protagonist/antagonist dynamics. The connection may not go as deep at the moral blind spots, but the manner in which both characters act immorally in the world is similar enough to imply a deeper, emotional reflection under the hood. That is certainly the case in *Dark Knight*, and the brilliance of the writing brings it out in stark contrast but also blurring shades of gray.

Actively Preys on the Moral Blind Spot and the Enneagram Vulnerabilities, Emotional Hot Buttons, and Behavioral Weaknesses of the Protagonist : In many ways, this sixth bullet is one of the most important components of the definition. A big issue writers have in developing the main opponent character is what to do with them. What does this character do, other than oppose? They can fight, they can be cruel, they can be mean, they can do lots of opponent-like things, but how do you decide what to have them do on an ongoing basis that will not get redundant and boring? The Enneagram-Story Connection shows you exactly what to do and how to do it for any opponent. The development approach follows all the internal relationships with the Enneagram we have already established:

- Pattern of Decline
- De-Evolution
- Core Fear/Poison
- Core Desire/Distortion
- Communication Blind Spots
- Communication Filters
- Common Conflict Pinches
- Uncommon Conflict Pinches, etc.

All the Enneagram style characteristics that contribute to a character's path toward de-evolution become resources for the opponent that they can use against the protagonist. And the more personal the opposition, the more access the opponent will have to all these juicy weapons, because the opponent knows the protagonist. But even if you have an opponent who is a stranger to the protagonist, they can still, over the course of the story, grow familiar and intimate

with the protagonist, learning the hot buttons, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses of the hero's or heroine's Enneagram style as they go along.

The key thing to understand about this critical bullet is that, as the writer, you don't have to use guesswork or pick things out of the blue when it comes to designing how the opponent will attack the protagonist. Yes, there will always be the low-hanging fruit, i.e., the obvious plotting and action elements that will come into play as potential emotional weapons in the opposition's arsenal, but these are the givens. It is the Enneagram character details of the protagonist's style that offer up all the wonderful behavioral, emotional, and mental riches that deepen the conflict, make things more personal, and help the reader identify with the action on the page. If you tap the Enneagram as your dramatic capital, the antagonism will not feel cookie-cutter, forced, or tacked on—it will feel natural and unavoidable.

Here is how it would play out with a Two protagonist against an Eight opponent. All Twos have at their core the ultimate fear that they are unlovable. No matter how much they try, no matter how indispensable they become, they will never be loved, so they de-evolve into the dictatorial and controlling behavior of the worst Eight: "I'm going to make you love me!" Think of the Glenn Close opposition character (Alex Forrest) in *Fatal Attraction* (Paramount Pictures, 1987). If our Two protagonist can't turn things around, they are destined to become controlling and smothering and to go off the rails any number of ways as they desperately grasp for control of the love that is slipping through their fingers. This is all good news for their natural opposition, a badly de-evolved Eight main opponent.

The Eight would play on the Two's insecurity about being loved; they would always make sure the Two never felt good enough, was always lacking, and was on the emotional outside looking in. The Eight would attack their communication blind spots, constantly exposing the Two's hidden intentions so as to undermine their helping and generous behavior. The Eight would prey on the communication distortion filters of the Two, creating situations where the Two is always off balance, fearful the object of their attention may not like them or doubting whether they have chosen the wrong person to love. The Eight could also prey on the distortion filter where the Two might question another person's threat level, fearing they are a danger to the Two's love interest, when in fact they are an ally—but because the Eight has manipulated the situation so well, the Two sees

threats where none exist. But that's not all the arrows the Eight opponent has in their quiver. The Eight could also go after the common conflict pinches natural to the Two protagonist: fear of being taken for granted, fear of feeling unappreciated, and fear of not being heard, not to mention any uncommon pinches you want to create that you think are appropriate in the context of the story.

All of these vulnerabilities are available to the opposition to attack the protagonist throughout the story. It should be obvious that this material is rich and fertile ground for generating conflict or comedy, and you as the writer should have no fear of ever running out of fuel for developing a powerful protagonist/antagonist relationship. Never again do you have to worry about how you are going to represent the conflict between your main character and your main opponent. The Enneagram-Story Connection gives you more than enough to play with, and that is just the beginning. As mentioned earlier, there is nothing that says you can't add your own hot buttons, pinches, and additional weak spots that make sense for your particular story. Try to make sure, however, that anything you add, that is not already a part of the natural Enneagram styles, is consistent with the Enneagrams you are working with.

Directly Contributes to the Personal Growth or Destruction of the Protagonist : This seventh bullet is somewhat obvious, but you would be surprised how often writers fail to directly connect the opposition's behavior to the change that takes place in the protagonist. If you only incorporate a few of these definitional elements into your development strategy, then you will avoid any potential disconnect between the plight of the protagonist and the behavior of the opposition. The only other point here is that the change that takes place for the protagonist does not have to be positive. The main opponent could spark a downward spiral that puts the protagonist in a worse position at the end of the story. There is no rule that says you have to have a happy ending, unless you are writing a specific genre that requires this, i.e., some romance subgenres require a happily ever after (HEA) ending (yes, there is actually an acronym they use).

Can Change or Not Change at the End of the Story : I'm sure you have heard many a guru mention the fact that the best stories have protagonists and antagonists who change. Stories that have main characters who are complex, not all good or bad, morally conflicted, and broken in some way all yield dramatic moments that can lead to growth or degradation. Opponents who turn out to be

“not so bad” at the end as they were in the beginning of a story are so much more interesting than the black-hat villains that gets their comeuppance in the end. Several memorable examples follow:

Opponents who Change



EXAMPLE

T-800 (*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, Tristar Pictures, 1991) : In the first *Terminator* film, the T-800 arrives in the past to kill Sarah Connor and her unborn child, but then returns in the next movie to save them. Does the T-800 really change? I think so, considering the ending where he dies in the vat of molten metal giving a thumbs up sign. There is a sense of humor, agency, and humanity. In this case, however, the transformation takes place over movies, not scenes.

Professor Severus Snape (*Harry Potter Series*, Warner Bros., 2001) : Unabashedly hostile and petulant toward Harry throughout the series, and universally assumed to be in league with Lord Voldemort, we learn he is actually an ally and the bravest wizard Harry will ever know.

Godzilla (*Godzilla*, Warner Bros., 2014) : Not happy to be disturbed from his slumbers, the awakened monster rains down destruction; it is clearly a menace to humanity, until it is revealed he is actually the protector of the Earth from other monsters who are awakening. Not so much a change by the monster as one by the humans, but the reversal is consistent with this bullet and is not an uncommon strategy in better quality monster movies. A similar take on this (perhaps the first example in literature) is Frankenstein’s monster, where the monster turns out to be the victim and the monsters turn

out to be the humans. The monster doesn't change so much as the perception of the monster by the audience.

Miranda Priestly (*The Devil Wears Prada*, Fox 2000 Pictures, 2006) :

Cold, unapproachable, insufferable Miranda makes Andy Sachs's life a living hell, but in the end, Miranda sees the strength in Andy and reverses her role from persecutor to proud mentor. In this example, the opponent does change, as does our perception of her.

In these examples, the pattern is interesting. Most of these opponents changed not so much in their natures but rather in reader-audience perception. We think they are bad, but they are really good, or at least not bad—but because they are jerks or destructive monsters by nature, we assume the worst. As I said previously, this is how most writers approach the problem of the changing opponent. The change is more of a reversal of perception than a change of actual character—unlike the last example with Miranda Priestly. She doesn't stop being an insufferable elitist, but she does change *her* perception because of *her* interaction with the protagonist (Andy). This is not only a change in reader-audience perception of her, but a change of her character in direct relation to the protagonist. This example illustrates the principle of having the opponent directly involved in the transformation of the protagonist *and* both characters changing as a result. Always go for the last example if you can, but if you can't get there, go with the reversal of perception. That is still powerful, entertaining, and better than having a one-dimensional solution.

So, now you know how to define this thing called a main opponent, and you have some ideas about how you can develop the different definitional elements into a supporting character that can help define the protagonist's journey. But there may still be some questions about nuts and bolts, i.e., the how-to of it all. Even with all of the earlier information and suggestions given, many writers will still need a clear starting point; some place to jump off from as they juggle all the pieces of the definition and the various details of execution.

This starting point is the Enneagram Opponent Triangle. Not unlike the Protagonist Change Triangle from [Chapter 9](#), this triangle represents a physical tool that you can refer to whenever you need a jumpstart for thinking about the foundational elements that make up a great main opponent. You can use this tool

after you know the Enneagram style of your protagonist; or, if you don't know the Enneagram of your main character, you can come to this tool and find a triangle that "feels" right as an opponent and then let the triangle suggest the Enneagram for your protagonist. Either approach works and gets you to the same development spot: a protagonist and antagonist with a natural and organic connection.

The Enneagram Opponent Triangle

This tool helps you focus on the key components that can influence your choices about who in the story would make the best main opponent. There is no magic bullet here; it is a subtle process of letting the three pieces of the triangle (pattern of decline, opponent profile, and consequence) work on you, influencing your imagination and allowing targeted questions to guide your decision-making process.

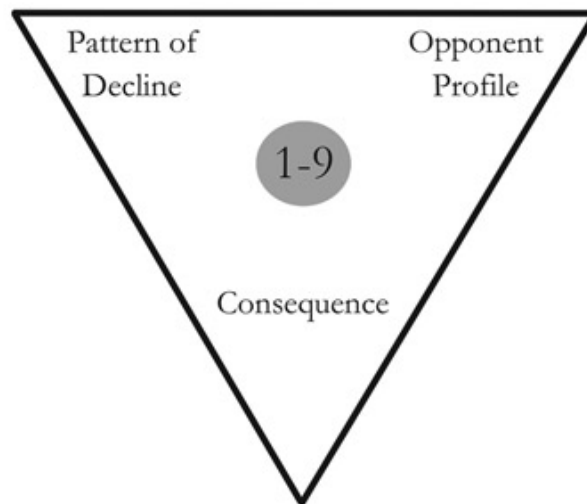
- Who in the story is best situated to leverage the protagonist's pattern of decline?
- Who in the story comes closest to the Enneagram de-evolution style of the protagonist's Enneagram style?
- Who will benefit most from the consequence coming to fruition (character and action pieces of the consequence)?
- Who will be the central force battling the protagonist for control in the end (either physically or emotionally)?
- Who has the most to win if the protagonist loses?
- Who best matches the opponent profile in the Enneagram Opponent Triangle of the protagonist?
- Who creates the most direct or indirect dramatic or comedic conflict for the protagonist?

These seven questions should always be at the back of your mind whenever you are testing potential candidates for main-opponent status. As you work through the different Enneagram Opponent Triangles, assessing which one might best apply to your story, simultaneously work through these questions. You will find

that the tool and the questions will work together to give you a gestalt awareness of the best candidates in your cast of characters. This is not a scientific analysis, but it is somewhat evidence based, in that it incorporates pieces of the main opponent definition and key Enneagram style characteristics of the protagonist's de-evolution pathway. These questions, and the triangles, provide a solid development strategy for finding, and then writing, one of your most important characters in your story.

The pattern established in the middle of the story showing how the protagonist makes bad choices, how they become more emotionally constricted, and how their pattern of fear undermines their core relationships

This is the Enneagram style that represent emotional/mental/behavioral de-evolution your protagonist's Enneagram style, e.g., One evolve to Four, Twos de-evolve to Eight, de-evolve to Six, etc.



This is the logical emotional, mental, and behavioral outcome that will occur for your protagonist at the end of the story if they do not change or heal their moral blind spot. This element has two pieces: character consequence and action consequence. The character consequence is Enneagram based; the action consequence is scene/action based

[Figure 14.1](#) Enneagram Opponent Triangle

[Figure 14.1](#) illustrates the individual components of the Enneagram Opponent Triangle. Let's go through it from top to bottom, left to right, and explain each component and how you can interpret each in your development efforts.

Pattern of Decline (top left): Hopefully before you get to this tool you have already identified the pattern of decline for your protagonist (see [Chapter 12](#)). If not, all is not lost; you can do it now. Recall, this is the pattern

established in the middle of the story showing how the protagonist makes bad choices, how they become emotionally constricted, and how their pattern of fear undermines their core relationships.

To identify this pattern, you will have to know your protagonist's core fear, their de-evolution, their poison, how they react when feeling unsafe, and how their desires become distorted. All these are covered in [Chapter 4](#) , "The Enneagram Model." You don't have to have every detail perfect; all you need to do is have a high-level understanding of how your protagonist will slip into deeper and deeper emotional trouble during the middle of the story. Don't worry; this pattern will get refined, customized, and sharpened as you develop your characters, but even if you can't come up with convincing behaviors to feed the pattern, remember that each Enneagram style has some built in characteristics that are always available to you to build a solid pattern of decline.

You can use the Enneagram-based opponent triangles listed later to give yourself a solid emotional and behavioral launching pad from which to begin creating your opponent triangle for any particular story you are developing. These triangles represent each of the Enneagram style's foundational characteristics that are always present, regardless of your story's context, thus you will always have a foundation to work with if you are clueless where to begin this process.

Opponent Profile (top right): This profile represents the lowest expression of the protagonist's natural de-evolution point. If they never change, they are likely to turn into someone like this. You will see a natural connection between the pattern of decline and this profile. The pattern of decline is the slippery slope the protagonist walks as they act out badly during the middle of the story, and this slope is influenced by their de-evolution point. That's why you will see lots of similar references in the pattern of decline and the opponent profile; they are directly related to one another. The opponent profile describes the kind of person the protagonist would hate to actually become, but if they're not careful, that's exactly where they're headed.

When you create a main opponent, you don't want them to simply be some mustache-twirling villain; you want them to have some meaningful connection to the protagonist, such that when they attack the protagonist their attacks are

personal, meaningful, and targeted. You want your opposition to go after the protagonist's emotional buttons, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses. In this way, they become a personal threat, not just a plot threat. The Enneagram gives your main opponent (and other opponents) logical points of attack consistent with the protagonist's de-evolution and their pattern of decline.

[Figure 14.2](#) offers a convenient summary of the various opponent points of attack that apply to any main opponent belonging to the listed Enneagram styles. In other words, if your opponent falls into any of these styles, the listed characteristics will be the ammunition for their emotional attacks. These are the "common" points of attack, meaning they are Enneagram dependent, not story dependent. You can always come up with your own "uncommon," story-specific points of attack to give your characters more to work with.

The beauty of all this is that if you have no clue where to begin finding a strong opposition character, all you have to do is rely on the opponent profile, the points of attack, and the pattern of decline for the protagonist to tell you what your main opponent will do in the story to make the hero or heroine's life miserable during the middle of the story, right up to the doom moment. If you do nothing on your own, create no new points of attack, never build on the already existing Enneagram-Story Connections, you will still have enough to develop

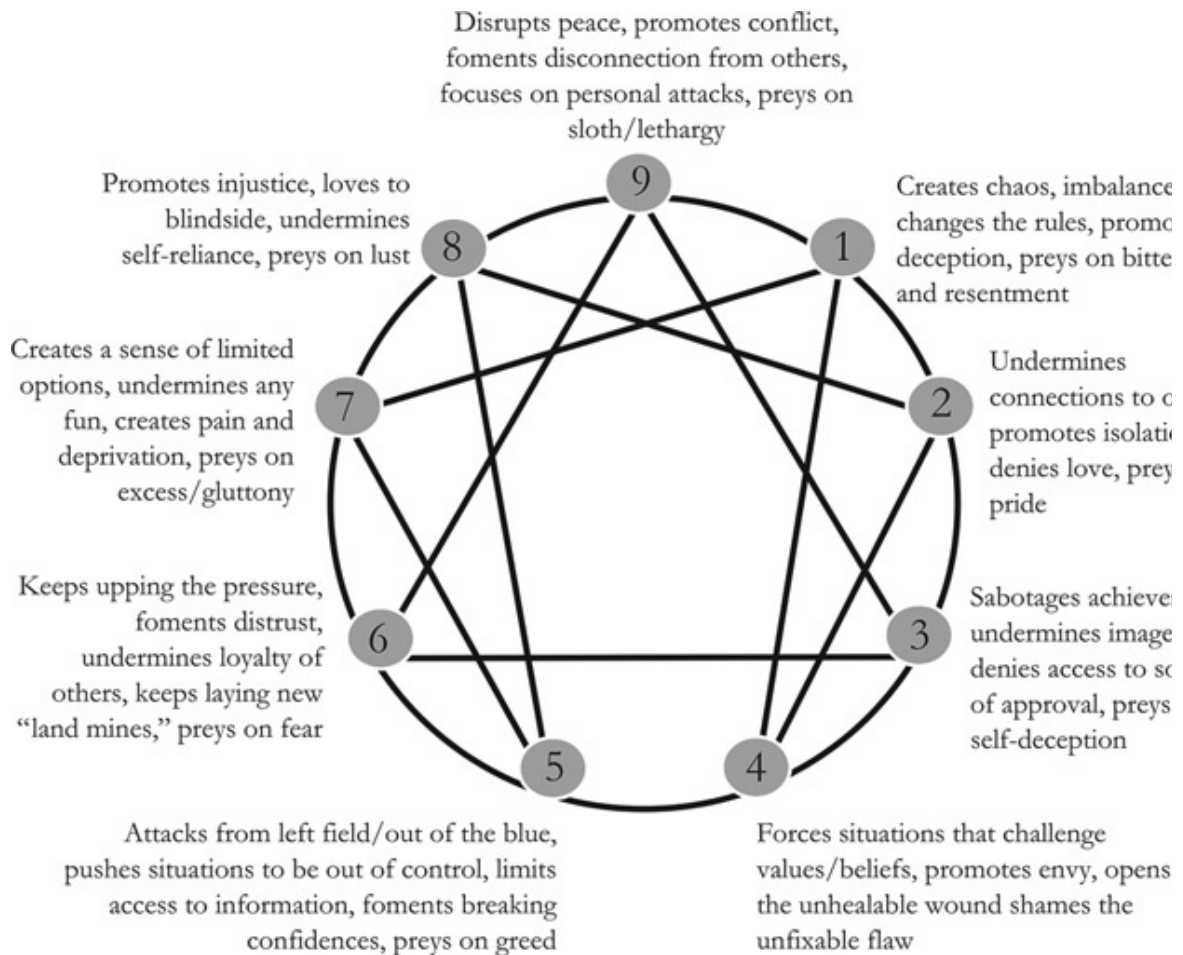


Figure 14.2 Enneagram Opponent Points of Attack

a multidimensional and satisfying opposition. So, the idea here is to plug the proper opponent profile into the triangle you are designing for your main opponent, but also to add your own unique and story-relevant additions to the profile. The more points of attack you can think of, the stronger the pool of resources for your writing when it comes time to develop scenes of conflict or comedy.

Consequence (bottom): This is the logical emotional, mental, and behavioral outcome that will occur for your protagonist at the end of the story if they do not change or heal their moral blind spot. This is the result that the blind spot is protecting the protagonist from experiencing. For example, if the moral blind spot is "I'm unlovable," then the consequence is the moment in time when this will be proven in action and emotionally. The

protagonist will face this and become it, rather than just academically considering the situation. The doom moment represents the point in the story where the consequence first raises its ugly head, but not to full completion. This is what scares the hero or heroine into the moment of truth where they choose to fight back against this threat, and this is where we begin the patter of elevation. The consequence has two pieces: character consequence and action consequence.

The character consequence is the emotional victory of the moral blind spot and is based in the Enneagram style of the protagonist. The action consequence is scene-based, meaning it will be different for every story. How the moral blind spot actualizes on the page, in terms of scene action, is story dependent, not Enneagram dependent. But they both work together to add fuel to the main opponent's fire. The main opponent knows what this consequence is and wants to push the protagonist over their emotional edge to be consumed by their moral blind spot fear.

After close examination, it should be starting to become clear how the three components of the Enneagram Opponent Triangle work together to inform you how to create the best main opposition possible.

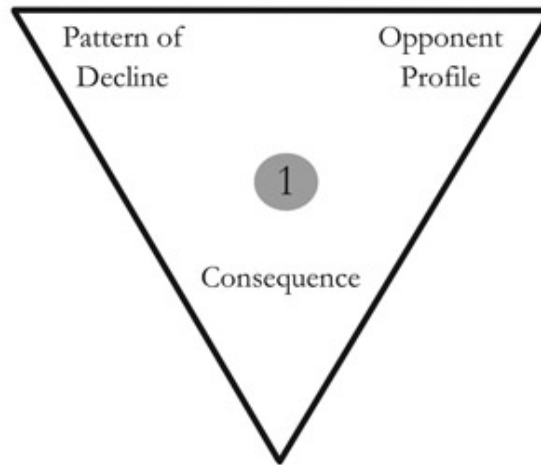
Enneagram-Based Opponent Triangles

The following diagrams illustrate core, style-based opposition triangles for each of the nine Enneagram styles. "Style-based" means that they reflect the Enneagram style characteristics devoid of story-specific requirements. The Protagonist Change Triangles (see [Chapter 9](#)) have Enneagram-specific versions that help you create your own character applications; the Opponent Triangles follow the same approach. These opponent triangles should be the first reference you use in constructing story-specific applications. First understand the Enneagram-based relationships you are dealing with; then you can begin to branch out to applying these contextually to your individual stories (story-specific examples will follow).



Perfectionism fails, responsibility becomes oppressive, chaos reigns. Here Ones sometimes move into their own special fantasy world where they can control every detail or nuance to manage the threat posed by change or chaos. The tighter they grip onto rules and being right, the more they slip out of control. The refusal to change is one of refusing to lighten up and appreciate life

Downside of the Enneagram Four: someone so absorbed, who sees themselves as the exceptional and not exceptional, clinging, demanding, moody, hypersensitive, untethered from reality hostile and sometimes psychotically so. Feeling of jealousy and unworthiness can lead to self-destructive behavior—and consumed by their melodrama, they may not mind taking others on with them



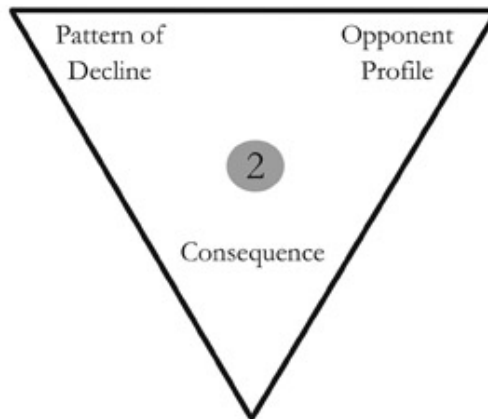
Character Consequences: Anger, resentment, feeling out of control.
 Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings the protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

[Figure 14.3](#) Opponent Triangle—Ones



When helping others fails to get them the support they seek, or when they find themselves unappreciated and rejected, they will work to get others to perceive them positively, hiding this agenda with geniality and friendliness. They will become increasingly clingy, needy, hostile, and possessive as their helping fails to produce safety. The refusal to change is the refusal to be loving vs needing to be loved

Downside of the Enneagram Eight: someone strong, self-reliant, commanding, a leader, and controlling of the people in their environment. It's their rules or the highway and weakness will not be tolerated. Those who acquiesce to their power reap their protection; those who don't reap vengeance and punishing anger. Get in line or get out of the way—that is the law



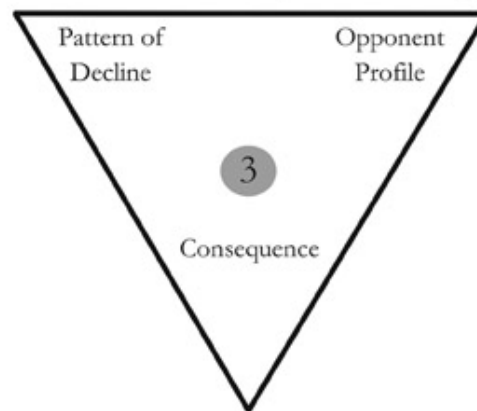
Character Consequences: Hostility, alone and lonely, feeling unloveable.
Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

[Figure 14.4](#) Opponent Triangle—Twos



As wins turn into losses, as their image is degraded in the eyes of others, as failure looms, they show what bad losers they are, blame others for all that goes wrong, and generally fall back on vanity and phoniness instead of authenticity. Approval seeking is replaced by resentment of the very sources of the approval they seek. The refusal to change is the refusal to achieve and to create safety and security for others, rather than for approval

Downside of the Enneagram Nine: someone driven by fear, doubt, and anxiety. Desperate to find safe ground and avoid trouble, anger, and danger; rely on passive-aggressive manipulations or downright hostility to remove the source of fear (including people). Deluding themselves that they act for the common good, all kinds of evil and mischief can be unleashed, when it is all really just about them trying to get safe



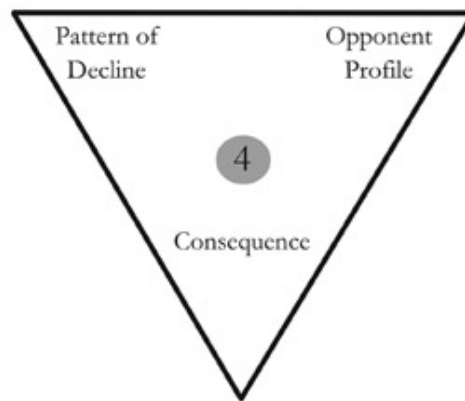
Character Consequences: Hostility, lethargy, feeling worthless and valueless.
Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

[Figure 14.5](#) Opponent Triangle—Threes



Focusing on what is unavailable or missing in their lives, they become melodramatic, seeing mainly misery and lacking. They grow competitive and spiteful, or grow moody or hypersensitive while beginning to act exempt from life's rules. Driven by their sense of defectiveness, they can be stricken with hopelessness and sink into morbid self-loathing and suicidal depression. The refusal to change is a rejection of being exceptional, preferring to be the exception

Downside of the Enneagram Two: someone who has subsumed their personal needs into taking care of others, or hiding a secret agenda of caring in order to mask manipulations to gain the limelight. Flattery and seduction are primary tools and anything they give comes with a terrible price tag. They package their hostility as love and are noted for stalking their objectified "loved ones." Pride definitely goeth before their fall



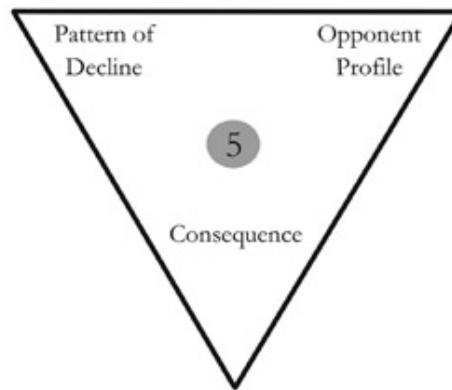
Character Consequences: Hostile, self-absorbed, feeling ordinary.
 Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

