S03 W01 – Story Grid 624 & The Trinity Planes (Beyond The Surface)

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# Video 1 – The Story Grid 624 Tools

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Speaker 1

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So, in our first training, we're going to be covering the Story Grid 624. The 624 is a suite of tools that we use to get a really good idea of the macro level of a scene, a short story or even a novel. And so we go through six levels of analysis and answer 24 questions in total. We're going to be starting that today with the first week, and then we're going to be going through the rest of it in the next two weeks. So in the first three weeks of our guild training, we're going to cover the entire 624. But we arranged them the six levels of analysis into Trinity planes. So it's important to have a little bit of context into what these Trinity planes are before we get into the individual tools in the storyboard 624.

The one that we're going to be covering today is Beyond The Surface. So we're going to be going over genres, five leaf clover, and the Proposition of Possibility. And Beyond The Surface is about big universal patterns, it's about defining the total space that we're working in. And looking at how the patterns that we're seeing relate to other works and relate to universal patterns of human behavior.

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Speaker 2

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In future trainings, we will explore the Above The Surface level of the Trinity plane. And here we're really talking about story as communication. So we're going to be focusing on the narrative device, which covers the author talking to a single audience member, we call Sam, about a very specific problem. And then we're going to look at how we are enacting that on the page with point of view. So we're going to look at the mode, we're going to look at the person and we're going to look at the tents when we get there.

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Speaker 1

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The final plane that we're going to cover is On The Surface. And that talks about the actual events, the simulated people who we call avatars, and the play of the story that we see, as we're reading the story. So these are the very concrete representations of what we explore in the other two planes. And throughout the training, you might hear us refer to these planes by their color. So Beyond The Surface is blue, Above The Surface is red, and On The Surface is green. And this is just a little bit of a shorthand that we use to cement these concepts in our mind and refer to them just in one chunk. So we'll get really familiar with these things as we go through the semester because they underlie everything. But these it's good to have a quick intro to give you an idea of what's to come in terms of the planes.

# Video 2 - Genres-Five-Leaf-Clover

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Speaker 1

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The first tool that we're going to go over in the Story Grid 624 is genre’s five leaf clover. It's fundamental to Story Grid to understand the genre of the work that you're studying, or the work that you're creating genre is central to everything because it creates expectations for your audience. Instead of just one thing, though, genre is made up of five different concepts, all of which we're going to go over as we look at genre’s five leaf clover.

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Speaker 2

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Okay, so the first genre leaf that we look at is the time genre. So what is the time genre for the story? Now, we want to look at this in terms of the audience members experience of the of the story, right. So this can be short, like a short story, it can be medium, like a novella. Or it can be long like a novel. It can also, of course, these translate into other mediums. So if you have a, for example, a film short, or a, the episode of a television show, or long form television, where you have a longer period, so that's the audience experience aspect. But we also want to look at the duration of the story, as the avatars are experiencing that, because that that creates that can create a little bit of conflict, a little bit of tension, because one can be really long and one short and vice versa. So we want to really think about what's the duration that we are communicating that we are sharing with the audience through the story, but also how the protagonists are experiencing it.

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Speaker 1

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Yeah, absolutely. And the interplay of those of the duration and the audience experience is so interesting when we're looking at the time genre. The second component of genre that we have is the structure genre. And this is about how, how many avatars who are following and how many are undergoing transformation. So we have arc plot that follows one central protagonist and shows the transformation of that central protagonist or failure to transform, perhaps, we have mini-plot, which is about following a wider cast. And we have more story components that are exploring a central theme, but they're not as unified as in the arc plot. And then the anti-plot, which is about a disintegration of the central structure. So this is really not something that you really have to worry about in the anti-plot, because they're not very popular, we don't see them very often. And we won't be studying them in this training. But it's good to know that they're out there as a reaction to the other two forms of story.

2

Speaker 2

2:57

Right, so that brings us to the style genre, this is our third genre leaf of the of the five. The end, here, we have two levels that we're looking at, we're looking at the category do we have drama, which is serious, we have emotions and actions, largely played straight. And then we also have comedy, where emotions and actions and pain are, are not played straight, right, we avoid looking at them directly and talking about them directly. So we have that level. Then we also have the medium. So from that we have, we have to choose drama or comedy. And then we have to choose a medium. And the medium can be things like a musical, a documentary, other types of film, it can be theatrical, we can have dance, of course, we can also have literary and epistolary and animation. So those are just some of the possibilities. But it's important because these each one Drama Comedy for our categories. And then each of these mediums has come with expectations create expectations in the audience members that you ignore at your peril. So we want to consider these when we're thinking about how we're going to present the story to our audience.

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Speaker 1

4:32

The fourth leave of genre is the reality genre. And this is about the alternate world in which the story is set, and about the types of causes and effects that are that are legitimate in that world, given its boundaries. So broadly speaking, we can divide this into realism, which follows the same kinds of codes, laws and norms, which we'll get into what each of those are, but it follows the same kind of rules. As our real world, then we have fantasy, which is about sort of a backward looking world where, where it's more about the past, where there's magic, and perhaps and that magic is only usable by certain actors in the arena. So it's about their magical properties by virtue of who they are. And it's about exploring that kind of identity. Then we have science fiction, which is forward looking, more fantasy ramus, backward looking. And science fiction also has some fantastic elements. But instead of being limited to certain actors, because of who they are sign in science fiction, it's more technologically based. So using that technology is open to everyone. Then we have factionalism, which is about these are, these are alternate worlds that look exactly like facts that have happened. So this is maybe a retelling of a historical event, something that seems like it's actually true. And then we have Absurdism, where cause and effect breakdown. And it there are a lot of surreal elements and randomness happening in the in the world. So those are some really broad categories. And as we examine this scene, we're going to get into how to break down the specifics of creating a reality genre, because while these are the broad categories, when you really get into creating the world, there are a lot of nuanced considerations to do there to create a cohesive world that will give your audience the right expectations.

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Speaker 2

6:47

Yes, and our fifth genre leaf is the content genre leaf. And this is the one where we've put a lot of attention and focus over time, they're all important, of course, but this is where we set expectations about what the story is about. So we're talking about the core need, that is, that is at stake, we're talking about the core value. And from that we get one of 12 content genres. And we identify typically, an external and an internal genre for the for the story. And one of those is the global and that's the most important one, that's the one we build the controlling idea around it is the basis for the Inciting Incident that the protagonist must deal with over the course of the story. So we have, so yes, we'll have the internal and external, and we'll identify the global from those two.

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Speaker 1

7:52

Yeah, and when we, when we talk about genre, if we use the shorthand, and we say what's the genre of the story, we mean, the global content genre. So if you have to pick one, that's what we collapse this down to, is the global content genre. And we'll provide lots of supplementary resources to learn about all of these genres, that is a Story Grid 1.0 topic is to explore all of these genres in detail. But since we're narrowing in on one specific scene for the semester, instead of going over all of them and all of the conventions and obligatory moments, and all of the core aspects of each of these genres. We're just going to be focusing in on our specific context from Jane Eyre. So to that end, we will hop over to our next video and talk about how all of these leaves apply specifically to our masterwork scene for this semester.

# Video 3 – 5 Genre Leaves for The Aeronaut’s Windlass (TAW)

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Speaker 1

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Now that we've gone over the five genre leaves, let's look at how they apply in our master pattern scene, which is the attack scene, chapter two, from Jim Butcher's The Aeronaut’s Windlass. So as we get into our masterwork pattern seen in these application videos, what we want to do is we want to go over the concepts as they relate to the specific scene that we're looking at. And along the way, we're going to be looking at global themes and how, how they relate to the actual events of the scene. So it's really important to understand the global movements of the novel, because they inform how we read the scene, and because it allows us to build the muscle of looking at a scene. So this is a question that we get sometimes, you know, how can I read one scene and then evaluate it and, and understand the genre and things like that. And it is possible to do that by being very careful about looking at word choice by being very careful about looking at scenes structure. And stories are like a hologram in that each part contains the seeds of the whole or reflection of the whole. However, when you're starting out, or when you approach something new, like a new genre, a new sub-genre or anything like that, it can actually be difficult to see those clues for what they are. And so that connection is there. But in these videos, we want to be really explicit about giving you that global context based on the whole novel and giving you evidence from the whole novel. So that you can start to build up that skill of seeing the way that the individual word choices and things like that reflect the whole of the story. So that kind of sets the scene for how we're going to look at the analysis in these application videos. And in this one, specifically, what we're going to do is go through those five leaves of genre. Now, in order to facilitate the discussion, and make sure that we are addressing things in the most helpful way, if possible, we've changed up the order a little bit. And so we're going to start out by talking about the content genre. So we've determined that globally, this is an external action plot with a sub-genre of epic savior. And internally, it's a worldview revelation. So we're going to talk about both of those choices. And we're going to talk about how we came to those decisions, what evidence we have, and what are some alternatives that we consider. So let's start out by talking about that external action plot. An Action plot in the Action genre is a story that addresses the core value of life and death. That's what's at stake. And this is one where the protagonist is fighting an antagonist of some sort. And that's how we're going to narrow down the sub-genre is by looking at the nature of the antagonist. But what is at stake in that fight with them is, is life and beyond that meaningful life. So if you go to the other end of the life death spectrum, you get to damnation, and our fate worse than death. And that fate worse than death is on the table, that you can have a life that is meaningless, or life that is not worth living. And that is the negation of the negation the opposition of that life value. So that's the space that we are exploring here. And we see that very clearly throughout the novel, where there are these where life and death are always on the table, people die. And when avatars are making decisions, that's what they're caring about, is that life and death spectrum, and are we going to be able to survive, or are we not? And so they're addressing problems with that frame of mind?

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Speaker 2

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Yes, so we have an Action story. And of course, that deals with the need for survival. And that big spectrum of value that goes from the negation of the negation, which is death would be a mercy all the way to meaningful life. But we want to break that big action story problem down a bit. And we have four sub genres that help us do that. And we, the way we break the genre into those sub-genres is by looking at the force of antagonism. And it's not just any force of antagonism, because of course, in any action story, you've got lots of, of forces that are antagonistic to what the protagonist is trying to accomplish. But what's the main force of antagonism who is really pulling the strings as they say, right, so you want to get to the root of that. And in this story, what we see is that there is this epic at Third Party conflict with the puppet master. Now although we don't see the puppet master in the scene over the course of the story, what's revealed is that there is this one big, bad force of antagonism pulling the strings, moving the pieces and causing problems for Captain Grimm. So we have this epic sub genre. And the, and the plot within that is the Savior plot. And what that means is that we have a force of antagonism that is bent on social destruction, or returning the returning society to pure chaos. So they don't, they aren't trying to accomplish a vision necessarily, they are just trying to break stuff down. And so that's the kind of antagonism with which Grimm has to deal in the story. Yes, absolutely.

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Speaker 1

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And I'm so glad that you're talking about the puppet master. I mean, we have to talk about the puppet master when we discuss the story. And isn't that just so handy? That Jim Butcher called him the puppet master, so we know exactly who's at the root of it. Now, in action stories, that won't always be so clear. And you might have to do some work to analyze, I'm just saying not everyone is going to be called the puppet master. But it really is so important to get down to the root of what's going on with that force of antagonism. And as we talk about this scene, as you say, the Puppet Master isn't in the scene. But one of the things that makes constructing an action story complicated is that from the beginning, you have to understand the antagonists' motivations and the layers of antagonism in their plan. Because otherwise, you're going to be writing at cross purposes with yourself, as you figure out, figure that out, and then it may change sub genres, that kind of thing. So that's why we want to get really clear on this to begin with, and do a lot of thinking about well, who is the actual force and antagonism? Because it's not the captain of the Tosca. It's not Cavendish, it's not any of these other people that we see on the page and the theory list makes that so clear in the story, when they're able to see through and say, these are not silk weavers, these are puppets, this is not an enemy. This is a puppet. And they can peel back those layers until they get to the root of it, which is really nice to aid us in our analysis. And, and I want to touch on this too, because sometimes it does seem so personal. So we have Grimm. And one of his forces of antagonism is Calliope, his ex-wife. Now, that's very personal, right. But she is not there as under her own. Under her own motivation to cause problems, like she does have, she throws her own motivations into the mix, of course, because of the way that she's executing her role, but she is acting as a representative of the chain of antagonism that she's in. And the same thing with Cavendish, again, she is one of Farriss’ apprentices, again, very personal, their personal motivations there. And she fulfills her role within that chain of antagonism in a different way, because of their personal connection, like she steals his collection. And that's not something she would necessarily do if she were just trying to fulfill the like act as a pure henchmen to the main antagonists. But again, she's not the root of that antagonism. So we have to ask these questions and be very careful about going all the way up the chain and getting to that pure root of the force of antagonism. And this is, again, what I was talking about at the beginning about how we want to look at these global themes to see how they're reflected in the scene. Because it's not just that we have to know the direction that our global story is going in. But there will be clues in the scene that are going to tell us about these global thing themes and tell us what we should be looking at. And we can't connect those we can't create them. Unless we as artists know at the beginning, what our antagonists plan and what the full and true nature of our force of antagonism is. So that's why it's so important to narrow down that sub. Right here at the beginning.

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Speaker 2

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So one of the important things when we're looking at the Content genres is we settle on one, but we also want to make sure that we're ruling out any other likely suspects. And, of course, War story is something that we might think of when we're talking about The Aeronaut's Windless, because obviously, there are the trappings of war that are brought into the story. And we have to, you know, representatives of two nations in this scene in particular, and of course, that antagonism blows up, so to speak, you know, as the story goes along. So, when we, when there is a potential other content genre that we need to look at, you know, we look at, obviously, we look at the need at stake, and we look at the value spectrum, and we also want to look for the, you know, various things that allow us to pull them apart. So, some of the things that we see in this is that, of course, we identify that force of antagonism that's at the root of what's happening, who's pulling the strings, the puppet master is pulling the strings and is he threatening survival, which is the need at stake in an action story? Or is his primary motivation about threatening security? And what we see through the actions of the henchmen of the puppet master is that he is bent on destroying Albion right so we know this from targeting the Lancaster battery we know this from sending the silk weavers up into the spire you know those they're very powerful, scary beasts that are quite capable of a lot of destruction. The puppet master enlists another spire in you know, to try to destabilize spire Albion now we don't know exactly why, right? We don't know why the puppet master wants to do this. But what we do know is that, that all of the puppet masters focus is on seizing the agency of different agents and turning their attention to destabilizing and destroying spire Albion, by any means necessary.

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Speaker 1

13:06

Yes, absolutely. And when we look at war, we have a lot of be of a different focus. So life and death is absolutely on the table. I mean, people are going to die in war stories. Absolutely. But the question is more about, once you're in this context, what do you do about it? Versus how versus Are you going to fight or not? Are you going to get into this battle? So it's more group focused, it's less individual focused, a lot of the time we talked about that the scope is bigger. And also, it's a different focus in the value space, because it's not about life and death to a certain extent in war, that's more out of control, in terms of what the protagonist is doing, but it's about how do you navigate that space? With honor? How do you form connections within the group that is fighting for a way of life? You know, and, and is this adjust cause often comes up in war stories and so the focus here is more on the actions of, of the individual, it's more on what is what is the way that I as an individual actor can preserve life and one of the options is throwing in with the with the spire and engaging in war, but that's not a given. So it's a little bit different from the focus of a war story and I love that you're talking about such so much of a focus on the destructive nature of this puppet master because I think that plays into this very closely, is that the puppet master in seeking to destroy isn't fighting a war so if we Think about a war, what happens at the end of a war, someone wins. And that Victor gets to implement their vision. But a purely nihilistic and destructive force of antagonism doesn't have a vision to implement. And so the puppet master, if he wins it, like he's, he's not a viable other side in the war. He's not. The structure of his antagonism is not one that could take over and create this world order, because it's too chaotic. It's too nihilistic and destructive. And so that means that even if they fight him using the mechanisms of war, and using, as you said, the trappings of war, they're doing so as a way of banding together not in the nature of a true war, that would be to two viable ways of life of relative goodness, pitted against each other to see who gets control of what the order is going to be going forward.

