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scoresvideos Writer Mentorship Program Scenes are the building blocks of our stories. These STORY UNITS dramatize definable VALUE SHIFTS for the AVATARS (or characters) and their CONTEXT (or setting). The value shifts that occur in each working scene of the story incrementally build the global arcs of change. Many writers define scenes by chapter breaks or changes in location or the AVATARS at the center of the conflict. While these transitions may coincide with a value shift, without a consistent definition of when a scene starts or ends, we cannot talk about a storys scenes consistently or examine masterwork scenes to improve our own scene work. Download the Math of Storytelling Infographic In the Story Grid Universe, we understand that stories are about life-altering change that happens when the protagonist makes an active choice in response to the global INCITING INCIDENT. As the building blocks of story, scenes dramatize smaller events and changes that when combined create the experience of the whole story. Executing effective scenes is one of the most important skills for story writers to master. We describe and identify whole scenes by using the Story Grid SCENE EVENT SYNTHESIS. This is a one-sentence summary that helps us analyze our own scenes or those in masterworks we seek to emulate. The Synthesis includes the following components. Ending value: This is how things stand at the end of the scene.Outcome of ABOVE THE SURFACE initial strategy: This describes the result of the protagonists initial attempt to reach their scene goal.ON THE SURFACE CLIMAX: This is the protagonists choice in response to the CRISIS.Tradeoff of the CRISIS: This is what the protagonist risks with their choice. The summary captures what happens after the protagonists initial strategy succeeds or fails and the protagonist acts in the CLIMAX, despite the potential risks of the CRISIS tradeoff. Scenes are different from TROPES or SEQUENCES. A trope is a change in microstrategies that build to a value shift of the scene. A sequence is an irreversible change in stakes that builds from the value shifts in scenes. Scenes allow storytellers to show the incremental change over time as the protagonist makes sense of and assigns meaning to the unexpected event that kicks off the story. Each scene presents a manifestation or instance of that global INCITING INCIDENT and the global CRISIS to communicate the CONTROLLING IDEA of the story. This also means that every scene should illuminate an aspect of SAMs problem from the NARRATIVE PATH. Scenes are made up of a series of TROPES. The microstrategies in tropes are used by the AVATARS to navigate the problems presented in each scene. The FIVE COMMANDMENTS OF STORYTELLING are dramatized through the trope microstrategies. The inciting incident of a scene catalyzes change with an unexpected event that is complicated by another unexpected event, which we call the turning point progressive complication. That event begins to turn the scene and forces the protagonist to face a crisis. When the protagonist implements their active choice in the climax, and they experience the immediate effects of the value shift or change in the resolution of the scene. FIVE COMMANDMENTS OF STORYTELLING. Each scene in a story will include an INCITING INCIDENT, TURNING POINT PROGRESSIVE COMPLICATION, CRISIS, CLIMAX, and RESOLUTION.Beyond the surface VALUE SHIFTS. Each scene contains a value shift, which describes a universal change from the beginning of the scene to the end of the scene.Above the surface essential tactics. The protagonist is forced to act or respond to crisis when above the surface essential tactic fails or succeeds and is not what they expected.On the surface action. The change in value comes as the result of on the surface climax action in response to the crisis. A scene should have a defined value shift. The scene will not end until the value has shifted. Writers should look for a change in value throughout the scene. One way to find the value shift is to identify the place in the story where the question raised by the inciting incident is resolved. Once the question has been resolved, the protagonist should have undergone a value shift. We analyze scenes through the STORY GRID 624 ANALYSIS, which helps us identify key features in every scene that we should study. Scene Event Synthesis Hamilton is recognized when, after his last relative dies, he overcomes his circumstances by fending for himself despite the risk of failure. Five Commandments Inciting Incident: Causal. When Hamilton is ten years old, his father abandons him and his mother. Turning Point Progressive Complication: Active. Hamiltons cousin commits suicide, leaving the young man alone and penniless. Crisis: Best Bad Choice. Hamilton can fend for himself or accept a life of squalor. Climax: Hamilton decides to educate himself. He borrows and reads books while working for his late mothers landlord. He publishes his writing. Resolution: A group of men are impressed by Hamiltons writing about the hurricane. They offer to pay for his travel and college. Scene Event Synthesis Darcy is devastated when Elizabeth insults his character after he asked her why she would not marry him despite knowing that any answer she gave would hurt him. Five Commandments Inciting Incident: Causal. Darcy pays another visit to Elizabeth knowing she is alone and unwell. Turning Point Progressive Complication: Active. Elizabeth refuses Darcys proposal of marriage. Crisis: Best Bad Choice. Should Darcy ask Elizabeth why she is refusing him and risk deep personal pain or blow Elizabeth off as being incapable of making a rational and beneficial choice? Climax: Darcy asks her why she wont marry him. Resolution: Elizabeth tells him in no uncertain terms why she wont marry him and insults him many times in the process. Scene Event Synthesis Clarice preserves life when she trusts herself by going down the steps to find Buffalo Bill despite knowing that she is walking into a trap. Five Commandments Inciting Incident: Causal. Clarice knocks on the door of Buffalo Bills house to ask him questions about the death of Fredricka Bimmel. Turning Point Progressive Complication: Revelatory. Clarice realizes that the man who had called himself Jack Gordon is really Buffalo Bill. Crisis: Best Bad Choice. Should she go down the steps when she knows it can only be a trap or call the FBI for backup? Climax: Clarice goes down the steps to find and kill Buffalo Bill. Resolution: Cathrine Martin is saved. A story can be split into smaller chunks called scenes, or incidents. Each scene should advance the plot and stand alone dramatically.There can be one or more scenes per chapter. Related Articles: Conflict, Creating Interesting Characters - Goals Scene Goal[]The scene goal is a character's short-term goal (or want, or need) for the scene, on top of the overall story goal.When conflict stands in the way of these goals, it makes the reader/audience ask a question. Will they achieve this goal? (What will happen next?).Scenes should end with further conflict, whether the character achieves the scene goal or not, creating a new goal which starts the next scene.Scene Goals + Conflict[]Goal + Conflict: Jane has to make it to a destination within ten minutes, but her car breaks down.Question: Will she make it in time?Goal achieved (boring): Jane makes it on time.Goal achieved/failed + more conflict: Jane makes it in time, but something isn't right... Goal + Conflict: John needs a job and has an important job interview.Question: Will he get the job?Goal achieved (boring): He gets the job.Goal achieved/failed + more conflict: Gets the job, but only if he carries out an important task. Or, he doesn't get the jobhe loses out to his best friend.Enter Late, Exit Early[]You should try to enter scenes late and exit early whenever possible. Begin scenes at an important point.Example:[]If two people enter McDonald's, order burgers, sit down, stick straws in their cups, fiddle with their phones, then start chatting, finish, go to the toilet then leave, it's boring.Enter late by beginning half-way through the conversation if you have to, then exit early before they finish the meal and pee.Scene Examples[]Here are some scene examples.The Matrix[]We arrive at Neo's office the moment he recieves a phone call no chit-chat with co-workers (enter late). Morpheus essentially says "evade the Agents" (scene/short-term goal). The agents are the barrier in front of the goal (conflict). That conflict makes the audience ask the question, "Will he escape?" (suspense). Neo refuses to follow Morpheus's orders on the ledge of the building (active protagonist) and he gets captured (scene goal failed + more conflict), with no visuals of the capture (exit early).Then we begin all over again in the next scene with a new goal (to not comply with the agents).Final Line[]The final line should encourage the reader to turn the page. These lines are often not subtle.Examples:[]Shaw replaced the phone and looked at his people. "Gentlemen, we just had a break in the Ryan case."- Tom Clancy, Patriot Games Example Two- Author, Title Writer Mentorship Program Scenes are the building blocks of our stories. These STORY UNITS dramatize definable VALUE SHIFTS for the AVATARS (or characters) and their CONTEXT (or setting). The value shifts that occur in each working scene of the story incrementally build the global arcs of change. 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In turn, every scene is built up with their own variables like location, character, time, plot, conflict, etc. To write a novel (or a short story, novella, etc.) you need to come to terms with that a story is written scene by scene (the length of your story will determine how many scenes youll need). It can, however, be tricky to write scenesespecially if you dont exactly know what it means. It took me a while to wrap my head around the idea of thinking of a story being built up by scenes. Which is why Ive written this blog post.Here, I will share 9 steps on how to write a scene. But first, lets look at what a scene is.What is a Scene?The short answer is that a scene is a unit that takes place at a specific location and in a specific time. You have a new scene if one of these changes.The longer answer is a bit more complicated. But, basically, a scene is a unit that consists of all kinds of storytelling aspects (setting, description, dialogue, etc.) that work in harmony with each other to show something that is vital for the overall story. In other words, every scene must have a distinct purpose within the larger scope of your story.Writing a scene can, therefore, become