

DEEP EDITING SHORT STORIES GOOD TO GREAT

Presenter

John Hope

DEEP EDITING SHORT STORIES: GOOD TO GREAT

- Audience and Theme
 - Conflict, Conflict, and more Conflict
 - Ups and the Downs
 - Heroes and Villains
 - Symbolism
 - A Story's Success
-

AUDIENCE AND THEME

AUDIENCE AND THEME

- What are you trying to tell people?

AUDIENCE AND THEME

- Storytelling is powerful



AUDIENCE AND THEME

- Identify your audience
 - What is important to them?
 - What do they understand?
 - Where are their emotions?
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AUDIENCE AND THEME

- Example: Science Fiction
 - Typically “nerdy” people are attracted to Science Fiction
 - Characteristics of “nerdy” people:
 - Difficulty with relationships
 - Enjoys creative alone time
 - Finds intellectual questions fascinating
 - Loves underdog stories

AUDIENCE AND THEME

- Identify your theme
 - What truths do you want to say to your audience?
 - Okay if truth is only true from a certain point of view.
 - Be bold.
-

AUDIENCE AND THEME

- Theme Examples
 - The Lottery, Shirley Jackson
 - Stark, inhumanity of community
 - Sacrifice
 - The Veldt, Ray Bradbury
 - Disconnected parenting
 - Fragileness of life
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AUDIENCE AND THEME

- Incorporating theme after the fact
 - Review scene after scene, allude theme in each one

AUDIENCE AND THEME

- Example: Kids need to learn how to work hard
 - Show benefits of hard work
 - Show the follies of people/kids who don't work hard
 - Show how people can change with hard work
 - Show different avenues of hard work
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CONFLICT, CONFLICT, AND MORE CONFLICT

CONFLICT, CONFLICT, AND MORE CONFLICT

- Conflict is our friend
 - Expose as quickly as possible
 - Layer conflict
 - Intensify conflict
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CONFLICT, CONFLICT, AND MORE CONFLICT

- Expose as quickly as possible
 - Mary wakes up.
 - Mary takes a shower.
 - Mary drinks her coffee.
 - Police come to her door and arrest her husband for tax evasion.
 - Mary panics and fights with the police.
 - In the struggle, police shoot husband.
 - Mary cries.

CONFLICT, CONFLICT, AND MORE CONFLICT

- Layer Conflict, example 1

Seeks Foxy Princess



Luke Skywalker



Desires Adventure



Clashes with Cynical Hero



Bad Guy Wants Him



Fascinated by Jedi Tales



CONFLICT, CONFLICT, AND MORE CONFLICT

- Layer Conflict, example 2

The Dance

5-year-old David



Wants to go to the dance with older brother, has to stay home with Grandma

15-year-old Camden



Goes to dance, gets heart broken by girl, comes home

CONFLICT, CONFLICT, AND MORE CONFLICT

- **Layer Conflict, example 2**

David's initial concern for this big brother

I crawl up Camden's bed, slide under the covers next to him, and rest my head on his bare chest. The thumping of his heart beats against my face. I shiver.

Camden asks, "What's wrong with you?"

Camden's concern for his little brother

I say, "Bad dream. A bunch of bad people. They look scary."

"Dreams won't hurt you." He wraps his arm around and pats the side of my leg. He snuffles and

I feel the shake of his body. I look up and he is wiping his face with his other hand.

"What'd you eat at the dance?"

David jealous of not being able to eat junk food

David's fear of what might have happened at the dance

"Just junk."

I huff. "I had SpaghettiOs."

Camden upset about the events at the

His voice shakes as he speaks. "I like SpaghettiOs."

"Camden?"

Camden wishes he was five years old

Camden concern for his little brother's fears

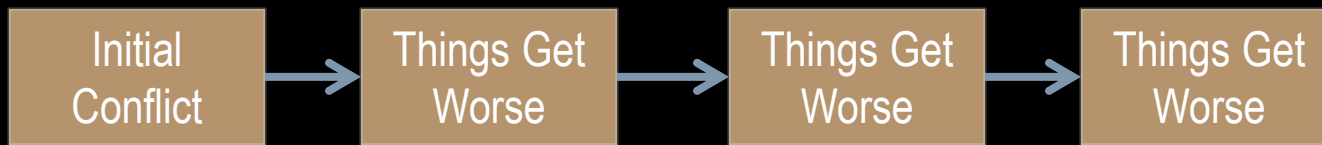
"Yeah?"

