

VANESSA THURGOOD BOOKS
PRESENTS



QUESTORY

YOUR GUIDE TO WRITING
A STORY WORTH SHARING



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WELCOME TO STORY QUEST!

Thank you for joining this course. *“Light does so much more when shared,”* and this course is just one of the many ways I am sharing my light with others.

You’ve now entered the realm of storytelling, and your life will never be the same. From this course, it is my hope that you will grow in every aspect of your life. We will explore the creation of stories through self-discovery and personal development. What once was daunting and mysterious will become a path toward a better you. We’ll take those ideas cluttering your mind and turn them into a full-length novel and a short story, ready to hand over to an editor by the end of this course.

In this course, we’ll explore the three basic avenues for telling your story, which include writing novels (50k-100k+ words) and short stories (500-10k words). We will also learn how to develop habits and systems that will shape the rest of your life. Some things we’ll cover are:

- ◇ How to get your ideas out and organized.
- ◇ Write your rough draft and how to edit it.
- ◇ Craft compelling characters that readers want to know.
- ◇ Build a world that feels real.
- ◇ Improve your writing abilities
- ◇ Become a better human being.

Expectations:

You signed up for this class to learn how to write and FINISH your manuscript. Therefore, it’s important to review the goals you’ve set to keep yourself on track. You’ll be expected to complete your set daily word count, finish the homework, and the readings. There are no grades associated with this course. However, I want you to take this just as seriously. We move at a fast pace and it will take effort on your part to keep up.

If you are struggling with a concept or are in a sticky place in your manuscript, please ask questions and ask for help. We succeed when we help each other in what is otherwise a lonely journey.

What you will need to bring to each class:

- ◇ A computer
- ◇ Your guidebook
- ◇ Idea notebook
- ◇ Notes from any assigned reading
- ◇ Most importantly, QUESTIONS!



Missed classes/ Make up classes:

If you know you are going to miss a class, please call or text Vanessa and let her know you won't be there. Missed classes can be made up by attending one of the other offered class times, or you can catch up on that day's lessons by watching the offered videos on Vanessa's website through the student portal (app coming soon!).

Class Structure:

We will begin each class by reviewing what we learned previously, answering questions, talking about what went well and what we can improve upon. Next, we'll dive into a bit of personal development that relates to what we're discussing that day. Some of this will come from the assigned reading and others will be general things about how to improve you as a person. This approach of using self-development in our process of writing is key to our success. It will help you level up your productivity, stop wasting time, and never get stuck by writer's block again.

The last aspect of each class is learning the next phase of storytelling. This means we will discuss the new topic, then put it into application so you can go home and truly build upon what you learn. Before

class is over, we will set our weekly goals.

The rest is up to you to keep your class commitments. It is important to dedicate the same amount of effort to this class as you would to learn any other skill. If you fall behind, jump in where we are and continue to move forward. The biggest win is to just keep going.

Books you will need to buy or borrow for this course:

- ◇ Miracle Morning by Hal Elrod (Section 2)
- ◇ Atomic Habits by James Clear (Section 3)

****Not Required, but Recommended ****

- ◇ The Dictionary of Body Language by Joe Navaro
- ◇ The Chicago Manual of Style

Now that the boring stuff is out of the way, let's get moving on our quest to write stellar stories!

CALENDAR

Section 1 - The Hero's Journey

	Topics
Week 1	Developing Your Why and Mind Mapping your story
Week 2	Your Goals and Outlining Your Novel
Week 3	Habits & Systems, Story Beats
Fall Break September 24 - October 7	
Week 4	Staying Organized and Developing Your Characters (Pro vs. Ant)
Week 5	Developing Your Routine, Miracle Morning, Remaining Characters (creation, conflict, arcs)
Week 6	Rings of Identity, Characters (16 Personalities test)
Week 7	Affirmations, Worldbuilding (hooks, seasons, weather, rules of the game, real world cultures or traditions)
Week 8	Identifying Roadblocks (swot), Worldbuilding (geography, maps) World Anvil
Week 9	Your Identity Statement, Book Research, Casting Your Scenes
Week 10	My Mission Statement, Premise and A-Story
Week 11	Developing One-Year Plan, Choosing a Genre and Finding Like Authors
Week 12	Celebrating Your Wins, Perspectives and Tenses
Christmas Break December 11-January 1	