Figure 14.6 Opponent Triangle—Fours



When their analytical and mental powers fail, their preference to be detached can twist into outright disassociation. Threatened by the demands of the world, they withdraw, hoarding time, space, information, or emotional availability; living in a world of information and ideas, not people. Trapped in their own mental vapor-lock, schizoid and unpredictable behavior can surface, along with aggression and paranoia. The refusal to change is the refusal to see their own humanity as a strength rather than a weakness

Downside of the Enneagram Seven: someone who sees commitment as confinement. Rules, regulations, process procedures be damned. They were all made to be broken. Deeply addicted, obsessed, or excessive, the line between reality and fantasy can blur. They often grown obsessed with grandiose visions and inflate themselves narcissistically and reject all realistic constraints on their behavior. They can act wild, impatient, chaotic, delusional, and explosive



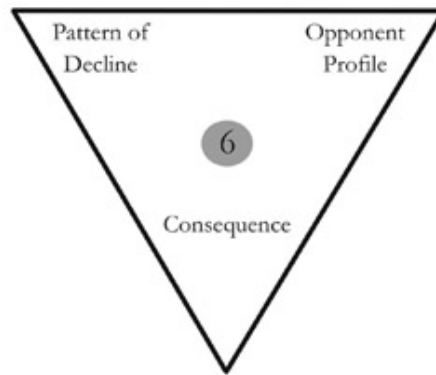
Character Consequences: Fear, incompetence, feeling mentally lost.
 Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

Figure 14.7 Opponent Triangle—Fives



They may seem friendly but give off mixed messages as anger breaks through. They are often nervous, hesitant, skeptical, overreactive, vulnerable, and conservative; and place strict, narrow limits on what they will risk or try. Often defiant of authority, but has a core of fear and a hidden dependency on the very authorities they dislike. Avoid challenges, catastrophize, and may persecute others who deviate from norms. The refusal to change is the refusal to accept a sense of personal peace and find courage

Downside of the Enneagram Three: someone for whom the strategy of being successful yields to a desire to seem that way. Often amoral, heartless, slick, and two-faced. They believe their own lies and con people without conscience. The aim is to maintain an illusion of superiority from which they derive a vindictive sense of triumph. To win, they may push themselves to extremes, enjoying the hyperactivity, using their relationships mainly as springboards for professional or personal gain



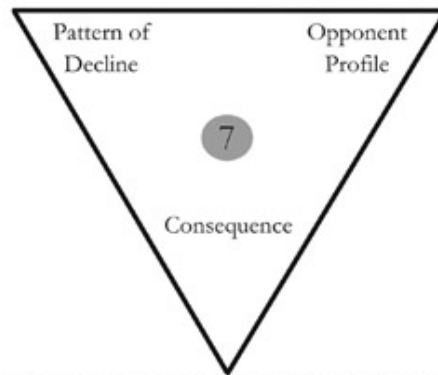
Character Consequences: Fear, doubt, feeling unsupported and isolated.
 Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

[Figure 14.8](#) Opponent Triangle—Sixes



Prone to escapism, they run as fast as they can to avoid pain in themselves and others. Rules are handcuffs, norms are limitations. The grass is always greener on the “other side” of everything. Easy to become addicted, fast-thinking, nimble with possibilities, they can appear dilettantish, impulsive, undisciplined, and glib. Appetites can't be permanently satisfied, so they plunge headlong into hedonism, seeking more to consume. The refusal to change is the refusal to face their pain and think more deeply

Downside of the Enneagram One: someone preoccupied with principles and high ideals, but tarnished by an obsessive focus on rules and “doing it right.” Their penchant for crusading is poisoned by self-righteous moralism and punishing judgment. Deep resentment boils under their surface and when it emerges their reforming zeal can look like rage, paranoia, and cruelty. For them, good and bad are black and white and all the gray is mere hypocrisy that must be purged



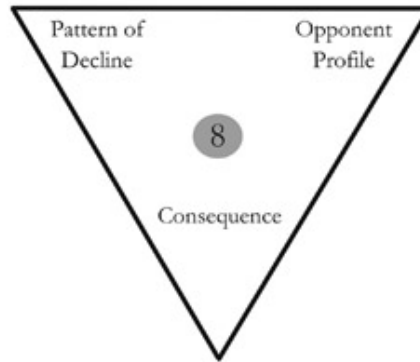
Character Consequences: Fear, emotional pain, feeling trapped and constrained.
 Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

[Figure 14.9](#) Opponent Triangle—Sevens



Preoccupied with power, they are tainted with self-interest. Somewhat free of self-doubt, they cover up their vulnerabilities with displays of strength; this is a defense against their own softness, which they perceive as weakness. Confrontation and fighting are enjoyable activities and can be their primary way to connect. This can also be a way to test others and assess external threats. Controlling people is the way to control a dangerous world. Overbearing, arrogant, belligerent, and callous, they are still sensitive to ridicule and self-exposure. The refusal to change is a refusal to own their own vulnerability

Downside of the Enneagram Five: someone so lost in mental processes and logic and reason that they live in a world of data not people. People just muck everything up. Intense emotion is to be avoided because it clouds thought and intense people are of even less use. Lost in their ivory tower, they become schizoid and unpredictable and antisocial. An air of superiority lifts them above their fellow and may even make them inhuman toward others. Fear drives them, but they think they can keep it at bay with pure thought



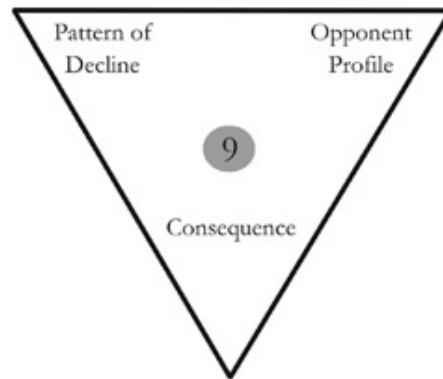
Character Consequences: Anger, controlling, feeling weak and unreliable.
 Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

[Figure 14.10](#) Opponent Triangle—Eights



They may appear as neutral diplomats and mediators, but their skilled talent for seeking common ground, peace, and union conceals a need to avoid conflict and getting into trouble. Merging with others wishes or even the environment is a favorite defense. They can be overly responsible, but underperforming, obsessively complaining and minimizing consequences. Stubbornness, passive-aggression, self-neglect, and nihilism are not uncommon. The refusal to change is the refusal to have personal presence and achieve

Downside of the Enneagram Six: someone so caught up in safety and security that they cannot trust, especially authority figures. Stricken with fear and doubt, they may become dependent on the very people they distrust, and act like weak, powerless losers. There is an outright seed of masochism, as they tolerate great abuse and still are loyal to their abusers. Their preoccupation with fear can degenerate into a recklessness that crosses over into self-destruction



Character Consequences: Anger, nihilistic, feeling separated and that nothing matters.
 Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

[Figure 14.11](#) Opponent Triangle—Nines

As I stated with the Protagonist Change Triangles in [Chapter 9](#) , these opposition triangles are not specific characters; they are blueprints for any character that falls within the confines of specific Enneagram styles. Just as a blueprint guides the architect in creating a fully dimensional structure, these blueprints are guides to help you customize the oppositional relationships that are natural to each Enneagram style to your purposes. Don't follow these slavishly, but instead use them so that you keep faith to the broader patterns within each style without being so constricted by them that you miss creative opportunities. In [Part 3](#) , I'll walk you through an example of how to use these blueprints to customize an opponent triangle for a specific character.

15

Enneagram-Story Teams



Story teams are not new, but they are never talked about by story gurus. It's time to give them their due.

I don't think there is a single creative person in the world who has not heard the phrase "form follows function." It was the famous mentor of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis H. Sullivan, who first expressed the notion that form follows function, in an artistic context, in his 1896 article "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered":

It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and all things superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, that form ever follows function. This is the law. ¹

Just as a chair (form) expresses the purpose of "sitting" (function), just as a house (form) expresses the feeling of "home" (function), and just as an

open space (form) expresses the experience of “freedom,” so a story (form) expresses the act of storytelling (function).

Form and function in creative writing are different things, but they are self-supporting, meaning they each make the other more effective. You cannot tell a story without it taking some shape, be that shape a dance, or painting, or mime, or sculpture, or song, or even the written word. The literary forms that stories take, i.e., the physical expression of storytelling in the world of literature, have a technical name: genre.

Genres are story forms, i.e., agreed upon conventions of artistic composition and stylistic expression. Storytelling is story function, i.e., the natural purpose or final intention of a story. Genre and storytelling exist in a balanced and cooperative state such that storytelling is made more powerful and effective by genre in transferring the experience of being human from person to person. That is the central purpose (function) of storytelling; it is how we teach one another about what it means to be human. Story forms are purely in service to the function of telling a story.

Genre forms can exist on their own, but in the absence of a story to tell, genres tend to become empty shells and typically deliver lackluster and dead experiences for readers or viewing audiences. A genre without a story is like romance without love. As a reader or movie lover, you have experienced this. Who hasn't read that mediocre novel or watched that dull movie and walked away feeling like the experience was one-dimensional, dramatically flat, and unoriginal? Okay, maybe there were lots of zombies and car chases; or aliens, robots, and superheroes, but—been there, done that. Without a story, genre loses its significance. When something loses its significance, it loses its ability to impact or change us. Thus, in the “right hands,” genres can elevate, inspire, augment, deepen, and generally make better any story to which it is in service. In the “wrong hands,” genre may entertain and distract, but it will never find the higher calling that comes from telling a story. This is not bad or wrong, but it is not storytelling.

What is a Genre and why should you Care?

As readers, we are exposed to genre forms with every book we read: mystery, detective, horror, romance, etc. Every book, movie, short story—in fact, any form of storytelling—belongs to a genre. This is a bit of a controversial statement, but I believe it to be true. From the highest-concept, zombie-apocalypse, young-adult-dystopian actioner to the most introspective, internal-angsty, navel-contemplating “literary” novel, all stories fall into some genre form.

Who says? And who has been put in charge of defining these so-called forms and validating that they meet the necessary requirements to be a genre? The answer will surprise you. The “who” is not some lofty literary critic in a big New York publishing company, or a rarified literary society tucked away in some dusty, book-lined mausoleum. No, the “who” is you (and me).

Readers are the ones who create genres. How? By their reading habits, buying patterns, and writer loyalties. We like what we like. And when an author gives us what we like, we ask for more of the same. But we don’t want just a rehash of what we read before; we want something new, but—the same. Our demand of the writer is clear: “Give us the same pace, the same big story beats, similar structure components, but make each story original and surprising. If you do that, I’ll keep coming back for more.”

That’s the deal; the arrangement, unspoken as it may be, between authors and readers. This is how genres are born—and die. Readers tell authors, not how to write, but the parameters of what they want to read. Out of this reader-writer dance, all the genres we know have come into existence. And, because of this arrangement, we continue to see new genres emerge in the market on a regular basis, as well as old genres that fall from grace.

Just in the last several years, the Young Adult (YA) genre (12–18) has spawned a new genre: New Adult fiction (*The Simple Wild* by K.A. Tucker, *Bring Down the Stars* by Emma Scott). Older readers (18–30) who enjoyed YA stories kept asking for YA-like adventures but with more mature

characters dealing with more adult issues, and New Adult was born. Similarly, as climate change has become a major issue in the world, so literature has reflected its importance. The new genre Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi) has emerged to respond to reader interest in climate-oriented stories (*American War* by Omar El-Akkad, *The Year of the Flood* by Margaret Atwood).

The Team Form

Within all the familiar genres we know and love, there is one subform that is of interest to us here: the story team. It is not a genre, per se, but it can operate in a genre-like fashion. Many writers have heard about ensemble stories, but the idea of a team story is not so familiar; in fact, most people assume that if you have a large cast of characters you have an ensemble and nothing else. This is not the case.

When I suggest to writers that teams are an essential part of character building in many stories, I am usually met with blank stares and confused looks. The idea that teams or team-building concepts might have anything to do with storytelling rarely, if ever, occurs to writers. On the surface of things, the natural connection between teams and fiction is not an intuitive one, but when the concept—as a story development tool—is explained logically, most people warm to the concept and see the sense of it—but getting there takes some theoretical bridge building and some practical demonstration.

The theoretical piece requires an understanding of one basic distinction: the difference between an ensemble and a team. As for the practical demonstration, that can be accomplished by showing how teams operate within specific genres to support not just individual character development but also the overall development of a story's structure. To that end, what follows is a systematic breakdown of the team form of story expression,

followed by examples of the nuances that must be mastered when writing any team format.

What is a Team?

We begin with a simple question and definition: what is a team?

A group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job, or project. Team members (1) operate with a high degree of interdependence, (2) share authority and responsibility for self-management, (3) are accountable for the collective performance, and (4) work toward a common goal and shared rewards(s).²

This definition is a bit dry and not all that useful for creative writing, but it does capture the essence of what a team is, and the qualities needed to constitute a team. The only other element that might be added is one of time. A team is most often constituted around a common goal to be achieved over a certain period of time. Teams that have long-term missions can still be seen as teams, i.e., the Human Resources Department can be a team, or the Shipping Department can be a team, but they are not assembled to do a discrete task in a defined period of time like, say, a writers' room on a television show.

As writers, we are more concerned with this time-sensitive application of the team concept. Teams in fictional stories need to have a time-limited mission, but not operate across unmanageable time scales. How long is too long? How short a timescale is necessary? This is subjective and individual to each story and group of characters, but when you start pushing things into years, you may be weakening the function of the team concept. Most often we're talking hours, days, weeks, or months. It all depends on if you can maintain the feel of a team under pressure, while you cast the time net for the story out across an expansive or unforeseeable end. Perhaps you can already see some of the challenges that start presenting themselves when you begin to think in terms of teams and not just in terms of a cast of characters.

Teams vs Groups

It is essential to make a distinction early in our discussion between a team and a group (or working group). Groups are collectives of individuals, all of whom have something in common or who share information that can help individuals achieve individual goals or tasks. Groups do not have the internal cohesion of teams, nor do they have the characteristics of teams in fictional stories (see [Figure 15.1](#)).

Groups, as such, tend to have much more in common with ensembles than teams. Because they share some common interest or knowledge, they can appear more interdependent and team-like than they are. As we will see later, this is often one of the key factors that confuses readers and viewers when they come upon a story that is an ensemble story but possesses group characteristics that muddy the dramatic waters. In the last chapter, we will look at some examples of this phenomenon, which will illustrate how creative writing is not just black or white but rather is black, white, and shades of gray.

Team Definition for Writers

While the team definition offered at the beginning of this chapter is technically accurate for defining a team in business, it is not perhaps the best definition for creative writers. So, let me present an alternative definition of a team story that you can use in developing your own team stories.

A team in fictional stories is defined as:

1. A set of two or more fictional characters with a full or partial selection of complimentary traits and behaviors

- Or non-complementary traits and behaviors (that later become complementary)
- Required to achieve a common goal
- That ultimately serve to accomplish the telling of a story

2. Team characters:

- Operate on a sliding scale of interdependence from low to high as the team develops, ultimately becoming highly interdependent
- Share responsibility for team evolution and efficacy
- Are accountable for team successes and failures
- Share collectively in performance-related rewards and punishments
- Work toward achieving a common story goal(s) or outcome(s)

The chief differences between this definition and the earlier definition are that this definition recognizes the variability in team size and especially notes how small a team can be. It also points to common characteristics required by team members that may not necessarily be complementary. Indeed, in many team stories, characters of the team may have non-complementary characteristics that only prove to be complementary later, after team cohesion occurs. An example of this is when a new team character comes on board and does not seem to have any characteristics whatsoever until later in the story, when circumstances arise that prove this person has an essential quality the team did not value or recognize initially.

The Four Stages of Team Development

In addition to the new definition of a team offered previously, there is another defining quality of a team story that is always overlooked by writers: *stages of development* . Just as individual human beings have

interpersonal dynamics, so teams have internal dynamics that make them run, fall apart, or perform at peak efficiency. Teams don't just happen; they coalesce over time, and they all follow a similar developmental process. All teams in the real world go through four stages of development.

The Stages

- Forming ³ : The team orients itself in three areas: goals or tasks, membership, and leadership.
- Storming : Conflict arises between the team and leader and/or between individual team members.
- Norming : The team develops consensual working agreements over previous disagreements, or over new suggestions for team effectiveness.
- Performing : The team becomes extremely productive and effective; there is team synergy and high morale.

These same four stages apply to teams in the not-so-real world as well, i.e., the world of storytelling. Every book, film, or television show has teams operating in many different forms and in many different capacities.

People routinely throw around the word “team” when describing certain kinds of stories, because the team configuration is obvious. Most sports stories involve a literal team (*The Art of Fielding* , by Chad Harbach; *Hoosiers* , Orion Pictures; *Beartown* , by Fredrik Backman); action movies with military units fighting off the monster/alien/super-villain are obvious teams (*The Dirty Dozen* , Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; *The Expendables* , Millennium Films; *A League of Their Own* , Columbia Pictures); and any group of people working together to do something is easily seen as team-like.

But what about a love story? What about a one-man or one-woman show in the theater? What about a coming-of-age, angsty teenage YA novel? As you will soon see, these all qualify as team stories (yes, even love stories).

Remember the partial definition of a team: “*A group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task ...*” The word “group” in this context doesn’t just include a large cast of characters. “Group” can be just two or more people. But even with a one-person show, there are other criteria (as this chapter will go on to show) for a team story that apply that place such stories firmly in the team category.

The real defining piece that makes this approach to team stories unique and powerful is the idea of stages of development. This is game-changing information and will help you immensely in not only recognizing team stories when you see them but also writing them more effectively in your own fiction.

Yeah—But

One thing needs to be made clear at this point regarding team stages. While teams in real life always go through stages of development, teams in stories may not be so predictable. There are certain genres where team stories are more certain to have clearly defined stages than others. [Appendix 4](#) and [Appendix 5](#) illustrate two such genres and give clear examples of how stages play out. But some genres do not always cooperate in this clear-cut way. Love stories, quiet family dramas, or other genres will often suggest the presence of stages, but they may not be fully formed. If this is the case, it does not mean you do not have a team story. It means you have a team story with weakly defined stages. In other words, as with genre story beats, team stages of development will always be present in any team-based story.

For example, in most stories, there will always be a clear sense of the forming stage (characters come together), and there is usually a clear storming stage (characters start fighting over something), however short it may be, but the norming or performing stages may be weak or missing. The idea here is not to dismiss the team approach to writing because the stages might be lackluster in any particular story. The principles still apply and

work. Maybe you can take the idea of stages and use it to strengthen the story, or maybe you need to realize that stages are not that important in this story, so you can let them go? The point is this: you can't know which is best until you apply the ideas and the concepts of stages of development.

Story Team Characteristics

Along with the four stages of team development, another feature that distinguishes team stories from other story forms is that team stories have specific characteristics within the structure of how a team story is told.

There are six basic characteristics that are almost always present in any team story ([Figure 15.1](#)).

As with stages, some of these characteristics may be missing or weakly drawn in a story, but generally speaking, they will all be present, especially the first two characteristics.

Team Characteristics
A protagonist carries the story
The story is focused on a single main goal/task
The plot is time sensitive
Subplots are at service to the mainline story
Develops in stages that build dramatic cohesion
Story lines tend to be continuous, not episodic

[Figure 15.1](#) Team Characteristics Table

I don't want to spend a lot of time here detailing each characteristic, as we will revisit each of these in more detail in [Chapter 16](#) , but here is some quick information.

A Protagonist Carries the Story : There is a clear hero/heroine. The story is about someone in particular.

The Story Is Focused on a Single Main Goal/Task : The story will not be split when it comes to the big objective of the story. There will be a goal, and it will be clear.

The Plot Is Time Sensitive : In keeping with the definition of a team, the clock is usually ticking in a team story—not always, but usually.

Subplots Are in Service to the Mainline Story : This is always a tough story development element in any story, regardless whether it is a team or ensemble story. But in the best stories, subplots work best when they help to support the mainline story and do not act as competing, stand-alone stories within stories.

The Story Develops in Stages : As defined earlier, team stories have stages. Ensemble stories don't.

Stories Tend to Be Continuous, Not Episodic : Team stories follow a continuous narrative line of cause and effect. They do not follow episodic or sporadic styles of storytelling.

Once again, sometimes team stories can still manage to follow the team format despite having some of these characteristics weakly played or missing, but usually, they will all be present to one degree or another. If you see the first, second, and fifth characteristics present, those are enough to clearly identify the form as a team story.

Let's apply what we've just covered to a real-world example of a story that is well established and well regarded in theater, film, and television. In this example, I'll highlight each of the team characteristics and explain how

they play out specifically in the story, in order to show that this is not just some abstract application but reflects how great stories are written.

***12 Angry Men* (Writer Reginald Rose Play/Screenplay, United Artists, 1957)**



A Protagonist Carries the Story : Juror #8 (Henry Fonda). This character carries the narrative and drives the story.

Story Is Focused on a Single Main Goal/Task : The team goal/task is to come to a verdict.

Plot Is Time Sensitive : There is no specific timeframe set, but the pressure is to do it as soon as possible.

Subplots Are in Service to the Mainline Story : All the various power plays, manipulations, etc. between jury members are all focused on making decisions to accommodate either Juror #3 (Lee J. Cobb) or Juror #8 (the antagonism between these two characters is the mainline story). Alliances are formed, opposition solidified, and all of it is designed to force Juror #8 to get off the dime and vote “guilty,” so they can all go home and be done. Unfortunately, Juror #8 will not comply.

Stories Develop in Stages That Build Dramatic Cohesion :

Forming Stage : The jury takes a little bit of time get to know one another; the jury foreman sets the agenda, and the honeymoon

is over pretty quickly when the first vote is taken and Juror #8 votes “not guilty” against all the others’ “guilty.”

Storming Stage : The jury spends most of the story in this stage. Each character reveals specific personality styles that contribute to the forward or backward motion of the decision-making process, and Juror #3 emerges quickly as the driving opposition to force Juror #8 to conform to the team’s “guilty” majority.

Norming Stage : This stage gradually emerges in the form of side conversations, little side vignettes where various jurors reveal their prejudices, peculiarities, and vicissitudes; and where Juror #8 slowly starts to cast doubt about the defendant’s guilt, slowly winning over more and more jurors to his position, inexorably turning the tables on Juror #3.

Performing Stage : This stage is represented by an almost total reversal of fortune for Juror #3, with him standing alone in the end as the sole “guilty” voter, and the entire team now working together to support Juror #8. The team is performing as a unified whole against Juror #3, as a result of the steadfast refusal of Juror #8 to give in to Juror #3’s threats and harangues. The transformation of the team from a bickering, squabbling, and back-stabbing amalgam into a real team operating out of common agreements and aligned goals (let’s all vote “not guilty”) is complete when Juror #3 is forced by peer pressure to back down and “go along” with the majority decision to vote “not guilty.”

Stories Tend to Be Continuous, Not Episodic : The story has minor subplots occurring around the table, but these are more like side discussion, not really subplots. Over all, the story is one continuous dramatic narrative, not a jumble of episodic moments strung together like pearls on a narrative string (e.g., an ensemble story).

16

Enneagram-Story Team Roles



It's not enough to know you have a story team; you also have to have its members do something. The Enneagram shows you how.

We have covered a new definition of “team” for writers, described four unique stages of development present in team stories, and presented specific characteristics common to all team stories. But there is one other identifier that you can look for to help define and clarify the presence of a team story: team roles.

For our purposes here, the central point I want to bring forward is the idea that in a team story, all of the team’s characters have a role to play. In other words, there is no team character who is there because the author thinks it is cool to have them there. Every person on the team has a story job to do, a developmental stage role to fulfill, and provides some window into the main character’s personal situation. Let’s take each of these separately:

Every Member Has a Story Job : This may be obvious, but you would be surprised how quickly the cast can get out of control if every character does not have a specific job to do in the functioning of the team and/or in the achieving of the goal. For most teams, the team leader is very precise in choosing whom he/she wants on the team, so readers and audiences are usually very clear about who is doing what and why. But just because it's obvious that this is important, never assume a large cast of characters will have everyone maximizing his or her roles in an entertaining and functional way.

Every Member Has a Developmental Stage Role to Fulfill : This is a role characteristic that most are not familiar with, because they are not aware of team stages. But in each stage of development (forming, storming, norming, performing), each team character provides a specific team function in that stage. This is a complicated topic; we cannot define each role for each stage here, but know that there are at least nine different roles that characters can play in each of the four stages. In other words, there are some 36 different roles that characters can play on a team, based on their Enneagram style and the stage they occupy at any one point in the team's development. Knowing these developmental roles helps you deepen every character so that they are not just one-dimensional, cookie cutters straight out of central casting (i.e., plucky comic relief, sexy vixen, geeky brainiac, etc.).

Some Members Provide a Window Into the Main Character's Personal Situation : In many ways, this is the hardest feature of team roles to accomplish. As with subplots, characters in stories are more than just plot devices. They are dramatic windows into the protagonist's character. The term "supporting character" means something specific. A supporting character *supports* the main character. What this means is that they help the hero or heroine move through the mainline story in such a way that the reader or viewer learns more about who they are because of this other character's presence and participation. Through their own character moments, the supporting

character becomes a window into a deeper view of why the protagonist is acting a particular way or feeling a particular feeling.

Every character in a story need not play this reflective role, but certainly the central characters of any story need to do so, and in a team story that means the other team characters. Again, perhaps not every team member, especially if the team is large (e.g., *Oceans 11*), but there should be several window-characters on any team to help readers or audiences better understand the motivations and actions of the protagonist (which is usually the team leader).

In addition to roles previously mentioned, one last consideration is that supporting characters can also act as a kind of Greek chorus. In classical theater, the Greek chorus served to articulate or express outright moral issues in a story or reflect on emotional action unfolding at various points in a play's performance. Similarly, in team stories, supporting characters (or even individual characters) can act as a literal window into the mind and emotional state of the protagonist, functioning as a chorus to reveal to the audience or reader new windows of understanding into the issues facing the hero or heroine and their inner angst, concerns, or feelings as they work through dramatic conflict.

Enneagram Team Roles

Knowing there are four stages to any story team's development, the next obvious questions are: *How do I know what to do with all the team characters, so everyone is active and contributing, and not just taking up space? What the heck is everyone going to do?*

It's not enough just to populate your team with bodies and then randomly let them blow things up, or shoot people, or do some other mindless action-movie bits of business. Everyone on the team should play a role; every member should add to the conflict, and all team members should be moving

as a dramatic unit through the team forming, storming, norming, and performing stages. Only then will the team feel cohesive and dramatically connected.