"I never want to go to a dance."

He pats me again. "Na. They're not bad. Just sometimes... sometimes people are mean."

CONFLICT, CONFLICT, AND MORE CONFLICT

- Intensify Conflict



CONFLICT, CONFLICT, AND MORE CONFLICT

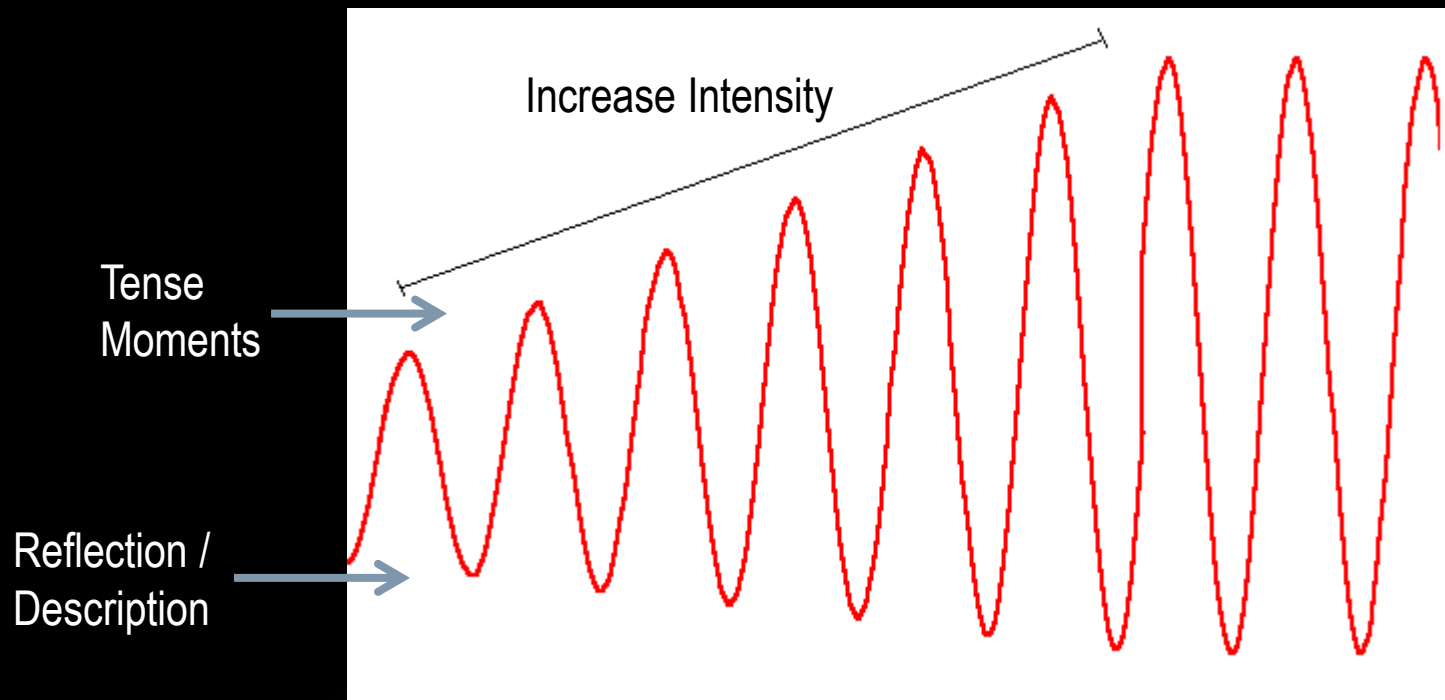
- Intensify Conflict, Example: Jaws (1975)