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Speaker 2

16:03

So we're talking about a lot of different details. And as we've talked about this, as is this kind of a complicated story, right? We're, we're increasing the scale of the story. So we've got more avatars, we've got more plotlines, right, we were, we're looking at a lot more. So it is easy to as we're pulling the threads apart to see what the story is really about. It's easy to lose sight of it. And we had some, you know, we went back and forth on this quite a bit. But when we look at the text, very clearly, it is focused on how do we preserve life? How best to a preserve life? And, and it's really also about the getting to meet what is a meaningful life? Right? What does it mean to meaningfully engage in life and what would not be meaningful? So we see that a lot. Of course, through Grimm, our protagonist, right, he has options, that would, he has options during the story that would enable him to make things easier on himself. And he makes it very clear that predator and predators crew, they that's his home, and his family, and that life without them would not be worth living. And so because of that, that theme that carries on and we get this really through all the avatars, what is it to have a meaningful life? And what if I had to do without it would not would mean that it's not, you know, that would take me to damnation. And so it's, it is a little hard to separate these threads, there certainly are themes of honor. And, and the other things, the trappings, we might say, of a war story, there are some of those things there. But when we look at what the story is really about, and we get down to the text, and where butcher is pointing us our attention, it really is about how do we preserve meaningful life in the face of this conflict from an invisible puppet master who is bent on destruction?

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Speaker 1

18:41

Yes, exactly. That's a skill that we build over time is looking at the fine points of that evidence and also narrowing down to ensure that we are focusing on the key movements in the story, rather than supporting movements that belong to a sub plot, or belong to something that is adding additional meaning to one of the key movements, but isn't really at the heart of it. And I think that's especially important to when we start to try to identify the internal genre. Because when we when we go to internals on our identification and analysis, a lot of times the different modes of experiencing an internal genre, or the different internal genres, they're bound up very closely together. And so we can see elements of different ones working together. So what we have to do is be very careful about what internal shift is actually driving the action, what is what is actually informing the main choices that the protagonist is having to make so that it's bound up with the spine of the story. And so for this story, we have landed on worldview revelation. And a worldview is about how the protagonist sees the world. So they are shifting their understanding of what the world is, and how they, how they think about the world, how they process information that is coming to them from that world, they're shifting that to better attune to the world as a whole. And so, so we looked at that, because the main choices that the that the avatars are making here are about how they think about the world. And so we'll have different avatars going through different worldview shifts, but they are all undergoing challenges to their worlds worldviews, or in the case of the protagonist, or the avatars that work together with the protagonist and fall under that kind of protagonist umbrella where people can have transformations, those avatars are going through shifts that affect their worldview.

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Speaker 2

21:07

Right, and worldview is such a wonderful, dynamic internal genre, and it's, in a way, every story has this has this shift, right? It's a change in how we see things. But within an when the protagonist has is having a worldview shift, it's that is how they transform in order to do what they need to do to solve the global problem. Right. So here, we've got a, we've got this action story. So Graham is very focused on how am I going to solve this survival problem? Well, the way he does it, is through Revelation. So that's the subplot we have going on now with a revelation story, what the protagonist needs to see what they need to they are attuning to the way the world works. Right? So what's the nature of the world? And how is it working? Because we can't know everything, right? We are, even if we know quite a bit about the world about the domain in which we operate. That is, we can't know everything. There are unexpected events that arise that we have to deal with. And the protagonist, who is going through a revelation shift is one who is open, tends to remain open and curious. They are mature enough that they understand that the world is not black and white, right? So they will have earlier in their lives gone through that maturation shift, they get to a point where Oh, yeah, unexpected things come up. And what they do with that is they incorporate it. So when they experience cognitive dissonance, so that's when things in the world are contradicted by our internality. Right. Oh, what is that there are turkeys here. That seems strange, then, but the worldview revelation protagonist does not resist that. They stay open and curious. Whereas the maturation protagonist resists it, they don't want to give up their black and white thinking. So that's what we have here we have this captain, who is, you know, has to keep track of a lot of things, a lot of people a lot of details, and he's not going to survive for very long if he isn't able to incorporate changes in understanding about the world about the context in which he's operating. So that's really what we're focusing on here. And that is how he is able to that is how he is able to preserve life is that when the external world changes, he immediately picks up on that cognitive dissonance and incorporates that works with it deals with it in order to have the insight he needs to take action and preserve life.

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Speaker 1

24:47

Yeah, the way that I like to think about revelations sometimes is that the protagonist needs to learn that the rules of the game are not the rules that they thought so they have been approaching one kind of person problem, and then they realize, oh, the problem is different. And then they can apply their understanding to that new problem. And as you said, this is a mature protagonist who understands it once he sees the Revelation, he understands what he needs to do. And so he is able to act as a mentor to other avatars and help coach them through their own transformations. And we've talked a little bit about Grimm and about how he sees these changes in the context, and he knows what to do. And then often, what we'll see is that he needs to explain what he has done to other people. So Creedy, for example, or Gwendolyn, and help them come to their own revelations about why he did what he did. And through that, what he's actually doing is he's coaching them through their own maturation, so that they can get to a point where they have independent revelations. And this is a, I think, a mark of the revelation protagonist is that they can act to help others along in that way. So they act as the sort of Beacon of wisdom, that they're moving wisdom forward, not only for themselves, but for the context as a whole. So now, let's take a look at the next genre leaf. And this is the reality leaf. And here we have identified this as fantasy. And more specifically, we're looking at elements of epic fantasy and steampunk that exist within this story. So I think it's really great to talk about this right after the content genre, because we have similar dynamics going on here where we have a lot, this is a big story. And so. So maybe that's something to talk about, too, is about how big it is, and how we address that sort of a big story. But what I'm thinking about here is that the same dynamics that we have, where we have the external, external in terms of like what's actually on the page, like what we can see, when we watch the story unfold, these have certain characteristics. And we have to be very careful about ensuring that we pull out what is actually driving the energetic Foundation, the movement, the arc of that story. So, you know, On The Surface, we see a lot of steampunk stuff. So if you were to, say, draw a picture of what you remember, from the aeronauts, windlass, you're going to have a lot of steampunk elements in it. They're airships, there are these crystals, they're steam power, there are the goggles that they have to wear to keep the sun from destroying them. There's the spire city, and it just has a very steampunk feel to it. And so when you first approach the story, that's what comes to the fore are all of those steampunk elements, because they are there as the visual components of what's going on in this context.

