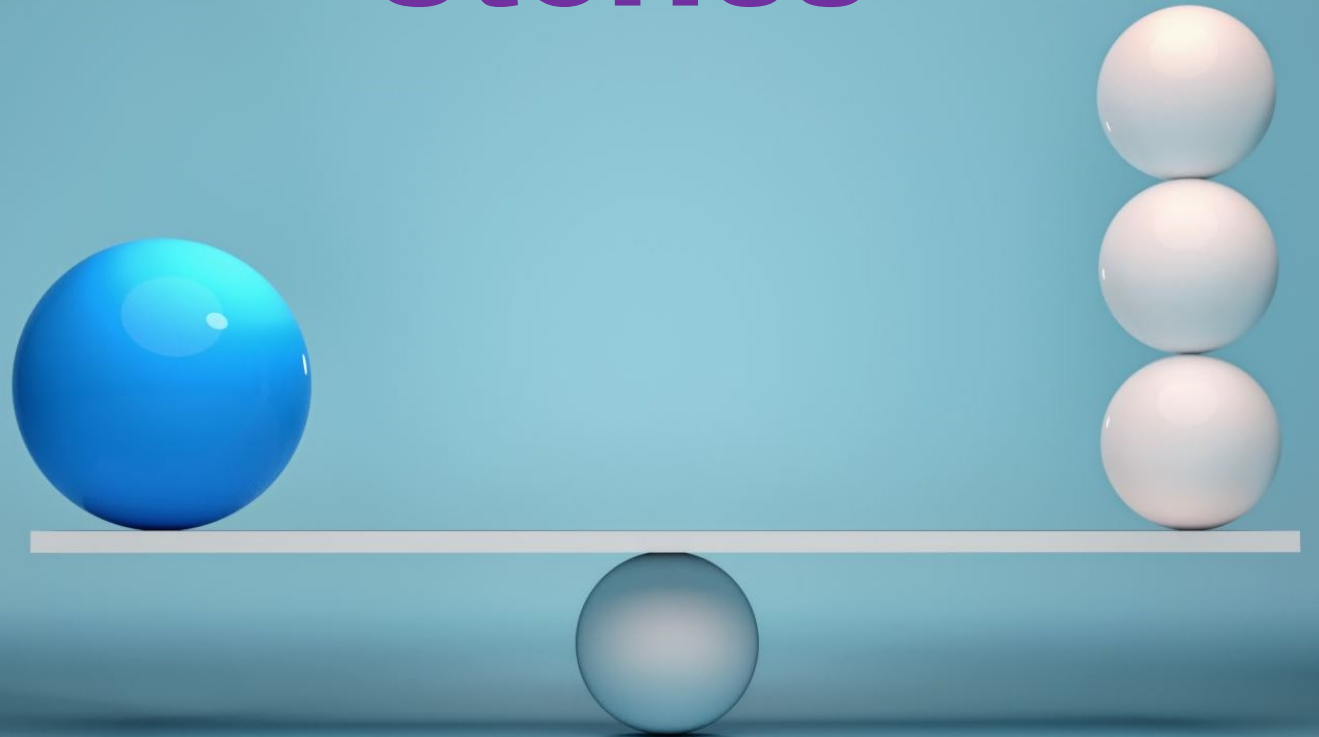


SMOKING
GUNS
AUGUST
MEETING
2022

Writing Short Stories



TROUBLE WITH SHORT STORIES?

- I had trouble. The stories kept running long - even with tight writing.
- Teaching short stories vs. Writing short stories.
- Success with long narratives vs. short narratives.
- What was I doing wrong? Surely there's a secret to short stories?