Fortunately, the Enneagram system gives you clear guidelines for every team character, based on their Enneagram style through all of the four stages of team development. This is worth repeating: *the Enneagram shows you specifically what role behaviors each team member fulfills in each stage of the team's developmental stages*—so you don't have to base your team's development on guesswork. There is no rule that says you have to follow these guidelines, but as always, there are consequences to not following the best practices of story development.

In this case, if you ignore the Enneagram-Story Connection for team development you will risk having a team that is loosely connected, with characters reduced to clichéd roles like “plucky comic relief with a heart of gold,” or “tough-as-nails leader with the heart of gold,” or “socially awkward computer geek with a heart of gold”—you get the idea. You can still use these clichés if you want, but with the help of the Enneagram you can also give them additional stage-based behaviors consistent with their Enneagram styles that will transcend character stereotypes and generate human interactions that will organically generate conflict and comedy based on behavior, not just clichés.

In a similar way as learned in [Chapter 9](#) , with the Protagonist Change Triangle, the role behaviors listed in later in this chapter are Enneagram-specific, not story specific. In other words, the roles listed relate to real-world human behavior based on style, not the plot requirements of any story. Consequently, as with the change triangle, you will have to interpret each role behavior and figure out how that can translate into team behavior for your story's context. Along with each Enneagram style/role, scene-level suggestions for scene conflict will be suggested as a way to illustrate how these role behaviors might be adapted to story conflict.

(Note: The suggestions for scene conflict are about action on the page, but underneath the action is behavior consistent with the stage/role behavior of the Enneagram style under examination. This is the fine

balance you must achieve to get the right mix of Enneagram truth and entertaining fiction. As with the change triangle statements in [Chapter 9](#) it is part art and part science.)

Enneagram Team Role Behaviors

Remember, all of the Enneagram roles listed still operate within the context of their larger Enneagram style. In other words, all the roles listed under the Ones have all the positive and negative connotations of a One Enneagram style operating. So, as you go through the various roles, keep in mind that each style has a larger behavioral context that colors why any character has taken on any particular role.

Also keep in mind the function of the stage involved. Any scene action a character might engage in should be related to the stage they are in, not just a random scene that comes out of nowhere. This means, for example, if you are brainstorming scene action for the forming stage, whatever Enneagram style applies, the characters actions should be focused on forming the team, not some other function.



Forming Stage : Task focused, with minimal need for social connection; may suggest ways to structure work.

Storming Stage : Frame conflict as a problem to be solved, exert leadership to do this, and grow impatient if the conflict endures.

Norming Stage : Suggest rules for working together.

Performing Stage : Embrace high production of excellent quality.



Forming Stage : Encourage people's contributions; facilitate organizing team around a central purpose.

Storming Stage : Assist others to express feelings toward a quick resolution; may give advice or distract through humor.

Norming Stage : Push team for clear, shared agreements (meaning working agreements, how are we going to work together, etc.).

Performing Stage : Like performing, particularly in support of star performers.



Forming Stage : Seek team approval early; may assert themselves in order to define goals.

Storming Stage : Become disengaged; perceive conflict as wasting time and too emotional.

Norming Stage : Like unification so refocus team on results and efficient work.

Performing Stage : Favorite stage, so encourage others to increase their performance.



Forming Stage : Focus on own internal feelings in relation to the team more than on the task.

Storming Stage : Enjoy realness of explicit conflict as long as they are not a main participant.

Norming Stage : Will suggest and support rules that add clarity but not ones that restrict individuality.

Performing Stage : Feel more a part of the team at this stage; work hard toward common goals.



Forming Stage : Social connections feel frivolous, yet necessary; strong preference for a focus on goals.

Storming Stage : Prefer to skip this stage in order to avoid anger and conflict.

Norming Stage : Like clear rules and structure as long as these allow sufficient autonomy.

Performing Stage : Prefer individual tasks in areas in which they feel competent; like being appreciated for their knowledge.



Forming Stage : Prefer watching the team's dynamics but will clarify issues or ensure vulnerable members get heard.

Storming Stage : May engage in conflict if authority and improper use of power are involved; may also withdraw.

Norming Stage : Work actively to secure agreement among team members, with attention to equal participation.

Performing Stage : Keep other members focused on deliverables, act as troubleshooters, acknowledge others' contributions.



Forming Stage : Contribute ideas about larger vision; dislike too much structure; can get impatient with lack of progress.

Storming Stage : Do not like conflict and perceive many disagreements as rival or petty; use humor to defuse serious situations.

Norming Stage : Will suggest a minimal number of rules that include everyone but react against rules that feel limiting.

Performing Stage : Tend to work from their own personal prioritizations; prefer a variety of tasks and roles that include positive social interaction.



Forming Stage : Either suggest direction for the team or pull back and watch, deciding whether to be part of the team.

Storming Stage : Enjoy the intensity of the interaction as long as people are honest; are often part of the conflict, but if not, they will lead the dialogue.

Norming Stage : Will recommend ground rules, particularly ones that allow everyone to be heard.

Performing Stage : If they find the productivity exciting, they will stay; if the work is not significant or is too predictable, they will move on.



Forming Stage : Have difficulty focusing if progress is slow; may become impatient.

Storming Stage : Uncomfortable and looking for a way out.

Norming Stage : Ambivalent about developing agreements; like the consensus, but don't like arbitrary rules.

Performing Stage : Find getting something accomplished with a harmonious team very pleasurable.

Source: (Ginger Lapid-Bogda 2004)

When you know you are writing a story that qualifies as a team story, but you don't have a clue what to do with one or more characters in a story, this chapter is your go-to solution. Every character in your story will have an Enneagram style, and once you figure it out you will never be lost for an answer to the question "What the heck do I do with everybody?"

Even if you don't follow the literal roles previously suggested, just reviewing them and brainstorming possibilities can spark other ideas and get you going in the right development direction. Relying on the Enneagram-Story Connection, in the teams-role context, is a sure way of always making sure no character ever gets left behind.

Part 3

The Seven-Step Rapid Story

Development Process and Case Studies

17

The Rapid Story Development Process and Case Study.

The last part of this book is about application. You have been through chapter after chapter of detailed and theoretical ideas, process procedures, and illustrated tools, all meant to help build a foundation from which you can launch any story idea into the storytelling stratosphere. But all the theory, illustrations, and techniques in the world are not going to help you if you can't figure out how to put them together into a manageable workflow. This last part of the book is an attempt to do just that.

Unlike my first book, *Anatomy of a Premise Line*, where I built a seven-step process that was tightly integrated and step interdependent, here in this book I am going to be less stringent. I'm going to give you seven steps, but they are not so tightly wound that if you don't do them in some order you will fall short of your development goals. Finding the Enneagram-Story Connection in your story can truly be a personal process you build out of all the information I have offered in these pages. But we have to start somewhere; consequently, what follows is one approach that can work nicely to pull together all the different threads that have been laid out to build this complex story development tapestry.

The Seven-Step Rapid Story Development Process contains the following steps:

- Step 1: Build the Enneagram Foundation of the Moral Component
- Step 2: Define the Protagonist's Enneagram Style
- Step 3: Define the Protagonist's Evolution and De-Evolution Enneagram Styles
- Step 4: Identify the Common and Uncommon Pinches, Crunches, Blind Spots, and Distortion Filters
- Step 5: Define the Opposition
- Step 6: Build the Enneagram Elements of the Story Middle

- Step 7: Develop the Premise Line and Logline

This is not the only approach you can take, but it is one approach that works and, for what it's worth, this is basically what I do when I'm writing a new story.

Why a Process and Not a List of Steps?

It is important to realize that what you are learning here is a process and not just a list of arbitrary steps. Lots of self-help books sell various steps as part of the hype to get you to buy the book: seven steps to perfect health, five steps to six-pack abs, three steps to finding the love of your life, and so on.

Consequently, while I make no promises, I do assure you that if you take the time and put in the work to master this material, your storytelling skills will improve, and your material will elevate above the middling crowd. That's as close to a guarantee as anyone in the story development business will ever give you (or should). As I said at the beginning of the chapter, the seven steps that follow are not a numbered list of "to-dos"; it is a process. The two are very different things.

A list is simply that: do step one, do step two, and so on. You work through the list in a linear way and carry out each list item slavishly, in order, and you don't skip any steps. You do the list as it's written, and the final result should be the promised deliverable (your six-pack abs or the love of your life). A process is a sequence of interdependent and related procedures, often involving inputs (data fed into the system) and outputs (outcomes resulting from the processed data) at various points in the process, leading to some expected goal or result. For example, in this process, each step does not stand alone; rather, each builds upon the others. Step one feeds into step two, and step two provides the input data needed to execute step three, and so on. Understanding this is essential in appreciating how working a process is different from just running a list of "to-dos." The other important aspect of a process is that at some point you will make it your own. A list is a list; it doesn't change. It is always the list.

With a process, you learn the steps, work the process-procedures, become familiar with the inputs and outputs, and develop an intimacy with the interrelatedness of all the parts. Over time, steps merge, combine, or seemingly disappear, and you find that you can "skip over" whole steps because you just know what to do. It becomes so second nature that you don't have to think about it; you

just do it. You are not a slave to the list—in fact, you change the process by customizing it to your style of learning and your creative process. You don't keep doing each step because Jeff Lyons (or anyone else) says you have to do it in any particular way. No, you make it your own; it becomes your process, and, as such, it becomes streamlined and self-engineered to facilitate your creativity, not some formulaic requirement dictated by a guru or teacher.

Forms and Worksheets

As you work through the seven steps of the Rapid Story Development Process, along the way I have provided some customized worksheets and development templates that you can use to facilitate knowledge transfer. There will be many examples given along the way in the text, but if you choose to apply the process to your own story idea as you go, the worksheets will afford you that opportunity. The appropriate worksheet suggestion will be listed at the end of each process step so you know which form to use with your story idea.

You don't have to use these tools; you can just wing it yourself and do your own thing, but I find that the documents I've provided do help focus the work and make the steps easier to visualize. You can access the forms and worksheets at the companion website set up for this book provided by the publisher. You can find the web URL address in [Appendix 9](#) of this book. Once you go to the e-resource webpage, instructions for downloading documents will be available on the website. You will find the following forms and worksheets:

Moral Component Worksheet : This worksheet is designed to help you generate a compelling and powerful moral component for your protagonist. It will guide you through the creation of each of the three core elements of any story's moral component.

Moral Enneagram Worksheet : This is a standalone worksheet, but it also works in a complementary way with the Moral Component Worksheet in helping you to generate a moral component. This worksheet, however, focuses on building the Enneagram resources that will help you create and develop a full moral component.

Protagonist Enneagram Worksheet : This worksheet is designed to help you define and implement the right Enneagram style for your protagonist. Using

various Enneagram resources, the worksheet walks you through key questions and reviews Enneagram tools to help you narrow down this important aspect of your protagonist's profile.

Protagonist Change Worksheet : This worksheet walks you through the design and implementation of your protagonist's change process. It relies on Enneagram-based resources, as well as the Protagonist Change Triangle Tool.

Common and Uncommon Buttons Worksheet : This worksheet is an Enneagram-based resource meant to help you design communication blind spots, informational distortion filters, and conflict pinches for your protagonist (and other characters). You will create Enneagram-based "buttons" that will be pushed by other characters for dramatic effect, but also create your own custom buttons.

Classic Story Middle Worksheet : This worksheet is one of two worksheets designed to help you create a solid story middle. The classic story middle is the non-Enneagram-based structure that every story uses to organize and propel the middle of a story forward.

Narrative Engine Middle Worksheet : This is the second worksheet designed to help you create your story's middle. This focuses on helping you identify the Enneagram-based resources and influences that structurally impact the narrative drive of your story and the structure overall.

Opponent Triangle Worksheet : This important worksheet helps you design and create a compelling and dramatically relevant main opposition for your story. Using the Opponent Triangle Tool and other Enneagram resources, this worksheet helps you figure out what character would be the best opposition and how to leverage the Enneagram for dynamic oppositional relationships.

Premise Line Worksheet : This is the last step in the development process, and you will use this form to develop our story's premise line after you have worked on the many other forms earlier. It guides you through the anatomy of a premise line template mechanics, but it is only a small subset of the full premise development process. It is, however, enough to set you on the right path for next steps in your development journey.

Case Study Worksheet Examples : This is a set of all the worksheets filled out for the test case example, Lilies of the Field.

So, let's begin.

Step 1: Build the Enneagram Foundation of the Moral Component

Why start here? Because this is the engine of the middle of any story, the foundation of an active protagonist, and the glue that holds any story together, if it is a story and not a situation. You can start wherever you please, but this is the place that will always kickstart this process into high gear as it feeds so many of your other choices in subsequent steps.

As you will remember from [Chapter 10](#) , the three elements of any story's moral component consist of the following:

- The moral blind spot
- The immoral effect
- The dynamic moral tension

The challenge is always finding a way to make each of these elements work together with the others to give any character solid emotional motivations, believable behaviors stemming from those motivations, and plausible decisions and choices generated from those behaviors that lead to story consequences and complications. Most writers do not have the advantage of even knowing what a moral component is, let alone having a tool like the Enneagram that can help uncover that moral component. But there are several things you can do that can initiate the process of discovery.

1. *Ask the key personal questions that will uncover the real motivation for why your protagonist is acting the way he or she is acting. Always start with, "What would they have to believe about other people [the worldview] to justify acting badly in the world?" and "What would they have to believe [incorrectly] about themselves to justify that particular worldview [view of people]?"*

Remember, your protagonist has a behavioral blind spot that influences how they act in the world, and how they act in the world is hurting other people. In order to act in the world in such a way, the protagonist must hold a worldview that justifies and allows for this immoral behavior. They would never do what they're doing to other people unless they felt (and thought) it was okay. This is what the first question is supposed to help you figure out, because that worldview is a metaphor for how the protagonist regards other human beings. So, when you ask, "What would they have

to believe about other people (the worldview) to justify acting badly in the world?,” you are really asking what negative judgment, belief, attitude, thought, or feeling (or all four of these things) does the protagonist hold regarding their fellow human beings?

For example, Frank from *The Verdict* (film/book) is a predator. His immoral behavior is that he preys on people’s vulnerabilities to get what he wants. His worldview is that people are objects, targets—nothing more. What would someone like Frank have to believe about other human beings to justify such behavior (worldview)? He would have to believe that people don’t matter and have no value other than what he can manipulate out of them. If you are human, you have little or no human worth.

Knowing how the protagonist is acting immorally and what worldview is justifying that immorality points your nose in a very specific direction, toward understanding how this manifests internally in the character. Meaning, now is the time to ask the next question, “What would someone have to believe about themselves to justify such a worldview and immoral effect?” In Frank’s case, connecting this dot is obvious. Humans have little or no worth; Frank is a human; therefore, he has little or no worth. This is his moral blind spot: “I have no worth or value, I don’t matter.” But he doesn’t know it consciously; it’s subconscious, but it drives every relationship he has with other people. It’s that simple, and that interdependent. All three things—immoral effect, worldview, and blind spot—are organically related to one another in an inescapable chain of cause and effect.

Sometimes just asking these two questions is enough, along with knowing how the character is acting badly, to reveal the moral blind spot. But other times the answer might still be elusive. If that is the case, then the next place to look for a moral hint is the ending of the story.

2. *Look to the final, personal lesson learned or character change at the end of the story* . In a story the protagonist always changes in the end, for good or ill. There is no rule that says your hero or heroine has to end their journey in a better place or be a better person. But how they end can be a revealing source of information if you don’t know how to articulate the moral blind spot. How your protagonist changes, i.e., the lesson they learn about themselves in the end, is the manifestation of the healed moral blind spot. In other words, if they hadn’t healed their blind spot, they would never have made the change. One gave rise to the other.

It is not unusual for writers to have some sense early in their development process how they want their story to end. Consequently, it is not unusual for them to also have a sense of how the protagonist will change. The emotional change will have embedded in it hints to the blind spot. If your character learns in the end that they are basically a good person after all and deserve love, then this gives you a strong clue as to the moral blind spot (“I’m not deserving of love because I’m not good enough”). Or if your protagonist learns that they are stronger than they thought they were, this suggests another clear blind spot (“I’m less-than, inferior, and worthless”). The lesson learned is a direct reference to the blind spot.

Using our example of Frank from *The Verdict*, when he sees the woman lying in her hospital bed in a coma, helpless, he sees that she still has dignity. She still matters to others who love her. He learns that just because you might be in such a sorry state you can still have value and dignity. And if this poor woman can have value, then his sorry self can have value and dignity, so he takes the case and saves the day. This lesson ties directly back to his original moral blind spot (“I have no value, I don’t matter”).

There are times when the two questions and looking to the ending still don’t deliver the clarity you seek. This is when you pull out the heavy guns of the Enneagram-Story Connection.

3. *Look to the building blocks of the moral component contained in the Enneagram.* There are four patterns in the Enneagram that separately and combined can inform you about the moral basis of any character. I covered much of this in [Chapter 11](#) : The Moral Enneagram.

- Enneagram Core Fears and Poisons ([Chapter 4](#))
- Enneagram Desires and Distortions ([Chapter 4](#))
- Enneagram De-Evolution ([Chapter 8](#))
- Enneagram Low Points ([Chapter 15](#))

Let’s look at each of these from the perspective of Frank Galvin in *The Verdict* to see how they might be used to support the creation of a functional moral component (moral blind spot, immoral effect, dynamic moral tension).

Our first assumption needs to be that we’ve come to some understanding as to Frank’s Enneagram style. Even if we’re wrong, put it through the steps and see what comes out the other end. If it doesn’t work, try another Enneagram style. So, for this example we’re going to say that Frank is a Three.

Frank's Core Fear : As a Three Enneagram, Frank's *core fear is being valueless* , and this festers into self-delusion (the delusion of insignificance).

Frank's Core Desire : As a Three Enneagram, Frank's *core desire is to have value* , and this festers into chasing approval.

Frank's De-Evolution : The Enneagram Three de-evolves into the downside of Nine—*no mattering, not caring, no achievement* .

Frank's Low Point : The emotional low point for a Three is being caught in the lethargy of "*I don't matter, nothing matters*" and *all achievement stops* .

Without even asking the two questions about worldview and self-view, we can create a clear narrative of Frank and his emotional-behavioral state: "Frank is a man for whom external approval is critical in order to not feel like he has failed or doesn't have value. If he can't win, then he risks falling into a black hole of cynicism and nihilistic torpor, where he will ultimately resent the very people from whom he once sought approval, and in a state of bitter resentment refuse to achieve anything, especially for himself."

All this is gleaned solely from the different bulleted Enneagram patterns. There is nothing added from the perspective of a writer who needs to embellish or add on traits for dramatic impact. This is all pure Enneagram. In this brief self-statement, we already see clear signs of a compelling moral blind spot. We have a man who has a deep fear of failure and being seen as worthless and valueless, and for whom image and success are paramount (you're only as good as your last court win).

It would not take much for a writer to piece together a moral blind spot for Frank along the lines of: "Frank believes he is ultimately worthless, doesn't matter, and is a failure." He's blind to this, of course, but this is what drives him at the primal level. Once you have this, you have to put that blind spot into action on the page. So, then you figure out what kind of external behavior would be consistent with this motivation. How should Frank interact with other human beings in the pursuit of his goals? Again, it doesn't take much to figure out that having Frank dismiss the human value of others, while preying on what little value they may have, is a logical behavioral strategy for his character.

We have not even asked the two important questions about worldview and self-view. We've just extrapolated and brainstormed possibilities based on the character's core Enneagram style. Now, if you ask the two questions, you will find that they only help to validate the arrived-at conclusions. All this also informs you about what Frank has to learn at the end of the story, i.e., that he does have value, he

does matter, and he can win—not for approval, but to bring justice back into the world.

You could have come to the same conclusions by starting with the two questions, figuring out the change in the ending, and then using the Enneagram patterns to fill in the gaps and validate your ideas along the way. There is no one way to apply these ideas; they mix and match any way that works for you. The point is, if you use these four steps—three not Enneagram-related and the last one all Enneagram-related—the puzzle of the moral component can be solved. Will every protagonist’s moral component fall into place this neatly, with the perfect ending and the perfect immoral effect, etc.? No, they won’t. But that doesn’t matter. The approach is an effective one and will guide you to answers and inspirations that will generate a workable moral component for any protagonist in any story.

As I stated earlier, if you go through all the steps here and come up short, or confused, or nothing seems to work, then move on to another style that feels right and repeat the steps. One of the Enneagram styles will work.



The following worksheets can help you with this step: Moral Component Worksheet, Moral Enneagram Worksheet.

Step 2: Define the Protagonist’s Enneagram Style

Finding the right protagonist for a story is usually where writers begin their development process. In fact, when a writer comes up with a new story idea, it will usually be sparked from one of these two inspirations: a person stands out as being central in the idea, or a specific story conceit stands out as a focus (aliens attack, monster shark, killer tomatoes, a guy marries his sex doll, etc.). Even if it is the

latter and not the former, the next question will almost always be, “Okay, so who is the main character?”

One of the first strategies to use in answering this question is to fall back on the classic three questions:

- Who has the most to lose?
- Who is in the most emotional pain?
- Who changes the most?

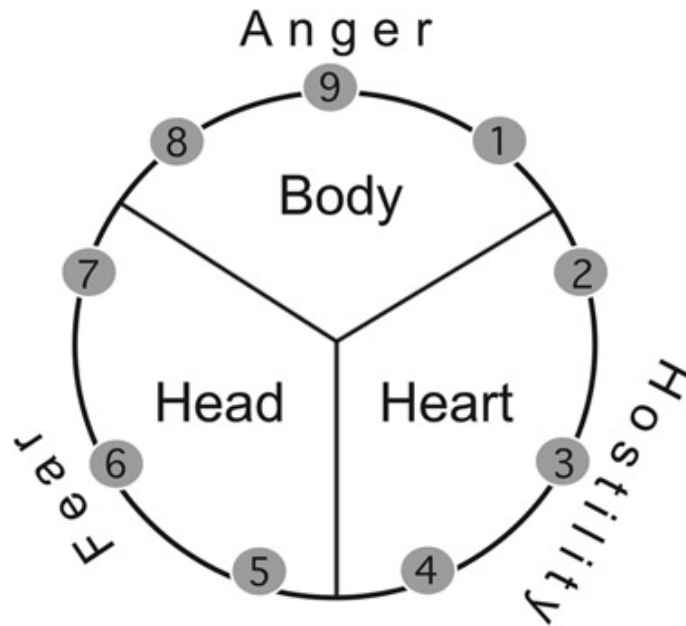
These questions will invariably point your nose in the right direction, if not give you a clear candidate outright. But zeroing in on the right character to test as a potential protagonist is not enough. Once identified, you have to figure out what Enneagram style fits them best.

You could just pick a number, any number, and start analyzing your candidate, kicking the Enneagram tires and checking under the hood for all the various patterns and characteristics, moving through each of the styles one by one until you find a match—but there is a better way: a methodological way that will save time and frustration.

1. Look to the Emotional Centers : Remember the three emotional centers from [Chapter 3 \(Figure 3.1\)](#)? It is provided here again as [Figure 17.1](#) . These are the grouping all Enneagram styles fall into and represent the highest level of organization in the Enneagram. They are also your first clue as to the Enneagram style of your protagonist (and opponent).

The first thing to look at are the high-level, controlling emotions for each center. Consider your protagonist and then ask yourself:

Which of the controlling emotions feel like my character’s root emotion? If your protagonist feels mostly anxiety and fear, then you are in the head triad (5,6,7); if your protagonist mostly has issues with anger, rage, and resentment, then you are in the body triad (8,9,1); if your protagonist feels more shame and hostility, then you are in the feeling triad (2,3,4). Once you have a triad you feel is somewhat accurate (you can always switch), then think about the next question, which further refines the choice of triad.



[Figure 17.1](#) The Three Centers

Is my character really focused on thinking, feeling, or relating? If you have settled on the body triad (8,9,1) then you think about whether or not your protagonist is really grappling with issues of relating to others vs feeling or thinking. If you feel this to be true, then you are probably in the right triad. The same goes for the other two triads. Is your character more concerned with issues of feeling and emotion; if so, then the feeling triad is probably the right place to be. Similarly, the same goes for thinking and that associated triad (5,6,7).

Is my character overusing, blocked, or underusing their triad? Once you feel you have narrowed down the right triad, then you can start working through each of the corresponding styles in that triad to see which one might be more appropriate for your protagonist. For example, if you are feeling pretty solid that the relating triad (body) is the right group, then ask if your protagonist over-relating (8), more blocked in their ability to relate (9), or under-relating (1). This helps you narrow down your selection. It will be surprising how systematic and accurate this can be as you hone your skills and your Enneagram knowledge along the way. This first approach is not a guarantee (there are no guarantees), but when you have no clue where to start, this gives you a reliable approach that can work.

2. Enneagram Character Profiles: Enneagram character profiles are another good source for nailing down your protagonist's style. I talked about these earlier, in [Chapter 5](#) , and each profile gives detailed sketches that can help

you peel away all the layers necessary to see your character most clearly. This step can happen as a standalone technique, or in conjunction with the first and third steps, but of the three this one is probably the most useful in terms of real data that can inform your choices.

3. Protagonist Change Triangle: The protagonist change triangle was discussed in [Chapter 9](#) and provides a nice snapshot into the change process for each Enneagram style. Reviewing each of the change triangles can give you a quick gestalt of your protagonist from the moment of beginning their story to the end when they change. Look at each triangle and let the details work on you, using your data from the Enneagram character profiles to add additional information. But even if you only use the change triangles, they can give you a solid snapshot of change patterns you have available for your character. Review each one, decide which one feels most natural to your protagonist in the context of your story, and then go with that as your protagonist's Enneagram style. Remember, the change triangles are not specific characters; they are blueprints for characters based on general Enneagram styles. Use these blueprints to build your story-specific application.

But what if you're wrong? Well, pick another. There is no way to get this wrong, but the more you systematize your approach, the less haphazard and random your choices will feel in the end. You will find that using these tools will refine your instincts and your sensibility for your characters; rather than making "guess-timates," you will be making solid choices based on your story's needs.



The following worksheets can help you with this step: Protagonist Enneagram Worksheet.

Step 3: Define the Protagonist's Evolution and De-Evolution Styles

(Dependencies: Step 2: Define the Protagonist's Enneagram Style)

In order to do this step, you will have to have figured out your protagonist's Enneagram style. [Chapter 8](#) details the specific paths each Enneagram style follows when they are locked in fear (de-evolution) or feeling safe and secure (evolution). The triad (3,6,9) and hexad (1,4,2,8,5,7) tracks for each point your nose to the behavioral end zones most appropriate for your protagonist's style. This is literally a follow-the-arrows kind of exercise and takes little or no calculation on your part. Find your protagonist on whichever track he or she belongs and then follow the lines.

