

NAVIGATING THE RIVER, STORY FORM by William Hill

EARLY QUESTIONS to ask yourself.

What if . . . ?

What genre will suit the story? Who is the target audience? Both selections come with settings, characters, and types of problems.

What problem needs solving or highlighting? What kind of story? A tale about a character, event, idea (a mystery to solve) or a milieu, a strange land/society? What is the setting? What is time frame? What is the story's theme or statement?

Who is the protagonist? Main antagonist? Is the problem a challenge, a chosen task, or a crisis, meaning a unchosen task, or a combo of both? Do the characters, problems, and setting match and support the theme?

The plot is character in action. What are the relief, success, and humorous points on the stair steps toward the climax? How does it end in broad terms?

PART I: The Introduction. Show don't tell about the characters, setting, conflicts and problems.

Introduce the protagonist(s) and show their dominant trait, weakness, desire, motivation and goals or lack thereof. Face the protagonist with a problem that foreshadows or leads to a crisis. Shake up his/her world. What happens that will reveal their true character? Is the protagonist willing or reluctant?

Choices of the opening scene are: action, character or situation crisis, including unknowns to solve.

Introduce the antagonist. Show the villain's power and how this desire thwarts the protagonist's goal/desire. The villain's job is to drive the story to catastrophe. A villain tests the character's mettle like a stress test.

Set up the or else, dreadful alternative. Failure or doing nothing means what?

Bring in time constraints, like a deadline, (which can shorten, later) to add pressure which affects character.

Create ill or good will. Perhaps set up the invisible life line. It will appear later to rescue the protagonist.

PART II: The Body. Here everything gets more complicated and conflicted. Increase tension.

A turning point happens. Repeated failures in solving the problem. Or the character continues to avoid and delay dealing with the challenges and crisis.

Conflicts, physical, mental and emotional, all multiply and get more complicated, even combining.

Create more ill or good will, even the lifeline. Small challenges overcome and lessons learned help the protagonist deal with the broader crisis.

PART III: Resolution. Here, everything unifies with the theme, and the character must commit to facing the problem, solving it, or failing, and echoing the overall statement.

There is a turning point, one of no return, where the stakes are the highest. All odds are stacked against the protagonist. What makes the character fully commit? The protagonist is forced to face a weakness or failing. The characters make defining choices.

To resolve, characters should redeem, win or be successful. Or, in their loss or failure, the protagonist or the audiences comes to some greater understanding, realization, enlightenment or discovery.

Navigating the River Story Organizing Form by William Hill

OVERALL:

Genre: Mystery. Romance. Fantasy. Science Fiction. Horror.

Target audience: Elementary, Middle School, High School, Age range:

Theme/Statement:

Story type: Character. Event. Idea.

PART I: Introduction. Who, What, and Where. Introduce and Show-off!

Setting:

Time frame:

Main character, dominant trait, weakness, desire/goal:

A problem that foreshadows crisis:

Opening scene:

Supporting characters and what they represent:

Antagonist, dominant trait, weakness, desire/goal:

Crisis (big problem):

Dreadful alternative & consequences of failure:

Ill or good will & invisible lifeline:

Part II: The Body. Complications and tension.

Turning point:

Failures:

Conflicts, physical, mental and emotional:

Ill or good will and the lifeline:

Small challenges overcome:

PART III: RESOLUTION: Here, everything unifies with the theme.

Turning point when the stakes are the highest:

The character fully commits by:

Weaknesses faced and defining choices:

Invisible lifeline shows up to rescue the protagonist:

Rare, desperate or unthinkable act to succeed or redeem:

Discovery, enlightenment or understanding: