

# The Single Most Powerful Writing Tool You'll Ever See That Fits On One Page

by Larry on August 12, 2009

A bold claim, that. But I challenge you to read this stuff — which, when printed, really does fit onto one page — and then argue that you've seen a more empowering checklist of *must-haves* gathered in such a condensed space.

There's enough stuff here to fill up a bookshelf. If you don't know what these questions mean, then by all means go to that bookshelf and settle in. If you do, then get busy, your bestseller awaits.

This is a listing of everything you need to know about your story before you can successfully finish it, stated in the form of a question. There was a time when I would say this is everything you should know about your story *before* you write it, but that only applies to folks who want to write a first draft that's basically, with a tweak or two, a polish away from being submittable.

Crazy, I know, but it happens. I've sold three first drafts using this approach.

For drafters — those allergic to story planning and who fight to the death for their defiance of outlining — this becomes a checklist of things you're looking to discover (answer) in your series of inevitable drafts. The more answers you can stuff into your next draft, the fewer subsequent draft you'll need to write.

And if you leave only a few of these untouched then no draft you write will ever be final. Only abandoned.

Yeah, it's that powerful.

Print this baby out and keep it in a safe place. Frame it and put it next to your PC. Whatever works. Because when you fully understand what these questions mean to your story, and how to integrate the answers into it, you're there.

The frequent visitor to Storyfix.com will notice that these blocks of questions correspond to the four parts of story structure, as described in our recent 10-part series.

And how, upon closer examination, the list envelopes all of the four elemental components of the Six Core Competencies (concept, theme, character and structure), leaving the other two (scenes and writing voice) to your brilliant execution.

And if you aren't a frequent visitor here, I submit to you that perhaps you should be. If you can find one page of information this densely populated with relevant guidelines and empowering milestones, snatch it up. But I'm betting you can't, at least elsewhere.

You're here. Welcome to the breakthrough in your writing journey you've been looking for. Welcome to Storyfix.com

**What is the conceptual hook/appeal of your story?**

**What is the theme(s) of your story?**

**How does your story open? Is there an immediate hook? And then...**

- what is the hero doing in their life before the first plot point?
- what stakes are established prior to the first plot point?
- what is your character's backstory?
- what inner demons show up here that will come to bear on the hero later in the story?
- what is foreshadowed prior to the first plot point?

**What is the first plot point in your story?**

- is it located properly within the story sequence?
- how does it change the hero's agenda going forward?
- what is the nature of the hero's new need/quest?
- what is at stake relative to meeting that need?
- what opposes the hero in meeting that need?
- what does the antagonistic force have at stake?
- why will the reader empathize with the hero at this point?
- how does the hero respond to the antagonistic force?

**What is the mid-point contextual shift/twist in your story?**

- how does it part the curtain of superior knowledge...
- ... for the hero?... and/or, for the reader?
- how does this shift the context of the story?
- how does this pump up dramatic tension and pace?

**How does your hero begin to successfully attack their need/quest?**

- how does the antagonistic force respond to this attack?
- how do the hero's inner demons come to bear on this attack?

**What is the *all-is-lost* lull just before the second plot point?**

**What is the second plot point in your story?**

- how does this change or affect the hero's proactive role?

**How is your hero the primary catalyst for the successful resolution of the central problem or issue in this story?**

- how does it meet the hero's need and fulfill the quest?
- how does the hero demonstrate the conquering of inner demons?
- how are the stakes of the story paid off?
- what will be the reader's emotional experience as the story concludes?