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[Worldbuilding Ep. 010: Plot Part Three, Structuring Plot from Character Desires and Forces of Antagonism](#)

Posted on February 27, 2007

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Worldbuilding Episode 010 Show Notes

I know this is taking *way* too long to finish, but the notes here will be updated this week. Episode 11 is being worked on right now, and should be posted by week's end as well.

People have been asking for more of these, so...

World Builder's Library. Get this worldbuilding book:

How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy by Orson Scott Card-one of the most useful chapters (from a worldbuilding perspective) is the one that focuses on the four mindsets available to storytellers. Card uses what he refers to as the MICE quotient when he thinks about how a story is

constructed. The MICE stands for Milieu, Idea, Character and Event, and thinking about which quadrant or category best suits one's mood, style and preference can help the worldbuilder decide where and how to start and end his or her stories (as well as which aspects of the worldbuilding process is most relevant to him or her).

Which of the four areas are you most interested in developing or focusing on as you develop adventures within your world:

Milieu

These stories, and worlds, according to Card, are about the *world* itself. Think about *Gulliver's Travels*, or *Wizard of Oz* (or for the super nerdy, the old Saturday morning adaptation of *Dungeons and Dragons*). If the strange world of your imagination takes center-stage, first and foremost, then you might be a developing what Card refers to as a Milieu Story. Adventures of these type usually begin when a character (an everyman who very closely resembles *us* with our modern sensibilities) enters the strange and fantastic. The adventures end when the hero returns home.

Idea

Do you have a theme, or a great twist, or a message or a social concern that takes center stage, so that the world you are creating becomes merely the stage for that idea to reveal itself in all its glory? You might be most interested in developing an Idea Story. Card says that mysteries and detective fiction follow this route. The adventures begin with a mystery, an idea that must be revealed or proven. The story is over when the detective solves the riddle, the crime, or reveals the nature of the hidden truth. I also think of *The Twilight Zone*, especially the old Rod Serling episodes, where the fun of the story happens in the end when the twist is played out, and the idea finally disclosed.

Character

If you have a character you are dying to play, use, write, or torture, and you want this character to go through significant and dramatic emotional arcs of great change and growth, you might be developing Character Stories. Indiana Jones, James Bond and Superman do not change, but rather stay essentially iconic and archetypal, so they fit better inside Event Stories. Sherlock Holmes would best suit the Idea Story, because like his Event Story counterparts, he does not change but stays always "Holmesish." A character who *really* learns something, who is *different* at the end of the journey, whose life path becomes *significantly* altered, is part of the Character Story. If your adventures are fundamentally about character change, then your adventures start with a character who needs changing, and end when that character finally resolves to change or grow as an individual.

Incidentally, Character Stories are probably not great choices for licensed properties because once the character changes for good, the story kind of ends. Imagine if Spider-man died. Or Superman decided to stay with Lois Lane forever and give up his godhood. Frank Miller created a Character Story successfully for Batman with *Dark Knight Returns*, but this story is not considered canon and is usually treated as a *possible* future or an alternate timeline, so as to keep the Batman franchise continually churning out Event Stories.

Event

The world, in these stories, gets disrupted by something that must be righted and realigned. The adventure begins near the point of the disruption, which we writer types like to call the Inciting Incident, then resolves itself in a finale when the event's disturbance is finally mended by the heroes. Think about *Lord of the Rings* or *Star Wars*, and most high fantasy for that matter, where the event takes the center stage, and the world serves as the environment through which the event is handled.

The quadrants in the MICE formula can overlap. A writer may create an Event Story with more developed character growth, or an Idea Story with a heavy milieu focus. But the fundamental structure usually emerges to dictate one category as a priority.

Which area do you, as a storyteller, as a worldbuilder, as a gamemaster, enjoy focusing on? The map, the

territory, the landscape, the wonders of the setting? Does your setting become a central character of the story? Does the story begin with everyman characters wandering through your invented world, their eyes-a-gazing? Maybe you are milieu focused.

Do you enjoy the thematic subject matter, the cosmic truth, or psychological study of human nature that your world unveils? Is your world about an unravelling mystery that needs illuminating? Perhaps you're idea focused.

Or maybe the *characters* take center stage, and your world becomes a place for their growth, change, advancement or destruction. Are the life lessons and hardships that the characters go through the focal point of your stories?

Or do you like the plot events that stir your characters into action? The old school serials? The villains that must be destroyed? The world that needs saving? Or the wrongs that must be righted? Maybe you're just old school Event focused.

The rest of the notes...

Thanks for being patient.

More show notes will be coming soon...



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- Coming soon!

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