CALENDAR

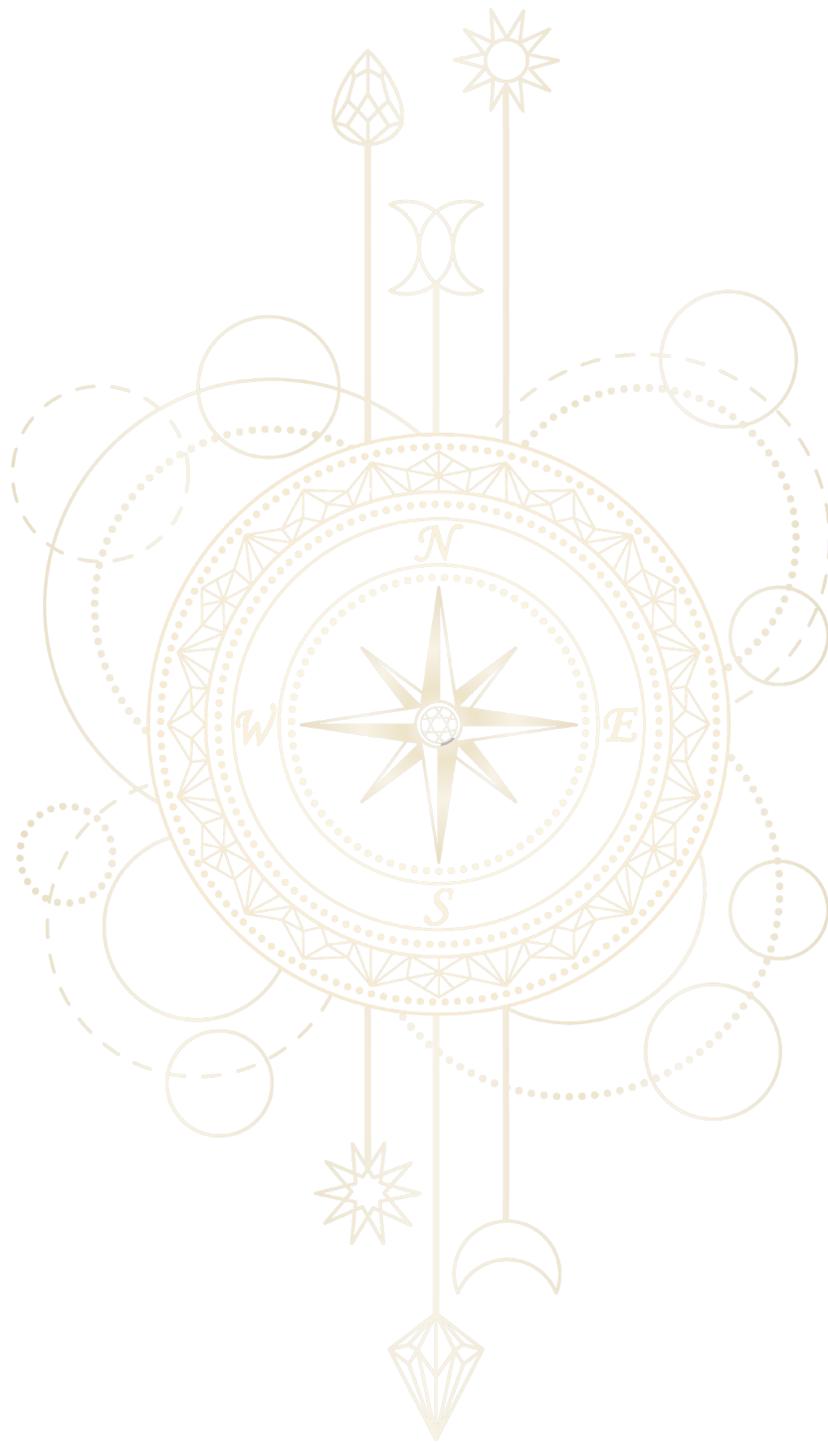
Section 2 - The Gritty Details

	Topics
Week 13	Revisit Your Why, Plot devices, Plot do's & don'ts
Week 14	Goal Check-in, Dialogue, Questions, and Comebacks
Week 15	Habits & Systems Check-in, Setups and Payoffs, Filling Plot Holes
Week 16	World Anvil and others for Organization and Keeping Details
Week 17	Dealing with Writer's Block, Genre Requirements
Week 18	Overcoming Obstacles, Timelines, Themes, and Story Goals
Week 19	Updating Affirmations, Scene Sequeling Comics, Solve the Problem in Your Story
Week 20	Mission Statement Review, Tropes and Avoiding Coincidences
Week 21	Being True to You, Keeping Characters Relatable and Real
Week 22	Limited Thinking and Beliefs, Story Pacing, Chapters, Breaks, Sections
Week 23	PI HERE, Style Guide, Various Technicalities
Spring Break March 17-23	

CALENDAR

Section 3 – Polish and Wax

	Topics
Week 24	Internal Self-Talk, Strengthening scenes with body language and emotion.
Week 25	Proactive VS Reactive Writing
Week 26	Nailing First lines and Chapters Beginnings and Endings
Week 27	Show, Don't Tell
Week 28	Staying Organized and Developing Your Characters (Pro vs. Ant)
Week 29	Developing Your Routine, Miracle Morning, Remaining Characters (creation, conflict, arcs)
Week 30	Rings of Identity, Characters (16 Personalities test)
Week 31	Affirmations, Worldbuilding (hooks, seasons, weather, rules of the game, real world cultures or traditions)
Week 32	Identifying Roadblocks (swot), Worldbuilding (geography, maps) World Anvil
Week 33	Your Identity Statement, Book Research, Casting Your Scenes
Week 34	My Mission Statement, Premise and A-Story
Summer Break	





SECTION I

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

*"There is no greater agony than
bearing an untold story inside you."*

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

YOUR DEEP DIVE “WHY”

Has someone ever asked you, “Why do you want to write a book?” This question may be easy for you to answer and it may not.

