

STORY WORKSHEET FOR WRITING A TV PILOT

1.) Start by defining what your Series Trigger and Dilemma are.

Your Series Trigger and Dilemma should set up your arc for Season 1. Your Series Trigger and Dilemma often set up the emotional arc for your central character. It often sets up WHY they want WHAT they want.

2.) What is your Pilot Trigger, Dilemma and Pursuit for the A story?

The pilot trigger, dilemma and pursuit should be linked to the series trigger and dilemma. Keep in mind that your pilot trigger, dilemma and pursuit would not happen unless your series trigger and dilemma happened.

Your pilot trigger should push your central character in the A story into a dilemma. The choice that is made in the dilemma defines the external pilot goal.

If you have a season one arc, you want to set up that your pilot arc is one step toward the season arc goal.

3.) What is the external goal that stems from your dilemma in the A story? By identifying the external goal, all of your other pivotal points in your story (obstacle, escalating obstacle and “all is lost” moment) will connect back to this goal.

4. Write a series log line.

Use the formula – Set up of WHO (create empathy), dilemma, action, goal with a twist of irony.

5.) Write a pilot log line. This is a summary of the A story.

Use the formula – Set Up of WHO (create empathy), dilemma, action, goal and a twist of irony.

6.) Write an internal log line for the central character in the A story.

Use the formula – Set up of WHO (create empathy), Dilemma, action, goal and a twist of irony.

7.) Write a log line for the B story arc and the C story arc using the same formula.

8.) Write what the starting trigger and dilemma is for your B story. Write the goal that stems from it.

Think of a theme that ties your story lines together. Ideally, your B story arc should elevate the A story arc. Think of an arc that ties together, theme, symbolism and message that connects your story lines.

9.) Write down the actions that the central character in your story takes in pursuit of the goal.

In every act, your central character should take an action toward the goal, hit an obstacle and there should be a reminder of the stakes.

10.) Write what your act-outs will be.

Your act-outs should be obstacles, escalating obstacles and an “all is lost” moment that all connect back to your goal.

You can double the impact by having your act-outs end on strong obstacles in the A and B story so that it really hits.

11.) Write what the external and internal stakes are for each goal. What is the worst that will happen if the goal is not achieved?

Make sure that there is an external/internal stakes arc throughout. Remind the audience what your character/characters have to lose.

12.) Make sure that the external goal in the A story is achieved. We need to see and feel the moment of the achievement in your last act.

13.) Set up what your series will be. End your pilot in a way that makes your audience want to return to see what happens next.

Make sure that the concept of your series is crystal clear.

CHARACTER ARC FORMULA – FIVE QUESTIONS

- 1. What is the childhood wound of your central character?**
- 2. How does the series trigger and dilemma split open this wound?**
- 3. What is the negative narrative that comes from these wounds?**
- 4. What is the flaw that comes from the negative narrative?**
- 5. How does the flaw/negative narrative get in the way of the central character achieving the goal?**