

WRITING FUNDAMENTAL SERIES

2025

# The Story Blueprint Worksheet

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by

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# About the Author

Heena Rathore-Pardeshi is an award-winning novelist, developmental editor, and creative writing mentor with over a decade of experience helping writers shape powerful stories.

She has taught hundreds of writers through her courses, workshops, and editing programs, and has

worked with bestselling authors, debut novelists, and publishing houses across India and abroad. She has also worked with multiple American and British production houses for turning books into scripts.

Her own works, including the acclaimed psychological thriller *Deceived*, gothic Indian-folklore horror *The Manor* and her upcoming book *The Art of Storytelling*, are known for their depth, atmosphere, and intricate psychological layering.

A passionate reader (she reads over 100 books a year), Heena brings to her teaching a rare blend of literary insight, structural precision, and emotional intelligence. Through her YouTube channel and Verbatik Media, she continues to build spaces for writers to learn, create, and grow.



# Introduction

Stories are the oldest form of human connection. They are like a thread that ties our memories, beliefs, and emotions into meaning. Before we had language, we had stories. Before we had history, we had myth. A story, at its heart, is not just what happens; it's *why* it matters.

This worksheet is designed to help you discover your story. Whether you're writing fiction or narrative non-fiction, this blueprint will help you move from idea to narrative.

Every section in this workbook corresponds to one of the key concepts covered in my "Anatomy of a Story" lecture (available on my YouTube channel) that covers the basics of story understanding the five essential ingredients to identifying your story beats and building structural cohesion.

Use it as a creative map rather than a checklist. You don't have to follow it in order; you can explore it however you want. The idea is to unearth the story that's already waiting beneath the surface.

The ideal way to use it is by printing out the entire worksheet and using it for one particular idea or story. You can take multiple prints for multiple ideas/stories.

All the best and Happy Writing!

**HEENA**

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# SECTION 1

## DISCOVERING YOUR STORY IDEA

**1. What inspired this story?** (Was it an image, a memory, a piece of dialogue, a question, or a feeling?)

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**2. Describe your idea in one line:** (Example: “A grief-stricken son discovers his father’s hidden identity through an unfinished letter.”)

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**3. What emotional truth does this story explore?** (Love, betrayal, loneliness, power, redemption, belonging...)

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**4. What is the deeper human question at its heart?**

» “What would you sacrifice for freedom?” or “Can love survive the truth?”

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**5. Why do you need to tell this story? (What personal connection or urgency fuels it?)**

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# SECTION 2

## THE FIVE INGREDIENTS OF A STORY

<b>Ingredient</b>	<b>What It Means</b>	<b>Guiding Questions</b>	<b>Your Notes</b>
<b>Character</b>	The beating heart of the story.	Who is your protagonist? What drives them? What's their flaw?	
<b>Conflict</b>	The tension that creates movement.	What opposes your protagonist's desire – internally and externally?	
<b>Change</b>	The transformation that gives meaning.	How does your protagonist evolve by the end? What truth do they discover?	
<b>Theme</b>	The story beneath the story.	What larger truth are you exploring about humanity, morality, or identity?	
<b>Cohesion</b>	The thread that binds everything together.	What tone, motif, or rhythm makes your story feel unified?	

**Remember:** Cohesion is what makes your story feel intentional. It's the echo between your opening and closing scenes, the rhythm in your pacing, and the consistency of emotional tone.

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# SECTION 3

## THE “WHAT IF” TEST

### Formula:

What if \_\_\_\_\_ ,

Even if \_\_\_\_\_ ,

But when \_\_\_\_\_ , everything changes.

### Exercise:

Write 3 different versions of your premise using this formula. See which one creates the strongest sense of urgency and consequence.

#### Version 1:

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#### Version 1:

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### Version 3:

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### Example:

**What if** a woman begins receiving letters from her dead husband?

**Even if** everyone insists he never existed.

**But when she** finds a photograph of them together, she must question her own sanity, **everything changes.**

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# SECTION 4

## STRUCTURING YOUR STORY

Choose a structure that best suits your narrative:

Structure Type	Description	Example
<b>3-Act Structure</b>	Act 1: Setup / Act 2: Confrontation / Act 3: Resolution	<i>The Godfather, The Kite Runner</i>
<b>4-Act / Screenplay Model</b>	Adds a midpoint reversal: Act 1 (Setup), Act 2A (Response), Act 2B (Attack), Act 3 (Resolution)	<i>Breaking Bad, Parasite</i>
<b>7-Point Plot Structure</b>	Hook → First Plot Point → Midpoint → Second Plot Point → Climax → Resolution	<i>Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone</i>
<b>Story Spine</b>	“Once upon a time...” → “Every day...” → “Until one day...” → “Because of that...” → “Until finally...”	Pixar storytelling model
<b>Hero's Journey</b>	Ordinary world → Call to adventure → Trials → Death/Rebirth → Return with elixir	<i>Life of Pi, The Alchemist</i>

## **Exercise:**

Try rewriting your story idea in the format of two different structures. Notice how it changes tone, pacing, and focus.

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# SECTION 5

## STORY BEATS & TURNING POINTS

Beat	Purpose	Prompt	Your Notes
<b>Hook / Opening Image</b>	Establish tone & character	What do we see first? What emotion do we feel?	
<b>Inciting Incident</b>	Disrupts normal life	What forces your protagonist to act?	
<b>First Turning Point</b>	No turning back	What decision changes everything?	
<b>Midpoint Shift</b>	Revelation / Reversal	What truth or lie is uncovered?	
<b>Dark Night of the Soul</b>	Emotional low point	What makes your protagonist nearly give up?	
<b>Climax</b>	Moment of truth	What final choice defines your protagonist?	
<b>Resolution / Denouement</b>	Transformation	How does the world (or self) change?	

## **Exercise:**

Sketch a line graph marking emotional highs and lows through your story – this visual “heartbeat” will reveal pacing issues and the dreaded sagging middle.

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# SECTION 6

## STORY COHESION

### CHECKLIST

**Cohesion is the symmetry of story, when every element feels like it belongs.**

- Tone remains consistent (language, imagery, rhythm).
- Opening and ending mirror each other in some way.
- Each scene has a clear purpose: either advancing plot, revealing character, or deepening conflict.
- Subplots echo the main theme or question.
- The story's emotional rhythm feels balanced; peaks, valleys, and reflection.

**Ask yourself:** If I removed this scene, would the story lose something essential?

If not, consider trimming or rewriting it.

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# BONUS SECTION

## YOUR STORY PROMISE

**1. What is your story really about?** (Beneath the events, what truth are you exploring?)

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**2. In one word, what does your story feel like?**(Hopeful, haunted, redemptive, tense, luminous, tragic...)

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**3. What do you want your reader to remember long after the last page?**

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**4. How does your ending transform your beginning?**

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**Complete this paragraph in your own words:**

My story is about \_\_\_\_\_.

It begins when \_\_\_\_\_.

It matters because \_\_\_\_\_.

By the end, readers will feel \_\_\_\_\_.



# HOW TO USE THIS BLUEPRINT

## **Using this blueprint effectively:**

- Print or fill digitally before drafting.
  - Revisit after every major rewrite.
  - Use it to spot structural gaps or emotional inconsistencies.
  - Remember: the blueprint evolves with your story.
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**THANK YOU!**