LESTER DENT'S PLOT FORMULA

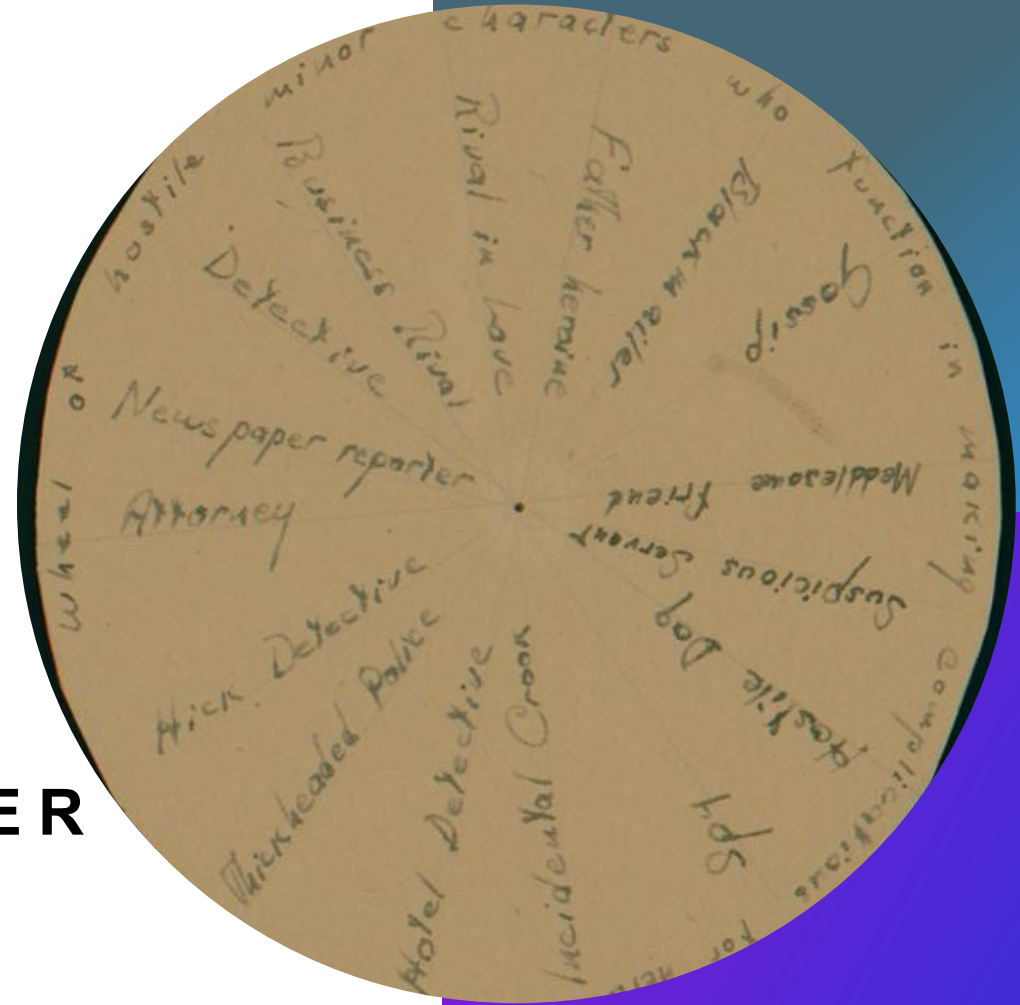
- **Who is Lester Dent?**

**The plot formula works with
a 6,000-word story,
a four-five stanza poem,
or an anecdote of 15-20 sentences for a nonfiction article.**

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER'S PLOT WHEELS

PLOT FORMULAS: TOO
EASY TO UNDERSTAND,
COULDN'T BE THE ANSWER

RECIPES!



DENT CLAIMED THAT NO STORY OF HIS USING THE FORMULA HAD FAILED TO SELL

- Dent writing action-adventure
- Formula works for genre fiction / works for literary fiction (all internal conflict)
- For lit. fiction, replace Dent's call for "physical action" with an internal epiphany or revelation.

4 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE STARTING WRITING

1. Different Murder Method for Villain to Use
2. Different Goal / Desire for Villain to want
3. Different Setting :: Verisimilitude / Local Color
4. Different Menace over the protagonist :: “Cloud that hangs over the main character”

Operating Instructions

1. Divide the story into 4 sections (1,500 words each)
2. Jobs to do in each section
3. Some jobs are similar but not the same.

OPENING FOR EACH SECTION

- All open with trouble in the first line.
 - ❖ Dent vs. Austen vs. Dickens
 - ❖ Erle Stanley Gardner's approach
- Short form vs. Long form
- Trouble in each section increases in difficulty and danger > 4th is the worst.
 - ❖ Action-Adventure; personal trouble

ENDING FOR EACH SECTION

- Each section ends with an unexpected twist.
- Twists are the backbone of Dent's plot formula.
- 4th Section twist is right on top of the climax
 - ❖ Following the twist is the Snapper or Punchline

MIDDLE JOBS IN EACH SECTION
~ TWO THINGS THE SAME
~ OTHER THINGS ALL DIFFERENT
FROM EACH OTHER.

- #1 same thing: a Try / Fail Cycle in 1st / 2nd / 3rd that “shovels more grief” on the main character (Dent). In the 4th section, the main character is “up to his shoulders in grief”.
- #2 same thing: Physical Conflict before the twist that ends the section (external but intellectual or social or ethical / moral for internal conflict)

OTHER THINGS ALL DIFFERENT

- Middle of the 1st Section: 1] Intro the main character
2] Intro all the other important characters ASAP
- Middle of the 2nd: Main character struggles to solve to conflict
- Middle of the 3rd: Main character nears the solution
- Middle of the 4th: Using own skills, main character solves the conflict.

CHECK FOR THESE AT THE END OF EACH SECTION

- Logic and Suspense
- Action is vivid and swift
- 5 senses are in use
- Description: Dent says trees, wind, water, scenery.
 We can add buildings, cityscapes like bridges, passersby, animals, etc.
- Worry line or baggage
- Main character has a modicum of success in each section.

SECTION 1

- Open with trouble
- Main character copes with conflict and reveals own personality
- Introduce all other main characters ASAP
- Try / Fail Cycle & intensified trouble (worry line or baggage) or threat of "a little death"
- End section with a twist

SECTION 2

- Open with increasing trouble
- Try / Fail Cycle & intensified trouble
- Main character struggles are clear
- End section with a Twist

SECTION 3

- Open with more increasing trouble
- Try / Fail Cycle & intensified trouble
- Main character struggles are clear
- (may need to clear up any other mysteries)
- End section with a twist (Dent "a hell of a fix")

SECTION 4

- Open with the worst trouble almost burying the main character
- Try / Success Cycle that clears up the main mystery
- Main character solves with own skills
- End story with a twist
- Close with a Snapper / Punch Line

**MAY INTO JUNE
EPISODES**

**Short
Narratives
in 4 Parts**

**THE
WRITE
FOCUS**