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Speaker 2

28:19

Yes, so I want to pull them apart for a second and talk about them, you know, what are some of those qualities and things that we're looking at? So with epic fantasy SCI might also call this high fantasy there. There's not a lot of in you know, in the storytelling world, there's a lot of variety, we're focusing on Epic, because it does actually connect up to the content genre of the sub genre of action, that it gives us that open that that sense of the big world, the complicated world, right? We spend a little over a month in this world over the course of the story, but we have a sense of a much greater timespan, we have a sense also where inspire Albion alone or and its environs alone. We don't go to the other spires, for example, but we have a sense of this world where there are many spires. And again, right, it's much larger than what we're actually experiencing. And that's part of what we're getting with this epic fantasy. So we have that aspect. It makes the story feel big. There are lots of the problems that you're facing in epic fantasy are large and complicated. So it's difficult to pull those pieces apart. And that's part of why epic fantasy stories tend to be really thick really long, because they have to, in order to really break those problems down and address them in a time. Again, this is a rule of thumb. It's not every epic story. So we have that aspect. And that really comes through. In more of the I would say, the feel of the story, overall, more of the Above The Surface and Beyond The Surface concerns of the story are really being pulled by that, by that epic influence. But we also have the steampunk and steampunk feels more like this, this is these are the trappings of the world. These are the details, the kind of On The Surface details of the world that we're engaging with. And what steampunk is, is imagine that technology stops with steam. Right? So technology as we know it. So our world stopped, technology just stops somewhere in the 19th century. And moves on in a different direction. Right. And it moves on quite a ways, right? They develop technologies based on what was available then. And of course, there are these other things like there's the crystals, but we've got steam technology, we don't develop the combustion engine, we don't develop nuclear technology, right? All that stuff that we there's no internet, in a steampunk world, right? So we have it's a combination of the past and the future, right. And so you have, it's a really interesting world, where we're dealing with almost it's like alternate history taken to an extreme. And then we have this big epic fantasy, the sense of time, and space, and just a very complex world, that we're dealing with that in which the problem arises. And therefore there are many angles and many aspects of the problem that have to be identified, broken down, and then incorporated in the solution.

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Speaker 1

32:34

Yes, and I think that's a really great breakdown of how these two different modes of fantasy look. And then we need to consider well, how do we know that Steampunk is just the trappings and Epic is the underlying motivator of the story are not motivated by the central mode of fantasy and the story, and not the other way around. And what you're talking about with how these different things arise is really important, I think that looking at when you look at world building, looking at what the seeds are, that you exaggerate to create the elements of that fantasy world, that gives you an idea of what kinds of problems you're dealing with. So as you said, with steampunk, it's about what happens if technology is different. So I see these stories where you're dealing with innovation, you're dealing with maybe competition, you know, this could be a person versus seem power thing, story, where it's about who's gonna win something like that. Those could be steampunk central stories where the technology and something about the transformation of the technology or the adaptation of the technology is really central to the story. But here that's peripheral. And so as we'll see, as we get into the double factor problem, it does affect the problems, but we're not transforming that part of the context. What I think we are transforming, though, is the epic side. And on the epic side, what we need are long lasting groups that that allow an individual's actions to have resonance across eternality because they can act as representatives of that group. So we'll see this you know a lot with things that so for example, in Middle Earth we have the hobbits we have Bilbo acting as the hobbit right. And his actions are going to change how people think about hobbits forever. In the Fellowship of the Ring, we have Legolas and Gimli, forming a connection that undoes Essentially, centuries of strife between elves and dwarves. And so we have those kinds of things. Now, I bring up Middle Earth, because it's something that we love here at Story Grid. And it's also a really good example of, of an epic fantasy that has these sort of typical groupings that are going on. I think those groupings are really important. So it can be like that, where it's the species differentiation, or that kind of, I think, I think Tolkien refers to habits as a species. I'm not sure if that's the correct term. But you know, you have these types of people that are different. It could be lineages and families, or it could be hierarchical traditions, like different military traditions, those sorts of things, and needs to be hierarchies that stretch back a long way into time. And that also have the capacity to stretch forward into the future for a long time. So that an individual's actions as a representative of one of those groups have wide reaching implications. And, and so what we're looking for is not just an it's not just a story that takes place inside of that kind of a context, but one that actually has ramifications for that context. So as I said, we don't have that sort of technological transformation that we were we would look for in a steampunk primary story. But do we have some? Do we have events that transform that idea of lineage? I would say, Absolutely, we do. So we have events that are just the one that springs to mind, we have a Warren's versus Albion's. And there is a, I would say that there's an antagonism that exists previously to this, we can see that happening. And yet it comes to a head and a war is always going to change the historical relationship between two national powers, right? So we have that transformation of the relationships between those groups. And also, and I just want to bring this up, because I find it delightful. We do have groups of different types of beings in this society. So we have humans, we have warrior born and we have cats, and

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Speaker 1

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people have different ideas, often mistaken ideas of the relative merit of these groups. And this is something that has stretched back for a long time, how these groups interact. And, you know, we have a really, really lovely moment where for the first time ever, a cat is made a citizen of the spire. And so within the events of the story, and because of the events of the story, we have profound transformations, in the ways that these lineages interact with each other. And that is something that we know is going to stretch across time and have implications for the society as a whole.

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Speaker 2

38:07

Yes, and I think that the, if we loop in the content genre, and the epic nature of that, is that the force of antagonism and the and the, the problems around the Inciting Incident and what Grimm is dealing with across the entire story. It's old, right? It makes me think about really ancient conflicts that we have in our world between people who have lived in, you know, near one another, or, you know, they're adjacent and they're, you know, they're they've been fighting over territory for a long time or fighting over identity fighting over the right to exist even. Right. And so these ancient conflicts that are affecting us today. And I think that's part of what is being explored here is that, hey, guys, we're, you know, here we are, and there's this old stuff that we have to metabolize, in order to solve some other problems. So we do get that, you know, there is this animosity between the roar ends and the Albion's and, and you get the impression that that's been going on for a very long time. It is personal, in a way, right. It's personal between these nations. And so, there's that piece that I think is is really important and that we see in these epic stories is that something happened In the past, that is still that is still affecting us today. And if we don't metabolize that, then we're not going to actually be able to deal with the primary force of antagonism that threatens our survival. And so that's the kind of stuff that we're really getting in a story like this. And so the, the steampunk aspects are so fun and really make it innovates. That the, that epic, the high fantasy exploration we have in, in The Lord of the Rings we have in the Arthurian legends, right, we have lots and lots of, of stories like this, and that throwing that together and understanding which is primary, and which is, is just making it you know, fun and interesting and new is really important for enacting the story. So we're going to need those elements. It doesn't have to be it doesn't have to be steampunk, it doesn't have to be epics epic fantasy. But when you are doing your iteration, right of a scene based on this, the scene, it has to have that sense of time and space in order to authentically enact that pattern.

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Speaker 1

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Yes, and I think that's a great point that you bring up the realistic examples. So we can have, we can find a lot of examples from the real world where there are these ancient conflicts or weather, where there are really long-standing hierarchies that give an epic flavor to things that are going on. And then also, of course, you could do fantasy and do a different kind of fantasy, different kinds of On The Surface things you could have, you know, instead of different types of people, like we talked about with the warrior born MCATs, and things like that, you could have different families, again, different institutions, those kinds of things would be completely viable for a fantasy environment, or in something like, what and to give examples of that we talk about epic fantasy from The Hobbit with types of people, with families with Game of Thrones, things like that. And with institutions, you have a whole bunch of things, but a Wizard of Earthsea springs to mind, where there's their institutions that go back where different wizards study in different ways, or Harry Potter, those kinds of things. So we can look at those examples to inspire fantasy, I would say for realism. It really is anything that explores those deep themes. And so yeah, maybe looking at stories that are set in, set within wars, but are in you don't need to find a masterwork that is separate. I'm just kind of giving ideas of how to come up with these things. I think your idea of looking at things that are historically relevant in terms of those deep seated animosities are really good, and then make sure that it comes down to the individual level. So thinking about things that you're familiar with that mark, perhaps centuries of conflict, and then bringing that down to what's happening now, because of that conflict in the past. That's really important. And then for science fiction, that's also possible. And I'm thinking about Star Trek, as an example of that, where there are these institutions. So the fleets that go back over time, you also have really deep seated animosity with the Klingons and the Romulans. And then, on the other side, you have the humans in the Vulcans who are fighting against them. So there are and you know, those transform as well as a hallmark, right, so by the next generation, you have Warframe on the bridge, and that's great. And we see that kind of transformation going on as these groups find different ways to interact over time. And so, yeah, so that's some inspiration for as you're developing your context. Don't feel locked in, you know, we constrain the way we constrain some places to give freedom and other places. So we're constraining the content genres, because that's so central to what's going on. So if you start moving those a little bit, you'll find seismic shifts and the rest of your iteration So we're constraining to action epic Savior, and worldly revelation. And then that, in turn gives you some freedom in figuring out what that epic component as you talked about is going to look like, and how you can have fun and really make that your own by playing with the context.

