

dan harmon story circle worksheet

Dan Harmon Story Circle Worksheet: A Detailed Exploration

The Dan Harmon Story Circle is a narrative structure developed by writer and producer Dan Harmon, best known for his work on shows like "Community" and "Rick and Morty." This storytelling framework offers a systematic approach to crafting compelling narratives by breaking down stories into eight distinct stages. By understanding and utilizing the Story Circle, writers can create more engaging and cohesive stories that resonate with audiences. This article will explore the Dan Harmon Story Circle Worksheet, its components, and how to apply it effectively in your writing process.

Understanding the Dan Harmon Story Circle

The Story Circle is an adaptation of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, tailored for contemporary storytelling. Harmon simplifies the journey into eight key steps that reflect the protagonist's transformation and provide a structure that guides the narrative arc. The Story Circle can be visualized as a circular diagram, where each stage builds upon the last, creating a cohesive narrative flow.

The Eight Stages of the Story Circle

1. **The Setup:** This is where the protagonist is introduced in their ordinary world. The audience gets a glimpse of their life, motivations, and the context of the story. This stage establishes the baseline for the character's journey.
2. **The Call to Adventure:** The protagonist receives a challenge or a desire that disrupts their normal life. This moment compels them to begin their journey, setting the stage for growth and conflict.
3. **The Refusal of the Call:** Initially, the protagonist may hesitate or refuse to engage with the call to adventure. This stage highlights their fears, doubts, and the stakes involved, adding depth to their character.
4. **Meeting the Mentor:** In this stage, the protagonist encounters a mentor figure who provides guidance, wisdom, or tools necessary for their journey. The mentor often represents a source of knowledge and support.
5. **Crossing the Threshold:** This pivotal moment marks the transition from the ordinary world to the extraordinary realm of adventure. The protagonist commits to the journey, leaving their comfort zone behind.
6. **Tests, Allies, and Enemies:** As the protagonist navigates this new world, they face challenges, meet allies, and confront enemies. This stage is crucial for character development and plot progression.

7. The Approach: The protagonist prepares for a significant challenge or conflict. This stage builds tension and anticipation, as the stakes are raised, and the protagonist must confront their fears.
8. The Ordeal: The climax of the story occurs here, where the protagonist faces their greatest challenge or enemy. This moment tests their resolve and often leads to a transformation or revelation.
9. The Reward: After overcoming the ordeal, the protagonist receives a reward or recognition. This stage signifies the fruits of their labor and the changes they have undergone.
10. The Road Back: The protagonist begins the journey back to their ordinary world, often facing one last challenge or realization that tests their growth.
11. The Resurrection: In this final stage, the protagonist experiences a final transformation, having learned valuable lessons throughout their journey. This moment often involves a confrontation with their past or a resolution of the central conflict.
12. Return with the Elixir: The story concludes with the protagonist returning to their ordinary world, bringing back the lessons learned or a tangible reward. This stage emphasizes the impact of their journey on their life and the lives of others.

Creating a Dan Harmon Story Circle Worksheet

To effectively utilize the Dan Harmon Story Circle in your writing, creating a worksheet can help organize your thoughts and plot points. Below are steps to create your personalized Story Circle Worksheet:

Step 1: Outline Your Protagonist

- Name:
- Age:
- Background:
- Goals and desires:

Step 2: Define the Eight Stages

1. The Setup:
 - Describe the protagonist's ordinary world.
2. The Call to Adventure:
 - Detail the event that disrupts the protagonist's life.
3. The Refusal of the Call:
 - Note the protagonist's fears and reasons for hesitation.

4. Meeting the Mentor:

- Identify the mentor figure and their significance.

5. Crossing the Threshold:

- Describe the moment the protagonist commits to the adventure.

6. Tests, Allies, and Enemies:

- List key challenges, allies, and antagonists.

7. The Approach:

- Outline the preparations and increasing tension before the climax.

8. The Ordeal:

- Define the climax and the protagonist's greatest challenge.

9. The Reward:

- Specify what the protagonist gains after the ordeal.

10. The Road Back:

- Describe the journey back and any final challenges.

11. The Resurrection:

- Identify the protagonist's final transformation.

12. Return with the Elixir:

- Note what the protagonist brings back to their ordinary world.

Applying the Story Circle to Your Writing

The Dan Harmon Story Circle Worksheet is more than just a planning tool; it is a dynamic framework that can enhance your storytelling. Here are some tips for applying the Story Circle effectively:

Tip 1: Focus on Character Development

The heartbeat of any story lies in its characters. Use the Story Circle to delve deep into your protagonist's motivations, fears, and growth. Each stage should reflect their emotional and psychological journey, ensuring that readers connect with their transformation.

Tip 2: Maintain Narrative Momentum

The circular structure of the Story Circle encourages narratives with a clear progression. Each stage leads naturally to the next, creating a sense of momentum. As you write, ensure that each event logically follows from the previous one, maintaining engagement and interest.

Tip 3: Emphasize Conflict and Tension

Conflict is essential for compelling storytelling. Utilize the "Tests, Allies, and Enemies" stage to introduce obstacles that challenge your protagonist. Heightening tension during the "Approach" and "Ordeal" stages will keep readers invested in the outcome.

Tip 4: Reflect on Themes and Messages

The Story Circle also provides an opportunity to weave in themes and messages. As your protagonist undergoes their journey, consider what lessons they learn and how these resonate with broader human experiences. The "Return with the Elixir" stage is particularly impactful for reinforcing the story's central message.

Conclusion

The Dan Harmon Story Circle Worksheet is a powerful tool for writers seeking to create structured, engaging narratives. By breaking down the storytelling process into eight key stages, it allows for a clearer understanding of character arcs and plot progression. Whether you are drafting a screenplay, novel, or short story, applying the Story Circle can elevate your writing, ensuring that your story resonates with audiences on multiple levels. Embrace the challenge of crafting your narrative using this framework, and witness the transformation of your storytelling skills.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Dan Harmon Story Circle and how is it used in storytelling?

The Dan Harmon Story Circle is a narrative structure that simplifies the classic Hero's Journey into an 8-step circular format, helping writers develop character arcs and plot progression. It emphasizes the protagonist's journey through challenges and transformations.

What are the eight stages of the Dan Harmon Story Circle?

The eight stages are: 1) The Character is in a Zone of Comfort, 2) They want something, 3) They enter an Uncomfortable Situation, 4) They adapt to it, 5) They get what they wanted, 6) They pay a heavy price for it, 7) They return to their old situation, and 8) They have changed in some way.

How can I create a Dan Harmon Story Circle worksheet for my script?

To create a Dan Harmon Story Circle worksheet, draw a circle and divide it into eight equal sections, labeling each section with the corresponding stages. Then, add notes or prompts for your characters

and plot points as you develop your story.

What are some benefits of using the Dan Harmon Story Circle in writing?

Using the Dan Harmon Story Circle helps writers maintain narrative focus, ensures character development, and creates a satisfying story arc. It also aids in identifying plot holes and enhancing the emotional impact of the story.

Can the Dan Harmon Story Circle be applied to non-fiction writing?

Yes, while primarily designed for fiction, the Dan Harmon Story Circle can be adapted for non-fiction by framing the narrative around personal journeys, case studies, or thematic explorations, helping to engage the audience through relatable experiences.

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