It is also very different for each individual. Some have had a story burning in their hearts or minds for years and they’re finally giving themselves permission to pursue it. Others find themselves led from an early age to the art of story craft.

What made you want to write a book?

Let’s tweak this question. I want to ask you instead:

What is it about that story that makes you want to write it?

Is it a story worth telling?

Is it worthy of your time?

The answer to these questions comes from within you. No one else can give you that answer, and if you find it hard to write something down, I want you to meditate on it until you can.

We need to answer to these questions before moving onto anything else.

Because by developing this “Why,” you’ll find the strength to get out of bed each day and complete your word count. You’ll stay committed to your goals and you will find success throughout this course.

Getting clear on your “Why” will make all the difference on those days where you don’t feel like writing. Or those days where it seems like the world is against you. Your “Why” will be the backbone for your entire writing career.

If you find that your “Why” is hard to pin down, try this exercise.

To find your why, begin a practice of self-awareness. Think about who you are. What do you want in life? What inspires you? Likes and dislikes? Get to know yourself on a deeper level. Write all these thoughts down on the space on the next page.

Next, I want you to keep a daily journal and reflect on what you write over the week. See what you can discover about yourself.

Things you can ask yourself to get started:

- ◇ “Why do you dress the way you do?”
- ◇ “Why are you early for everything?”
- ◇ “Why do you get up and exercise every day?”

You aren’t taking the beaten path. You shouldn’t! It’s so much more fun and energizing to take the road that leads you to your best and most fulfilled self. And I can guarantee it won’t be on the road that everyone else is taking.

