

CHARACTER

— and let thy feet
millenniums hence
be set in midst of knowledge



GEORGIAFILM
ACADEMY®

DRAMATIC WRITING FOR FILM, TELEVISION, AND THEATRE I




CHARACTER

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PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST

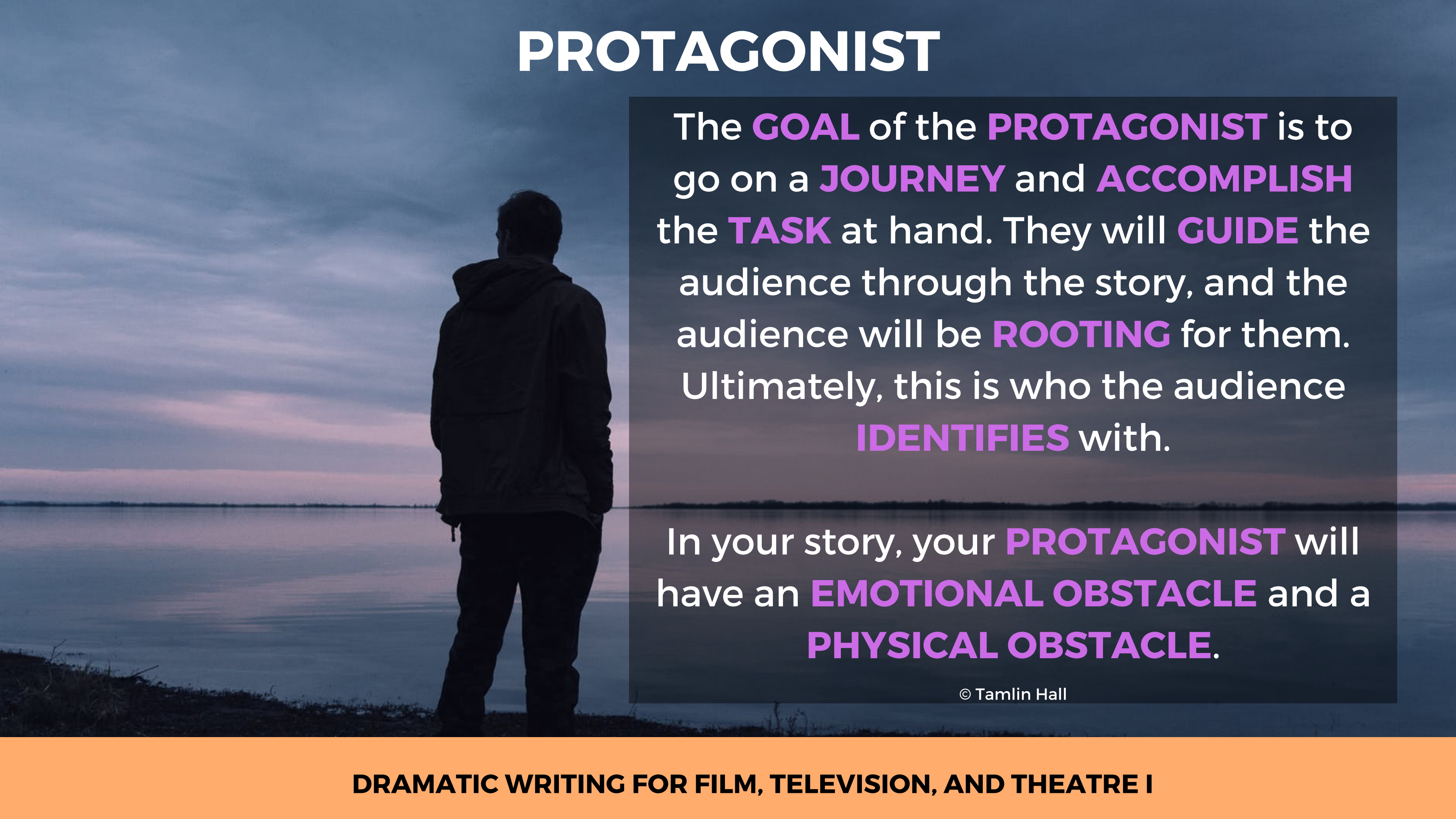


The **PROTAGONIST** is the character in story that the audience will **FOLLOW**. The protagonist is going to **CARRY** the STORY on their **SHOULDERS**. Most, if not all stories, follow the protagonist.

Our **ANTAGONIST** is in the story to **STOP** your **PROTAGONIST** from reaching their **GOAL**. Your antagonist **ALWAYS** has a **REASON** why they do not want the protagonist to reach their **GOAL**.