Do you have to do what the lines tell you? Do you have to have your Eight protagonist de-evolve into a paranoid Five? No and no. You can do whatever you want. But as with all these steps, approaches, and processes, while they are not mandatory, not following them has story consequences. Maybe you can make other choices that will work, and that break all the Enneagram rules in terms of how one style relates to another. If so, congratulations. If not, however, you might want to go back and follow the best practices and see what that gets you.



The following worksheets can help you with this step: Protagonist Enneagram Worksheet, Protagonist Change Worksheet.

Step 4: Identify the Common and Uncommon Pinches, Crunches, Blind Spots, and Distortion Filters

(Dependencies: Step 2: Define the Protagonist's Enneagram Style)

Pinches, crunches, blind spots (not the moral blind spot), and distortion filters are all discussed in [Chapter 6](#) , “Character Communication Styles,” and [Chapter 7](#) , “Character Conflict Styles.” These Enneagram elements all represent behavioral and emotional “hot buttons” that opposition characters can push to make your protagonist’s life miserable. This helps you create scene-specific beats that are Enneagram-based, but that are also character-based in dramatically consistent and personal foibles. In order to do this step, you will have to have figured out your protagonist’s Enneagram style.

As you review the communication and conflict styles, you will become more familiar with the Enneagram-specific (common) pinches, crunches, blind spots, and distortion filters for each style. These, in turn, can act as catalysts for you to find the uncommon pinches, etc. Remember, “uncommon” in this context means character and story-specific behaviors that you invent rather than are endemic to any character you are inventing. But, with that said, any uncommon pinch, etc. you build should be consistent with the character’s Enneagram common pinches.

For example, your protagonist might be an Enneagram Two. Their common pinches would include *being taken for granted* , *feeling unappreciated* , and *not being heard* . You could give them a pinch from some other Enneagram style, but you must always ask yourself, “Does this fit their Enneagram style?” If you can make it work and it fits, then great, you’ll be fine. How do you know that it is “working”? Ask these questions:

- Does this uncommon trait or behavior feel consistent with my character’s Enneagram style?
- Does this uncommon trait or behavior feel right for them as an individual?
- Does this uncommon trait or behavior fit with my character’s general pattern of decline or elevation?

There is clearly a subjective element to accepting or rejecting possible uncommon traits and behaviors. But the Enneagram common pinches, etc. help to give you some solid guidelines to follow.



The following worksheets can help you with this step: Common and Uncommon “Hot Buttons” Worksheet.

Step 5: Define the Opposition

(Dependencies: Step 2: Define the Protagonist’s Enneagram Style)

With this step, you want to approach the challenge of defining the main opponent and also your supporting opposition characters. Let’s look at the latter first and then deal with the main opposition.

Your supporting opposition makes up a large part of any supporting cast in a story. Consequently, it is important that you have some strategy for creating these characters so that they *support* your protagonist and the mainline story as closely as possible. Most writers just wing it (pun intended); sometimes they hit it, and sometimes they miss. In your case, any swing you make will hit the ball if you base your swing on the Enneagram and Enneagram Wings.

I covered Enneagram Wings in detail in [Chapters 4](#) and [13](#) , including giving an example of how to use the wings to develop a supporting character. Familiarize yourself with these wing combinations. The more intimately you understand their broad strokes and nuances, the more accurately you will be able to use them as guides in creating supporting characters.

There are two opponent subtypes, however, you should avoid as much as possible:

- Self-Opponent
- Ex Machina Opponent

Self-Opponent : The protagonist as their own worst enemy. This is something that should be true for any good protagonist, but in some stories the hero or heroine are the alpha and omega, the proverbial snake eating its own tail. The protagonist fights an internal battle against their inner demons, which may spill out into the world and their relationships, but the main emotional struggle is with themselves (e.g., *All Is Lost*).

As with *ex machina* techniques, the self-opponent is frowned upon by modern storytellers. The reasons are numerous, but the two most important are that they tend to be too passive and do not generate compelling conflict with other characters. Stories with these kinds of opponents can become narcissistically focused on the protagonist, or so repetitive with self-rumination and introspection that narrative pace is killed, along with reader interest. It is very hard to write a story longer than a short story (100 words to 7500 words) or novelette (7500 words to 17,500 words) with such a protagonist without risking these consequences.

Even so, the self-opponent story is an old and established literary form in novel writing and can be pulled off successfully if the writer has the skills to do so. From short stories to expansive novels, protagonists have battled their inner-selves with occasional outside skirmishes with other characters that serve to further illuminate their own heart's conflict with itself. It can be done; it has been done (e.g., *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* , by Robert Louis Stevenson). And while I could go on about the whys and how-tos of writing one of these kinds of stories, my focus here is really about the external, human opposition: how to find it, build it, and make it the most human opposition possible.

Ex Machina Opponent : The term *deus ex machina* is a Latin translation of an ancient Greek term for “a god from a machine.” In Greek theater there would often be a crane that dangled a God-figure above the stage, and this figure would strategically intervene in the play (as they do in life), reaching down and plucking the hero from danger, just in the nick of time. Considered bad form in modern storytelling, this technique is nonetheless still popular when it comes to certain kinds of stories. The *ex machina* opponent is the force of opposition that is nature, setting, society, the unknown, God, or some force other than human that has agency (or not) and seems bent on stopping the protagonist from moving forward.

Non-human opponents are not as uncommon as they might seem. In fact, they are very common when you consider many (if not most) genre stories fall into the situation category. Recall that situations are “stories” that lack a strong moral component and are focused not on character change but on solving the mystery/predicament/puzzle (e.g., *Godzilla* , *Towering Inferno* , *Day After Tomorrow*). Non-human opponents that are anthropomorphized humans do not fall into this category, as they are merely people in animal’s bodies. But, when your protagonist is fighting against the killer tornado, or the burning skyscraper, or the runaway train, or the random monster/alien/ghost/robot/whatever, then you are definitely in the ex machina category.

The main tool, however, that you will use to create your main opposition is the Opposition Triangle. When designing your central opponent, the following issues should be kept in mind:

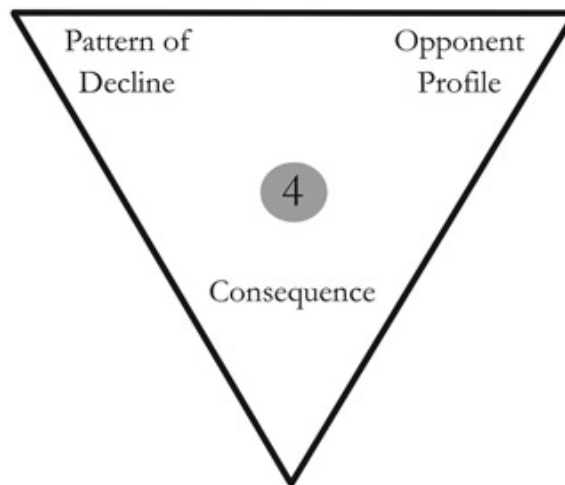
- *The main opponent needs to be a single person* . This opponent helps drive the entire storyline, so you want a character representing this role, not an abstraction like a city, or a force of nature, or addiction, or God (unless he’s personified). As I said in [Chapter 14](#) , the main opponent needs to be personified, especially if your protagonist is up against some large group like a corrupt government or corporation—there needs to be a single person who personifies this threat.
- *Make the main opponent personal* . As much as possible, try to make the main opponent personal to the protagonist. This means having the protagonist and antagonist both know one another in more than a tangential way. Why? Because the more the bad guy/gal knows their hero or heroine, the more they can know the protagonist’s blind spots, pinches, etc. A personal opponent gives the relationship intimacy and heightened dramatic opportunities. If you have a story where there is no such relationship, then you can mitigate this weakness by having the opponent learn about the protagonist’s inner demons over the course of the middle of the story. In this way, by the time they have it out in the final battle, they will feel like old enemies and the opponent can leverage their personal knowledge along the way to push emotional buttons and create more personal havoc for the hero.
- *Base the main opponent in the Enneagram* . This may sound obvious, but most writers just concern themselves with creating a nasty bad guy and leave it at that. But the more your opponents can be derived from the Enneagram tools we have discussed in this book, the more integrated they will be into

the journey of the protagonist. Try not to just wing it with your main opponent; use the opposition triangle tool to build a solid protagonist-antagonist relationship.

This tool is described in detail in [Chapter 14](#) . Take the time to study the principles involved in creating custom triangles for your characters. Remember, the nine opposition triangles that are presented in [Chapter 14](#) ([Figure 14.6](#) is provided here again as [Figure 17.2](#)) do not represent specific characters, but rather are blueprints for you to use in creating your own opposition relationships. I know I've said this repeatedly in several places in this book in relation to several of the tools presented. But the point bears repeating because if you don't understand the blueprint role of the tools, then you run the risk of mindlessly applying them, and the result of that will be cookie-cutter characters who will be flat and predictable.

Focusing on what is unavailable or missing in their lives, they become melodramatic, seeing mainly misery and lacking. They grow competitive and spiteful, or grow moody or hypersensitive while beginning to act exempt from life's rules. Driven by their sense of defectiveness, they can be stricken with hopelessness and sink into morbid self-loathing and suicidal depression. The refusal to change is a rejection of being exceptional, preferring to be the exception

Downside of the Enneagram Two: someone has subsumed their personal needs into the care of others, or hiding a secret agenda of in order to mask manipulations to gain the limelight. Flattery and seduction are primary and anything they give comes with a terrible tag. They package their hostility as love and are noted for stalking their objectified "loved one." Pride definitely goes before their fall



Character Consequences: Hostile, self-absorbed, feeling ordinary.
Action Consequence: Story-dependent action that brings protagonist face-to-face with their moral blind spot

[Figure 17.2](#) Enneagram Opponent Triangle Example—Fours

What follows is an example of how you can take the opposition triangles for any of the Enneagram styles and tweak them to your specific purposes. I'm going to take our "Joe the bank robber" character from [Chapter 10](#) and demonstrate how to use an Enneagram Opposition Triangle for his opposition development.

Enneagram Opponent Triangle Example...



Joe's Profile : Joe is an Enneagram Four. He robs banks because he has a moral blind spot of thinking he's the exception, flawed beyond repair, unredeemable. He justifies this blind spot with the worldview that his thieving is okay because the world owes him. He's entitled. He has a right to take whatever he wants, whenever he wants it, because he's a special kind of guy.

Knowing this about Joe, we can proceed to break down his opposition triangle to see how we can make it personal for his character.

Enneagram Style Pattern of Decline : Focusing on what is unavailable or missing in their lives, they become melodramatic, seeing mainly misery and lacking. They grow competitive and spiteful or grow moody or hypersensitive while beginning to act exempt from life's rules. Driven by their sense of defectiveness, they can be stricken with hopelessness and sink into morbid self-loathing and suicidal depression. The refusal to change is a rejection of being exceptional, preferring to be the exception.

These are the broad strokes of how a Four character can decline across the middle of a story. They don't have to do all of these things, or feel all of these emotions, but

these represent enneagrammatically consistent patterns you can tap into to design Joe's pattern of decline. The key objective when you do this is to keep the underlying essence of the Enneagram style without warping the overall interpretation so that it becomes too broad, or inclusive of other Enneagram styles, and thus watered down. In other words, stay true to type as much as possible.

When you accomplish that, you will come up with something custom and personal to your protagonist, such as the following story pattern of decline.

Story Pattern of Decline : As a Four, Joe complains about what he doesn't have, rather than focusing on what he does have. His complaints have the tinge of a whine, rather than objective truth. He competes with his brother Vinny over every advantage, and his thin skin and hypersensitivity to criticism can turn spiteful and punishing. Whenever he sees an opportunity to take advantage or better his position, he takes it, regardless of consequences to others, even his brother. Volatile moodiness and swings from lethargy to manic aggression color all his relationships, as Joe searches for answers to his inner lacking. Only the thrill of "the job" fills the void, as it showcases his uniqueness and special talents for all to see. But this is always short-lived, and he sinks back into his low moan of longing for things long hoped for.

As you can see from this story pattern of decline, it is not simply a cookie cutter of the Enneagram pattern for the Four. It is personal to Joe; it shows his individual expression of the base emotions and behaviors, and it is a pattern that can consistently play out from scene to scene across many chapters of a novel, or through the middle of a screenplay. This was accomplished by keeping the broad Enneagram pattern in the background and then allowing that to inform creative, personal expression along the way. This pattern is also not cast in stone. You can add to it, subtract from it, change it, and morph it as you need to get it just right.

Enneagram Opponent Profile : Downside of the Enneagram Two: someone who has subsumed their personal needs into taking care of others or hiding a secret agenda of caring in order to mask manipulations to gain the limelight. Flattery and seduction are primary tools, and anything they give comes with a terrible price tag. They package their hostility as love and are noted for stalking their objectified "loved ones." Pride definitely goeth before their fall.

This profile represents some of the main characteristics of a badly de-evolved Enneagram Two, which happens to be the de-evolution point for any Four character (see [Chapter 8](#)).

Story Opponent Profile : Joe’s nemesis, Alice, an ex-gang member, former lover, and a de-evolved Enneagram Two, has made Joe her special little project. Alice is hellbent on winning Joe back, whether he wants her or not. She will prove to him that he needs her, and if he rejects her again, she will make him love her—somehow. Alice uses her intimate knowledge about Joe to manipulate the police, creating close calls where Joe escapes capture because she is playing both sides to get what she wants: Joe. She flatters Joe, as she seduces the police with fake leads, and then squeezes Joe into ever tighter corners where he can’t escape her emotional onslaught: “Love me, or else!” She knows his insecurities, his core fear of being ordinary, his weaknesses, and his strengths, and she plays each of them like a virtuoso. She comes off as loyal and loving, but underneath she wants Joe to beg for her forgiveness and proclaim how he can’t live without her. Alice has the upper hand and she knows it, or so she thinks. Her pride is her blind spot.

This paints the picture of a nasty, de-evolved Two that shows an intimate connection to the protagonist and that retains all the needy, clingy, vindictive, controlling behaviors of any Two acting out at their worst. Any piece of this profile can repeat itself in different scenes and chapters, acting as a behavioral engine to drive the protagonist-antagonist relationship forward, and all based in the core Enneagram characteristics of the Four’s natural point of de-evolution.

Enneagram Consequence : [Character] *Hostile, self-absorbed, feeling ordinary*

These are the standard emotional consequences for any Four character, if they never change.

Story Consequence : [Character] *Joe will end up broken beyond repair, alone and lonely, feeling less than ordinary .*

Within each of these emotional consequences you can see how the Enneagram consequences play out. They are there, just under the surface. The story consequences bring them into sharper character focus with a clear story context.

Story Consequence : [Action] *Alice sets Joe up to take one final fall to prove how she is indispensable to him, as she is the only one who can save him from the trap. Joe falls for it and finds himself cut off from all resources, unable to leverage any advantage, completely dependent on Alice's goodwill. He does now, in fact, need her, and it's the worst possible scenario for him .*

While this is not super-specific with scene details, it does set up story-level action that demonstrates how the hero will end up experiencing the emotional consequences of not facing his blind spot. The action consequences are the plot equivalent of the character consequences. If Joe doesn't start to rise up out of his pattern of decline and move into his pattern of elevation, he will face the character consequences.

This example illustrates how you can adapt the Enneagram-specific opponent triangles to any story context for any protagonist. If you follow this basic approach, you will have a much higher success rate creating opponents that will ring true not just for your story, but also for your protagonist.



The following worksheets can help you with this step: Opponent Triangle Worksheet.

Step 6: Build the Enneagram Elements of the Story Middle

(Dependencies: Step 2: Define the Protagonist's Enneagram Style; Step 3: Define the Evolution and De-Evolution Styles; Step 5: Define the Opposition)

This step is, without doubt, the most integrative and intricate step in the process. It brings together all the Enneagram elements we have covered in [Parts 1](#) and [2](#) , and

it does so in a methodological way that helps you structure the narrative flow of the middle of any story. All of the pieces of the machinery of the middle of your story have been described in [Chapter 12](#) , in some detail. This step is more of a reminder to you of the order in which you can approach the construction of the story middle. I'm not going to repeat the definitions of all the components involved, but I will add some tips and recommendations about how to use them.

All of these components have been used in the earlier steps, so you should have already become familiar with them as you have moved through the process:

- Enneagram Core Fears and Poisons ([Chapter 4](#))
- Enneagram Desires and Distortions ([Chapter 4](#))
- Enneagram Conflict Styles ([Chapter 7](#))
- Enneagram Evolution ([Chapter 8](#))
- Enneagram De-Evolution ([Chapter 8](#))
- Enneagram Low Points ([Chapter 15](#))

Building your middle starts with planning the central beats of the classic story middle:

- Inciting Incident
- First Reversal/Complication
- Midpoint Complication
- Second Reversal/Complication
- Low Point /Visit to Death/All Is Lost Moment/Dark Night of the Soul (nomenclature varies depending on what guru you listen to)
- Final Battle
- Resolution

The underlined list members are the beats you absolutely need to have for any good story (or situation) to work properly. The first and second reversals are nice to have, but not essential. There are a few considerations, however, that you should keep in mind as you figure out this classic structure.

1. The inciting incident should not be any old random thing. If something is inciting the hero or heroine to jump into the adventure, it needs to be something that speaks to their moral blind spot. It needs to be something that is “bright and shiny,” that attracts them like a moth to a flame. The

inciting incident should speak to them at a visceral level, so that it is irresistible. The protagonist is attracted to it because of who they are, not just because it is a dangerous thing that threatens them, or some outof-the-blue threat that anyone would naturally respond to. It can be that, and most writers are fine settling for that, but if you can make the inciting incident personal to the protagonist then you have a stronger emotional reason for why they are jumping into the fire.

A simple example using Joe once again follows.

Inciting Incident #1 : Joe the bank robber is sitting around watching soaps and eating bonbons. Bored, itching for a job, there is a knock on the door. Cousin Vinny tells Joe about a possible job and he needs Joe to drive the getaway car. Joe doesn't have to hear any more—he's in.

This first scenario is clearly connected to Joe's blind spot. He's interested because robbing banks is what he does, it's who he is. This is very simplistic, I understand, but it shows the direct relationship between the setup of the inciting incident and the personal connection the protagonist has to the opportunity. Of course he is attracted to it; he has no choice.

Inciting Incident #2 : Joe the bank robber is walking down the street, and when he walks in front of a bank the doors burst open and a gang rushes out in masks with bags of money. One of them puts a gun to Joe's head and tells him to get into the car and drive or else. Joe has to drive the car or die, so he does as he's told.

In this second scenario, Joe's in the adventure now, but passively, not proactively. There might be more action, and it might be more fun to watch, but why the character is acting and how the adventure kickstarts is not deeply connected to the hero. He's being pulled in against his will, more than with it. Is Joe okay with robbing the bank? Sure, he's no shrinking violet about that, but this isn't his robbery. He didn't choose to do it. He's just a leaf caught on someone else's wind. Not bad or wrong, but not as dramatically strong as the first scenario. This is a very important idea to keep in mind when devising your inciting incident: make it personal, make it emotionally connected.

2. The midpoint complication should complicate two things: community stakes and protagonist stakes. Both of these things should get complicated at the midpoint, not necessarily exactly at the same time, but as closely as possible to keep them feeling like they have been caused by the same story effects.

“Community stakes” refers to the stakes involving everyone, including the protagonist. The community’s safety, security, and well-being is at greater risk because of what happens in the plot at the midpoint. “Protagonist stakes” refers to the personal stakes of the protagonist, meaning that they become in danger of losing, or having put in greater danger, their core relationship in the story. Some personal relationship becomes at jeopardy. This personal stake may not involve or bother anyone else, but it is a big issue for the hero or heroine. As I said, you want these to happen closely together and to have some mutual causality bringing each about. When they both occur, the story has a lot more juice and the dramatic or comedic opportunities for future scene development increases exponentially.

Midpoint Complication Example : Here is a simple example of what I’m talking about: Bill and Mary are secret agents (and lovers) tracking down a terrorist in Lower Manhattan who is threatening to blow up a subway station. At the midpoint, Bill discovers that the terrorist is a guy named Ben, his old CIA partner who went rogue, and that the bomb he has is a dirty bomb, not just a conventional bomb, and will take out all of Lower Manhattan, not just the subway station (community stakes rise—everyone is in greater danger). At the same time, Bill discovers that Ben is also Mary’s brother and if he has to kill his former friend and partner that might put his love affair with Mary in danger (protagonist stakes—nobody else cares about this except Bill and Mary).

In this over-the-top example, you clearly see what the community stakes are and what personal/protagonist stakes are at risk. Both sets of stakes are interrelated and closely connected in story-time. Imagine that the only midpoint complication was the dirty bomb reveal. This is fine and ratchets up the danger, but it is fairly flat all by itself. Add in the personal stakes and the midpoint takes on a whole other dimension of interesting. One is flat; the other is multidimensional. That’s what you want to go for.

3. The low point was well described in [Chapter 12](#) . There are two things to keep in mind when coming up with your protagonist's low point. The first is to remember that the low point is the character side of the doom moment. The doom moment in the story is a two-sided coin. One side is the plot beats that constitute the "all is lost" moment in the story, and the other side of the coin is the protagonist-specific emotional crash that occurs because of the plot side of the coin. In other words, the moment will come when it appears the hero/heroine has lost, the bad guy or gal has won, and all is lost. This drives the protagonist into their Ennea-gram-specific emotional low point. This is the second thing to keep in mind: the emotional low point should be consistent with the Enneagram low points diagram ([Figure 12.6](#)). Whatever low point you create doesn't have to be consistent with this, but if it isn't then you will have to compensate for any emotional inconsistencies that might develop as a result.

Remember, there are no rules, just best practices. If you ignore best practices you will not be arrested by the story police, but there will be story consequences for deviating from best practices; not as punishment, but as byproduct. Consequently, it is recommended you take your scene or scenes that you feel represent your best low point and compare them to the Enneagram low points to assess if they resonate with the Enneagram style norms. They don't have to be perfect, but the more your scenes feel in sync with the low points, the more the low point for your protagonist will ring true to the reader.

4. The final battle is usually seen as pure plot and action. But there is an important character element to the final battle that is worth mentioning. The battle is ultimately about who will win or lose the goal; the protagonist wants something (tangible), and the main opponent wants to stop them from getting it or take it for themselves. This is what most writers settle for, and this is perfectly fine, but similarly to the midpoint complication, where part is plot and the other part is character-based, the best final battles have two parts.

The action-plot part is clear enough: one person wins the brass ring, the other loses. But the character part is more complicated. From the moment the protagonist experiences their low point/doom moment, they are slowly (or not so slowly) on the rise back up from their pattern of decline. They are becoming more self-aware, more

authentic, more themselves, and while they have not changed completely, they have had moments or incremental shifts to give them confidence that change is possible. It is not until they come face-to-face with the main opponent over the final win-lose moment that the protagonist faces their moral blind spot, sees it for all its ugliness, and then rejects it and realizes how they have to change. This is the moment of truth, and they either grow or they retreat in fear back into their blind spot, only deeper into darkness (no rule says you have to have a happy ending). This is the real final battle: the emotional final battle. It settles the question: who will the protagonist choose to be?

Final Battle Example : Let's take Joe as our example again. Joe has been systematically manipulated by his nemesis, Alice, and he has been slowly rising from the ashes of his all-is-lost moment. When he finally meets her to fight over who will take the money from the robbery, her or him, he also must finally look at his entitlement and his delusions about being special and outside normal rules of living life. Alice pushes these buttons, hoping to force Joe back into his Enneagram Four box, but as they both get into the helicopter that will carry them away to safety, with all the money, Joe realizes what she is doing. He sees he's just a guy like everyone else, flawed and ordinary in his way, but also unique. Her manipulations fail and Joe rejects her ploys. She sees she has lost the battle and pulls a gun. What happens next? The resolution!

5. The resolution is the change in action. The protagonist wins the battle (or not), but this is not the end of the story. The real end is the resolution, which is the moral blind spot healed in a visual way through character action. The protagonist changes and wins the contest with the opponent, but the change that makes this happen has to make itself visible in behavior. The protagonist can't say, "I'm a new man," and be done. No, they have to show how they are new. This resolves the character's journey, not just winning the final battle.

Resolution Example : In our scenario with Joe and Alice, he has won the battle over what kind of man he will become. She knows it, as she holds the gun on him. Joe is not sure if she will kill him or not, but that she hasn't yet says she's just bluffing. It is here Joe demonstrates his change. No longer entitled, no longer driven by a need to be the exception, he decides to be exceptional

and the opposite of self-absorbed. He hits the latch to open the helicopter side-door and all the money flies out into the air, raining down on the poorest neighborhood in the city. Alice has lost everything and lowers the gun, and a lot of poor people will pay their rent this month because of Joe.

This is how you resolve your protagonist's story, by not just giving them a plot-based win. This is not easy to do, and many writers settle for a clear battle over tangible stake. Not bad or wrong, but clearly not as emotionally satisfying for readers.

Once you have worked through the classic story middle, and all its pieces, then you can start thinking about how to keep that middle moving forward—how to create narrative drive and a sense of momentum. This is the job of the narrative engine middle. Like the classic story middle, the narrative engine middle has seven components:

- Immoral Effect
- Problem/Consequence
- Proactive Choice
- Proactive Effect
- Offer to Change
- Refusal to Change
- Doom Moment

All seven of the narrative engine middle components are underlined because they are all essential to create narrative drive and forward story motion. Each of these components is detailed in [Chapter 12](#), so go back and review them if you don't understand their function in the middle of your story, particularly the role of the first four elements, since they are part of the active protagonist loop described in [Chapter 10](#). The first four elements are critical for an active protagonist vs a passive one.

1. The offer to change can be taken a bit too literally, and thus can become confusing. The "offer" is not a literal one; it is implied. The chances of you having other characters asking your protagonist if he or she is ready to change is not likely. What is likely, however, is the story giving the protagonist multiple opportunities to change, but they refuse to do so. It is this implied offer, presented by direct scene action you create, that helps you

tighten the emotional squeeze on your protagonist and increase stakes as you go.

Offer Example : Using Joe again, we see him continually taking advantage of other people's money, and each time he does it, more laws get broken, more people get hurt, and the bounty on his (and the gang's) head rises. With each incident Joe can choose to stop, but he doesn't—he doesn't see any reason to, yet. The story offers him changes, but he walks on by. How many chances should Joe get? That's up to you, but minimally you should try for three scenes (screenplay), or three chapters (novel) where the implied offer is made.