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Speaker 2

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So now we're gonna move on to the structure leaf. And this is the one where, really, we're looking at who or what is transforming what is the one, we're looking at the story, and we're looking at the problem, what is being transformed from the Inciting Incident through to the resolution of the story. And here, we've identified it as the arc plot. Now, what that means is, we're very focused on the transformation of a single individual. Now, that doesn't mean that other people aren't having insights and aren't having transformations of their own. But what it does mean that the, that we're, we're focused on the transformation of a single individual, and, and then the, that transformation is what creates a change to a greater or lesser degree in the context, right, you can, if you have a mini plot story, what you're talking about is the Inciting Incident comes in. And there's a transformation of the whole context. And you'd be you'd be looking at the transformation of all the individuals, even though you have a central figure. But here, we're really focused on what is this story really about. And the story of the aeronauts windlass, is about how Grimm finds the best way to deal with the external threat by attuning to his environment. So you can you can see how we've got that the external, which is global, so it's like he has to deal with this external problem, the threat to the survival of himself, his crew, the predator. And then of course, the larger world of Albion, but we know where his heart is. And, and so he has to deal with that external threat. And He does it by attuning to the environment, right? Like, every time new information comes in, he is incorporating that. And that's what we're getting from the worldview revelation. So one of the things about this story that I that I like, this is my, this is my little red side trip for a moment. Because when I'm running the simulation of this story, from the moment of the Inciting Incident, I'm thinking of that, that saying, for want to nail the shoe was lost for want of the shoe, the horse was lost for want of a horse, the night was lost, and so on to the battle and the war and right there are different versions of it.

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Speaker 2

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But the key is that there are linchpins in the world, and Captain Grimm is one of those. And because of the decision that he makes in response to the global Inciting Incident, within that scene, He preserves himself and most of his crew and the predator and, and they play a pivotal role in facing the puppet master across the whole story. So that's what I'm thinking about. And that's really why I come down on our plot. This is about his transformation, and how he is a this pivotal figure in dealing with the external threat. So that's kind of if you I'm hoping that that's useful, that little red side trip of simulating what the story really is about, and having that understanding of why we're landing on our plot.

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Speaker 1

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Yes, and I think that it can be confusing to approach it when, when you're first starting out, because, for example, the multiple points of view, were sometimes scrims not even on the stage. And, you know, understanding that it's an arc plot through that requires some sort of It's a theme that I see a lot with this book, right, is that we've talked about this with the content. So I'm sure we've talked about this with reality's honor. And now we're talking about it with the, with the structures on is that you have stuff going on and you have to peel back layers, you have to scratch the surface to see what is actually going on in terms of the global story. And I think that's what makes this really complicated story. And it's so fun, right? It's so fun to enjoy. But then when you're analyzing it, it does take a lot of care. And we found that one of the things that I like to, to say, when we're looking at other stories, even if they are long, sometimes it's easier to just sort of hold the whole thing in my working memory. And with this story, I found that it was not possible to hold all of those components in my working memory. And so one of the things that we did is that we wrote out a timeline of every event that happens in the novel, just so that it helped us to compress that a little bit and get it just to a little bit more of a workable size, so that we could start to look at all the ways that these different pieces are working together. And that's part of just like peeling that back scratching the surface and finding out okay, what's actually going on here, because there are a lot of moving pieces. And so, you know, I think that it's very clear that it's an arc plot, but that could be obscured by the multiple points of view and things like that. And so I love what you're saying about thinking about Grimm as a linchpin that is so true. And another thing that, that I am thinking about is a really, really lovely moment in the book, where folly can finally talk to somebody who's not a crystal, it is such a great moment for her. But she's standing with Grimm in the predator, and she says, Oh, I get it. You're the predator. And the predator is you. And so there's this this affinity that goes down to the identity level between the captain and his ship. And I want to bring this up, because it allows for that umbrella of the protagonist to extend to other people. So we see that Gwen, for example, has a transformation. Over the course of the story. She, she in Crete, they undergo transformations through experiencing grins revelations. And we talked about that a little bit on the content genre. But I want to bring it up again here. Because what that is doing, is it saying that as Grimm goes through, he's doing the movement for a whole group of people. And we talked about how revelation has this sophisticated, mature protagonist. And sometimes, when you have that kind of genre that allows for a protagonist who is sufficiently advanced to act in a mentorship capacity, that person can act. And can their personhood can encompass the identities of others, so they can expand their protagonism into this whole group. And I think that that's a really beautiful thing that happens here so that we can see the effect of Graham's actions on a larger scale, and really get the impact of his lynchpin capacity. And also, then I want to relate that back to the reality genre and talk about how we're seeing on a smaller scale, right, one ship, but we're seeing how the individual can act as the representative of the larger group, and facilitate transformation for groups of people. And so you can see that all of this stuff is really working together, where we're, we're experiencing the grand scope of this novel, in all of these different facets of the genre.

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Speaker 2

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I'm so glad you brought that up, because it reminds me of what we talk about when we talk about stories. And that stories are the way that we they're like these containers, it's also the process through which we pass knowledge and wisdom about how to solve our perennial problems. And what you just kind of blew up for me is that the way that we do that, of course, we all have to come together and work together to solve these big problems, especially if we're metabolizing. A lot of stuff from the past right stuff that's been around for generations and generations and generations. In order to do that. We do need to work together, but we have to as individuals commit to seeing reality as it is in order for that to happen. So in order to be able to work together in these groups, we've all got to have the agreement, we're going to try to see things as they are. And we're going to try to metabolize the things that come up as they come up so that we can chip away at these bigger problems that are standing in the way of the existential threats that we face right now. So again, it's very complicated. But you can see how it does come down to this one individual who's inspiring others who has the maturity to be able to suffer fools, I mean, not gladly, perhaps. But he helps people who are not yet where he's at, to come up and see things from where he is seeing them. And that's exactly what we need to solve these problems that we face that are way too complicated for any one individual to solve.

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Speaker 1

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And love this discussion. And I think one of the things that we're getting at is how moving and how impactful these transformations are. And I think that it's very important to the way that the story is that we actually see those resolutions play out that we actually see the full impact on the context and on the other individuals of what's going on. When our protagonist, scram has these revelations, and then acts in accordance with them. And, for me, that ties into the style genre, where the first division that we make is between drama and comedy. And so as a reminder, from the concept videos, in drama, we have emotions that play out fully. So we don't have that reversal, where we undercut the effect of that emotional moment, we would, but we allow for the full impact of it of the emotional thing that that's happened, we don't make a joke of it, we don't make light of it. So one moment that stands out for me, in this mass work pattern scene that we're looking at is when Grimm and Creedy are talking about the death toll. And, you know, they don't, they don't they have so much respect for the weight of the loss. You know, they don't make jokes about it, they don't minimize it. They let it sit and be the full weight that it needs to be that these people have died and that they that Grimm did the best that he could, and yet still, there had to be these losses. And that's so important for the impact of this story and the message that it's trying to get across, that those losses are real, and they matter. And Grimm. And the other people who are going along with him must care about them. And so we have that dramatic mode, where we're treating the emotions with the weight that they need, and we're letting them play out in full.

