

The Plot Menu – Part 1

Cinderella – A Fractured Fairy Tale

Overview:

Pantsing is the most inefficient way to write. But in-depth plotting is also a time waster if you don't stick to your outline. The Plot Menu is a happy medium.

The Plot Menu is a three-step process:

- 1) Choose your main characters' personality types
- 2) Set up your tent-pole scenes
- 3) Brain-dump scenes as you go

A blog post on the topic : <http://ocwriters.network/2017/11/09/plot-menu-creating-balanced-story/>

Part 1 - How to choose your main characters' personality types.

The Enneagram Institute describes nine basic personality types. (See page 3 for more detailed descriptions.)

The Reformer	The Loyalist
The Helper	The Enthusiast
The Achiever	The Challenger
The Individualist	The Peacemaker
The Investigator	

Each type responds differently to the same stimulus. Let's imagine Cinderella with three different personality types and see what it does to the plot.

I) Cinderella as a Reformer:

- 1) Fear of being corrupt or defective
- 2) Desires to be good, to have integrity
- 3) Weakness is anger

If Cinderella is a Reformer she won't take the injustice done to her by her stepmother lying down. Her need to see wrongs righted and to improve the world around her would force her to take action. Combine that with her temper, and this version of the story could quickly become a Steven King novel. Imagine this Cinderella picking up a fireplace poker, heading upstairs and whacking her adoptive family.

II) Cinderella as an Investigator:

- 1) Fear of being useless or helpless
- 2) Desires to be capable and competent
- 3) Weakness is greed

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If Cinderella is an Investigator she won't lie passively in the cinders and allow her stepmother to abuse her. Her fear of helplessness will drive her to try to take charge of the situation. Add to that her propensity toward greed, and there's no way she'll sit by and allow her inheritance to be stolen.

This Cinderella won't be inclined to rely on the affection of the Handsome Prince to save her either. Remember, she wants to feel capable and confident in her own right. When the Fairy God Mother comes calling, this Cinderella would most likely want to become her understudy in an attempt to get that kind of power for herself. This book would find its place on the Fantasy or Magical Realism shelf in the bookstore.

III) Cinderella as an Enthusiast:

- 1) Fear of deprivation and pain
- 2) Desires to have personal needs fulfilled
- 3) Weakness is gluttony

If Cinderella is an Enthusiast she won't be happy with her uncomfortable lifestyle. She complains, moans, and is too distracted by her situation to get any of her chores done. All she cares about is eating, drinking and being merry, none of which are her current reality. When this Cinderella gets to the ball, she'll head straight for the buffet table—Handsome Prince be damned. You'd find this version of the story in the Humor section of the bookstore.

IV) Cinderella as a Loyalist

- 1) Fear of being without support and guidance
- 2) Desires security above all else
- 3) Weakness is fear

This is the Cinderella we know and love. She puts up with her stepmother's demands because the devil she knows is better than the one she doesn't. Fear keeps her from acting. She never makes a move to change her situation until the Fairy God Mother comes around. She then shifts her security from her stepmother to the Fairy God Mother, and follows her guidance. The story ends happily ever after because Cinderella finds the ultimate stable situation, marriage to a rich, powerful man.

Choose your protagonist's personality type

- 1) What genre are you writing?
- 2) What drives your character?
- 3) What will be your main character's arc?

Answer those questions, and it shouldn't be hard to arrive at the basic personality of your protagonist. Remember in good fiction, just as in real life, this is only a starting point. People are nuanced, complex creatures. No one will be a complete cookie-cutter version of any one type. Think of this as a way to keep your story on track and avoid having unbelievable characters.

Rinse and Repeat. Go through the same process for the other key characters in your story and begin your novel with a strong supporting cast.

Nine Enneagram Institute Personalities

- 1) **The Reformer:** Type One is principled, purposeful, self-controlled, and perfectionistic.
Basic Fear: Of being corrupt/evil, defective
Basic Desire: To be good, to have integrity, to be balanced
Weakness: Anger
Key Motivations: Want to be right, to strive higher and improve everything, to be consistent with their ideals, to justify themselves, to be beyond criticism so as not to be condemned by anyone.

- 2) **The Helper:** Type Two is generous, demonstrative, people-pleasing, and possessive.
Basic Fear: Of being unwanted, unworthy of being loved
Basic Desire: To feel loved
Weakness: Pride
Key Motivations: Want to be loved, to express their feelings for others, to be needed and appreciated, to get others to respond to them, to vindicate their claims about themselves.

- 3) **The Achiever:** Type Three is adaptable, excelling, driven, and image-conscious.
Basic Fear: Of being worthless
Basic Desire: To feel valuable and worthwhile
Weakness: Deceitfulness
Key Motivations: Want to be affirmed, to distinguish themselves from others, to have attention, to be admired, and to impress others.

- 4) **The Individualist:** Type Four is expressive, dramatic, self-absorbed, and temperamental.
Basic Fear: That they have no identity or personal significance
Basic Desire: To find themselves and their significance (to create an identity)
Weakness: Envy
Key Motivations: Want to express themselves and their individuality, to create and surround themselves with beauty, to maintain certain moods and feelings, to withdraw to protect their self-image, to take care of emotional needs before attending to anything else, to attract a "rescuer."

Information taken from <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/type-descriptions/>

5) The Investigator: Type Five is perceptive, innovative, secretive, and isolated.

Basic Fear: Being useless, helpless, or incapable

Basic Desire: To be capable and competent

Weakness: Greed

Key Motivations: Want to possess knowledge, to understand the environment, to have everything figured out as a way of defending the self from threats from the environment.

6) The Loyalist: Type Six is engaging, responsible, anxious, and suspicious.

Basic Fear: Of being without support and guidance

Basic Desire: To have security and support

Weakness: Fear

Key Motivations: Want to have security, to feel supported by others, to have certitude and reassurance, to test the attitudes of others toward them, to fight against anxiety and insecurity.

7) The Enthusiast: Type Seven is spontaneous, versatile, acquisitive, and scattered.

Basic Fear: Of being deprived and in pain

Basic Desire: To be satisfied and content, to have their needs fulfilled

Weakness: Gluttony

Key Motivations: Want to maintain their freedom and happiness, to avoid missing out on worthwhile experiences, to keep themselves excited and occupied, to avoid and discharge pain.

8) The Challenger: Type Eight is self-confident, decisive, willful, and confrontational.

Basic Fear: Of being harmed or controlled by others

Basic Desire: To protect themselves, to be in control of their own life and destiny

Weakness: Lust

Key Motivations: Want to be self-reliant, to prove their strength and resist weakness, to be important in their world, to dominate the environment, and to stay in control of their situation.

9) The Peacemaker: Type Nine is receptive, reassuring, complacent, and resigned.

Basic Fear: Of loss and separation

Basic Desire: To have inner stability "peace of mind"

Weakness: Indifference

Key Motivations: Want to create harmony in their environment, to avoid conflicts and tension, to preserve things as they are, to resist whatever would upset or disturb them.