2. The refusal to change is just that—the protagonist walking away from the chance—but not because they clearly understand the offer being made. All that is clear to them is that they are in the midst of their pattern of decline. They don't see the opportunity; they just see the complication. It is very important you don't write your protagonist from a place where they consciously know what is being offered; it will not ring true, and it will probably come off very forced and unconvincing.
3. The doom moment has two layers, as stated earlier. Just remember you are writing the best doom moment when you have the character low point and the action beat happening in sync, similar to the midpoint complication. They don't have to be perfectly timed in the same scene, but they do have a close relationship within story-time, closer than the two pieces that make up the midpoint.

With both structures under control (classic and narrative), you can turn to the pattern of decline. Also detailed in [Chapter 12](#), the thing to understand is that this is the first story middle structure that is entirely Enneagram dependent. Unlike the pattern of elevation, the pattern of decline does not have discrete pieces; it is more a loose amalgam of Enneagram style traits and characteristics related to your protagonist's de-evolution point. By the time you come to this in your development process, if you are following these seven steps as presented, you will have already figured out most of the pattern of decline as part of your design of the opposition triangle. If that's the case, then now is the time to revisit the pattern of decline portion of that triangle and assess whether or not it still applies. If it does, great. If it doesn't, keep working on it until it does.

When you are happy with your pattern of decline, you can turn your attention to the pattern of elevation, which has seven components:

- Doom Moment
- First Awakening
- First Step Toward Change
- Second Awakening
- Reconnects in a New Way
- Final Awakening
- Moment of Truth

Also detailed in [Chapter 12](#) , this pattern is often the most overlooked pattern in any story. Either the writer truncates it and jumps from the doom moment to the moment of truth with nothing in between, or it is ignored completely.

As described in [Chapter 12](#) , each of the components of this pattern have a function and purpose. You do not have to do all seven of them, but the underlined ones are essential for any good story.

1. The doom moment we covered completely in [Chapter 12](#) and in earlier sections of this part, so I won't belabor this item.
2. Reconnecting back to the story is a very important step for the protagonist trying to pull themselves back up out of the doom moment and the low point. "Coming back" means something; they are coming back to something. That something is human connection. The protagonist can't do things alone; they need the team, the ex-lover, the ex-buddy, whoever, to help them win the day. There are stories where the protagonist is indeed the lone hero who kills all the monsters or aliens or robots or uber-villains, but these are usually situations, not stories. In stories there will be other characters, people with whom your protagonist needs to reconnect with after losing their connection at the low point. This act of reconnecting, for the purpose of getting help to beat the bad guy/gal, is one of the first clues to the reader that the hero or heroine is ready to start changing. They have grown a little, not changed completely, but at least they are willing to re-engage. This is why the reconnection beat in the pattern of elevation is so important in any story.
3. The final awakening can also just be "the" awakening, if you only have one of them. This awakening harkens back to the moral blind spot. This is when the protagonist sees it clearly for the first time. They still don't heal it, but at least they "get it" and the reader knows that healing is on the table, whereas earlier it was not. Take this opportunity to look closely at what the

protagonist is seeing about themselves and make sure it refers back to a consistent and relevant moral blind spot. This is one of the places you can use the actual story to validate earlier choices and development decisions.

4. The truth moment can be tricky. This is the moment where the protagonist sees the truth: change or lose/die, and the choice presented by this truth is to heal the blind spot or not. This is where all the work you've done pays off in action on the page with the protagonist deciding they are different, and they can step up and change.

Does this moment happen before the final battle? Should it happen during the final battle? How about after the final battle? The answer is: you get to choose. Where this moment happens is story dependent, and you might have to play around with timing to see what works best. The critical piece is that you have the moment. If it's missing, you rob your protagonist a deeply personal dramatic moment, and you rob the reader the opportunity to see the protagonist complete their emotional journey. You might still pull off a good ending without a truth moment; it's not impossible, but shoot for it anyway. The story will be stronger in the end for it.



TIP

The following worksheets can help you with this step: Classic Story Middle Worksheet, Narrative Engine Middle Worksheet.

Step 7: Create the Premise Line

This step of the process is the only step that is not Enneagram dependent, but it is an essential step because the whole point of going through steps 1 through 6 is to put yourself in a position where you can develop a story that will work. Once you have all the building blocks from the previous steps, now is the time to pull them all

together into a narrative premise that can deliver the promise of the story you want to tell.

Premise development is a whole separate process, one that I detailed in my previous book, *Anatomy of a Premise Line: How to Master Premise and Story Development for Writing Success* . It is an essential step in any story's development process and should be undertaken *before* any pages of text (screenplay or novel) get written. Another one of my mantras: develop first, write second.

The premise process is something you can do without any Enneagram knowledge or experience, and it is designed to help you deal with many of the same story structure issues we have covered in this book, but in a slightly different way. But if you have undertaken the previous six steps of the Rapid Story Development Process, then you are actually in a very good position to tackle a premise line and begin constructing your narrative.

The seven steps of the premise development process are as follows:

- Step 1: Determine If You Have a Story or a Situation
- Step 2: Map the Invisible Structure to the Anatomy of a Premise Line Template
- Step 3: Develop the First Pass of The Premise Line
- Step 4: Determine If the Premise Is Soft or High Concept
- Step 5: Develop the Logline
- Step 6: Finalize the Premise Line
- Step 7: Premise and Idea Testing

I will not cover all of these steps here; for that you can refer to *Anatomy of a Premise Line* . The two steps, however, that I will cover are truncated versions of the underlined steps: step 2 and step 3. Many writers may feel that they are ready to start writing their magnum opus after they have gone through the first six steps and have fleshed out all the gory details of structure and the Enneagram. I would suggest that they should reconsider. They are certainly ahead of the curve, but they are not home.

As I will show in the last section of [Part 3](#) , there is more to the path-to-pages still to come before most writers will be secure and safe to start manuscript pages. So, when you feel you have sufficiently executed the first six steps, take your first step toward a real narrative with this last step.

The premise line is a tool to help you begin to bridge the gap between story development and physical pages. In that sense it is very mechanical, but not so

mechanical that is ties your hands and feet creatively. Rather, the opposite is true; it opens up story possibilities and reveals new resources as you create it.

The idea is to get your basic story idea condensed down to one or two sentences, where the entire structure of your story (beginning, middle, end) is present in the premise line, and where you are able to tell your story in its most essential form without exposition, author notes, and backstory backfill. Know this, however: your first passes on this will be very long, perhaps a page of text, because it is very hard for writers to cut to the chase and just tell the story, especially when they don't fully know the story. So, don't judge the process, or yourself, if your first however-many passes are long and filled with clunky exposition. It happens to everyone (including me). Keep refining, keep deleting the fluff, kill your darlings, and you will get there. It is not unusual for this step alone to take one or two months (yes, you read that right). It gets easier and less time consuming the more you do it and the more skilled you become in the execution, but know this is not a quick step, and you don't want it to be.

If that puts you off, then you have to weigh rushing it against the reality that you will start pages and end up doing this same basic development work *after* you have two hundred pages of manuscript that aren't working. Then you will have to go back to the drawing board on your premise idea, because that's where every story goes wrong, if it is going to go wrong, but you will have the added challenge of having two hundred pages to wade through and decide what to keep and what to toss. One way or the other, you will have to do the development work, so do it up front and save yourself a lot of writing and rewriting time.

Every premise line has the same basic anatomy, consisting of four essential clauses. Why clauses? Because clauses make up sentences, and the goal is to get a single sentence as your premise line. So, we begin with the clauses that will make up this sentence (as I said, chances are you won't have one sentence, but the principle still works).

Anatomy of a Premise Line



KEY CONCEPT

Clause #1 (Protagonist Clause) : An event sparks a character to action, where...

Clause #2 (Team Goal Clause) : That character joins with one or more other characters acting with deliberate purpose toward some end...

Clause #3 (Opposition Clause) : When that purpose is opposed by a force of resistance bent on stopping/frustrating/opposing them...

Clause #4 (Dénouement Clause) : Leading to some conclusion and resolution.

As with any formula, this can vary and change to some degree to accommodate personal style and temperament, but the essential clauses *must* always be present. Let's look at what each clause consists of and what function it plays.

Protagonist Clause : This first clause sets up the protagonist and the inciting incident. That's all it does. You don't need any more information in it than that.

Team/Goal Clause : The second clause establishes the central goal or desire of the protagonist and gives some idea who will be going through the middle of the story with them as they all move toward achieving that goal. The goal should be tangible (get the girl, get the money), not abstract (find peace, be one with God, be happy). The "team" could be one person or many. The essential idea is that this clause gives some picture of the core relationship(s) that will be driving the middle of the story. If it's a love story, then the other lover will be the primary team member. If it's a sports story, then there will literally be a team of people helping to win the big game. You don't have to establish any other information other than the goal and the teaming relationship(s) that will be operating across the middle of the story.

Opposition Clause : This third clause establishes the main opponent and gives some broad strokes as to the adventure that will be unfolding. You have a main character, an inciting incident, a clear goal, and some core relationship driving the middle. Now you introduce the opposing force(s). Who is trying to stop the protagonist and why? We covered all this in [Chapter 14](#) , so these concepts should not be new. This third clause is where you have to start telling the bulk of the story. Give some sense of the big story milestones, what big reveals happen, what complications are revealed, and the clause should end with a midpoint complication. The ending complication may not always be clear, but as you work the tool over many iterations the clarity will come. Already you can see that the entire structure of your story is starting to take shape, and many of those structural elements you have probably already figured out due to your earlier work on steps 1 through 6.

Dénouement Clause : This fourth clause includes the doom moment and wraps up the remainder of the adventure, telling us how the protagonist gets to the final battle, and then resolves the story with their emotional change. This is a complex clause, much like the third clause. It begins with the doom moment and ends with the resolution; both of these you might know very well by this point. Between these two points you reveal big story beats and reveals that might be lurking in the structure. The key is to tell how it ends. What is the actual ending? Don't finish with, "And then a really cool thing happens at the end." No, tell us what happens. Don't be coy.

This is the basic machinery of the premise line tool. It reveals the entire structure of your story in just a few short sentences, and when it is working, that's how you know your story will work on the page. It is your canary in the coal mine and, along with the previous steps, will assure you that you are ready to move forward with deeper development.

In the clause descriptions, I made reference to specific story beats that "should" be present. There are no "shoulds." Try to get them in, but if you can't then get as close to them as possible. The goal is to come up with a premise line that flows; tells the story; gives a clear picture of the structure of the story; and delivers a solid sense of the beginning, middle, and end. If you can work in all the other details—great,

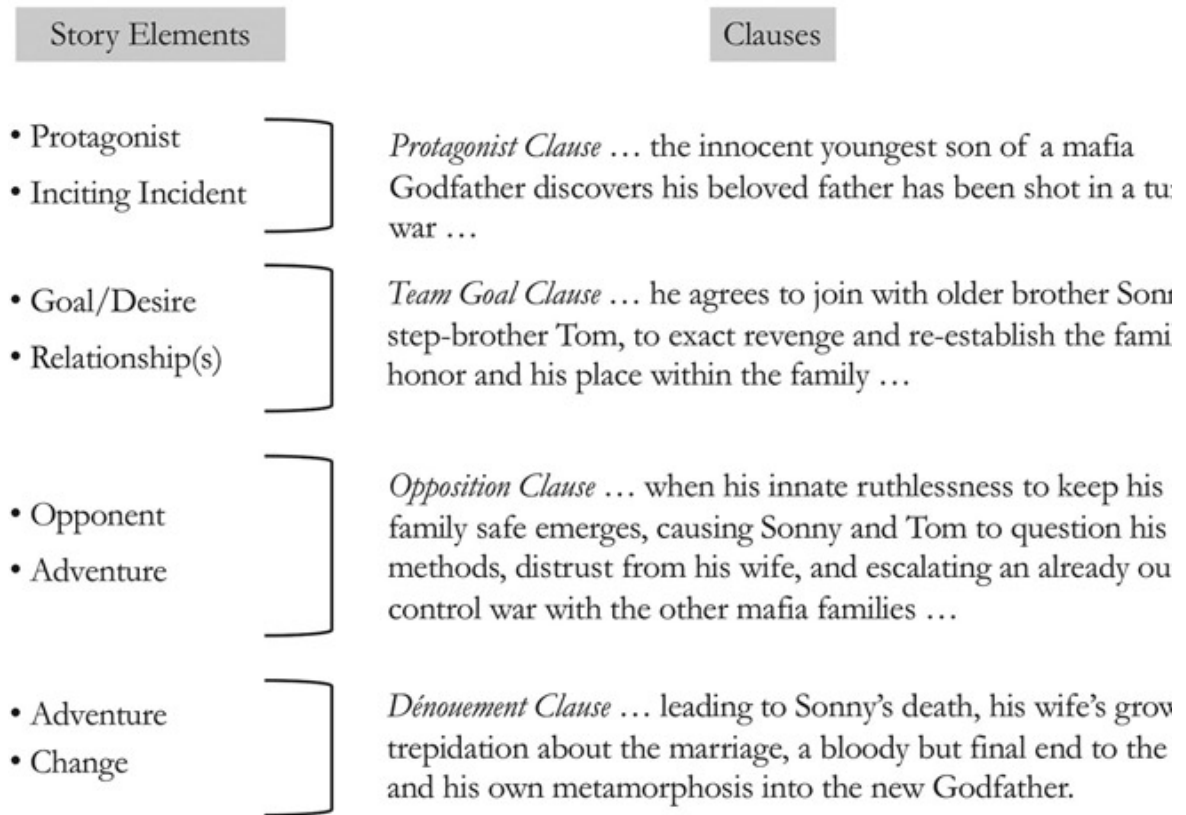
you're all the better off for it. But don't dismiss your efforts if you don't hit each detail with clarity. This takes time, focus, and a lot of magic happening between the gears of the machine.

Consider the following two examples from film and literature. They are good examples of how condensed you can get the essence of the story's structure and still convey the beginning, middle, and end. The midpoints, doom moments, battles, etc. are implied but not specific, which helps you keep things to the point but not so vague as to use filler language to imply action.



The Godfather

Anatomy of a Premise Line: The Godfather

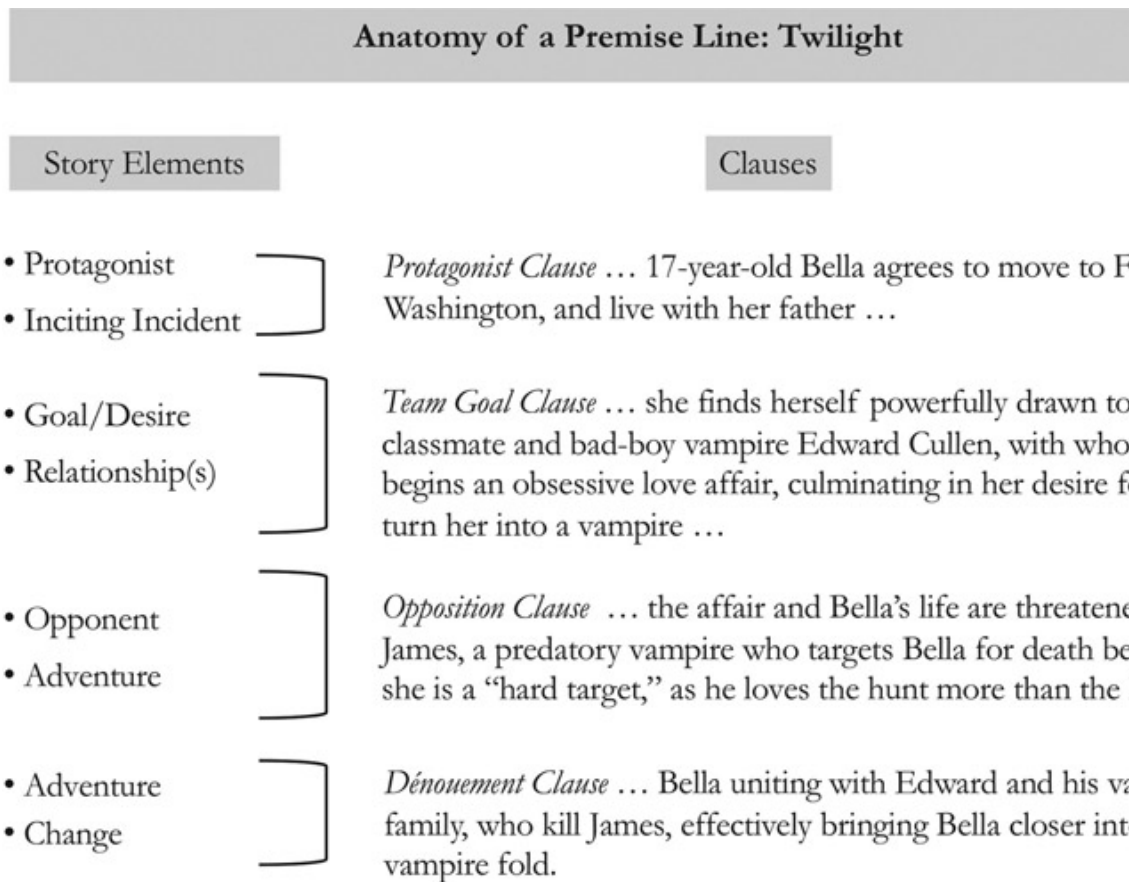


[Figure 17.3](#) *The Godfather* (1972) Novel by Mario Puzo, Screenplay by Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola

Final Premise Line : The “innocent” youngest son of a powerful mafia Godfather discovers his beloved father has been shot as part of a turf war and agrees to join with older brother Sonny and step-brother Tom to exact revenge to re-establish the family’s honor and reclaim his own place within the family; when his ruthless need to keep his family safe emerges, causing Sonny and Tom to question his methods, distrust from his wife, and escalation of an already out-of-control war with the other mafia families; leading to Sonny’s death, his wife’s increased fear about what kind of man she’s married, a bloody and final end to the war, and his own dark metamorphosis into the new Godfather.



Twilight



[Figure 17.4](#) *Twilight* (2008) Novel by Stephenie Meyer, Screenplay by Melissa Rosenberg

Final Premise Line : When 17-year-old Bella agrees to move to Forks, Washington, and live with her estranged dad, she finds herself powerfully drawn to classmate and bad-boy vampire Edward Cullen, with whom she begins an obsessive love affair, culminating in her desire to be turned into a vampire so that they can be together forever; until the affair, and Bella's life, are threatened by James, a predatory

vampire who targets Bella for death because she is a “hard target,” and he loves the hunt more than the kill. This leads Bella to unite with Edward and his vampire family, who kill James, effectively bringing Bella closer into the vampire fold.

The premise line is one of your first lines of defense against rambling and wasteful writing. Master this tool and you will have a huge leg up on the development process, and when you combine it with the steps of Rapid Story Development, you will have an unbeatable methodology for working your stories for maximum effect.



The following worksheets can help you with this step: Premise Line Worksheet.

A Case Study

Now you have all the seven steps of the Rapid Story Development Process. What follows is a sample test case that demonstrates how each of the seven steps you’ve just reviewed play out in an actual story.

There are many stories I could have used as our test case. I decided to use this story because it so perfectly illustrates 99 percent of what I’m teaching in this book. *Lilies of the Field* was written in the early 1960s, and the movie was made by United Artists in 1963. At this time, the author didn’t know the Enneagram from a steak sandwich (nor did most human beings), but he hit all the right notes regardless.

His uncanny ability to hone in on the Enneagram essentials, at a time the Enneagram was barely a glint in the eye of the Enneagram world, only speaks to the central tenet I posed early in this book, namely: we are not the Ennea-gram, but the Enneagram is us. The author had the emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) necessary to recognize the patterns playing themselves out inside his characters. Consequently, he knew how to align them to one another for maximum emotional effect; how to oppose them for maximum conflict; and how to lift them to dramatically elevated places, consistent with their characters, after pages and pages of conflict and emotional turmoil.

Lilies of the Field is a true test case; one that deserves to be lauded for its authenticity, emotional heart, and enneagrammatic structural integrity.



CASE STUDY

Case Study: Lilies of the Field (United Artists, 1963)

Step 1: Build the Enneagram Foundation of the Moral Component

Moral Blind Spot : He doesn't belong. Homer has an unconscious belief that he can never belong—anywhere.

Immoral Effect(s) : Style Seven behaviors: hard to pin down, disruptors of order, righteously judgmental.

Uncommon Effects (Homer specific) : Homer comes off as hurried, disconnected, focused on himself and not others, unpredictable (they don't know if he'll just disappear one night), not fully committed to a task.

Dynamic Moral Tension : Risk belonging or run the other way—again. The tension is constantly between go or stay.

Enneagram Poison : Enneagram Seven excess/gluttony—in Homer’s case, this takes the form of his unwillingness to settle down and make his mark in the world.

Enneagram Core Fear : Homer’s fear of that he’s going to miss out on the big dream “out there” waiting for him.

Moral Component Stated : Homer’s moral flaw is that he is running, running, running, but has no idea toward what; consequently, he has no sense of belonging or place in the world. He is blind to the fact that he is even running away; he thinks he’s going to something.

Enneagram Core Desire : To be happy.

Enneagram Desire Distortion : Frenetic escapism.

Step 2: Define the Protagonist’s Enneagram Style

Homer’s Style : Worst form of the Enneagram Seven (won’t be pinned down, hates structure, bored with routine, avoid the pain).

Step 3: Define the Evolution and De-Evolution Styles

Evolution Enneagram Drive : Enneagram Five. Homer evolves to seeing that he needs to stop running, think about the real context of things, and appreciate the satisfaction of accomplishment.

De-Evolution : Enneagram One. Homer’s worst self-expression is the rule-bound, judgmental, inflexible, and change-phobic Enneagram One.

Healing the Moral Blind Spot : Homer realizes he’s manifested his dream of building something of his own and makes his mark in the world without sacrificing his freedom.

Step 4: Identify the Common and Uncommon Pinches, Blind Spots, etc.

What are the common pinches and blind spots for the protagonist; and what are the uncommon pinches and blind spots?

Common : Tendency to think they've mastered information when they haven't, tend not to see their own behavior might undermine being taken seriously, don't see how their scattered thinking and actions might be distracting to others. Homer is not so much distracted as he is conflicted about staying or going. His main common blind spot is that he is more future-oriented than in the moment, always yearning for the greener grass over the next hill.

Uncommon : Arrogant about being his own man, afraid of being controlled, wants to be taken seriously, and wants to be appreciated for his work.

Main Pinches of Protagonist (Homer's buttons) :

- Boring routine
- Feeling dismissed, not taken seriously
- Undeserved criticism

Protagonist's Blind Spots Preyed On by Opponent :

- Homer's fear of being controlled
- Homer's arrogance that he's his own man; flattery
- Homer's need to be taken seriously and appreciated

Step 5: Define the Opposition

Main Opponent : Mother Maria; Enneagram One with a Nine wing.

Enneagram Relationship : Protagonist Enneagram de-evolution point.

Final Conflict Opponent : Sitting around the dinner table, Homer is entertaining the sisters and he begins a sly game trying to get Mother Maria to say thank you. They pleasantly spar, but in the end, he tricks her into saying it.

Step 6: Build the Enneagram Elements of the Story Middle

Classic Story Middle (Non-Enneagram Dependent) :

- Inciting Incident : Homer is offered a job by Mother Maria, which he refuses, until he realizes he has no money and he changes his mind.
- First Reversal/Complication : Homer realizes that Mother Maria wants him to build the nuns a new chapel.
- Midpoint Complication : Homer is manipulated by Mother Maria to accept the job as contractor to build the chapel. The *community stakes* are that now the whole community might have a local church, and the *protagonist stakes* are that Homer is no longer a guy just passing through; he and Mother Maria are now partners in a literal sense.
- Second Reversal/Complication : After three weeks away, Homer appears just in the nick of time, as his absence has seen the sisters decline and the town grow concerned about the future. Why he came back is not made clear, but it re-complicates his life (not the strongest of complications possible).
- Low Point (Character Beat) : The townspeople come and force Homer to let them help build the chapel. This drives him into emotional crisis as this is his project; he's building something of his own and he wants to do it alone.
- Final Battle : Planning on leaving, Homer sits with the sisters and in a bit of wordplay tricks Mother Maria into finally saying thank you to him. She knows she's been tricked, and it's okay with her.
- Resolution : His final act is to sing the nuns into song fest, "Amen," as he quietly slips away and out of their lives.

Narrative Story Middle : The first four elements of the narrative middle (immoral effect, problem/consequence, proactive choice, and proactive effect) are all part of the active protagonist loop and the offer/refusal loop, but they are too numerous to list individually. All four give rise to

many story moments that affect the middle of the story in that they build each of the large and small story beats that drive the narrative forward. All the complications, all the reveals, all the conflict and comedic moments can be labeled with one of these four elements. So, they are present throughout the middle of this story.

The last three pieces of the narrative middle do have story-specific scenes and moments that can be clearly identified.

- Offer to Change : Homer is constantly looking for the opportunity to leave, but he wants his money, and then he wants Mother Maria to say thank you (which she never does), and then he has to build the chapel.
- Refusal to Change : Homer says no to change because his pride and ambition to build “his” chapel stop him from seeing he is really a part of a community and that he belongs in the fullest meaning of that word.
- Doom Moment (Plot Beat) : With Homer no longer directing the construction, the project is in jeopardy. The whole thing might fail unless the workers get better direction and management. Mother Maria tries, but she can’t because of language problems. Homer watches all this from a safe distance, petulantly waiting confirmation from someone that they need him.

Enneagram Style Pattern of Decline : Enneagram Sevens are prone to escapism; they run as fast as they can to avoid pain in themselves and others. Rules are handcuffs; norms are limitations. The grass is always greener on the “other side” of everything. Easy to become addicted, fast-thinking, nimble with possibilities, they can appear dilettantish, impulsive, undisciplined, and glib. Appetites can’t be permanently satisfied, so they plunge headlong into hedonism, seeking more to consume. The refusal the change is the refusal to face their pain and think more deeply.

Homer Pattern of Decline (Offer/Refusal Loop) : Homer is constantly offered the chance to run away or stay and finish what he’s agreed to accomplish. The goal post keeps getting moved by Mother Maria, but the offer keeps coming up for him. As she keeps digging her hooks deeper into him, Homer does run away for a little while, but he comes back, because he wants to build “his” chapel, not their chapel. His

appetite, i.e., his need to be the sole architect, cannot be satisfied and he becomes obsessed with building.

- **Pattern of Elevation:**

Low Point : The townspeople force Homer to let them help build the chapel and they take over. He is squeezed out.

First Awakening : Homer sees the crisis Mother Maria is facing with workers who can't understand her. He knows he needs to step in, but he waits.

First Step Toward Change : Juan tries to help Mother Maria with the workers, but even he can't bridge the language gap. He sees Homer watching them and approaches Homer and cajoles him into stepping up to help again.