Turn the page and take a five minute deep dive into your why and see how far you can go.



Week 1

Why do you want to write a book?

Why does this matter to you?

Why do you want that?

Why is this story worthy of your time?

How will your book help others?

Summarize your thoughts above into 1-3 sentences. Get SUPER clear on why you are starting this journey.

MIND MAPPING YOUR BOOK

Mind mapping is one of an author's most valuable tools when planning a novel. It allows you to get every single idea that's been floating around in your head out onto paper where you can see it with your physical eyes. This frees up space in your mind.

It can help you see what ideas relate, and which ones go in sequential order. You can also discover ideas that will not fit for this book, but don't throw them away! Hang onto those ideas in your idea pocketbook. They may come in handy later on.

So how do you create a Mind Map?

First, take your giant stickie note and write out your big idea, or your key concept, in the center. Then put it in a bubble. From here, take a new marker and make other bubbles that connect back to your big idea.

These can include character names, settings, major plot points, specific scenes that keep playing in your mind, and anything else that pertains to your book. Get as detailed as possible. Every single idea you've had for this book needs to be put on the paper, even if you're not sure that you'll use it. Put it up.

Once completed, you can take a

different colored marker and connect your smaller ideas that go together. You can also put numbers next to each bubble to help you identify what needs to happen first, second, third, etc.

This is also a wonderful space to decide what tense you want to write your book in. First or third? Present or past? What is common for books in your genre?

For help, check out these articles:

Pros and cons to present tense

<https://thewritepractice.com/past-tense-vs-present-tense/>

<https://theeditorsblog.net/2012/01/31/narrative-tense-right-now-or-way-back-then/>

First, second, and third person

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/grammar/point-of-view-first-second-third-person-difference>

Past tense is very common, and as such, readers can fall into your story quicker. Present tense is great for an action based story because it's always pushing forward.

First person keeps us in the head on the Point Of View character. This gives us insight into their thoughts and feelings in a very intimate way. This can be a great option for a first book as you have only one character's thoughts to keep track of.

Third person puts distance between the reader and the characters. It can also afford the writer several perspectives with which to play. You won't be limited to only one person's view of the world. This will require planning to keep it cohesive.