tricky because you need to look at it from two sides. You need to see the smaller picture (the scene) to write a good one that will reveal some new aspect of your plot or character, etc. Also, you need to see the bigger picture (the story) to write scenes that will harmonize together and create a great entity.9 Steps on How to Write a SceneTo write a scene to the best of your effort, you should be able to answer the following questions for each of your scenes:Which characters are in this scene? Do they all play an important role in this scene?When and where does this scene take place?What needs to happen in this scene? Think about the overall story.What is the goal for this scene? Think about the protagonists goal for the overall story and what smaller goals he need to achieve to later achieve his main goal.What is at stake for the protagonist in this scene?What is the main conflict in this scene?Whats the most surprising and unexpected thing that could happen in this scene?How does this scene further develop the storys plot?Whats the worst that would happen to the overall story if this scene was omitted? In other words, is this scene absolutely vital for the overall story?I hope youve found this useful!Have you struggled with writing scenes before? If not, how have you gone about writing your scenes? Do you have any tips you would like to share? Please do share in the comments below. How to Write a Story: From Idea to Finished Manuscript is a course for writers of genre fiction who want to write a storywhether a short story, novel series, or anything in between. This is for the Fearless Writer who wants to take their writing to the next level. This post was first published in March 2016 and updated in March 2023.Scenes are the building blocks of your novel. When you plan (if you plan!), youre thinking in scenes: individual little chunks of story that build on one another as they work towards the conclusion.Like me, you probably feel you have an intuitive grasp of what a scene is in a short story or novel. If you feel your scenes arent quite working, though, or if you struggle to outline your scenes, thinking through what exactly a scene is might help.Lets take a quick look at a few definitions:A scene is a sequence where a character or characters engage in some sort of action and/or dialogue. Scenes should have a beginning, middle, and end (a mini-story arc), and should focus around a definite point of tension that moves the story forward.Teach Yourself How to Write a Blockbuster, by Lee Weatherly and Helen Corner (pg 40, 2006 edition)By scene we mean here all that is included in an unbroken flow of action from one incident in time to another [] The action within a scene is unbroken in the sense that it does not include a major time lapse or a leap from one setting to another though the characters may, of course, walk or ride from one place to another without breaking the scene, the camera, so to speak, dollying after them.The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers, John Gardner (pg 59, 1991 edition)For me, a scene isa unit of story in which something changes. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and at the end something is different than it was at the beginning. It may be a character or a situation, or just our understanding of a character or a situation, but whatever it is, its changed when the scene is over.Whats a Scene (And Whats A Chapter?), Timothy Hallinan, TimothyHallinan.comSome writers like to think of scenes as chapters, starting a new chapter for each new scene. Theres no reason you cant do that but chapters play a different role.I sometimes end chapters mid-scene (so theres a cliffhanger) and I only switch viewpoints when I switch chapters, even if one chapter contains multiple scenes. Thats a personal preference yours might be different.Theres never going to be a perfect definition of a scene that works for every circumstance, so dont get too caught up in trying to decide whether a small time gap or a change of location definitely means its a new scene. If it feels to you like the same scene, treat it that way. Normally, scenes will include the following elements:At least one character, taking action (even if that action is primarily internal e.g. making a decision).If more than one character, dialogue between them. This dialogue should either advance the action or reveal character ideally, both.A description of the characters surroundings. Where are they and how does their environment affect the action and/or dialogue taking place? (An argument in the kitchen at home is going to be different from an argument in a crowded, noisy pub.)Conflict or complications, leading to the point of tension that Lee Weatherly and Helen Corner refer to in the quote above. This wont necessarily involve an argument or physical fight: it could be more subtle (a passive-aggressive comment) or conflict with something inanimate (a machine going wrong; terrible weather). It could also be internal conflict (a character is happy with something going well for once, but worried its been too easy).Rising emotion or tension. Dont start with a high point and get less interesting from there! This doesnt necessarily mean having action that gets physically more intense, though: you might, for instance, have a physical struggle followed by a high-stakes argument. K.M. Weiland