Second Awakening : N/A (there is none)

Reconnects in a New Way : Homer listens to Juan and knows he has to help again, but now it's not just for him; he's redoing a community.

Final Awakening : Homer places the final cross on top of the chapel and knows he's done what he set out to do. He signed his name in the cement and finally makes his mark in the world. He belongs somewhere.

Moment of Truth : At the very end, Homer knows he has to go. He sits with the sisters, knowing his decision to leave but knowing they don't know his intention. This is not a classic moment of truth about the blind spot—Homer has already healed that—but it is a moment of truth between him and the sisters in terms of their relationship.

- Enneagram Style Low Point : Controls obsessive/excessive behavior by becoming perfect and constrained, becoming righteous and blaming.
- Protagonist Low Point : Town comes to help, robs him of his growing sense of accomplishment, and this sends him into an emotional depression.
- Doom Moment : With Homer no longer directing the construction, the project is in jeopardy. The whole thing might fail unless the workers get better direction and management. Mother Maria tries, but she can't

because of language problems. Homer watches all this from a safe distance, petulantly waiting confirmation from someone that they need him.

Step 7: Develop the Premise Line

Write the “Protagonist” clause: When nomad, free-spirit Homer Smith’s car overheats and runs out of gas in the middle of the New Mexico desert...

Write the “Team Goal” clause: He is recruited by a small group of nuns to build them a chapel...

Write the “Opposition” clause: ... where stoic and domineering Mother Maria manipulates him and uses his good nature against him to keep him working without pay, without thanks, and seemingly with no end in sight, forcing Homer to begin his own stealth campaign to get money and thanks from the intransigent Mother Maria, including finding outside work with local construction gangs, which to Mother Maria’s consternation makes her crank up the righteous guilt as she invokes God as the reason for his presence, and his responsibility to deliver a chapel as promised...

Write the “Dénouement” clause: ... until Homer begins to covet the job of being his own boss, building this project on his terms and feeling resentful and rejected when his greediness begins to undermine the project, forcing Mother Maria and the locals to step in to finish the job, which Homer at first sees as pushing him aside and threatening all the work he has done on his own, but later realizes that he is in fact finally building something of his own and can make his mark in the world without losing his sense of freedom with help and support of those around him, and even manages to trick the crusty Mother Maria into thanking him for his efforts and leaves the community better off than he found it, as he departs the nuns and continues on his original journey, a changed man.

Final Premise Line: (Write as one or two short sentences): When nomad, free-spirit Homer Smith’s car overheats and runs out of gas in the middle of the New Mexico desert, he is recruited by a small group of

nuns to build them a chapel, where stoic and domineering Mother Maria manipulates him and uses his good nature against him to keep him working without pay, without thanks, and seemingly with no end in sight; forcing Homer to begin his own stealth campaign to get money and thanks from the intransigent Mother Maria, including finding outside work with local construction gangs, which to Mother Maria's consternation makes her crank up the righteous guilt as she invokes God as the reason for his presence, and his responsibility to deliver a chapel as promised. Until Homer begins to covet the job of being his own boss, building the project on his terms, and feeling resentful and rejected when his greediness begins to undermine the project, forcing Mother Maria and the locals to step in to finish the job, which Homer at first sees as pushing him aside and threatening all the work he has done on his own, but later realizes that he is in fact finally building something of his own and can make his mark in the world without losing his sense of freedom with help and support of those around him, and even manages to trick the crusty Mother Maria into thanking him for his efforts and leaves the community better off than he found it, as he departs the nuns and continues on his original journey, a changed man.

Conclusion

Even after consuming an entire book of details, graphics, bullet lists, and systematics, this final chapter can still feel like putting your mouth to a firehose. That's okay, and to be expected. Take it all in pieces, large or small, as you can. There is not right way to do this, but the doing is essential.

This chapter encapsulates all that you have learned, gives some formal guidelines for practical application, and, most importantly, attempts to integrate the didactics with the intuitive. The power of what you are learning in these pages is not the acquisition of some storytelling secret-sauce, or a box of magic bullets. No, the power lies in the space between logic and reason, and imagination and talent. In this "between" space, within this liminal place, your creative process can inform process procedures, and your gut intuition can guide your story perception.

Every writer will enter into this liminal space in their personal way. Some will start with logic and reason, falling back on the tangible, rules, mechanics, and the safety of definition, ultimately finding the creative freedom and naturalness of talent and craft. Others will throw caution to the wind, leaping headfirst into the void doing what feels right, only then to find security in the river banks of the process-steps as they direct the creative flow and spontaneity to clear milestones and story markers. One is not better than the other, but they are both necessary. As a friend of mine is fond of saying, “Any strength overused becomes a weakness.” The same can be said for any process that relies too heavily on schematics vs freeform creativity. Find your doorway in, enter the liminal creative process, and be held up and guided by best practices that have evolved over hundreds of years—or thousands in the case of the Enneagram—assuring (not guaranteeing) arrival to your ultimate destination: a work of professional merit, and a work of art.

Superman had his Fortress of Solitude. Batman had his Bat Cave. Dr. Strange had his Sanctum Sanctorum. Let these pages be your super hideaway where you can renew and regenerate the only superpower you are ever likely to develop—that of being a master storyteller. Because literally nothing can stop you now.

THE END

About the Author

Jeff Lyons is a published fiction/nonfiction author, screenwriter, and story development consultant in the film, television, and publishing industries. He has worked with major studios like NBCU and Columbia Pictures, and with leading independent producers and film and television production companies. He is an instructor through Stanford University's Online Certificate Program in Novel Writing and guest lectures through the UCLA Extension Writers Program. Jeff is a regular contributor and advisor to leading entertainment industry screenwriting and producing fellowship programs, such as the Producers Guild of America's Power of Diversity Master Producers Workshop and the Film Independent Screenwriting Lab, and is a regular workshop presenter at leading writing industry conferences such as the Romance Writers of America, StoryExpo, Great American Pitchfest, and many others. His clients have won major literary prizes like the William Faulkner Gold Medal and include *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling authors. Jeff has written on the craft of storytelling for *Writer's Digest Magazine*, *Script Magazine*, *The Writer Magazine*, and *Writing Magazine* (UK). His first book, *Anatomy of a Premise Line: How to Master Premise and Story Development for Writing Success*, was published by Focal Press in 2015, and his new book, *Rapid Story Development: How to Use the Enneagram-Story Connection to Become a Master Storyteller*, will be published by Focal Press in late 2019. Jeff's feature film script, *American Thunderbolt*, is being developed as a major motion picture through Hargenat Media, UK, for a 2020 release.

Website : www.storygeeks.com

Twitter : @storygeeks

Facebook : www.facebook.com/storygeeks

Notes

Chapter 4

[1 http://psychologydictionary.org/psychological-model/](http://psychologydictionary.org/psychological-model/)

Chapter 15

- 1 Louis H. Sullivan. “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered.” *Lippincott’s Magazine* (March 1896): 403–9.
- 2 “Team.” BusinessDictionary.com. WebFinance, Inc. www.businessdictionary.com/definition/team.html (accessed October 20, 2018).
- 3 Based on a larger conceptual model defined in “Development Sequence in Small Groups” by Bruce Tuckman, Prof. of Education at Ohio University, 1965.

Appendix 1

Quick Reference—Rapid Story Development Standing Definitions

Definition of Moral for Writers

“Moral” refers to the principles, behaviors, and conduct that specify a person’s sense of right and wrong in themselves, and in the world, and that define their impact in the world as a human being .

Supporting Character Definition for Writers

A supporting character in fictional stories is defined as:

1. A character in a fictional story that is not the dramatic focus of the story, and:
 - May or may not have a subplot of their own
 - Can be an ally or an opponent

2. A supporting character:
 - Opens windows into a protagonist’s weaknesses and strengths

- Generates dramatic or comedic conflict and complications
- Challenges values and presents alternative points of view
- Supplies backstory, additional exposition, or otherwise reveals story information to the reader unavailable or unknown to the protagonist
- Has dramatic or comedic effect on the outcomes of the protagonist's mainline story

Main Opponent Definition for Writers

A main opponent in fictional stories is defined as:

1. A character in a fictional story that is not the dramatic focus of the story, and:
 - Is a supporting character in the story
 - Is human, not an inanimate object, concept/idea, or force of nature
 - Is not the protagonist's self
2. A main opponent:
 - Does not need the protagonist, and wants to stop them from succeeding and beat them to the goal
 - Needs the protagonist in order to achieve a mutual win, but on the opponent's terms
 - Can be known or a stranger to the protagonist
 - Has an Enneagram style that reflects the worst qualities of the protagonist
 - Reflects and mirrors the moral component of the protagonist

- Actively preys on the moral blind spot and the Enneagram vulnerabilities, emotional hot buttons, and behavioral weaknesses of the protagonist
- Directly contributes to the personal growth or destruction of the protagonist
- Can change or not change at the end of the story

Team Definition for Writers

A team in fictional stories is defined as:

1. A set of two or more people with a full or partial selection of complementary skills,
 - Or non-complementary skills (that later become complementary)
 - Required to achieve a common goal
 - That ultimately serves to accomplish the telling of a story
2. Team characters:
 - Operate on a sliding scale of interdependence from low to high as the team develops, ultimately becoming highly interdependent
 - Share responsibility for team evolution and efficacy
 - Are accountable for team successes and failures
 - Share collectively in performance-related rewards and punishments
 - Work toward achieving a common goal(s) or outcome(s)

Stories vs Situations

The Five Components of a Story

- A story reveals something about the human condition or makes a statement about what it means to be human.
- A story tests personal character, over and over, to reveal deeper character and motivation.
- A story's plot twists and subplots don't just ratchet up stakes; they open windows into character and motivation.
- A story ends in a different emotional space than it began.
- A story is driven by a strong moral component motivating the protagonist through the middle of the story, resulting in dramatically interconnected scene writing.

The Five Components of a Situation

- A situation is a problem, puzzle, or predicament with an obvious and direct solution.
- A situation does not reveal character; it mainly tests a character's problem-solving skills.
- A situation's plot twists ratchet up the puzzle or mystery (stakes) but rarely open character windows.
- A situation begins and ends in the same emotional space, especially for the protagonist.
- A situation has no, or a very weak, moral component, often leading to episodic writing.

Appendix 2

Quick Reference—The Nine Character Styles

Ones



What We Like About Ones : Eye for detail, keep word, responsible, diligent, highly principled, know how things are done, powerfully discerning.

What We Don't Like About Ones : Judgmental, resentful, controlling, hyper-critical, perfectionists, rigid.

Key Motivations : Do it right because the rules say so, self-justification, to be beyond criticism themselves, to have integrity.

How a One Would Tell Their Story : “Growing up, I had a negative relationship with my father. You’re supposed to like your parents; it’s the correct thing to do. Especially when you follow their rules and behave properly. And I did, perfectly—in my opinion. There were very clear expectations of me growing up; I wrote them down. I still have the list. A long list. Even today I keep lists. Safer, I think,

so you can point out when others don't follow directions properly. You see, it's easy for me to see what needs to be done, and what's right or wrong. Improving things comes naturally to me, so I must hold myself to a higher standard. I feel responsible to meet that standard. Consequently, I can be demanding, critical, and diligent as I pursue a task to its right and correct end. I have to admit that sometimes it's like I have a little voice in me that is constantly reminding me of what I'm doing bad or wrong. Even so, I doubt there is anything more beautiful than perfection, so I strive for this aesthetic and expect those close to me to do the same. I say what I mean, and I do what I say. I expect the same in return. Act irresponsibly or unfairly and you will get onto one of my lists, and not one you want to be on. I won't necessarily show my resent and disgust, but that's what's going on inside me."

Twos



What We Like About Twos : Real interest in others, good networkers, empathic, motivate others, service oriented, genuinely nice.

What We Don't Like About Twos : Needy, clingy, orchestrate others, hidden agendas, hostile, possessive.

Key Motivations : Want to be loved, appreciated/needed, to get others to respond to them positively.

How a Two Would Tell Their Story : "Growing up, I had an ambivalent relationship with my father; he just didn't make much of an

impression either way. Fortunately, that didn't affect my natural talent for being responsive to the needs of other people. I just really love being of service, especially when it results in others being productive and successful. I really do have a genuine interest in people. I'm so sensitive to it that I can even pick out a stranger in a crowd in need of help. It's like they're waving an invisible flag crying for help, and only I can see it. Good relationships matter, and I strive to build them. I think it is my innate warmth, friendliness, and generosity that makes it so easy for others to let me give to them. I have to say, though, that when someone refuses my help, and I know they need it, I can get frightened, feel unappreciated, or even hostile. I have been known to work around people's refusals of my assistance, sometimes going behind their backs to help them, or convincing others to do so for me. It's true, I can be adamant, even when my own situation is compromised, or when I might need some help."

Threes



What We Like About Threes : Efficient, goal oriented, know how to get things done, successful, quick on their feet, authentic, winners.

What We Don't Like About Threes : Vain, phony, crave approval, phobic about failure, bad losers, resentful of others.

Key Motivations : Need affirmation to distinguish themselves from others, crave attention to impress others, want to look good.

How a Three Would Tell Their Story : “I was Mommy’s favorite. Needless to say, we got along great all through childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Dad was good, but Mom was great. Probably because I succeeded at pretty much everything she had me do. And she had me hopping ballet, soccer, glee club, swim team, acting club, you get the idea. And I was either president or the star performer in all of them. Talk about positive reinforcement. I thrived on approval, and that is true right up to today. More than anything else, winning and achievement gives me the most satisfaction. Striving to be the best is nice, but being the best is the best. If I’ve learned anything, it’s that a person’s value is really based on how impressive their resume is—the real resume, not the fake one everyone gives to potential employers. Accomplishments speak louder than dreams or wishes. Because I’m so goal oriented, I often postpone taking care of my own emotional life in order to get real work done. How my successes look is important to me, so I don’t take kindly to people who might slack off and make me look bad. I work well with others, but it’s still a competition, one I’m intent on winning.”

Fours



What We Like About Fours : Sensitive, aesthetic, have a deep ability to connect emotionally, highly authentic, emotionally expressive, inquiring.

What We Don't Like About Fours : Self-absorbed, self-referencing, melodramatic, needy, always longing, never having.

Key Motivations : To be special, to express themselves authentically, self-protective of their core emotions, find a rescuer.

How a Four Would Tell Their Story : “Sadly, I had a bad relationship with both my parents. I just never connected with them deeply enough, I guess. It always felt that something was wrong or missing, maybe with me, I don't know (deep sigh). I've always tried to create real and meaningful relationships, but frankly, people just don't “get” me. This makes me sad and even angry at times, but I just keep searching out there for the answer. I'll find it—someday (deep sigh). I'm highly sensitive to the emotional states of others and am happiest when I can connect deeply with someone, even in a workplace setting. Truth be told, I find being sad strangely comforting. I love the feeling of longing-to-long. There's a specialness in longing, in the unavailable, and in the far-away promise of things. Keep the ordinary of life; give me the special life.”

Fives



What We Like About Fives : Smart, analytic, systematic, fast decision makers, cautious, visionaries.

What We Don't Like About Fives : Withdrawn, paranoid, greedy with information, aloof, detached emotionally.

Key Motivations : To possess knowledge, to understand how the environment works, to defend the emotional self with intellect.

How a Five Would Tell Their Story : “I was ambivalent toward both my parents growing up. Mixed feelings to be sure. Bottom line: I couldn’t rely on either of them. So, I learned, as a kid, to trust my keen sense of analysis and my natural smarts to figure out how my world worked and got through life by using my mind and not my emotions. This serves me well, even today. I prefer to watch situations unfold, rather than get sucked into them; being detached makes it easier to pick my battles. I do better alone than with others, and rarely get bored in my own company. But I also enjoy interacting with people, when they don’t make excessive demands on my time or resources or get too emotional—which is most of the time unfortunately. I have to admit, one of my favorite statements is, ‘The world would be a great place, if it wasn’t for all the darn people mucking everything up.’ I want a simple and thoughtful life and try to be as self-contained as possible. I can get very siloed, this is true, but just leave me alone to figure things out and I just might surprise you with my wisdom and vision when I come out of my ivory tower. So, be patient; I’m worth the wait.”

Sixes



What We Like About Sixes : Critical thinkers, proactive, loyal, courageous when it counts, good allies, troubleshooters, strategic

thinkers.

What We Don't Like About Sixes : Catastrophize, always look for worst-case scenarios, worry, doubt, frozen fear, nay-sayers, distrustful of authority.

Key Motivations : Looking for the safe and secure, to feel supported, to find community and belonging.

How a Six Would Tell Their Story : “I had a great relationship with my father. Mother was nice, but Dad was the one I trusted most. This might be the reason why I am so distrustful of authority in general; because so few seem as worthy of my trust as my father. Trusting others is a big issue for me, and I definitely operate from the idea, “untrustworthy until proven otherwise.” But, once you win my trust, I’m the best friend you’ll ever have. Safety and security are always in the forefront of my thinking, feeling, and action. Before making choices, when danger is present, I will scan the horizon for all possible scenarios that might go wrong, often dwelling on worst-case. This can cripple my mental and emotional processes, and freeze me in fear, worry, and doubt. But normally I am insightful, intuitive, sharp-minded, and highly strategic in my approach to life. Sometimes the worry and doubt that lurks constantly under the surface can be relieved by my confronting danger before it confronts me, but usually I do my best just to avoid it by having a solid plan, before my security is threatened. Be prepared, have a plan, and only trust those who earn it.”

Sevens



What We Like About Sevens : Enthusiastic, fun-loving, enjoy life, lively, engaging, full of ideas, fast thinkers, glass-half-full people, synthesizing minds.

What We Don't Like About Sevens : Addictive, obsessive, “do” before thinking, unfocused, can be scattered and judgmental.

Key Motivations : Crave freedom/happiness, don't want to miss anything life has to offer, to keep distracted/busy, to avoid/discharge pain.

How a Seven Would Tell Their Story : “Mother and I didn't get along. You could say we had a negative relationship. I don't like to talk about it, it's too painful. What I do like to talk about is just about anything that's exciting, fun, or fascinating. My mind runs in high gear, ideas fly, and I feel energized and happy when I can bring disparate ideas together into a big picture that works. My natural optimism and freeform thinking can make me appear flighty to some, but the truth is I've already run through most scenarios when everyone else is still working on just one. I'm not flighty—I'm fast. The problem is I get bored with routine or predictable tasks. I need variety and “the new” in order to maintain my energy to help others stay enthusiastic and engaged. I have lots of super-close friends; you can't have too many of those. And when things get uncomfortable, painful, or rocky, I shift my attention to pleasurable things and the future possibilities over the horizon. You never know what big thing is waiting out there for you, so don't dwell on the pain of life. That's why I like lots of options and do my best to never be boxed in by rules or boundaries. Life is too short—so, have fun.”

Eights



What We Like About Eights : Self-confident, decisive, protective of the weak, leaders, champions, highly developed sense of justice, fair minded.

What We Don't Like About Eights : Dictatorial, dismissive, willful, confrontational, punishing anger.

Key Motivations : To be self-reliant, to not show weakness, to be important in their world, to protect the defenseless.

How an Eight Would Tell Their Story : “I had a hate/love relationship with both my parents. Sometimes they were the best; other times, I wanted to just run away and start over with new ones. I'm sure this is why I developed such a high sense of independence and self-reliance. I found that being strong, honest, responsible, and dependable was a recipe for success in life, even at a young age. Take on life face-to-face, head-on. I like that quality in myself, and I like that in others. I have a highly developed sense for when people are lying to me or being deceitful. This is the kiss of death. I will cut you off at the knees and leave you for the flies, so don't even go there. But if you are innocent or naive, I will defend and protect you. I will be a champion when it's called for, or a dictator when that is called for. I have no problem stepping in, rewriting all the rules, and taking absolute control from incompetent people, or worse, those abusing power. I have no problem showing you my rage and anger, especially around injustice, but I have little tolerance for weakness or phony vulnerability in others. Even with all my

Appendix 3

Quick Reference—The Enneagram

Wings

Enneagram One Wings (9–1–2):

Safety Position : When feeling safe, Ones with a Nine wing may present as more calm, cooperative, discerning, and less judgmental. Ones with a Two wing may present as more giving, helpful, and less focused on being right and more on doing right.

Fear Position : When in fear, Ones with a Nine wing may become less present, passive aggressive, harder to pin down, and indecisive. Ones with a Two wing may begin to micromanage, obsess about other's lives/work, and become harsher in their judgments of self and others.

Enneagram Two Wings (1–2–3):

Safety Position : When feeling safe, Twos with a One wing may be more serious and altruistic toward others rather than an individual and be more critical of their emotional responses. Twos with a Three wing can be comfortable in the spotlight, goal oriented, and more willing to play well with others.

Fear Position : When in fear, Twos with a One wing will be quick to judge, driven by quixotic expectations, and hold themselves to

stringent standards. Twos with a Three wing may become obsessive about how others see them, demanding of attention, and more strategic in their helpfulness.

Enneagram Three Wings (2–3–4):

Safety Position : When safe, Threes with a Two wing may be more people-focused and less task-focused; they may be more aware of their own needs; and their normally selfish drive to succeed may be tempered with empathy toward others. Threes with a Four wing may come off as less as performing and more authentic in their emotions, and they may demonstrate real insight into self and more sensitivity to the moods of others.

Fear Position: When in fear, Threes with a Two wing may find their approval-seeking magnified by the caretaking of the Two; achievement can quickly twist into resentful disappointment when unacknowledged; and they may exhaust themselves trying to meet the needs of others. Threes with a Four wing may be moodier and less socially engaged, and they may react with an inflated sense of importance and superiority when demands are made for introspection.

Enneagram Four Wings (3–1–5):

Safety Position : When safe, Fours with a Three wing may come out of their introversion and be more energetic. The Three's focus on achievement may balance the Four's love of drama; the Three's need to protect their image helps the Four to stay real and counter their need to ruminate. Fours with a Five wing will find their intuition and subjectivity balances with logic and reason; the Four may take things less personally and more objectively, and as their

emotion becomes tempered with the Five's thinking, they may be less impulsive.

Fear Position : When in fear, Fours with a Three wing may appear less genuine in their self-expression, influenced by the Three's tendency for emotional performance; achievements and successes may be more smoke than substance, focused more on appearance than real work; and the Three's pressure of success may exacerbate the Four's natural affinity for melancholy and ennui. Fours with a Five wing may find their natural introversion deepened by the Five's desire for privacy and isolation; their need for connection with others might be derailed into feelings of being marginal or an outlier; and they may overthink situations, further disconnecting them from human connection.

Enneagram Five Wings (4–5–6):

Safety Position : In safety, Fives with a Four wing may find a nice balance between their thinking and feeling. They may also be able to connect more deeply in human interactions, and the Five's tendency to sit back and observe may find a balance with actual involvement through action. Fives with a Six wing may resource the Six's natural courage to find a stronger sense of presence; they may become more committed to people and ideals rather than information, and the Five's ability to assess data and evidence may help them take positions on principle, not just on the facts.

Fear Position : In fear, Fives with a Four wing may withdraw even deeper into their mental machinations and analysis; the Five's inner sense of separateness may lead to moodiness and depression. Appearing emotionally distant, the Four's influence may feed their fear of rejection and generate a need to stand out in a unique way. Fives with a Six wing may find the Six's mistrust and doubt pushing them more into withdrawal; they may find their thinking unbalanced

toward fear and worst-case scenarios, and the Five's already strong tendency for planning might become obsessive and neurotic.

Enneagram Six Wings (7-6-5):

Safety Position : When feeling safe, the Six with a Five wing may be more inclined to trust their inner voice, rather than seek outside evidence; their anxiety and fear may become more balanced with the Five's cooler objectivity; and the Six may have more confidence in their ability to assess situations, making them more open to multiple viewpoints. Sixes with a Seven wing will often be more optimistic and less prone to catastrophizing; the Seven influence may make the Six quicker in their thought process and more willing to risk, and they may actually be able to take themselves less seriously and laugh at their own fears.

Fear Position : When feeling afraid, the Six with a Five wing may find the Five's wariness escalating their own fear and anxiety; the Six may start to live more in their head, trusting their intuitions and experience less, and rather than trusting themselves, they may turn to outside sources of information for safety and security. The Six with a Seven wing may find themselves more avoidant and unwilling to deal with issues front-and-center; the Seven's fear of pain may influence the Six to withdraw through distraction and diversion, and they may deflect with plans and ideas to delay painful decisions.

Enneagram Seven Wings (8-7-6):

Safety Position : When safe, Sevens with a Six wing may be more deliberative and studied in their decision-making. Their drive for total freedom may be balanced by the Six's inclination to work with

a trusted group of people, and the Seven's tendency not to get pinned down may become grounded by the Six's planning and foresight. The Seven with an Eight wing will find themselves more assertive; the Eight's drive to action will move the Seven from the realm of possibilities to the realm of doing, and the inner strength of the Eight will help the Seven to be less afraid of pain and being hurt.

Fear Position : When fearful, the Seven with a Six wing may find their fears exaggerated, making them fickle and erratic. The Six's self-doubt and anxiety may make the Seven's planning and doing even less effective; and the Seven may find themselves burdened with an oppressive sense of duty and obligation, rather than feeling free. The Seven with an Eight wing may find their need for immediate satisfaction distorted by the Eight's need for control, resulting in the Seven's potential for using others to their own advantage. The Seven may become haughty and superior toward others, influenced by the Eight's self-reliance and confidence; and the Seven may generally appear more aggressive and forceful in pushing their free-flowing ideas.

Enneagram Eight Wings (9–8–7):

Safety Position : When safe, the Eight with a Seven wing may find their drive to act first and plan second balanced by the Seven's big-picture view. The Eight's "go it alone" knee-jerk will often be tempered by the Seven's willingness to engage people and share ideas, and they may find themselves generally happier with life and less hard-nosed and unrelenting. The Eight with a Nine wing will definitely appear softer and relaxed; they will be more willing to allow events to unfold, rather than make them unfold; and the Nine's natural inclusiveness will balance the Eight's single-mindedness and self-reliance.

Fear Position : When in fear, the Eight with a Seven wing may find themselves less self-aware of their impact on others; they may be more prone to addictive behaviors, and the Seven's tendency to think quickly and broadly may undermine the Eight's natural strategicness. The Eight with a Nine wing may cause the Eight to lose connection with their inner confidence and strength; the Nine's tendency to self-abandonment may push the Eight into neglecting themselves in favor of "getting it done." They may also become dissociated, depersonalizing their actions and disregarding their impact on others, sometimes cruelly.