UPS AND DOWNS

UPS AND DOWNS

- Pacing

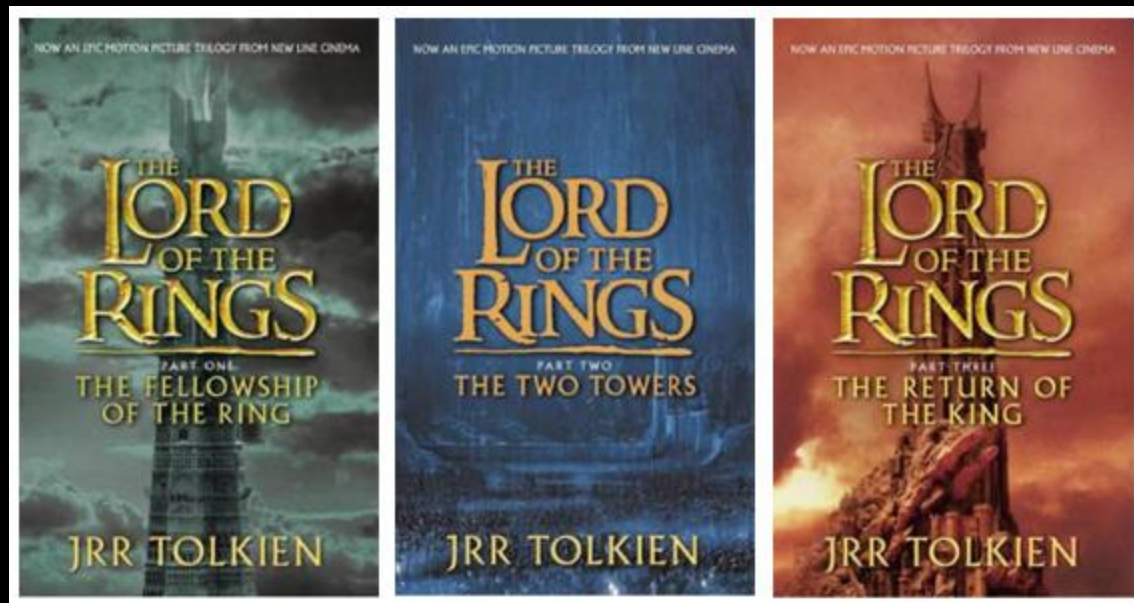


UPS AND DOWNS

- Factors that affect pacing
 - Amount of elaborate descriptive language versus quick, blunt words
 - Number of words used
 - Criticality of the conflict
 - The amount of time that passes
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UPS AND DOWNS

- Example 1: Lord of the Rings



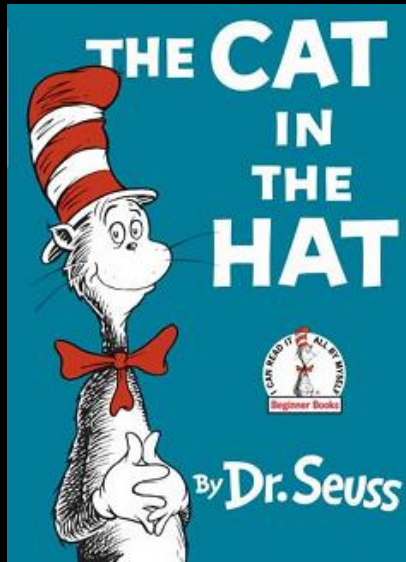
Very slow, lots of explanation

Clashing of good verses evil intensifies

Entire world at war, series climax

UPS AND DOWNS

- Example 2: The Cat in the Hat



- Kids are bored
- Cat does some juggling, frightens the fish
- Brings Thing 1 and 2, both destroy the house
- Mom approaches
- Cat leaves with Thing 1 and 2
- Cat returns with a machine that cleans up at the last moment
- Mom arrives

UPS AND DOWNS

- Tips to decrease pace:
 - Include specific descriptions
 - Flashbacks / reflections / comparisons
 - Tips to increase pace:
 - Use descriptive verbs
 - Skip boring and/or understood scenes
 - Remove gratuitous elements
 - Let the events explain how people feel/think
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HEROES AND VILLAINS

HEROES AND VILLAINS

- Readers love to have someone to root for and someone to hate
 - Good versus evil is universally understood
 - Good guys are just as important as bad guys
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HEROES AND VILLAINS

- The good and the bad



HEROES AND VILLAINS

- Heroes: What readers like in characters
 - Has flaws
 - Humble
 - Good character (dependable / keep promises / honest)
 - Live by morals / standards
 - Helpful / compassionate (esp. for certain people)
 - Funny / sense of humor
 - Courageous, yet shows fear
 - Relatable goals
 - Down to Earth / level-headed / even-tempered
 - Smart
 - Cool (esp. in tense moments)
-