has some great, in depth thoughts about the emotional arc of scenes here.A strong ending: dont let the scene peter out. (I am indebted to Lorna Fergusson here for her advice to get in late, get out early with scenes.) If youre revising an already-written scene, you might want to try cutting the last paragraph or the last couple of lines of dialogue.A link to the next scene: for instance, your protagonist decides to face off against their nasty boss, and the next scene shows this confrontation. The link can be less direct, though: perhaps it simply highlights the contrast between one characters circumstances and anothers (e.g. you end with one character hungry and start the next scene with a character feasting).Of course, you could have a scene that doesnt use all of these elements but if several are missing, you might want to reconsider whether its actually a scene at all.So, how do you put together a good scene?A Quick Note on the Scene and Sequel Story Writing TechniqueTheres a particular story-writing technique where you produce scenes followed by sequels. The terminology gets a bit confusing here, as most people would call both types scenes and some people consider them to be two halves of a scene (essentially, action and reaction).This technique originated with Dwight Swain, and you can find plenty of articles explaining it online, like this one from Advanced Fiction Writing.Its not how I pattern my scenes personally, though I think it includes helpful elements to think about including. But if its a technique you want to explore, K.M. Weiland has a handy series of articles about scene structure here.Her novel Storming also uses the scene-and-sequel technique very effectively as in, you wouldnt particularly notice it if you werent looking for it, and it works very well with the genre and the story that K.M. is telling.Planning and Structuring ScenesIf a scene is going to go wrong, its not usually because youre hopeless at dialogue or you cant describe settings. It goes wrong because youve struggled with the structuring and pacing.Youve probably read fiction whether published or in a workshop with a scene that:Started off well but then dragged on way too long you started skipping pages to get to the next interesting bit?Confused the heck out of you it took ages to figure out what was going on (and there was no good reason for the author to leave puzzling).Took ages to get into the actual action, with a lot of tedious thinking and soul-searching from characters before they didI think all these problems are ones that can be solved with a bit of forethought. I know that, when Im writing without a good plan, Ive a bit of a tendency to try to carry on with what logically happens next or to visit a character weve not heard from recently regardless of whether what happens next actually forms a scene, or whether that character has anything interesting to do or say.Im slowly becoming a convert to planning, then, rather than just making it up as I go along. Heres what works for me hopefully some of it will work for you too:When you evaluate the scenes that youve planned, or the scenes that youve written, ask yourself:#1: What changes during this scene? If you cut the scene entirely, would the story still work fine? If so, the scene probably shouldnt exist.#2: How can you do more with this scene, if its needed but currently feels a bit lacking? Can you bring in an extra complication, work in some necessary backstory, put a character under greater emotional or physical strain?#3: How does this scene link to the one before and/or the one after? Is the action building up towards a climax? Are you going for a particular resonance or a note of irony by juxtaposing one characters actions, speech, or thoughts with anothers?#4: Could this scene be placed earlier or later in the novel? Should it be? What else would change?#5: Is this scene too repetitive? Have you got an earlier scene that does something fairly similar? This happens all too easily if youre writing over an extended period of time. (Dont feel, by the way, that you have to show something two or three times in order for the reader to understand that its the normal state of things. Readers are quick off the mark.)#6: Have you chosen the best location for the scene? If a scene is feeling a bit flat or dull in its current setting, relocating it could add extra drama and tension. For instance, two characters arguing at home might end a bit too easily with one storming off; two characters arguing on a long, crowded bus journey have fewer options.#7: Does the scene start too early? If you have a lot of internal thought or chit-chat dialogue, then you need to get into the scene later: let us take for read whats already happened at the point at which the action begins.#8: Does the scene end too late? While I dont think this is by any means inevitable if youre using a scene-and-sequel structure, I do think you need to avoid having a long drawn-out section of character angst about what to do next. If they need all day to think about it, end the scene and start the next one at the point at which some new action happens.#9: Is the action over too quickly? Its tricky to judge the pace of a scene while youre writing, because writing out the words takes so much longer than reading them. Even if youre writing an action scene, readers wont want it to rush by too fast: they want to enjoy all the excitement.