Enneagram Nine Wings (8-9-1):

Safety Position : When safe, the Nine with an Eight wing may appear more decisive, focused, and direct in their communication and action; the Eight's sense of autonomy may balance the Nine's natural tendency to merge with others; and the Eight's boldness may give the Nine a sense of safety when facing potential conflict with others. The Nine with a One wing may find their easy-going outlook more structured and principled; the Nine may find themselves more willing to right what is wrong, rather than "settling" for things the way they are; and the Nine, in pursuit of peace, may do so with the real belief they are doing something to reform the world.

Fear Position : When in fear, the Nine with an Eight wing may find their repressed anger explosively and aggressively expressed. The Nine's natural passive-aggressiveness may take on a more direct and hurtful character, and the Nine's tendency to disassociate can become exaggerated when influenced by the Eight's emotional coldness and dispassion. The Nine with a One wing may find themselves obsessing over whether they are doing something "right," resulting in increased passive-aggressive behavior, procrastination, and tumult; the One influence of "should" and

“ought” may derail the Nine’s focus on their true goals and desires, and the Nine’s already low-energy expressiveness may be further diminished by their fear of alienating others.

Appendix 4

Example—Team Development in the Action-Adventure Genre

The following example illustrates how the four stages of team development might play out in an action-adventure story in a book series, feature film, or TV series. Notice that the four stages are divided into beats. The number of beats will vary from genre to genre, but the essential idea is that the four stages are always present in any team story. How those stages need to be layered to accommodate particular genre story beats and pacing is what determines the number of “beats” within each stage.

Don’t get caught up in beats vs stages; the essential concept to take away here is that team development stages are always present in the development of a team-based story, but genre specifics and beat requirements dictate a further refinement of each stage to accommodate genre-specific story beats and pacing, and the number of these refinements (beats) varies from genre to genre.

Woven within and without all the team stages are the genre beats each stage must pass through to accommodate the necessary story beats required by the genre. Every genre is made of different beats or story milestones that are characteristic of that genre; every genre is thus different in how it expresses the individual beats/milestones that characterize its genre, but every genre will have the same four stages of team development regardless of any genre-specific beats.

I want you to focus on the concept of team development stages, because while many writers are well versed in genre beats and genre structures,

almost all miss this crucial piece of team story development, regardless of the form of the story they may be developing (novel, feature film, television series, etc.).

Forming Stage

Beat 1 (Initiating Contact) : The powers-that-be seek out and hire or force through intimidation a reluctant hero/heroine to do their dirty work and save the day from some monster/threat/predicament.

Beat 2 (Actual Team Forms) : The hero/heroine gathers team members (*membership*) or has to manage a rag-tag group already assembled for them to lead. Team *goals* are clarified; *roles* are usually defined here or emerge throughout the gathering/recruitment process (we see windows into various characters' talents/skills). By the end of this stage, we know what the team's goal(s) is (are), who the members are, and what roles they will play on the team (plucky comic relief; deadly, vixen, sex kitten; brainiac computer tech; coldblooded assassin, etc.).

Storming Stage

Beat 3 (Internal Team Problems) : The newly assembled team members distrust one another and posture, challenge, or confront each other for dominance or authority. Internal team alliances start forming and romances form, loyalties start to split, and the team fragments. Another alpha leader often emerges at this stage. The team is more focused on internal struggles than the external threat they were hired to resolve.

Beat 4 (Leadership Challenge) : The hero/heroine's leadership is usually challenged by the other alpha team member, but the challenge is put down (exacerbating tensions). The reluctant hero/heroine forces a fragile, shaky truce within the team. This is usually the moment the hero/heroine has to commit to finally being a leader. The hero/heroine reorients team to its original purpose and knocks heads if necessary, thus winning respect.

Norming Stage

Beat 5—First Team Test (Consensual Agreements to Cooperate) : The opposition/monster/threat makes itself felt by menacing the external world, not the team directly. The team rallies in response to test its shaky alliance. The team is not seasoned, and previous dysfunctions reveal weaknesses in team effectiveness. The team gets beaten up, and it's humiliating. The opponent is now fully aware of the team's presence, but is unimpressed and bent on destroying them. The powers-that-be question the wisdom of their decision to bring in the hero/heroine.

Beat 6—Second Team Test (New Suggestions for Team Effectiveness) : The team's ego is bruised, so they brainstorm how to fix themselves. Here we also have the first signs of cohesion and real cooperation. The hero/heroine steps up training, and dysfunction peaks. The team starts to revisit the storming stage again. The other alpha member seriously challenges the hero/heroine's leadership, or rather than challenge leadership they decide to betray the team and form an alliance with the opponent—setting the team up for defeat. The opponent raises the stakes again to draw the team out to destroy it. This is where the first major team death occurs, or significant injuries. At this point, the hero/heroine is often disenfranchised, or

isolated, or fired by the powers-that-be. The team is often at its wit's end and rudderless.

Performing Stage

Beat 7—Third Team Test : The team is shaken by events but puts aside differences, rallies behind the hero/heroine, and creates new resolve to do what they were hired to do. Talents rise, cohesion increases, and the hero/heroine is reinstated, or reinstates him/herself against the will of the powers-that-be. The team is now at peak performance, and they take on the enemy to victory. In some stories, this is where most of the team dies, leaving the hero/heroine standing with one or two others as the only survivors. But, in many book and TV series, the team is left intact so that sequels or new episodes can be written—because nothing kills a series faster than killing off characters readers or audiences have grown to love.

Summary

This genre-specific example is just one example of how genre beats play out within the context of team stages of development. Within any genre, you will find that all the story beats that make a genre a genre will unfold fairly neatly within all the four stages. And even if you find it difficult in a team story you are developing to clearly identify where specific genre beats need to go, if you keep thinking “function” and work on figuring out how any genre beat might relate to forming, storming, norming, or performing, chances are you will start to see the logical placement of any genre beat in your team structure.

If, for some reason, you can't see where a beat belongs, don't stress it. Just put it wherever you think it belongs and you will be fine. It's better to have the guidelines and end up with a few outliers than it is to have no guidelines and end up with nothing but outliers. Over time, I will add future appendices of other genres to demonstrate further how the beats and stages play out in other genres (love story, horror, etc.).

Appendix 5

Example—Team Development in the Romance Genre

The romance genre is a fascinating genre in creative writing. More than any other genre form (except perhaps science fiction), it has evolved into a well-established complex of subgenres and marketing categories with clearly identified story elements, beats, and flow. As of this writing, it is the most popular and lucrative genre for writers today. What's more, romance publishers give tremendous support to authors in developing their stories, in the form of detailed author guidelines for subgenre requirements, and strong editorial support for imprint content development.

In addition, when you consider that romance can mix with many other genres to create subgenres (paranormal romance, romantic suspense, contemporary romance, historical romance, inspirational romance, etc.), the complexity and depth of development possibilities is astonishing. Granted, most genre fiction today is mixed-genre, but romance is particularly situated to leverage cross-genre pollination for success.

Heat levels vary from hot to sweet, but what all romance genre books have in common, and must have, is a happily ever after (HEA), or at least in some cases, a happy for right now. This is the reader's expectation. How the couple gets there is where the fun begins, but like all good stories, the structure hits the same basic beats.

As I said, there are many story development experts who have come up with their own proprietary story beats for romantic comedies, love stories, etc., and when you review the literature you realize that they are all

describing many of the same basic genre beats, regardless of the proprietary names they may give their structure steps.

The following example of team development in the romance genre is based on the work of Gwen Hayes. I highly recommend you check out her work, listed in the “Acknowledgments” section. I have selected her approach to the romance structure because I think she has done the best job pulling together the pure genre-story requirements while incorporating the best of pre-existing genre models currently in the literature. I know many members of the Romance Writers of America (RWA), the premier organization for romance writers, who follow Gwen’s model (though the RWA does not endorse any particular structure approach); consequently, I believe it will be instructive to use this model for our analysis.

What I find striking about Gwen’s take on the romance genre is that she intuitively divided her structure for romance into four parts: setup, falling in love, retreating from love, and fighting for love. She called them different things, but functionally these parts perfectly correspond to the four stages of team development. This is another corroborating indicator, for me, that team stages are natural to storytelling and not just “some guy’s” invention. There is a reason Ms. Hayes did what she did: her natural story sense took her down the right river, rather than into the floodplain, because her intuition about story structure tapped into the principles we have been discussing throughout this book.

Forming Stage (Set Up)

Beat 1/2 (h1/h2: him/her, heroine/hero) : These are two beats, often separate scenes, that introduce the heroine/hero (remember this is romance, so the protagonists are most often female/male—but not always—same-sex stories are very popular). In keeping with sound story structure principles, this introduction should be visually exciting and revealing of each character’s inner angst. This is the

team forming stage, so they are not together yet—except for second-chance romances; they haven't actually met—but the reader is already getting the message h1/h2 are destined for each other, even if they don't know it yet.

Beat 3 (Meet Cute) : This is the actual meeting of the eventual lovers. Typically, this is structurally the inciting incident, as it kickstarts the connection and also the external adventure. Still forming the team, the two central characters might be engaged (not literally), but the connection and need for the other is not set in emotional stone.

Beat 4 (No Way 1) : In keeping with the forming stage, this beat throws the first emotional monkey wrench into the mix. The lovers soon realize this just isn't going to happen, nor should it, despite any physical attraction or primal urges. This is an emotional pushback that pushes for quite a while in the story, and it begins in the forming stage.

Beat 5 (Adhesion Plot Thrust) : Just when the lovers think that they might not be locked into anything, they get locked. Something happens that forces them to be reliant on one other, or dependent, or literally or metaphorically connected at the hip. Many devices can be used to accomplish this, but the idea is they are in it together now, for better or worse, and there's nothing they can do about it. The team is now formed.

Norming Stage (Falling in Love)

Beat 6 (No Way 2) : Now that the team is formed, the first internal problems begin to emerge, but it has not broken out into full-on storming. One or both of the lovers dig in their heels on the original “no way” belief as a way of defending themselves from the forced unity they now suffer.

Beat 7 (Inkling This Could Work) : One or both of the lovers blinks, and the armor cracks. We see the beginnings of consideration: “Hmm, maybe...” This is the beginning of the norming stage where the hint of a common ground emerges, even if not fully realized.

Beat 8 (Deepening Desire) : But the norming is unavoidable, as *consensual working agreements* , commonalities, irresistible qualities, etc. deepen the connection and the falling in love is in full, or at least undeniable, bloom.

Beat 9 (Maybe This Will Work) : This is usually where they encounter real intimacy. This is the continued evolution of the norming of the relationship with real feelings of “hey, this just might...”

Beat 10 (Midpoint of Love Plot) : The culmination of all the norming, the middle of the development. But, as with any story’s midpoint (following story structure best practices), it is the calm before the storm, and things are about to ratchet up for the action line as well as for the relationship.

Storming Stage (Retreating from Love)

Beat 11 (Inkling of Doubt) : Just when the light begins to gather, the cloud passes overhead. The old “no way” nag pops back up, or some new reveal upsets the previous norming culmination. As with any storming stage, the disagreements start, the opposition is sharpened, the rivalries emerge, or any host of possible wrinkles appear that cast doubt on all that has developed.

Beat 12 (Deepening Doubt) : And it only gets worse. The connection is still there, but the worries rise, and the doubt is undeniable.

Beat 13 (Retreat) : The storming may be noisy or quiet (internalized), but the pressures mount and one or both of the lovers bail in whatever way feels right based on the scenario. The bail may be literal, or quietly emotional, but it is an act of self-protection.

Beat 14 (Shields Up) : This is the first confirmation that either of their darkest fears about love is true. The thing they feared might happen (the reason they felt “no way” in beats 4 or 6) is now staring them in the face. The storming stage has come to the breaking point, literally.

Beat 15 (Break Up) : In standard story structure, this is the first phase of the doom moment, or black moment, or visit to death, or whatever story guru terminology you want to use. All is lost, or at least the other lover is lost, regardless of what action line might be playing out around both protagonists. Ideally, not only do they pull apart due to their own constricting emotional dynamic, but the external opposition also made their move and the h1/h2 are coming up short on that plot line as well. All is indeed lost.

Performing Stage (Fighting for Love)

Beat 16 (Dark Night of the Soul) : We begin the performing stage of the drama with an emotional regrouping. In classic structure we are still in the doom moment, but it is the phase where the fall from grace is followed by the realization that even though they might still be deep in their flaw, they can't keep operating from this same place—if h1/h2 do, they will lose everything. They are not changing, but they are entertaining the idea. Consequently, they must snap out of it somehow, regroup, and try again, but differently this time. They don't know what that means yet, but that knowledge is coming. Maybe at this point, they develop the courage to reach out to their love interest, regardless of potential rejection, or perhaps not. This is still the performing stage because it is about changing outcomes; delivering on promises; and moving forward, not backward.

Beat 17 (Wake-Up/Catharsis) : This is where the performing stage shows itself: the choice is made to love instead of fear. The character may not fully heal their moral blind spot, but the central choice is made that opens up all possibility for change and resolution. This is the first step to high performance.

Beat 18 (Grand Gesture) : The next step in high performance is acting on the change. Remember, in any story, any change in a character must be shown on the page in behavior to have any meaning. You can't have someone contemplating their navel smugly proud of their inner growth. They have to act on it and show the reader in action

how they've changed. This is that moment, and it requires high performance in every sense of the word.

Beat 19 (What Wholehearted Looks Like) : The lovers are complete; they have taken on the external opposition to not only their love affair but also whoever is threatening the community. They are a team performing at its highest level, and they are aligned in life and love. All that's left now is to show the happily ever after.

Beat 20 (Epilogue) : All is well, and it's time to leave, but here is where you want to show just how well-matched the lovers are and go out on a nice bit of character business that shows how all too human they are or wrap a nice bow on it (but not too perfect a bow).

(Structure beats based on *Romancing the Beat: Story Structure for Romance Novels* by Gwen Hayes, 2016)

Summary

As with the previous appendix, this example falls right into line with the principles of team-based story development. The particular structure we've just looked at is unique in that its creator had the story instincts to group her beats into functionally appropriate categories that, by no conscious mechanism other than her talent, neatly fall into all four stages of team development.

This is not an accident or a fluke. Every genre will “cooperate” in this way. It has no choice, because teams are a part of storytelling. Not every story is a team-based story, but most are. The point is that rather than guessing or crossing your fingers and toes, hoping you get it right, you will have the necessary knowledge to be able to test, validate, and choose which subset (teams or ensembles) best applies to the story you want to tell.

[Appendix 6](#)

[Enneagram Resources](#)

If you have done any research into the subject of the Enneagram, then you know it is a huge topic. There are literally thousands of web links and hundreds of books written on the subject. I am offering here a few resources where you can get educated and expand your skill set with the Enneagram as a writer, but also learn more about the tool for personal growth. Your Enneagram style as a writer is something that influences how you write, so it is important to learn the personal side of the Enneagram. The sources I list are few, but they are comprehensive and eminently approachable as learning platforms. I highly recommend you start with these and then expand your research using these as your foundation.

Dr. Ginger Lapid-Bogda (The Enneagram in Business)

This is not a site for writers, but it is one of the best resources for people new to the Enneagram. Geared toward business applications of the Enneagram, it nonetheless teaches the basics in a way that is accessible and clear (more of an issue than you might imagine in this field). You won't need all of Ginger's tools or subject areas, but the basic Enneagram content is some of the best available. I have used a lot of her material in this book, so that should tell you something.

Blog : <http://theenneagraminbusiness.com/blog/>

Twitter : @glbogda

Facebook : www.facebook.com/TheEnneagramInBusiness/

Tom Condon (The Changeworks)

Tom is one of the leading international Enneagram coaches and teachers. His expertise in Eriksonian Hypnosis and the Enneagram are fascinating applications worth investigating. There are few people as savvy and insightful in their analysis and application of Enneagram principles, especially to fictional characters. I relied heavily on his book, *Enneagram Movie and Video Guide 3.0*, for my examples and test cases. He saved me a lot of “reinventing the wheel.” I only wish he’d get 4.0 published one of these days.

Website : www.thechangeworks.com/index.html

Blog : www.thechangeworks.com/blog/tcblog.html

Email : able@resourceful.com

Facebook : www.facebook.com/tom.condon.52

Judith Searle

Judith is a long-time and well-respected Enneagram teacher and writer. Her book, *The Literary Enneagram: Characters From the Inside Out* (Metamorphous Press, 2001), is one of the best resources for Enneagram analysis of fictional characters and stories. I highly recommend her book.

Website : www.judithsearle.com/

Amazon : <https://amzn.to/2vnxoHc>

The Enneagram Institute

The Enneagram Institute is probably the premier Enneagram resource familiar to most enthusiasts. It is pure Enneagram education and application. They have a definite point of view and theoretical bent, which you may or may not agree with, but they are nonetheless a power player in the Enneagram space. They do a lot of good work and have great educational materials.

Website : www.enneagraminstitute.com/

Twitter : https://twitter.com/Russ_Hudson54

Facebook : www.facebook.com/russ.hudson2

Appendix 7

Writer Resources

(Note: The Internet addresses and locations may change over time, so these links may not last the test of time. If the links are broken or no good, all these resources are worth searching for using your web browser .)

Every writing how-to book I know lists various resources in the appendix to help the writer with advice, more tools, references, etc. The lists tend to be long and include the usual suspects: all the flavor-of-the-month gurus or hipster story consultants active at the time the list is published. I really did not want to saddle you with another generic list of “writer resources.” You have Google and a web browser—you don’t need me to recommend a story consultant. But, since consulting is one of the things I do, I thought you’d like to know who I respect in the business—trust me, the list is short. As time passes, of course, some of these companies and individuals may fold or decide to go sell aluminum siding, but most have had some serious longevity, so I suspect they will be around for quite some time. None of the intro blurbs I give are meant to provide a comprehensive review of services or skills. I just want to introduce them to you, and you can contact them for more.

Jenna Avery

Jenna Avery is a sci-fi screenwriter, columnist, blogger, writing habit coach, and the founder of an online writing-accountability coaching program that helps writers build professional writing habits. This is not a critique group with people offering bad ideas of how to make your script better. This is a system of guilt-free support, powerful small group coaching, and daily accountability. This is a great productivity tool for people who have not developed the discipline of writing.

Website : www.calledtowrite.mn.co

Email : support@jennaavery.com

Twitter : @jennaavery

Facebook : www.facebook.com/jennaavery

Tawnya Bhattacharya (“Script Anatomy”)

“Script Anatomy,” founded in 2010 by writer Tawnya Bhattacharya, is a writing program developed and taught by a working TV writer. Its unique curriculum is designed to give emerging professionals practical development, writing, and rewriting tools to help advance their craft. “Script Anatomy” clients have won spots in all major TV writing fellowships and have staffed or sold pilots to both cable and network channels. For more information about classes, workshops, and consults, visit:

Website : www.scriptanatomy.com

Twitter : @tbhattacharya

Facebook : www.facebook.com/tawnya.b

John Truby

John Truby (Truby's Writers Studio) has been teaching story structure and screenplay development for more than two decades. He's one of the few "gurus" who actually has professional screenwriting experience working both in features and television. He is the author of an important book called *Anatomy of Story: 21 Steps to Becoming a Master Storyteller* . He is internationally recognized and sells tons of great products. His work with genre structures is especially wonderful.

Phone : 310.573.9630

Website : www.truby.com

Email : trubystudio@truby.com

Twitter : @johntruby

Facebook : www.facebook.com/johntrubyscreenwriting

John August

John has one of the most popular and respected screenwriting/entertainment industry-related blogs on the Internet. He is a screenwriter (*Big Fish* , *Charlie and Chocolate Factory* , *Corpse Bride* , among others), novelist, playwright, and director. His no-nonsense take on the screen trade is refreshing and incredibly informative.

Blog : www.johnaugust.com

Email : ask@johnaugust.com

Twitter : @johnaugust

Facebook : www.facebook.com/johnaugust.fb

Go Into the Story (Scott Myers)

Go Into the Story is another popular and useful screenwriting blog. Scott is an accomplished screenwriter, having worked for major studios and broadcast networks. He is a popular screenwriting teacher through the UCLA Extension Writer's Program and is a great resource for any screenwriter, regardless of level of experience. He also writes the "official screenwriting blog" for the Blacklist (blcklst.com).

Blog : www.gointothestory.blcklst.com

Email : gitsblog@gmail.com

Twitter : @gointothestory

Facebook : www.facebook.com/pages/Go-Into-The-Story/147927418335

The Bitter Script Reader

One of the best blogs on script reading by a professional story analyst (anonymous) who has worked for Oscar-winning production companies and one of the "big" agencies. This person's wit and insight are incredibly fun and educational. He/she is one of the gatekeepers you are trying to win over in your writing efforts. Read this blog and learn. And have lots of fun.

Blog : www.thebitterscriptreader.blogspot.com

Email : zuulthereader@gmail.com

Facebook : www.facebook.com/pages/Bitter-Script-Reader/154427441425

Disclaimer : None of the resources listed in this or other appendices have read this book prior to publication, or publicly subscribe to anything I say in this book. Their presence here is in no way an endorsement of me or my writing. I make this disclaimer for their benefit, but also to make it clear these recommendations are in no way a *quid pro quo*. They're here because they're the real deal and I like them.

Appendix 8

The Conscious Writer Manifesto

The idea of the conscious writer is so fundamental to my teaching and consulting that it has become not just a motto, but a manifesto. It's something I would chip into sidewalks or spray-paint on blank walls under freeway overpasses and on abandoned buildings if I could (without risking fines or jail time).

The origin of this idea came out of my evolution as a writer, but even more from watching the thousands of consulting clients I've had over the years, both prose writers and screenwriters. Seeing how many of them were sleepwalking through their writing careers, blindly following how-to creative writing memes, or obediently applying pointless paradigms and theories to their writing forced me to not only wake up in my own writing process but to realize that everyone deserved to be woken from their writing somnambulism and deserved to at least be given the opportunity to take back their creative power from whatever guru, methodology, or flavor-of-the-month creative writing secret sauce they may have given their power to. Yes, I'm talking about empowerment.

The word "empowerment" is way overused these days, having been effectively hijacked by the self-help and human potential movements of the 1980s and 1990s. But empowerment means something, and it means something important for creative people in particular. It means giving yourself the permission and giving yourself the authority (authorship) to be powerful. Being powerful means: having the ability and the willingness to act. When you are empowered you are giving yourself permission to have

power (i.e., exercise your ability and willingness to act). You cannot be powerful or empowered without being awake and conscious. The trances of the gurus are broken, and the charms of the writing-process charismatics are dispelled. It's time that writers took back the word "empowerment" and made it our own.

We live in an age where it has become frighteningly easy to go on autopilot and hand over creative control to experts, gurus, teachers, or some authority. Being a conscious writer is all about taking your creative power back and taking full responsibility for your writing process, creativity, writing successes, and writing failures. So, to that end, I have created Seven Qualities of the Conscious Writer. Read them, live them, breathe them—not as some dogma handed down from some new writing guru, but as wisdom you can choose accept to or reject as you wish. Take what works, reject what doesn't; then, move on—by choice!

The Seven Qualities of a Conscious Writer

- They intentionally make narrative choices based on creative objectives and goals; they do not stumble in the story dark, tripping into a story clueless of how they got there.
- They know what they are writing, why they are writing it, and how they want to write it.
- They are always open to new approaches to storytelling and creative writing and are never dogmatic about any one approach.
- They are so steeped in the fundamentals of story development, and the best practices of creative writing, that whenever they choose to stray from those fundamentals and best practices, they do so with surefootedness, creative poise, and confidence in their craft.
- They listen to everyone and try everything, but follow no one; they are their own guru.

- They take responsibility for their failures as well as their successes and know that they (not some fortune cookie) are the only ones who can solve their writing problems—and they love that responsibility.
- They don't give their creative power away to anyone or anything—ever.

Being a conscious writer honors our true creative process and is the only path to achieve deep, authentic, and meaningful connection with readers. It is the best way to be your best writer-self.

* * *

Remember: "Listen to everyone, try everything, follow no one. You are your own story guru."

Appendix 9

E -Resources

Routledge has established an e-resource where you can access proprietary resources that accompany this book. All the worksheets and templates used in this book will be available on this website. It is very possible that I will add new resources to this over time, so there is an added benefit to using this resource, as it will give you access to new and updated materials as I add them to the site. There will be no site registration or login required.

Go to this URL to download content from *Rapid Story Development* E -resources page: www.routledge.com/9781138929708

Index

Note: Page numbers in italics indicate figures. Some subentries are in sequential, rather than alphabetical, order, for ease of use.