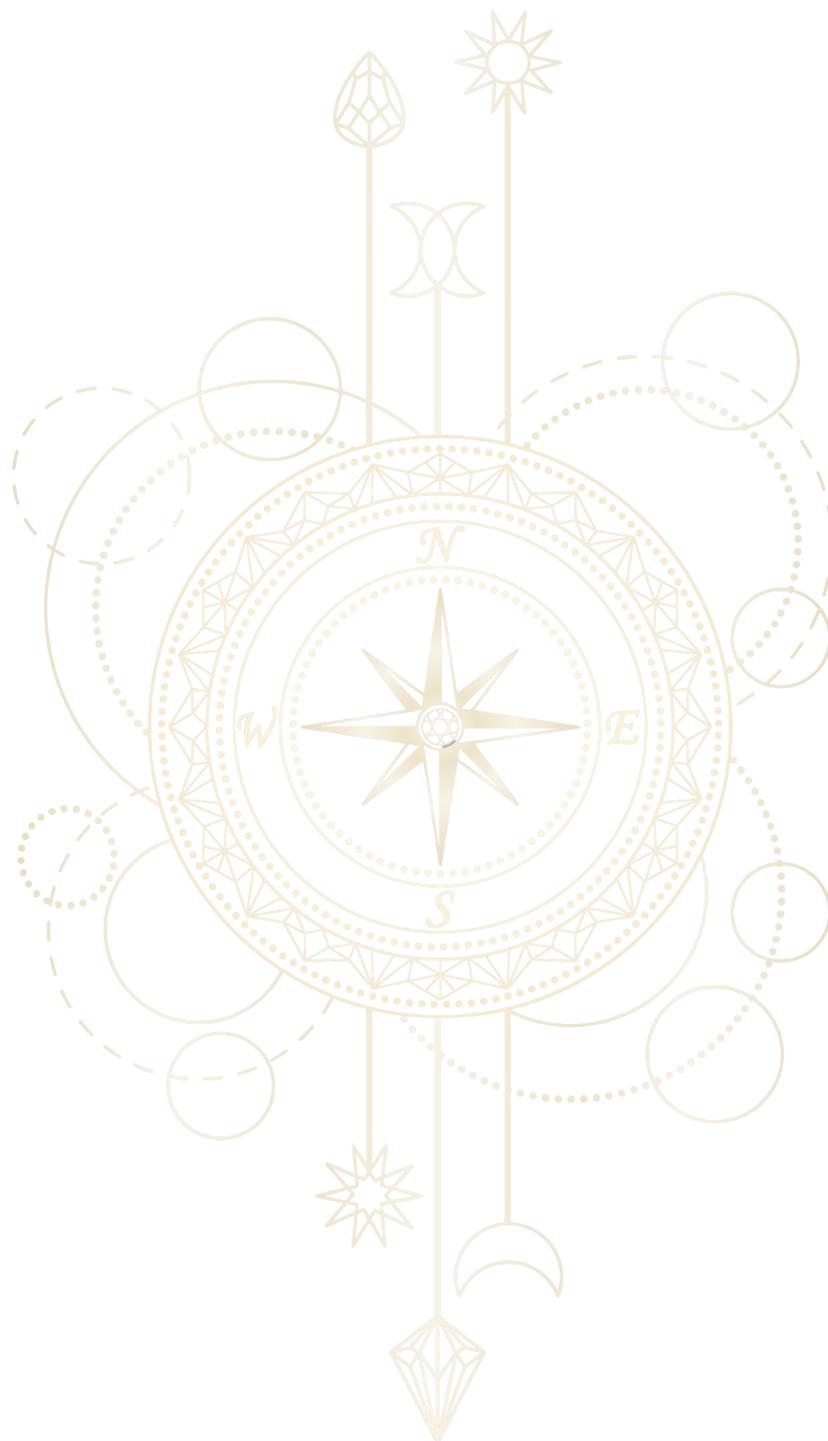
I would highly **discourage** new writers from using second person. It is awkward and extremely hard to pull off well. This is why there are so few books written in this way. It's just not how we talk.

Ready to dive in?

Action Items:

1. Type up your "why" for writing a book and place it in the plastic sleeve in the front of your Storyteller's Quest Handbook.
2. Finish your Mind Map. Add any extra details that come to you over the week. Bring it to our next class filled with your ideas.

NOTES



HOW TO SET A GOAL

Review:

Last week you learned how to craft your why for writing a book. It's time to share what you've come up with.

Goals and You:

We hear A LOT about goals and how you need them, but what are they?

According to the Oxford dictionary, *a goal is the object of a person's ambition or effort; an aim or desired result.*

So, what are your goals? What are your ambitions or the aim you are trying to reach?

Like our mind map last week, we're going to use that same concept to make our goals in seven different areas of our life. *Spiritual, Professional, Self-Improvement, Physical, Financial, Relationships, and Projects.*

Write out anything you want in each area that you can accomplish in the next twelve months on the goal map on the opposite page.