#10: Does the action drag on too long? Watch out for scenes that seem to meander back and forth without really progressing, or scenes that involve lots of thinking and not much doing.And finally, a bonus #11 Does the scene involve a chat over tea/coffee? I think any scene Ive ever attempted to set in a cosy coffee shop has ended up being cut (or swiftly relocated). Yes, it might be realistic for your characters to sit down and have a civilised conversation over a nice cuppa but thats not going to be terribly exciting to read about.This isnt an exhaustive list if you have a different question that you ask yourself about your scenes, please feel free to add it in the comments below.If you want to thoroughly edit scenes youve already written, I recommend downloading C.S. Laskins excellent .pdf on scene structure, which has a more detailed checklist.Your Next SceneWhen you next sit down to work on a scene, write down three to seven bullet points that describe whats going to happen. This is a good tool for (a) figuring out if youre going to have too little or too much going on within the scene and (b) keeping you on track as you write it.To go further with your scenes, check out my piece on writing stronger scenes by adding depth and detail.What is a scene and how do you write a good one? Find out the difference between active and passive scenes and how they work together to create compelling stories.In this article well look at: What is a scene?Active and passive scenesTreat each scene as a storyBe economic with scenesAim for visual interestGood scenes checklistEditing - what makes a scene weak?As a theatrical term scene describes all the action taking place on stage in a particular location. This location is defined by its scenery e.g. the set of a bar, dungeon, street corner etc. However, in movies and novels a scene can be more fluid and might comprise a series of continuous, related actions taking place across a number of related locations. Take, for example, a fight scene think of a classic swashbuckling sword fight where the hero and villain spend five minutes clashing steel through miladys boudoir, through the corridor, down the stairs into the Great Hall, then out into the kitchen turning left and ending up in the pig sty. This type of scene is known as active. In contrast, other scenes may describe action that is not continuous and might be spread over diverse locations over a long period of time. These scenes are known as passive...Whatever its mechanics any scene will fall into one of two categories: active or passive. Active scenes: are those where the protagonist is determined to reach a well-defined, achievable goal and by the end of the scene theyve either succeeded or failed to accomplish it. Active scenes dont contain time breaks, everything happens in the present as a single continuous sequence of events. Passive scenes: these generally deal with the aftermath of an active scene. The passive scene starts with the protagonist facing a dilemma and ends with them reaching a decision. These scenes can contain time breaks and can be spread over a variety of (otherwise unrelated) locations. Take the following. A bank robber approaches a bank. His goal is the robbery of said bank. He barges in through the main door, pulls a gun and orders the cashier to fill a bag with money. A customer sees his chance and tackles the bandit. The gun goes off and the customer is killed. Spooked, the robber flees the bank without his loot and the last we see of him hes running down an alley, police sirens blaring in the background. The above is an active scene. There are no time breaks, the robber doesnt pull his gun and suddenly go into a long flashback about his dying mother (though a short one might be appropriate in some situations for example a flash of memory about a robbery he saw in his childhood) the sequence of action should be unbroken. If the next scene is passive we might see the robber facing a dilemma: to hide or run. After weighing the options he decides to head out of town. We then see him furtively walk the streets as he tries to raise enough cash to buy a car. We might see this action spread over numerous locations over a number of days as the robber tries to call in favours from his lowlife friends and decide what to do next... Most stories comprise strings of active scenes interspersed with passive scenes. Passive scenes do the following: They give your audience a chance to catch its breath after the excitement of an active scene.Allow implications arising from events in active scenes to sink in.Provide opportunities to introduce new information about characters and build up their back-stories.Provide opportunities to introduce twists.Allow changes in direction the setting of new goals. For example, in First Blood Rambo escapes from town and is hunted through the woods by the sheriff and his deputies. This is an active scene that climaxes when Rambo captures the sheriff and, holding a knife to his throat, tells him to back off. The next scene is passive and we see action in a variety of locations: discussions inside a command tent, a news-reporter speaking to a camera, a helicopter coming into land, troopers assembling by a river, Rambo hunting a wild pig and making camp. The climax of this scene is Rambos radio