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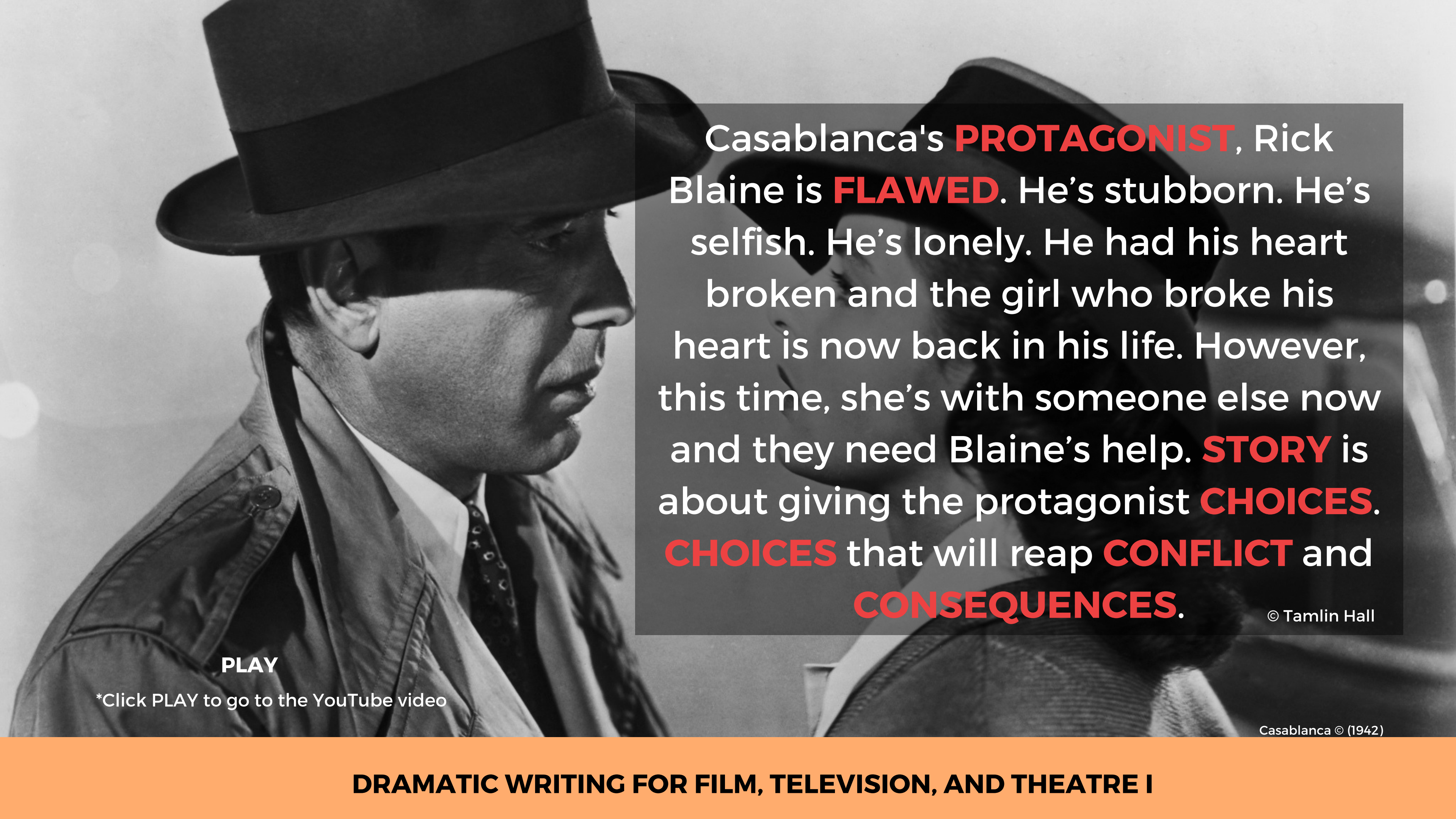
PROTAGONIST



The **GOAL** of the **PROTAGONIST** is to go on a **JOURNEY** and **ACCOMPLISH** the **TASK** at hand. They will **GUIDE** the audience through the story, and the audience will be **ROOTING** for them. Ultimately, this is who the audience **IDENTIFIES** with.

In your story, your **PROTAGONIST** will have an **EMOTIONAL OBSTACLE** and a **PHYSICAL OBSTACLE**.

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Casablanca's **PROTAGONIST**, Rick Blaine is **FLAWED**. He's stubborn. He's selfish. He's lonely. He had his heart broken and the girl who broke his heart is now back in his life. However, this time, she's with someone else now and they need Blaine's help. **STORY** is about giving the protagonist **CHOICES**. **CHOICES** that will reap **CONFLICT** and **CONSEQUENCES**.

© Tamlin Hall

PLAY

*Click PLAY to go to the YouTube video

Casablanca © (1942)

ANTAGONIST

When we think **ANTAGONIST**, we think words like **EVIL** or **BAD**. While this is accurate and **MOST** of the time they have some unappealing qualities, a **STRONG** antagonist will also be “**RELATABLE**.” A three-dimensional antagonist forces there to be a **THEME** in the story. It will **HUMANIZE** the antagonist.

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The following clip from The Dark Knight clearly defines what each character **STANDS** for.

Who's **RIGHT**? Who's **WRONG**? What tactics does the Joker use to **SWAY** Batman? What tactics does Batman use to **PERSUADE** the Joker?