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Speaker 2

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I'm so glad you bring up that moment. Because it is a really important moment. And although this is a very exciting story, right and, and there's a lot of humor to write I mean, we've got Rowl the cat who is amazing. He's really fun, right? He is, he's serious, but he's also really fun. And, and we have characters like or excuse me avatars, like Ferris, and Foley, and their interaction, the banter between different avatars. It is really fun, it is humorous. So drama, doesn't mean that we don't have humor. Right? But it doesn't mean that we're playing with emotions, and we're not playing with that we are that we are dealing with emotions and dealing with pain, and we see the actual consequences as you say. So that's the, that's are those two categories of drama and, and comedy. So we obviously settled on drama. And then we want to look at the medium and this one can be a little bit tricky, because we've identified it as cinematic. But this is a written novel. Right? So that's a little confusing, but the way it plays out the way we expect Your ants the story is very much like a film.

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Speaker 2

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And that means that we've got the visual presentation, the audible vision, presentation, right the whole way that we are experiencing the details. It's not hard at all to run that film in our head, we can imagine that as imagine this as an epic film, right. And so we see this and this is a function of the point of view choice, which will, you know, we'll talk about in future weeks, of course, but that that point of view choice really allows us to experience the story, as if we are watching it unfold as a film. So even though we've got words, the effect that's created is cinematic, so we experience the story in that way.

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Speaker 1

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And finally, we have the time genre. And this we look at the two levels. So we look at what is the experience for our audience? And what is the experience for our avatars as they go through the events of the story. And we kind of contrast those. So we want to look at this at a global level. And then we want to look at the scenes specifically. And how long does that take. So at a global level, as we've been talking about, this is an epic novel. So this is long, we looked at the audiobook, it takes about 21 hours to have it read to you. And you know, your mileage may vary based on your reading speed. But it does take a long time to experience this story. And it also takes quite a long time, though, we can talk about what that means relatively. But it takes a long time for the avatars to experience it. So once we start going through, and we look for clues as to how long the events are taking, how far apart they are spaced, it takes more than a month for the events of this story to unfold. And I think that's, that's a kind of an interesting thing. Because when I first read it, I experienced it as taking place in a much shorter timeframe. Because I think that I discounted the time on the end, like the two weeks that they're training for the duel and that kind of thing. And really focused on the expansion of the hours to a couple of days in the middle, where they're dealing with a lot of the intricacies of figuring out the plot of the antagonist.

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Speaker 2

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Yes, it's remarkable how there's so much packed into the story. And we are and it moves at a really good clip, the pace of the novel is wonderful. And so the we don't necessarily, as we're reading it, experience it as an expansion of over a month. But I think that what that what that means is that the that that pace has been handled really well. Right, so that it doesn't feel like I don't I've read many epic fantasy stories, and some of them feel like they're never going to end. But this one goes really quickly. And we're very engaged. It's very exciting. There's lots of intrigue. And so we don't necessarily feel that it doesn't feel heavy, it doesn't feel like it's taking too long, feels very fast. So that's really interesting. And, and we want to think about when we're thinking about our stories, when we're thinking about any story we're analyzing, we'll want to think about how much is being compressed, essentially, you know, time so we have places where the story is essentially compressed, right? Where it's like, Oh, two weeks later, for example. And a week after doing this, and a day later and those clues aren't, are just kind of dropped throughout the story. So they're important for us as in analyzing the story, we want to net we want to understand what's going on there. But as we're reading it, we don't necessarily pick up on it. It just they're just little clues dropped in that in that enable us to understand what's happening. And there of course, are those moments where, where, where not just this much time has passed, but this is going to happen. So for example, the duel is in seven days, we get that little that bit of information. So we have compression. And we have in the, in the battle scenes, we have what feels like expansion, because there's so much happening, that it feels like Time is moving very slowly. So those are, that's really skillful execution and paying attention to Sam's experience, to enable the US to take in so many details, so much information at the level that we want to write, you could do this as a quick read. And then you can do it as you can reread and reread and reread to really get those details and let all of that art let you appreciate all of the art and craft that went into putting this story together.

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Speaker 1

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Yes, and, and I think to part of that skillful execution is balancing those timeframes with the transformation in the context and in the avatars. And so that's why I had that little bit of hesitancy where I said, Well, you know, we'll talk about the relative importance of that month or so. Because there are certain things that it enables. So, you know, part of that is that that transformations happen, sometimes in their own time, or if they're going to happen more quickly, you have to facilitate them. And so one thing is, you know, when you bring up the training for the duel, Bridgette is she is she's a practical kind of person, you know, and Gwen is a prickly kind of person, if I had to characterize them, I would perhaps characterize them in that way. And Benedict is very careful, right, so you have this trio. And they're interacting with each other. And they don't have these big moments of, oh, I'm bonding, I'm skipping rungs on the bonding ladder, right. And so they need these couple of weeks together, because Bridget is not the kind of person who is going to have the sort of Disneyesque, I see the sky, and now all of a sudden, I'm in love with him, right? So she has that progression of getting to know Benedict and getting to, to understand him, so that she can make that leap and find that he is that he is the, you know, by the end, they are connected, they are bonded. And so having that time for her to progress in relationship with him, I think is really nice, and a really good choice. And with Glenn, you know, they, they're very different. And they're going to be kind of at odds with each other. And so having that relationship proceed incrementally, is really lovely as well. Now, I want to contrast that with Foley, who she meets, and then she has these moments. And probably, if you're thinking about the story, you can think about moments when Bridgette and Follies relationship jumps. So it's not that same steady progression that she has with the other avatars. But instead, it's like Bridget will have a realization Oh, you're talking to the jars because you can't talk to me, she shows folly that respect. Folly doesn't get respect from people very often. And she recognizes, Oh, Bridget has merit, and they have this step change in their relationship. And so those are the kinds of moments that you need, if you're going to have a very collapse timeframe, like a couple of days. And having too many of those doesn't make sense. So it's really lovely to have some of the transformations in relationship be stretched out. And some of them be compressed, where it makes sense. And, you know, I'm also thinking about this relative to other things. And so, talked about Middle Earth before. So let's just continue in that vein that the events of The Hobbit take place over a couple of years. And so this is another situation where the dwarves aren't giving much to Bilbo, you know, it's a, an adversarial relationship to start with. And then he has moments where he's able to kind of prove himself to them, but it's a very gradual, painful process to get to the point where they're bonded. And so it has to be that extended timeframe to have that same sort of gradual overcoming, you know, and we don't need that long, because we don't have avatars who are really adversarial with each other. But we do need some time. Now, we can imagine that if there's an arc where I don't know, for example, Sirocco seems like a candidate, you know, Syriac going great, maybe they come to be allies, that would take longer because they do start in this adversarial position. So as you create your avatars think about how long it's going to take for them to move from their initial state to the place where you want them to be, in the end.

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Speaker 2

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Exactly. That's part of making the experience feel authentic. Right. So you can't have things happen overnight, if they're not the kinds of things that happen overnight. So that's really important. And then we need to think about that over the course of the entire story, of course, but then we also want to think about it in terms of our, our scene, right? So in the scene that we're looking at, it's short, and it's a few hours, right. And we, again, we want that to be appropriate, we want that to be to the level of conflict, not just for the battle between predator and Itasca, but it needs to be appropriate, as you say, to the relationships that are developing. So we see that there's conflict between Creedy and kettle, about the approach that they should take and that sort of thing. And, and that we want that to be just right, right, to fit the situation. And to be something that that will, we need those conflicts, the those instances of conflict within the scene to be setting up in the right, to the right degree to write to the right extent, the conflict that will exist across the story between Creedy and kettle, for example. And so there's a nice moment when all of that gets paid off in the way that that Grimm is assigning tasks for in a later scene. So this is, it's really lovely to, to really be thinking about this and where the scene starts. And then also, of course, thinking about it. In terms of its importance, obviously, this is the global Inciting Incident it how it's important. So although it lasts just a few hours, it takes a full scene, right? So we are really engaging, and getting in there. So we want to think about the time that we're spending, the focus that we're putting on things and how important it is for the entire story.