conversation with his old commander Colonel Trautman (Company leader to Raven. Talk to me, Johnny.) which reveals much about Rambos past life. Trautman asks Rambo to surrender (presenting Rambo with a brief dilemma) but he refuses. The next scene is active, the action resuming as the National Guard and various armed townsfolk swarm into the woods to hunt down the fugitive.Treat each scene as if it were a mini-story in its own right. InBasic story structurewe saw how a traditional story comprises a beginning, a middle and an end divided by two plot-points. The first plot-point is the inciting incident that separates the beginning from the middle, and the second plot-point is the climax that separates the middle from the end. A good scene should include all these elements. For example, near the beginning of Star Wars theres a passive scene in Obi-Wan Kenobis desert home. Here Kenobi tells Luke Skywalker that his father was a Jedi Knight, and R2D2 plays the recorded message of Princess Leia asking for Obi-Wans help. Obi-Wan asks Luke to join him and help the Princess. Luke refuses. If we think of this scene as a story then the first plot-point (the inciting incident) consists of Obi-Wan asking Luke to come away with him. This presents Luke with a dilemma, he can either go with Obi-Wan, or not. Luke refuses but agrees to give Obi-Wan a lift to the nearest spaceport. The offer of a lift is the second plot-point in the scene as it resolves the conflict between Luke and Kenobi. The next course of action has been agreed on and the story can now move forward.Try to lump action into as few scenes as possible. It takes time and effort to establish a new location and this is better spent on the action and dialogue that will move your story along. If you have three separate scenes that feature conversations between the same two characters is there any way this information could be delivered in one or two scenes? Cut weak bitty scenes or combine them to make strong, significant ones. This advice applies equally to novels as it does to movies or television shows. Theres an obvious additional financial benefit to a TV or movie production in reducing the number of locations that are needed, but if youre writing a novel it can still take a considerable amount of work to paint a mental image of a new location in the readers mind. If its not absolutely necessary that you do so, you might as well save yourself the trouble and put your energy into scenes that will carry more weight.Make scenes more interesting and memorable by including a strong visual element. If youre describing a conversation between two business people in a fancy office, try to set it somewhere eye-catching such as the glass atrium attached to the main entrance, Better still do it in the atrium against the backdrop of an impressive water feature or bright mural some image that will stick in the mind. Alternatively, if its a really crummy office make the stand-out feature the half-dead yucca plant drooping in the corner, or the extravagant blonde wig wobbling on the head of the receptionist. In the same way, a conversation between two old men could take place in a parlour or sitting room, but could be more interesting in the corner of a bar or during a walk through a graveyard. Again, this advice applies to both written and visual media. A memorable, interesting location will help hold a viewers or readers attention, whether its in front of their eyes or in their imagination. Think about all the stories youve enjoyed which elements stand out most vividly when you remember them? For most people its those with a strong visual component that will have the most impact. Take, for example, The Game of Thrones and the imprisonment of Tyrion Lannister in the Eire of the Vale of Arryn. J. R. R. Martin could have written this as a typical underground dungeon location. Instead he invented the sky cells prison chambers with one side completely open to the elements allowing the horrifying possibility that you might roll out in your sleep and suffer a long fall to a certain death. Its a location that really leaps off the page, and the screen, and sticks in the memory.Your active scenes should include the following: A short-term goal for the protagonist. They must have an objective, and one they have a reasonable chance of achieving within the time-scale of the scene. If theres no chance of success, theres no tension. An obstacle for your protagonist to overcome. Without significant obstacles your scene will have no interest or suspense. A dramatic outcome. Your best active scenes will culminate in your protagonist suffering an unexpected disaster or mishap as these setbacks raise the stakes and increase tension. Alternatively, if a scene is centred on your antagonist, aim for it to end with a success. Something thats good for your villain will be bad for your hero, and until the story is resolved were looking for opportunities to add to our heros tribulations. In passive scenes make sure you have: An appropriate beginning. Most passive scenes follow on from an active scene. In these cases the action in a passive scene should be a logical progression from the climax of the active scene that went before it. A dilemma. Give your protagonist a choice of actions, and ensure that the choice is between unpleasant alternatives. Whatever action is decided