



ELA Virtual Learning

Creative Writing

May 13, 2020



Creative Writing

Lesson: Tues., May 12

Objective/Learning Target: Students will learn how a story's controlling idea determines works specifically in the medium of television.



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Warm-up: On Monday, we read an excerpt from Robert McKee's book on storytelling craft, *Story*. Today, [watch this video of McKee](#) discussing *controlling ideas* as it pertains specifically to television.

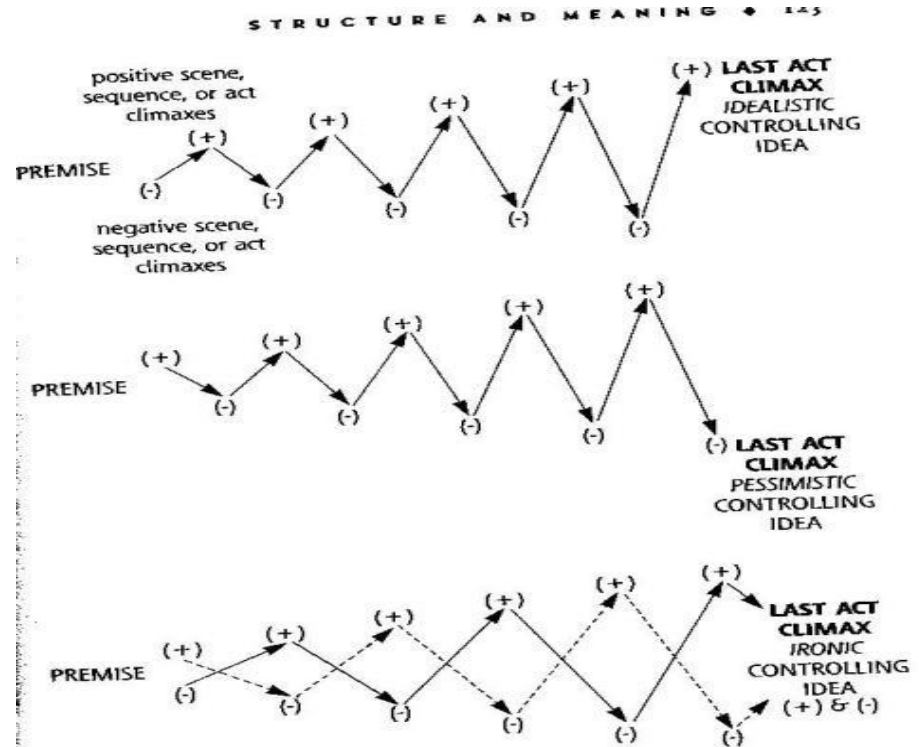


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Review: We've learned before that characters must have motivation, and the obstacles (or conflict) thwarting that character's desire propels the story forward. When she makes progress toward her goal, we consider that a net positive change. Any kind of setback would be considered negative.

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Review (cont'd): According to Robert McKee, the final “value” in the story structure determines its controlling idea-idealistic, pessimistic, or ironic. This helps us determine the underlying value of the story.





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Lesson: In [the video for today](#), McKee tells us the first step is to determine the value (justice vs. injustice, existential). The next step is to ask “how” and “why.”

For example, over the course of [the sitcom *Community*](#), a disgraced attorney named Jeff secretly desires a sense of belonging, and the show’s premise is that he can find this at a local community college (the last place he expects).



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Lesson (cont'd):

How: Jeff creates a study group, apparently to get closer to his love interest Britta (subplot) as well as to finish his degree and be reinstated as an attorney.

Why: Because he wants to be loved and desires a sense of belonging. (For Jeff, these motivations are subconscious.)



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Practice: For the television show you've been studying (or select any current sitcom), determine the overarching *value* of the series as well as the *how* and *why*.



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Additional Practice: Actively watch another episode of a television show you've been studying. Does the *how* and *why* change when you consider a secondary character's motivation? How does that character clarify or complicate the *how* and *why*?



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Additional Practice/Resources:

[How to Become a Television Comedy Writer](#)

[Screenwriting Glossary](#)

[Screenplay Formatter Add-On for Google Docs](#)