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Speaker 1

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Yes, absolutely. And as you're creating your own iterations, thinking about keeping the scene time genre about the same, is going to be a good constraint to help you achieve the same kind of balance with that global overall plot of antagonism that, that you have developed earlier on when you're thinking about what your action epics Savior plot looks like. So we recommend with things like this, if there's a reason to adjust it, you can adjust it a little bit. But start with the default of keeping it the same, just because the fewer moving pieces you have, the more you're going to be focusing on the things that are really impactful to putting your own stamp on this iteration. And those are going to be making sure that you have the right kind of epic setup so that you have the, whatever your epic framework looks like. And then making sure that you really understand the nature and the true scope of the antagonism.

# Video 4 – The Proposition of Possibility (POP)

Speaker 1

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Now let's take a look at the Proposition of Possibility or POP. And this is a very fun term that we have for what we used to call the What If so, if anyone has seen any of the previous podcasts or read any of the previous material that we had talking about the what if that's now updated to be the Proposition of Possibility. And it has four components that help us to lay out the boundaries of the space that we're exploring with our story. So a lot of this comes out of the genre. So it's important that we're doing these in the order that we're doing them because one feeds into the next. And the components here are the context protagonist, Inciting Incident and goal state.

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Speaker 2

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Yes, so our Proposition of Possibility or POP is, is a really wonderful tool, because what it helps us do is it helps us constrain but also generate the problem space for the story. So coming out of our five, genre, Clover leaves, we have all of those, all of that information. And now it's as if we're kind of sorting it and putting in into different places, different forms, to help us understand the problem. So we're still in the blue level, we're still Beyond The Surface, looking at big mythopoetic patterns. But we're beginning to organize the information and think about it so we can prepare to drop down into Above The Surface where we will look at story function and as communication. But first, we have to really understand the problem space. And that begins with the context. So our context is the whole system setting for the story. And when we're looking at that, of course, we just want to start with from the reality genre, what's the location? And the time? Where the heck are we?

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Speaker 1

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Yeah, and the location and time give us a really good grounding On The Surface of the scene. So we're looking at the On The Surface component of this Beyond The Surface tool. So these Trinity planes are operating at all different levels. So just noting that, but we can note the location and time and then also another component of the realities honor that's really important is what are the rules of this world? So how does cause and effect work? How does that process of cause and effect work? What kinds of things can cause effects? How much randomness is there? How much chaos? How much order? And what are the capabilities of any special conditions that there are in the world, these are all things that we would look at and describe when we're describing the reality genre components of the context.

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Speaker 2

3:10

So then, after we're looking at the, the how the reality genre is influencing our context, then we want to look at the actual the conventions of the content genre. Now, what's really what I love about this is we're tying together different levels of story, we're pulling some Story Grid 1.0, back into what we're working on here with Story Grid 2.0. So the conventions of the genre, as you may remember, they are the selective constraints, and the enabling constraints of the of the context, that both give rise to the conflict, but also provide the means by which the protagonist can solve the conflict, right and solve their problem. So we're looking at the kinds of we're looking at selected constraints, which are qualities of the setting or, you know, qualities of the context. And then we're also looking at there are subjects or avatars within the context. So we want to make note of those that are required by the, by the genre. And then we also have these other circumstances, that that increased conflict, and forced the protagonists to face to really face it, right, that are bringing the protagonist to the turning point, and the crisis when they must decide. And so those circumstances are, are also part all part of the context, and we need to make sure that those are in in there, and we need to understand what they are in order to be able to execute the story and satisfy the readers expectations for the genre.

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Speaker 1

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Yeah, and one of the things that we talked about in the genres, five leaf clover videos, is about the concept of overlapping genre so that we don't have just different genres that are sitting independently from each other and operating in the same story. But instead, they work together. And so that's something to develop further, in defining the context is about looking, it's looking at how one component of the world can link different genres together. So if you have a global genre, and then you have the other secondary genre, so whether one is one is internal and one is external, what you'll see is that when they operate together in the same context, they'll have constraints that overlap and tie those two genres together. And we'll take a look at a concrete example of that when we look at our masterwork seating pattern. And so we can jump into the final component of our context, which is the double factor problem space. And this is a big one, because this is setting up a very important concept that we'll be talking about over the course of the training, which is the problem that our single audience member or Sam faces. And we'll get into that in a lot more detail next week. But this is setting up what kinds of factors are in play for the audience member who is observing the story. And we have double factor nests. And what that means is that it's not about figuring out what the best way to make a sandwich, what's the tasty sandwich where you're just optimizing one thing, but instead, it's about weighing and prioritizing different concepts that you have to find a balance between. And that's a lot trickier. Because what that balance is can change depending on the context. And so. So that's why we put it in context. Right? So we're talking about context, and then we're talking about two different things that the protagonist will have to weigh as they navigate this space.

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Speaker 2

7:26

Yes, I'm so glad that you brought this up, because it's, it is vital, right? Because, as you say, a story about what's the best sandwich? Or how do you make a sandwich is not super interesting, right? And we need to weave in the components of these double factor problems and make sure they are part of the context, which, incidentally, will be part of the binding beats the world building beads that we're going to work on later, are going to come right back to this kind of thing. We, the author must communicate the double-factored pneus of the problem through and demonstrate through the context. And it's I realize we're talking in abstracts, we are definitely going to talk about this when we get into the masterwork scene. But it's really important to understand how all of these levels of analysis and tools are tied together and how if you give this some thought in the beginning, you're going to set yourself up for a much better story. Because you've taken these things into account, even if you have to make adjustments later.

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Speaker 1

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Yeah, and, you know, I think that it's important to think about the things that we're going to talk about in the future. And to focus on that a little bit. So I love that you brought that up, because we are going to focus on this problem all the way through. And as you said, when we get to the world building binding beats, which, if anyone doesn't know what those are, it's okay, we're gonna get there. But you know, the bottom ties back to the top. And so what I want to bring up here is like, that's why we're doing this. That's why we're planning the scene at this macro level. Because we haven't just chosen the parts that we like, we've chosen the parts that you need to plan a scene that works. So the idea of setting up these boundary conditions for what your context is. The idea there is to create a frame in which all of the more micro parts of story can operate, so giving direction and giving a specific function to the beats that live within this scene. And so we're going to be coming back to the constraints that we set up in these early trainings. We're going to come back to them again and again, because they inform every other part of the scene. And so we can't have beats without understanding these principles of the Story Grid 624.

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Speaker 2

10:08

Right. And I'm so glad you brought up constraints again, because that reminds me that one of the things we're doing, we're really focusing in the semester on iterating, the masterwork scene. So what we're gonna do is we're, you know, we're outlining all of the constraints, the things that you have to have in your scene, when you report, you know, when you iterate it when you create it. And that could feel like, Oh, I feel like I'm just spinning my wheels. I'm not getting anywhere. So I know how to do this lovers meet scene, that's only one scene type. How does that help me with my work in progress? Well, one of the things that we're doing is we're giving you the constraints, and helping you to begin to see them within the masterwork scene, that's going to take time. So don't panic, if you're not able to identify those yet. We're giving them to you. But what this will do over time, is enable you to choose the constraints for your next work in progress. So you're not just learning how to do have execute a very specific scene with specific constraints. You're learning about how they work, you’re learning what like, what effects they have they create. And that way, you'll be able to choose more wisely when you return and start working on your own story. And that is a very exciting thing. Indeed.