upon it should lead to a new problem to overcome, so helping to set up the next scene. An outcome. Dont dither. Once the dilemma has been mulled over, your protagonist must come to a decision. Its this outcome that will propel the story to the next sceneThe director and screenwriter Howard Hawks once said that a good movie should contain at least three great scenes and no bad ones. Its great advice thats true of any story. When you finish your first draft go through your text and eliminate your weakest scenes. Either cut them altogether or extract the action they contain and find ways to embed it into stronger scenes. A weak scene will be one that: Does not naturally flow from the scene that went before it.Contains nothing that helps move the main story along.Could be removed without anyone noticing.Is entirely unmemorable. So sharpen your editing axe and search your script for chop-worthy scenes. Good hunting! More pruning tips can be found inRevision and editing.Main image Frenzel c/o Shutterstock Writer Mentorship Program Scenes are the building blocks of our stories. These STORY UNITS dramatize definable VALUE SHIFTS for the AVATARS (or characters) and their CONTEXT (or setting). The value shifts that occur in each working scene of the story incrementally build the global arcs of change. Many writers define scenes by chapter breaks or changes in location or the AVATARS at the center of the conflict. While these transitions may coincide with a value shift, without a consistent definition of when a scene starts or ends, we cannot talk about a storys scenes consistently or examine masterwork scenes to improve our own scene work. Download the Math of Storytelling Infographic In the Story Grid Universe, we understand that stories are about life-altering change that happens when the protagonist makes an active choice in response to the global INCITING INCIDENT. 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Resolution: Cathrine Martin is saved. Share copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. One of my biggest struggles as an emerging writer was understanding the concept of a scene and how it differed from the overall events of the book. After all, if I plotted the beats* in my novel, wouldnt each scene naturally fall into place?Short answer: No.If you rely only on your outline to establish the overall arc of your story, youll end up with a lot of transition scenes long pages of people walking, talking, looking at the scenery, maybe, without any real sense of conflict, tension, or overall plot arc.In this series, Ill first talk about what a scene is and how to tell when a scene begins and ends. In the next post, Ill go over how to write excellent scenes.What is a scene?First, what the heck is a scene and why is it so hard to define?A scene is basically a mini-story containing a small arc. You connect your scenes together to create an overall arc for your story. Put more simply, a scene involves a setting, a character, an action or reaction, and a time. When one of these changese.g., a character enters or leaves, the setting changes, or its the next day, youve moved to a different scene.Where scenes begin and endFor example: you have a scene where two characters are burning evidence in a fireplace. A third person walks in and catches them in the act. The moment the third person enters, that's a new scene.Conversely, if you start your scene when the third person walks in and find two people burning evidence in a fireplace, this is all one scene, because it starts with that three-person dynamic and continues that way.Parts of a sceneA novel consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end. A scene also does so, but in a way that contributes to the overall arc of the larger work. That means each scene will probably contain some variation on conflict, options, and resolution or non-resolution. Conflict is generally created by making your character want something and then stripping that away.In my blog post on plotting, I talk about the importance of knowing your characters goals. In individual scenes, your character(s) will also have goals, otherwise, there's no need for the scene.Maybe your evidence-burning characters want to get rid of papers that incriminate them in a horrific crime. Their goal is escaping undiscovered, avoiding prison, or possibly even staying alive. You can either resolve their problem by allowing them to successfully burn the evidence before the third person enters or mess up their plans by having the third person discover the plot. Either way, the third person ends the initial scene and starts a new scene in which the characters have a new goalperhaps to get rid of the third person, or somehow convince them of their innocence.When you start looking at each scene as a way of establishing conflict and thwarting the characters goals, you inevitably build tension and conflict in your larger work. Understanding the components of a scene enhances the overall richness of your work, which always leads to great reader enjoyment.---*Helpful vocab:Beats are the standard elements of a story that help build the plot structure, such as the introduction, the inciting incident, the call to action. Scenes are individual units of action, conflict, and change. 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What is a scene in film. Scene explained.