HEROES AND VILLAINS

- Villains: What readers don't like in characters
 - Perfect
 - Liar / undependable / carelessly breaks promises
 - Brags / sees themselves as superior
 - Unsportsmanlike / unfair
 - Self-serving
 - Not funny / bad sense of humor
 - Hidden cowards
 - Unworthy goals
 - Extreme behavior / mood swings
 - Bullies others
 - Whines and complains
 - Panics under pressure
-

HEROES AND VILLAINS

- Heroes
 - Expose/highlight likeable characteristics
 - Villains
 - Expose/highlight despicable characteristics
 - In both cases...
 - Subtle clues go a long way
 - BE TRUE TO ALL CHARACTERS
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SYMBOLISM

SYMBOLISM

- The glitter that makes a story shine
 - Highlights themes and story elements to give them more impact
 - Should not require explanation
 - Requires a strong story first
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SYMBOLISM: METAPHORS / ANALOGIES

- Avoid clichés
 - Ex: “Prettier than a rose.”
- The more vivid (and specific) the better
 - Ex: “The wheel's spinning, but the hamster's dead.”
- Be consistent with the character making the comparison
 - Ex: (from a boy in rural America) “The man was fatter than a pregnant cow.”

SYMBOLISM: VISUAL REMINDERS

- Objects that help recall memories
 - Ex: Stuffed animal / doll in an elderly mother's hand may remind her of her children when they were young – or when she was young
- Objects that imply something deeper
 - Ex: (The Great Gatsby) The billboard eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg = sees through the dishonesty -> loss of loss of morality / spiritual values in America

SYMBOLISM: VISUAL REMINDERS

- Use elements that surround the character(s)
 - Common things that character sees everyday now has new meanings due to circumstances
 - Character(s) sees things in a different light
 - Character(s) compares things with other elements/experiences
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SYMBOLISM: DOUBLE MEANINGS

- “Marriage is a fine institution, but I'm not ready for an institution.” – Mae West
 - “Whenever I feel blue, I start breathing again.” – L. Frank Baum
 - “The only thing we don't have a god for is premature ejaculation... but I hear that it's coming quickly.” — Mel Brooks
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SYMBOLISM: PARALLEL STORIES