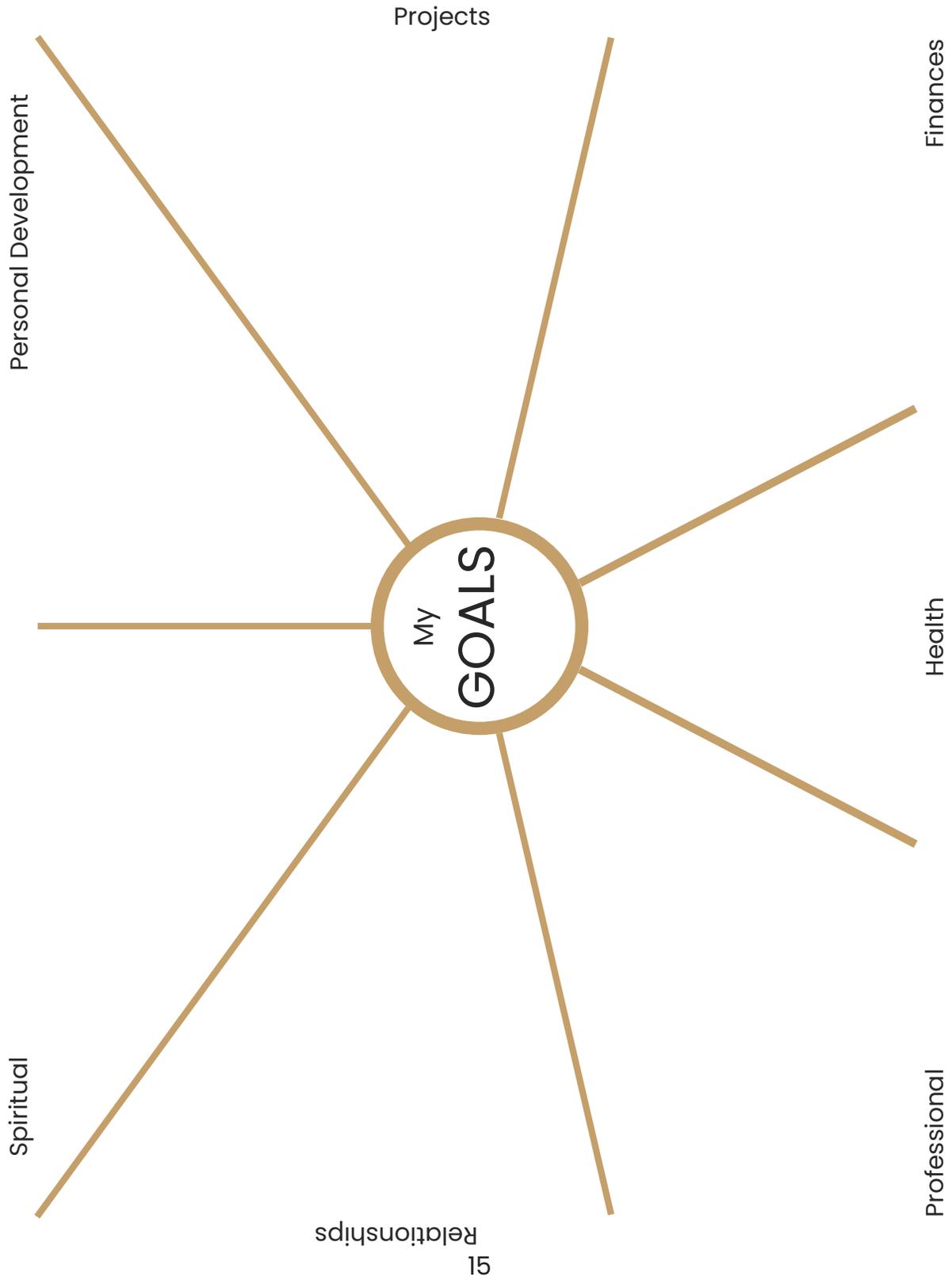
Once all your ideas are out, I want you to pick 1 in each category to work on for the next twelve months and use the SMART

method (below) to write out the full goal on page 16. They must be SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ACHIEVABLE, RELEVANT, and TIME-Bound.

- **Specific:** I want you to write more than "I want to write a book." Instead write, "I am going to write the rough draft of my story by the end of this year."
- **Measurable:** How will you track your progress? "I am going to write the rough draft of my story by the end of the year. I will do this by keeping to my daily word count goal of _____ words per day."
- **Attainable.** Keep in mind that these goals are for the next twelve months. You can do a lot in a year, but you can't do everything. Often we overestimate what we can achieve in a year, but underestimate what we can do in five.
- **Relevant:** Does this goal even matter to you or is it something someone else wants you to do? Remember, these are YOUR goals.
- **Time-Bound:** When does this goal need to be completed? Deadlines help us stay motivated. We can perform great things under pressure.