PLAY

*Click PLAY to go to the YouTube video

Batman (Protagonist) - **RULES**

Joker (Antagonist) - **NO RULES**

© Tamlin Hall

The Dark Knight © (2008)

All stories can be categorized in these 3 categories:

- 1) MAN VS. MAN
- 2) MAN VS. NATURE
- 3) MAN VS. SELF

When it's **MAN VS. SELF**, the main character is the **PROTAGONIST** AND the **ANTAGONIST**. The antagonist of story does **NOT** have to be human, either. The rule is that the antagonist has to be in **DIRECT OPPOSITION** to the protagonist obtaining his/her **GOAL**.

© Tamlin Hall

HAUNTING GHOSTS

"We all need therapy. To unpack our baggage from yesteryear. Your characters are no different. They must heal the broken facets of their **PAST** to live a healthier life in the **PRESENT**. The ghost is the most significant thing haunting them that is driving them to make poor decisions."

Characters' personal **CHALLENGES** are often rooted in **BROKEN** pasts.

*Excerpt from CRASH! BOOM! BANG! HOW TO WRITE ACTION MOVIES by Michael Lucker, courtesy of Michael Wiese Productions (<http://mwp.com>).

RIGHTS AND WRONGS

All **GOOD** characters are **RIGHT** about things and **WRONG** about things. In bad movies, the good guys are **ALWAYS** right and the bad guys are **ALWAYS** wrong. This feels shallow and empty. Why? Because it's just not real. We're not all **BLACK** and **WHITE**. Having characters be right **AND** wrong offers them depth, texture, and nuance.

*Excerpt from CRASH! BOOM! BANG! HOW TO WRITE ACTION MOVIES by Michael Lucker, courtesy of Michael Wiese Productions (<http://mwp.com>).



ETHOS, PATHOS, AND LOGOS

ETHOS, **PATHOS**, and **LOGOS** are the three **PRIMARY** grounds for which an audience **CONNECTS** with a story's **CHARACTERS**. If you create situations where your audience **CONNECTS** with your hero via all three the audience will **FOLLOW** your hero **ANYWHERE**.

ETHOS – CONNECTING VIA TRUST
PATHOS – CONNECTING VIA EMOTION
LOGOS – CONNECTING VIA LOGIC

*Excerpt from CRASH! BOOM! BANG! HOW TO WRITE ACTION MOVIES by Michael Lucker, courtesy of Michael Wiese Productions (<http://mwp.com>).

CHARACTER vs. CHARACTERIZATION

Direct vs Indirect Characterization

Direct



1. Tells reader character

E.g. 'She was a cheery, always upbeat person.'

2. Gives broad sweep

You can summarize personality in a line.

3. Useful for first details

Concise, broad details are easier to remember.

Indirect

1. Shows reader character

E.g. 'Her lighthouse smile beckoned across the crowd.'

2. Uses cumulative detail

Actions, words, dress, other details build up a portrait.

3. Useful for development

Characters' deeds and words add up, give complex growth.

Outline your characters:
www.nownovel.com

CHARACTERIZATION is the sum of all observable qualities of a human being, every thing knowable through careful scrutiny, like:

- Age and IQ
- Sex and sexuality
- Style of speech and gesture
- Choices of home, car, and dress
- Education and occupation
- Personality and nevosity
- Values and attitudes
- All aspects of humanity we could know by taking notes on someone day in and day out.



CHARACTER vs. CHARACTERIZATION

PLAY

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TRUE CHARACTER is revealed in the choices a human being makes under pressure.

The greater the pressure the deeper the revelation,
the truer the choice to the character's essential
nature.

The Hunger Games © (2012)

CHARACTER vs. CHARACTERIZATION

So, beneath the surface of **CHARACTERIZATION**, regardless of appearances, who is this person?

Loving or cruel? Generous or selfish? Strong or weak? Truthful or a liar? Courageous or cowardly? etc.

The **ONLY** way to know the truth is to witness him/her make choices under pressure to take one action or another in the pursuit of his/her desire.

As the he/she chooses, he/she is.

PLAY

*Click PLAY to go to the YouTube video

Wreck-It Ralph © (2012)

CHARACTER

Thus **CHARACTER** is ultimately **NOT** how people are defined with words, **NOT** even what kind of dialogue you may give them.

CHARACTER is what people **DO**, the **ACTIONS** they take due to their true nature = **PLOT**

PRESSURE is **ESSENTIAL!!!**

This is how you create **STORY** – by putting **PRESSURE** on your **CHARACTERS**.

PLAY

*Click PLAY to go to the YouTube video

Remember the Titans © (2000)

CHARACTER VS. PLOT

Which is more important?

NEITHER – Because character **IS** plot and plot **IS** character.

So, **ACTIONS** that take place simply to serve the needs or desires of the writer, which are **NOT** grounded in the **TRUE** nature of a story's character, are poor plots and poorly structured stories.

ASSIGNMENT

1) Find/present examples of poor plots/character which led to poorly structured stories.

2) Find/present amazing character/plot – where great character led to great plot and vice versa?