12 Angry Men [122](#)–[123](#) , [186](#)–[187](#)

28 Days Later [151](#)

action-adventure genre [255](#)–[258](#)

active protagonist loop [107](#)–[110](#) , [108](#) , [109](#) , [133](#) , [139](#) , [218](#) , [229](#)

Aliens [150](#)

All About Eve [113](#)–[114](#) , [119](#)–[120](#)

allies [49](#) , [146](#)–[158](#) , [245](#)

All Is Lost [108](#) , [208](#)

Amadeus [105](#)–[106](#) , [114](#)–[115](#) , [120](#)–[121](#)

American Beauty [79](#)

anger/rage/resentment [25](#)–[26](#) , [43](#) , [50](#) , [55](#) , [59](#) , [61](#)–[62](#) , [79](#) , [98](#) , [113](#) , [115](#) , [120](#)–[121](#) , [144](#) , [150](#) , [157](#) , [192](#) , [203](#)–[204](#) , [246](#)–[247](#) , [253](#)

antagonists [5](#) , [159](#)–[160](#) , [162](#)–[163](#) , [165](#) , [167](#) , [169](#) , [209](#)–[210](#) , [212](#)

Apartment, The [79](#)

archetypes [149](#) , [153](#)–[158](#)

Art of Fielding, The [184](#)

awakening [17](#) , [139](#)–[141](#) , [168](#) , [219](#)–[220](#) , [230](#)

backstory [17](#)–[18](#) , [149](#) , [165](#) , [221](#) , [238](#)

Beartown [184](#)

blind spots [14](#) , [23](#) , [34](#) , [52](#)–[55](#) , [88](#) , [110](#) , [111](#)–[112](#) , [119](#) , [124](#)–[126](#) , [130](#) , [136](#) , [141](#) , [157](#) , [164](#) , [197](#) , [207](#) , [209](#) , [212](#)–[214](#) , [228](#) , [230](#) ; behavioral [126](#) , [201](#) ; communication [52](#) , [138](#) , [166](#)–[167](#) , [199](#) ; entitlement [109](#) ; *see also* [moral blind spots](#)

Blob, The [150](#)

Breaking Bad [88](#)

Campbell, Joseph [154](#)

change [69](#) , [83](#) –[84](#) , [89](#) , [126](#) , [201](#) , [209](#) ; constrictive [67](#) ; expansive [67](#) ; *see also* [character change triangle](#) ; [offer to change](#) ; [protagonist change triangle](#) ; [protagonist change worksheet](#) ; [refusal to change](#)

character change triangle [89](#)

character communication styles [52](#) –[56](#) , [207](#) ; Ones [53](#) ; Twos [53](#) ; Threes [53](#) –[54](#) ; Fours [54](#) ; Fives [54](#) ; Sixes [54](#) ; Sevens [54](#) –[55](#) ; Eights [55](#) ; Nines [55](#) ; *see also* [blind spots](#) ; [crunches](#) ; [distortion filters](#) ; [pinches](#) ; [speaking attitude](#) ; [speaking style](#)

character conflict styles [57](#) –[66](#) , [207](#) ; Ones [61](#) ; Two [61](#) ; Threes [61](#) ; Fours [61](#) ; Fives [61](#) ; Sixes [61](#) ; Sevens [62](#) ; Eights [62](#) ; Nines [62](#) ; *see also* [pinches](#) ; [pinch behaviors](#) ; [pinch-crunch conflict model](#)

character development [1](#) , [5](#) , [16](#) , [21](#) –[22](#) , [23](#) , [31](#) , [43](#) , [51](#) , [60](#) , [80](#) , [84](#) –[85](#) , [125](#) , [130](#) , [153](#) –[154](#) , [158](#) , [181](#) ; beginnings [5](#) , [44](#) , [83](#) –[85](#) ; endings [5](#) , [44](#) , [83](#) –[85](#) ; *see also* [change](#) ; [character change triangle](#) ; [offer to change](#) ; [protagonist change triangle](#) ; [protagonist change worksheet](#) ; [refusal to change](#)

character evolution and de-evolution [67](#) –[80](#) , [88](#)

character styles [241](#) –[247](#) ; *see also* [Enneagram character styles](#)

character typing [153](#)

circuit of fear: hexad [70](#) –[72](#) , [70](#) , [95](#) , [98](#) , [99](#) ; triad [69](#) , [73](#) –[74](#) , [73](#) , [96](#) , [98](#) , [99](#)

circuit of safety: hexad [75](#) –[77](#) , [75](#) , [95](#) , [97](#) –[98](#) , [99](#) ; triad [78](#) –[79](#) , [78](#) , [95](#) , [98](#) , [99](#)

classic story middle [130](#) –[131](#) , [131](#) , [133](#) , [137](#) , [160](#) , [199](#) , [214](#) , [218](#) , [228](#)

classic story middle worksheet [199](#) , [220](#)

classic story structure [1](#) , [130](#) , [133](#) , [141](#)

common/uncommon buttons worksheet [199](#) , [207](#)

complication characters [150](#)

conflict buttons [60](#) , [63](#) –[64](#)

conscious writer [13](#) –[14](#) , [21](#) , [152](#) , [273](#) –[275](#)

controlling behavior [18](#) –[19](#) , [166](#) , [212](#)

Coppola, Francis Ford [224](#)

core desires and distortions [34](#) –[35](#) , [34](#) , [119](#) –[122](#) , [166](#) , [202](#) ; *see also* [Enneagram core desires and distortions](#)

core fears and poisons [32–33](#), [33](#), [104](#), [106](#), [108](#), [112](#), [166](#), [170](#), [202](#), [212](#); *see also* [Enneagram core fears and poisons](#)

core image [35–36](#), [35](#), [87](#), [95](#), [97](#), [99](#)

creative voice [21](#)

crunches [14](#), [58–65](#), [136](#), [197](#), [207](#)

Dark Knight, The [152](#), [164–165](#)

Day After Tomorrow [209](#)

decline, pattern of *see* [pattern of decline](#)

de-evolution *see* [character evolution and de-evolution](#)

deus ex machina [208–209](#)

Devil Wears Prada, The [168](#)

Dirty Dozen, The [184](#)

distortion filters [14](#), [52–55](#), [111](#), [167](#), [197](#), [199](#), [207](#)

doom moment [131–139](#), [141–144](#), [171–172](#), [216](#), [218–219](#), [223](#), [229–230](#), [262](#)

Driving Miss Daisy [95–96](#), [100](#)

elevation, pattern of *see* [pattern of elevation](#)

emotional baseline [69](#)

emotional centers [24](#), [25](#), [27](#), [204](#); body center of emotionality [25–26](#), [26](#), [157](#); head center of emotionality [25](#), [25](#); heart center of emotionality [26–27](#), [26](#); *see also* [Three Centers](#)

emotional intelligence (EQ) [19–21](#), [65](#), [131](#), [226](#)

Enneagram character profiles [205–206](#)

Enneagram character styles [45–51](#), [242–247](#); Ones [46](#), [242](#); Twos [46–47](#), [242–243](#); Threes [47](#), [243](#); Fours [47–48](#), [244](#); Fives [48](#), [244–245](#); Sixes [49](#), [245](#); Sevens [49–50](#), [245–246](#); Eights [50](#), [246–247](#); Nines [50–51](#), [247](#)

Enneagram core desires and distortions [112](#), [118](#), [227](#)

Enneagram core fears and poisons [32](#), [112](#), [126](#), [157](#), [202](#), [213](#), [227](#)

Enneagram low points [126](#), [142](#), [142](#), [144](#), [202](#), [214](#), [216](#)

Enneagram model [5](#), [29–44](#), [87–89](#), [119](#), [156](#)

Enneagram opponent points of attack [172](#)

Enneagram opponent triangle [169–178](#), [170](#), [210](#), [211](#); Ones [173](#); Twos [174](#); Threes [174](#); Fours [175](#), [210](#); Fives [175](#); Sixes [176](#); Sevens [176](#); Eights [177](#); Nines [177](#); consequence [172–173](#); example [210](#); opponent profile [171](#); *see also* [opponent triangle worksheet](#); [pattern of decline](#)

Enneagram resources [5](#), [199–200](#), [265–267](#)

Enneagram-Story Connection [1](#) , [2](#) , [5](#) , [13–14](#) , [22](#) , [24](#) , [27–28](#) , [30–37](#) , [43–44](#) , [45](#) , [51](#) , [56](#) , [65–66](#) , [79–80](#) , [81–194](#) , [197](#) , [202](#) ; *see also* [character development](#) ; [Enneagram-Story Teams](#) ; [middle](#) ; [moral component](#) ; [moral Enneagram](#) ; [opposition](#) ; [supporting cast](#)

Enneagram-Story Team roles [189–194](#) ; behaviors [191–193](#) ; *see also* [forming stage](#) ; [norming stage](#) ; [performing stage](#) ; [storming stage](#)

Enneagram-Story Teams [5](#) , [179–188](#) ; characteristics [185–186](#) , [185](#) ; definition [181–183](#) , [239](#) ; vs. groups [182](#) ; team development, four stages of [183–184](#) , [255–258](#) , [259–263](#) ; team form [181](#) ; *see also* [Enneagram-Story Team roles](#) ; [forming stage](#) ; [genre](#) ; [norming stage](#) ; [performing stage](#) ; [storming stage](#)

Enneagram styles [14](#) , [16](#) , [23](#) , [25–27](#) , [32–33](#) , [52](#) , [60](#) , [69](#) , [84](#) , [86](#) , [89](#) , [94](#) , [111](#) , [138](#) , [142](#) , [156–157](#) , [167](#) , [171](#) , [173](#) , [178](#) , [191](#) , [197](#) , [203–204](#) , [206](#) , [210–211](#) ; *see also* [Enneagram character styles](#) ; [Enneagram opponent triangle](#) ; [Enneagram Wings](#)

Enneagram symbol [16–17](#) , [16](#)

Enneagram system [1](#) , [4–5](#) , [15](#) , [18–19](#) , [22](#) , [23–28](#) , [58](#) , [111](#) , [191](#)

Enneagram Wings [37–44](#) , [156](#) , [158](#) , [208](#) , [249–253](#) ; Ones [38](#) , [38](#) , [250](#) ; Twos [38](#) , [38](#) , [250](#) ; Threes [39](#) , [39](#) , [250](#) ; Fours [39–40](#) , [39](#) , [250–251](#) ; Fives [40](#) , [40](#) , [251](#) ; Sixes [40–41](#) , [40](#) , [251–252](#) ; Sevens [41](#) , [41](#) , [252](#) ; Eights [42](#) , [42](#) , [252–253](#) ; Nines [42–43](#) , [42](#) , [253](#) ; constrictive qualities [38](#) ; expansive qualities [38](#) ; *see also* [fear](#) ; [fear position](#) ; [safety position](#) ; [security](#)

episodic writing [108](#) , [110](#) , [128–129](#) , [240](#)

E -resources [277–278](#)

evolution *see* [character evolution and de-evolution](#)

ex machina opponent [208–209](#)

Exorcist, The [150](#)

Expendables, The [184](#)

Face in the Crowd, A [72](#) , [143](#)

Fatal Attraction [71](#) , [143](#) , [166](#)

Faulkner, William [57](#)

fear/anxiety [25](#) , [30](#) , [32](#) , [38](#) , [40–41](#) , [56](#) , [68](#) , [73](#) , [80](#) , [103–104](#) , [106](#) , [114](#) , [116–117](#) , [119](#) , [121](#) , [136](#) , [143–144](#) , [157](#) , [163](#) , [204](#) , [251–252](#) , [262](#) ; *see also* [circuit of fear](#) ; [core fears and poisons](#) ; [Enneagram core fears and poisons](#) ; [fear/poison dynamics](#) ; [fear position](#)

fear/poison dynamics [113–117](#)

fear position [38–43](#) , [250–253](#)

film [3–5](#) , [12](#) , [15](#) , [21](#) , [94](#) , [97](#) , [101](#) , [105](#) , [147](#) , [152](#) , [159](#) , [168](#) , [184](#) , [186](#) , [201](#) , [223](#) , [233](#) , [256](#)

final battle [131](#)–[132](#) , [136](#) , [140](#)–[141](#) , [209](#) , [214](#) , [216](#)–[217](#) , [220](#) , [223](#) , [228](#)
Firm, The [78](#) , [99](#)–[100](#)
focus of attention [30](#) , [31](#) , [32](#) , [35](#) , [87](#) , [95](#) , [97](#) , [99](#) , [112](#)
forming stage [185](#) , [187](#) , [192](#)–[193](#) , [256](#) , [260](#)–[261](#)
Frankenstein [152](#)
Freud, Sigmund [153](#)–[154](#)
Game of Thrones [147](#)
genre [129](#) , [133](#) , [148](#) , [150](#) , [165](#) , [167](#) , [179](#)–[181](#) , [184](#) , [209](#) , [256](#) , [258](#) , [260](#) , [263](#) , [271](#) ; *see also*
[action-adventure genre](#) ; [romance genre](#)
Godfather, The [69](#) , [72](#) , [84](#) , [110](#) , [143](#)–[144](#) , [224](#) , [224](#)
Godfather Trilogy, The [101](#)
Godzilla [168](#) , [209](#)
Graduate, The [74](#) , [144](#)
Hamlet [115](#)–[116](#) , [121](#)
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix [62](#)–[65](#) , [71](#) , [143](#)
Harry Potter series [60](#) , [168](#)
helpers/messengers [146](#)–[158](#)
Hollywood [3](#)–[4](#)
Hoosiers [184](#)
Ichazo, Oscar [17](#)
immoral effect [102](#)–[106](#) , [108](#)–[110](#) , [111](#) , [125](#) , [133](#)–[134](#) , [164](#)–[165](#) , [200](#)–[203](#) , [218](#) , [226](#) , [229](#)
inciting incident [131](#) , [136](#)–[137](#) , [214](#)–[215](#) , [222](#)–[223](#) , [228](#) , [261](#)
intelligence quotient (IQ) [19](#)
Jung, Carl [153](#)–[154](#)
“just do it” approach [11](#)–[14](#) , [84](#) , [145](#) , [198](#)
Law & Order [149](#)
League of Their Own, A [184](#)
Lean on Me [116](#)–[117](#)
Lie to Me [149](#)
Lilies of the Field, The [5](#) , [66](#) , [76](#)–[77](#) , [226](#)–[230](#)
literature [15](#) , [21](#) , [94](#) , [105](#) , [168](#) , [179](#) , [181](#) , [223](#) , [260](#)
love stories [184](#) , [222](#) , [258](#) , [260](#)

low points [131](#) –[132](#) , [135](#) , [137](#) –[138](#) , [141](#) –[144](#) , [202](#) , [214](#) , [216](#) , [219](#) –[220](#) , [228](#) , [230](#) ; *see also* [Enneagram low points](#)

Malcolm X [77](#)

Mamet, David [106](#)

Man for All Seasons, A [113](#) , [119](#)

Mayer, John D. [19](#)

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer [73](#) , [76](#) , [184](#)

Meyer, Stephenie [225](#)

middle [5](#) , [67](#) , [88](#) , [107](#) , [110](#) , [126](#) , [127](#) –[145](#) , [156](#) , [160](#) , [162](#) , [170](#) –[171](#) , [199](#) –[200](#) , [209](#) , [211](#) –[213](#) , [218](#) , [222](#) –[223](#) , [229](#) , [239](#) , [261](#) ; classic story middle layer [130](#) –[133](#) ; development of [128](#) –[129](#) ; “mushy” [110](#) , [129](#) ; narrative engine middle layer [130](#) , [133](#) –[136](#) ; structure of [130](#) , [138](#) , [145](#) ; *see also* [doom moment](#) ; [episodic writing](#) ; [final battle](#) ; [immoral effect](#) ; [inciting incident](#) ; [low points](#) ; [midpoint complication](#) ; [moment of truth](#) ; [offer to change](#) ; [pattern of decline](#) ; [pattern of elevation](#) ; [proactive choice](#) ; [proactive effect](#) ; [problem/consequence](#) ; [refusal to change](#) ; [resolution](#) ; [reversal/complication](#)

midpoint complication [131](#) , [137](#) , [214](#) –[216](#) , [219](#) , [223](#) , [228](#)

moment of truth [133](#) –[134](#) , [136](#) , [138](#) –[139](#) , [141](#) , [172](#) , [217](#) , [219](#) , [230](#)

monomyth [154](#)

Moonstruck [76](#)

moral: definition [102](#) , [238](#)

moral blind spots [30](#) , [102](#) –[106](#) , [108](#) –[110](#) , [112](#) , [125](#) –[126](#) , [133](#) –[135](#) , [137](#) –[138](#) , [141](#) , [151](#) , [161](#) , [164](#) –[165](#) , [172](#) –[173](#) , [200](#) –[203](#) , [207](#) , [211](#) , [214](#) , [217](#) , [220](#) , [226](#) –[228](#) , [239](#) , [263](#)

moral component [14](#) , [33](#) , [35](#) –[36](#) , [44](#) , [57](#) , [87](#) , [101](#) –[110](#) , [111](#) –[112](#) , [124](#) –[126](#) , [129](#) , [151](#) , [156](#) –[157](#) , [161](#) , [164](#) , [197](#) , [199](#) –[200](#) , [202](#) –[204](#) , [209](#) , [226](#) –[227](#) , [238](#) –[240](#) ; definition [102](#) ; dynamic

moral tension [102](#) , [104](#) –[106](#) , [111](#) , [200](#) , [202](#) , [227](#) ; immoral effect [102](#) –[106](#) , [108](#) –[110](#) , [111](#) , [125](#) , [133](#) –[134](#) , [164](#) –[165](#) , [200](#) –[203](#) , [218](#) , [226](#) , [229](#) ; *see also* [active protagonist loop](#) ; [moral blind spots](#) ; [passive protagonist loop](#)

moral component worksheet [199](#) , [204](#)

moral Enneagram [5](#) , [111](#) –[126](#) , [202](#) ; acting out [124](#) –[125](#) , [134](#) , [151](#) , [163](#) , [212](#) ; building blocks [51](#) , [112](#) –[124](#) , [126](#) , [139](#) , [202](#) , [220](#) ; core desire/distortion dynamics [119](#) –[124](#) ; strategy [101](#) , [125](#) –[126](#) , [129](#)

moral Enneagram worksheet [199](#) , [204](#)

multidimensional characters [155](#) , [172](#)

My Dinner with Andre [116](#) , [117](#) , [122](#) , [123](#)

Naranjo, Claudio [17](#)

narrative drive [128](#) –[129](#) , [199](#) , [218](#)

narrative engine middle worksheet [199](#) , [220](#)

Network [73](#) –[74](#)

'night, Mother [76](#)

norming stage [187](#) , [192](#) –[193](#) , [257](#) , [261](#)

Nutty Professor, The [77](#)

Odd Couple, The [152](#)

offer to change [133](#) –[135](#) , [218](#) , [229](#)

Of Mice and Men [106](#)

opponents [30](#) , [157](#) , [160](#) , [162](#) , [167](#) –[168](#) , [171](#) , [208](#) –[209](#) , [213](#) ; main [148](#) , [160](#) –[162](#) , [164](#) –[167](#) , [169](#) –[173](#) , [207](#) , [209](#) –[210](#) , [216](#) –[217](#) , [223](#) , [228](#) , [238](#) –[239](#) ; *see also* [ex machina opponent](#) ; [self-opponent](#)

opponent triangle worksheet [200](#) , [213](#)

opposition [94](#) , [113](#) , [119](#) , [135](#) –[136](#) , [141](#) , [186](#) –[187](#) , [200](#) , [207](#) , [257](#) , [262](#) –[263](#) ; clause [222](#) –[223](#) ; defining [14](#) , [197](#) , [207](#) –[213](#) , [228](#) ; nature of opposition [160](#) –[161](#) ; structure of [159](#) –[178](#) , [159](#) ; *see also* [Enneagram opponent triangle](#) ; [opponents](#) ; [Opposition Triangle](#)

Opposition Triangle [173](#) , [178](#) , [209](#) –[211](#) , [219](#) ; *see also* [Enneagram opponent triangle](#) ; [opponent triangle worksheet](#)

parent(s) [36](#) –[37](#) , [46](#) , [48](#) , [50](#) –[51](#) , [164](#) , [242](#) , [244](#) , [246](#) –[247](#) ; decline [137](#) ; elevation [139](#)

parental matrix [36](#) –[37](#) , [36](#)

passive protagonist loop [107](#) –[108](#) , [107](#)

pattern of decline [88](#) , [96](#) , [130](#) , [133](#) –[134](#) , [136](#) –[139](#) , [138](#) , [142](#) , [144](#) , [157](#) , [166](#) , [169](#) –[171](#) , [207](#) , [211](#) –[213](#) , [216](#) , [218](#) –[219](#) , [229](#) ; parent [137](#) ; *see also* [offer to change](#) ; [proactive choice](#) ; [proactive effect](#) ; [problem/consequence](#) ; [refusal to change](#)

pattern of elevation [130](#) , [134](#) , [136](#) , [138](#) –[141](#) , [139](#) , [213](#) , [219](#) –[220](#) , [230](#) ; parent [139](#) ; *see also* [awakening](#) ; [doom moment](#) ; [moment of truth](#) ; [reconnection](#)

performing stage [185](#) , [187](#) , [191](#) –[193](#) , [257](#) , [262](#) –[263](#)

personality typing systems [18](#) –[19](#) , [153](#) –[154](#) , [156](#)

pinch behaviors [60](#) –[65](#) ; *see also* [character conflict styles](#)

pinch-crunch conflict model [58](#) –[66](#)

pinches [58–61](#), [64–66](#), [111](#), [136](#), [138](#), [199](#), [207](#), [209](#), [228](#); common [14](#), [60](#), [62–64](#), [166–167](#), [197](#), [207](#), [227](#); uncommon [14](#), [60](#), [62–64](#), [166–167](#), [197](#), [207](#), [227](#)

plots [60](#), [70](#), [98](#), [130–132](#), [134](#), [149–150](#), [162](#), [166](#), [171](#), [186](#), [190–191](#), [213](#), [215–217](#), [229](#), [239–240](#), [261–262](#); *see also* [subplots](#)

premise line [15](#), [197](#), [200](#), [220–226](#), [230–231](#); dénouement clause [222–223](#); opposition clause [222–223](#); protagonist clause [222](#); team/goal clause [222](#); worksheet [200](#)

proactive choice [109–110](#), [133](#), [135](#), [137](#), [140](#), [218](#), [229](#)

proactive effect [109–110](#), [133](#), [135](#), [137–138](#), [218](#), [229](#)

problem/consequence [109](#), [133](#), [135](#), [137](#), [218](#), [229](#)

Producers, The [149](#)

protagonist change triangle [68–69](#), [84](#), [85–100](#), [86](#), [169](#), [173](#), [178](#), [191](#), [199](#), [205](#); Ones [89](#), [94](#); Twos [90](#), [96](#); Threes [90](#), [98](#); Fours [91](#); Fives [91](#); Sixes [92](#); Sevens [92](#); Eights [93](#); Nines [93](#); examples [94](#), [96](#), [98](#); *see also* [protagonist change worksheet](#); [protagonist Enneagram worksheet](#)

protagonist change worksheet [199](#), [206](#)

protagonist Enneagram worksheet [199](#), [206](#)

protagonists [30](#), [36](#), [101](#), [107–108](#), [167](#), [208](#), [261–262](#); *see also* [active protagonist loop](#); [passive protagonist loop](#); [premise line](#); [protagonist change worksheet](#); [protagonist change triangle](#); [protagonist Enneagram worksheet](#)

Psycho [74](#), [143](#)

Puzo, Mario [224](#)

Pythagoras [17](#)

reconnection [139](#), [140–141](#), [220](#)

red-herrings [149–150](#)

reflection/cautionary tale characters [149](#), [151–152](#)

refusal to change [133–134](#), [211](#), [218](#), [229](#); *see also* [pattern of decline](#); [pattern of elevation](#)

resolution [17](#), [59](#), [131–132](#), [192](#), [214](#), [217](#), [222–223](#), [229](#), [263](#)

reversal/complication [56](#), [58](#), [83](#), [109](#), [131](#), [137](#), [148–151](#), [157](#), [163](#), [168–169](#), [187](#), [200](#), [214–216](#), [218–219](#), [223](#), [228–229](#), [238](#)

“ringing true” [19–22](#), [43](#), [45](#), [56](#), [60](#), [80](#), [86](#), [145](#), [213](#), [216](#), [218](#)

romance genre [167](#), [180](#), [256](#), [259–263](#)

Rosenberg, Melissa [225](#)

Rowling, J. K. [60](#), [65](#)

safety position [38–42](#), [250–253](#)

Salovey, Peter [19](#)

security [37–38](#), [41](#), [49](#), [68](#), [74](#), [78](#), [88–89](#), [97](#), [114](#), [120–121](#), [130](#), [143](#), [215](#), [232](#), [245](#), [252](#)
; in- [143](#), [166](#)

self-opponent [208](#)

Seven-Step Rapid Story Development Process [5](#), [14](#), [195–232](#)

Shaffer, Peter [105](#)

shame/hostility [26–27](#), [59](#), [62](#), [85](#), [120](#), [122](#), [204](#), [212](#)

Sherlock Holmes [121](#)

Silence of the Lambs [101](#), [115](#), [118](#)

social intelligence [19](#)

speaking attitude [52–55](#)

speaking style [52–55](#)

Steinbeck, John [106](#)

Stevenson, Robert Louis [208](#)

stories [1–3](#), [13–14](#), [17](#), [19](#), [21–24](#), [29](#), [31](#), [43–44](#), [45](#), [51](#), [54–56](#), [59–60](#), [67](#), [69](#), [80](#), [83](#),
[89](#), [94](#), [101](#), [105](#), [107–108](#), [122](#), [128–129](#), [131–133](#), [135](#), [138](#), [147–152](#), [155](#), [159–163](#),
[167](#), [173](#), [179–188](#), [189–190](#), [208–209](#), [219](#), [226](#), [238–239](#), [257](#), [260–261](#), [267](#); vs.
situations [239–240](#); *see also* [story development](#); [story structure](#); [storytelling](#)

storming stage [185](#), [187](#), [192–193](#), [256–257](#), [262](#)

story development [1–2](#), [4–5](#), [7](#), [12–15](#), [16](#), [21–22](#), [23–24](#), [30](#), [37](#), [44](#), [45–46](#), [51](#), [68](#), [80](#),
[94](#), [110](#), [111](#), [125](#), [128](#), [145](#), [155](#), [159](#), [181](#), [186](#), [191](#), [197–198](#), [221](#), [233](#), [256](#), [260](#), [263](#),
[274](#)

story structure [1](#), [5](#), [7](#), [15](#), [22](#), [24](#), [30](#), [58](#), [80](#), [110](#), [128–130](#), [132–133](#), [136](#), [139–141](#), [159](#),
[221](#), [260–263](#), [271](#)

storytelling [1–3](#), [13–14](#), [19–22](#), [24](#), [29](#), [43](#), [51](#), [52](#), [57](#), [59](#), [67](#), [101–102](#), [108](#), [111](#), [116](#),
[124](#), [129](#), [142](#), [146–147](#), [153–157](#), [159](#), [179–181](#), [184](#), [186](#), [197–198](#), [209](#), [231–232](#),
[233](#), [260](#), [263](#), [274](#)

Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The [208](#)

Streetcar Named Desire, A [69](#), [71](#), [96](#), [143](#)

subplots [127–128](#), [146–148](#), [151](#), [186–187](#), [190](#), [238–239](#)

Sunset Boulevard [97–98](#), [100](#), [105](#), [119](#)

supporting cast [146](#) –[158](#) , [208](#) ; *see also* [allies](#) ; [archetypes](#) ; [character typing](#) ; [complication characters](#) ; [helpers/messengers](#) ; [red-herrings](#) ; [reflection/cautionary tale characters](#) ; [supporting characters](#)

supporting characters [28](#) , [34](#) , [60](#) , [146](#) –[152](#) , [157](#) , [160](#) –[162](#) , [169](#) , [190](#) , [208](#) , [238](#) ; *see also* [allies](#) ; [archetypes](#) ; [character typing](#) ; [complication characters](#) ; [helpers/messengers](#) ; [red-herrings](#) ; [reflection/cautionary tale characters](#)

survival strategy [31](#) –[32](#) , [32](#) , [35](#) , [87](#) –[89](#) , [95](#) , [97](#) , [99](#) , [112](#)

team characteristics [185](#) –[186](#) , [188](#) ; table [185](#)

Terminator 2: Judgment Day [168](#)

Three Centers [27](#) –[28](#) , [205](#)

Towering Inferno [209](#)

TV [3](#) , [101](#) , [147](#) , [159](#) , [256](#) –[257](#) , [270](#)

Twilight [225](#) –[226](#) , [225](#)

Verdict, The [106](#) , [114](#) , [120](#) , [143](#) , [201](#) –[202](#)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? [72](#) , [143](#)

Wilder, Billy [105](#)

World War Z [149](#) –[150](#)

writer resources [269](#) –[272](#)