Fill out your seven goal areas for the next twelve months in the final draft Goal Sheet on the next page.

GOAL MAPPING



Week 2

YOUR GOALS

Spiritual:

Relationships:

Professional:

Personal Development:

Projects:

Finances:

Health:

A ROUGH OUTLINE

Last week, we went over how to Mind Map your story. Today we're going to use that map as a guide to make the rough outline for your novel. We will identify which ideas fit into certain portions of the book. We can call these major story milestones or story beats. The six primary ones are these:

- Backstory
- Inciting Incident
- Slap or Major Setback 1
- Slap 2 or Major Setback 2 (Depending on your story, it is possible to have a third slap, but most stories only have two major setbacks.
- Climax
- Resolution

There is a difference between Acts and Milestones in a story:

Acts:

When thinking about acts, it helps me to think of a stage play. The first act is all about set ups and letting the viewer/reader in on the crucial details. This is your backstory and what gets the tale we're reading/viewing into motion. The second act is all the middle bits (your slaps or setbacks). The final act is the climax and the resolution.

If thinking of your story in terms of acts works when first breaking things into groups from your Mind Map, by all means, use it. Once you have that figured out, then dive deeper into the story structure by using the milestones.

Milestones:

Milestones, or major story beats, are the significant events that propel your story forward. You cannot have a climax if you never set up an inciting incident. The resolution won't feel earned if we didn't establish enough backstory and the struggles along the way.

So how do you put the milestones together and where should they occur?

Backstory: This should only take up the first 5-15% of your novel. Keep in mind that less is more and you'll have the whole novel to give readers all the info they NEED to know. Also, keep this pertinent to the plot of the story. Every aspect you have in your book should propel the story forward in some way. This includes the characters, the setting, the challenges. EVERYTHING needs to point us toward the climax of the story.

Inciting Incident: This happens in the first 20% of your story. If you go over this

amount, your story will have a very slow pacing and will lose the attention of your readers. Again, remember that less is more and the quicker you can drop your readers into the main story, the more they'll invest in it.

Slap 1: This event is the main characters first real setback in the story. This is intended to make sure the MC is truly committed to this course of action. It needs to be something serious, but not so bad that it feels like we already hit the climax. The character should be able to find a solution to this problem and still be positive about making it to their goal. This will occur around the 35%-45% mark of your story.

Slap 2: This slap should be tough. It may seem like there is no way they'll accomplish their goal, but then they're given a small measure of hope that all will turn out well. This can be in the form of the death of a loved one and they continue to carry the mission forward. (Think of when Moana and Maui fight the lava monster the first time together. They fail, but through the guidance of her grandmother, she is given the courage to try again. This will occur around the 50%-75%.

Climax: At 75%-95%. Everything has been pointing to this moment. From your backstory through now, this moment needs to have been built up. Let things marinate until all the important questions for this book have been answered.

Resolution: This occurs somewhere at the 95-100% mark. It should tie all the loose ends that pertain to this book up. However, this is also where you leave a small teaser for what comes next with your books. Is it a murder on the last page? A letter? A mysterious arrival? What will make your readers eager for the next book?

With a set of sticky notes and masking tape, I want you to map out your timeline. Set your tape horizontally on the wall and put numbers 1-6 or you can write the name of each milestone on the tape.

Next, write one bubble concept on each sticky note with a number 1-6, corresponding with the six milestones. Then place them in their appropriate place on the timeline. This will help you get a better idea for how your story fits together. Add any extra thoughts that come to your mind as you do this.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Finish your goal sheet with your seven goals for the next twelve months.
2. Finish your tape and sticky note timeline. Transcribe it onto the sheets of lined paper on the next page, adding any other details that come to mind over the next week. Bring this with you to our next class.

REMEMBER: leave white space around your bullet points. We'll be filling in details next week.