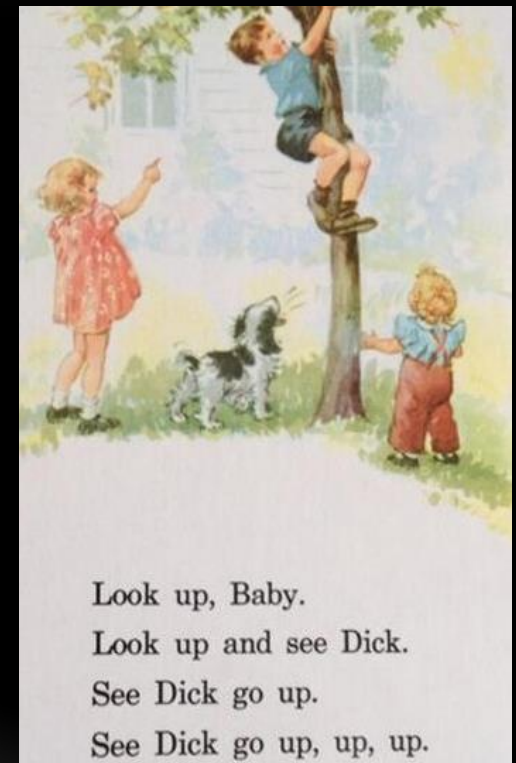
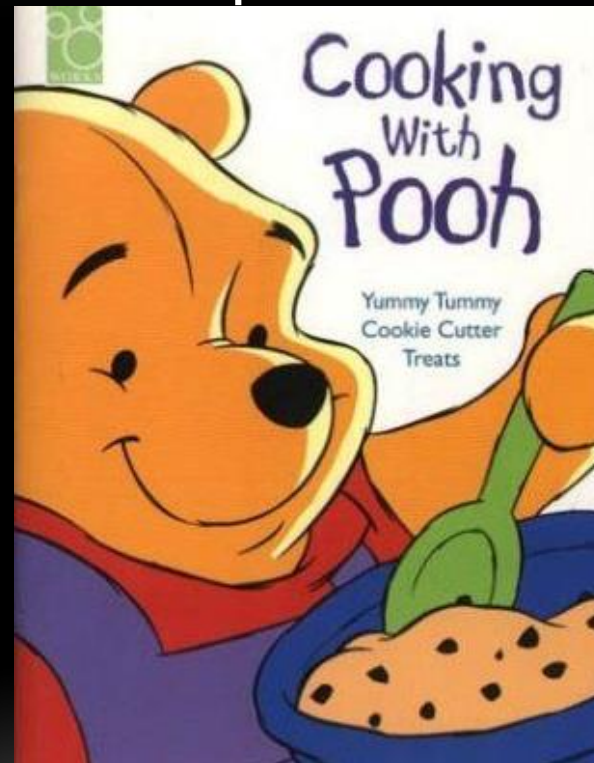
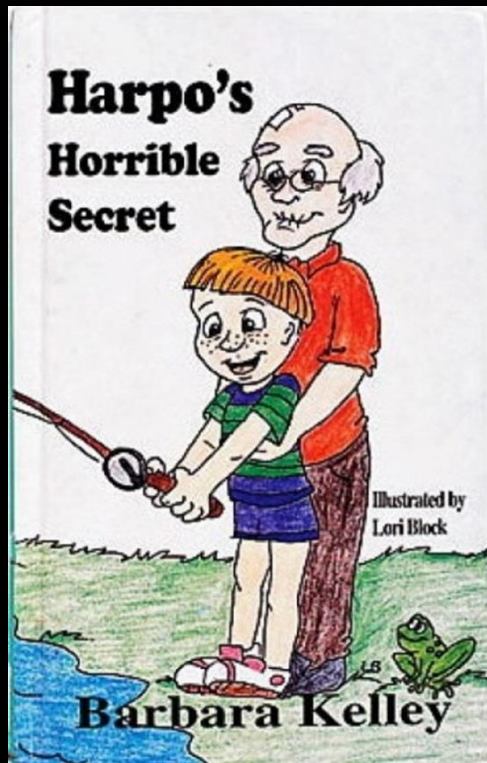
- Duplicate lessons or themes that multiple characters experience
 - Ex:
 - A girl loses her friend's trust by plagiarizing her homework.
 - The girl's mom loses the trust of her work associates by taking credit for her peers' work.
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SYMBOLISM: THINGS TO AVOID

- Will your implications be appropriate for your audience?
 - Ex: A bully taunts a smaller boy by grabbing a small lizard, pulling off its tail, and waving the writhing tail in the smaller boy's face.
 - Feedback (from a teacher): "This would not be accepted in the school system since this is animal cruelty and such behavior is seen as roots to serial killers."

SYMBOLISM: THINGS TO AVOID

- Other unintentional implications



A STORY'S SUCCESS

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- In all cases, success depends on:
 1. Getting the right story
 2. To the right person
 3. At the right time
-

A STORY'S SUCCESS

THE RIGHT STORY TO THE RIGHT PERSON

- Know your audience
 - Who is buying stories in your genre?
 - Who is judging/scoring your story?
 - Has this story already been told?
 - *People love stories with which they can connect.*
-

A STORY'S SUCCESS

THE RIGHT STORY TO THE RIGHT PERSON

- Research Agent / Publisher's listings / catalogs
 - How does your story fit?
 - Does it complement other stories?
-

A STORY'S SUCCESS

THE RIGHT STORY TO THE RIGHT PERSON

- Story Characters and Elements
 - Seek readers who have a connection with specific story characters and/or elements

- Example:



- 13-year-old boy
- Deaf protagonist
- Boy is bullied
- Shark conservation
- Adventure / fantasy

A STORY'S SUCCESS

AT THE RIGHT TIME

- How do you guarantee that a story will reach people at the right time?
 - Stay in touch with what's popular – trends
 - Talk to / listen to your audience
 - There's no guarantee
-

A STORY'S SUCCESS

AT THE RIGHT TIME

- Best thing you can do:
 - **BE PERSISTENT**
 - Spend time doing
 - Set daily / weekly goals
 - Steadily gain success
-

A STORY'S SUCCESS

AT THE RIGHT TIME

- Personal experience:
 - Royal Palm Literary Awards

Year	Number of Submissions	Number of Awards
2012	8	0
2013	5	2
2014	6	2
2015	8	1
2016	7	5
2017	5 (so far)	TBD
<i>Totals</i>	39	10

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