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Speaker 1

11:47

It sure is. And, and I think that we'll see so much variety in the iterations of the masterwork scene. And I think that's just really exciting. So I'm really looking forward to it. All right, let's hop into the next component of our Proposition of Possibility, which is the protagonist. So this is a pretty important one, as it's the avatar, and I think it's important to take a little time here to talk about the word avatar, since that's going to be new to some of the members of The Guild. But it's the avatar, who is the primary one in the story, and they face the double factor problem that we just talked about, that's raised by the Inciting Incident. And they must actively respond in the stories global climax. So to unpack that a little bit, let's talk about what an avatar is, and why we're not saying character, when that is something that is so common. So an avatar is a simulated person. And it is what people outside of Story Grid would refer to as a character. But we want to refer you, sorry, we want to reserve that word character, for a very specific concept. And that is character as meaning the, the internal workings of an avatar. So you can have lots of simulated people in your stories, you can have, you know, what you call primary characters, secondary characters, tertiary characters. And there are lots there can be lots of people that can be cast of 1000s of people. But really, if you think about it, you don't know anything about the characters of people who are just extras on the stage. Because the character is that internal working. So it's how the avatar processes the world, how they see the world, what frame they're looking through, what worldview they have, how they process in terms of what pieces of collective cultural grammar, which are, like laws and codes and norms that they subscribe to, like, what kinds of what kinds of things do they hold to be true? What are the propositions that they value? Where do those come from? What kinds of identities do they feel that they have? What kinds of emotions do they have? And how do those drive their actions? How do they prioritize different virtues and values? I mean, all of these rich, big meaty concepts, which we will talk about as we get into the material in the rest of the semester. All of these are things that make up the character of an avatar. And so character is a very special and very powerful thing. And we want to make sure that we don't give character to just anybody who happens to show up on the page. Instead, that's something that as a writer, you have to work to show. And so what's important here is the protagonist must actively respond to the Inciting Incident In the story's climax, and we'll talk about this as we get into the five commandments of storytelling. But when they take action, that's when they reveal their character. And so that's going to be really key to identify the protagonist, to identify how the, the writer in taking them through that sort of a decision making process has gone beyond, they're just being an avatar and develop their character. So that's really key to the protagonists space. And as we look at the protagonist, they're going to have a lot of special roles in the story, in terms of owning the climax, in terms of being the primary agent, and they're also the one that the reader will associate with, as they read through the story. But we're going to focus a lot on how to identify protagonists, because it can be tricky. But keeping in mind that they're the ones who are making decisions and who are making actions that shift the global value that's going to guide you in determining who is the protagonist of a story.

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Speaker 2

16:11

Excellent, excellent. So once we define identify who our protagonist is, then we want to think about their relationship to the context. So we went through all of those aspects of the context. And then when we dropped down into who is the protagonist, we want to understand how they relate, what are they what they're working on, and this is a very specific thing. And we've adjusted the language a little bit from last semester, but it's still very close. So we want to know, is the protagonist a fish out of water? And, and more specifically, a fish out of native water, who is incited to enter a novel context or at let's say, perhaps a novel pond? A new place, right? Or is the is the protagonist, a indigenous defender of the pond? Right. So they're trying to force someone else who's come into the context, to conform to the norms, laws, and codes of the collective cultural grammar, like this is how we do things here, guys, so that they can, so that they can defend the context and keep it safe. So this is a really important thing to understand about the protagonist. Because if we're, you know, looking ahead to when we're looking at the beats, the protagonist will be acting in a particular way, and will have a particular things that they're pursuing, because they are driven as a fish out of water, or as a defender of the pond. And so it'll be really important for them to act consistently with that role that they're playing in the story.

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Speaker 1

18:16

Yeah, absolutely. And it's, it's great to look at this particular characterization of the avatar as both backward looking like you connected it to the context and forward looking to the beats and also forward looking to the other parts of the POP. So as you said, it's about the role that they're going to be playing in the beats. And it's about the identity that they're going to take on in response to the Inciting Incident to. So we're going to talk about the Inciting Incident next. But you can see in the bullet points that we have here that we're already talking about incitement. So we have, you know, the fish out of native waters, incited to enter a novel context, or the defender who has incited to deal with an intruder. And so we all have so many identities within us, and identifying, as you said, Which role the protagonist is playing, that's going to show which identity to focus on. And so, so, a single avatar can be both of these things in different domains or different contexts and things like that. And so the key thing is to narrow down and look at the specific identity and role that is affected by the global story. And by the, in particular, the global Inciting Incident, which is our next component of the POP that we'll get to.

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Speaker 2

19:36

So our third area within the POP that is our Proposition of Possibility is what is inciting the protagonist. And so, of course, this is our Inciting Incident. And this is what creates that double factor problem we were talking about that arises from the context in both the form of the inciting the Inciting Incident is a problem. But it is a problem that is con. complicated by the protagonist’s relationship, both to the Inciting Incident but within the context. So what we're talking about and how the, whether the protagonist is the fish out of water or the defender of the pond, that, that that is that part of that relationship to the Inciting Incident. And we need to understand that in order to, to go on. And what this will, we, of course, want to look at the global Inciting Incident of the story, because that's setting everything in motion. It's creating the problem. And also, we'll create other things that we'll talk about, that we'll talk about next, in what the what the protagonist is, once that happens. So we need to understand the global Inciting Incident as we do this. But of course, because we're looking at a scene, we want to look at the scene level Inciting Incident. And importantly, consider how this is an aspect of the global Inciting Incident. So there will be things that should be things that your scene level Inciting Incident has in common with the global Inciting Incident. And that's because every scene is an opportunity for the protagonist to metabolize an aspect of that Inciting Incident, right, so they are exposing pieces, aspects of the Inciting Incident of that double factor problem on their way to facing the turning point and the global crisis. So it's really important that these be connected in important ways. And in different stories that will be different. Right, the links between the global Inciting Incident and the scene level, Inciting Incidents may be different. We had some fun figuring out what this is for our masterwork scene. But the important thing is that they are connected in a deep way that doesn't necessarily have to be on the nose. But you should in a masterwork scene, you should be able to discern it. And you want to be thinking about that as you are recreating your version of the masterwork scene.

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Speaker 1

22:45

Yeah, absolutely. And I think that, as we get into examples, it will be a lot clearer. But to kind of illuminate that you can have these, the connection between aspect and problem space, at different levels. So like you said, it's not necessarily on the nose, but it can be On The Surface. For example, if you find out that there's a family secret for one of your avatars, that avatar might need to confront the secret and deal with the material implications of it. And then maybe also talk to different family members about what has been going on. So the avatar might call their mom to say, you know, why didn't I know about this before? And so that can be an On The Surface kind of connection? Or it can be an Above The Surface connection? Maybe it's how do you deal with a particular frame in which you see the world? How do you deal with pride or prejudice, for example, to name a work? And then different Inciting Incidents with touch different aspects of those kinds of frames? Or at a Beyond The Surface level? How do you deal with drop ins of order and chaos? Or how do you deal with different aspects of a virtue and, or a value space. And so all of these things can be ways in which the Inciting Incident is connected. And it's important to look at masterworks and then abstract up to see how far up the connections go. And that's going to help build up like a library of understanding different ways in which you can create coherent stories that hang together on less a central controlling idea. And so all of those connections can happen at lower levels or at higher levels or a mix of them. And, and looking at how that's been, how, how famous and authors that have stood the test of time, right, how they've finished fixed that problem and addressed it. That's going to help under help you understand how to do that in your own work.

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Speaker 2

24:54

Right. And, you know, one thing that's really important also about the Inciting Incident is is the force of antagonism because the Inciting Incident is how the force of antagonism is operating to it in the beginning, right? So for the, from the global Inciting Incident, it's kicking things off, right. And it may not always be, for example, we talked to, we've talked about how the Inciting Incident of The Hobbit is Gandalf coming and encouraging, nudging Bilbo out the door to go on an adventure. And that's not he's, he's a force of antagonism there because Bilbo wants to stay at home, he is not the big problem that is that is awaiting Bilbo down the road. But they are connected. And it's important to realize that, but so we really want to understand and be thinking about the forces of antagonism that are operating, we saw them in the context. And now they're kind of now they've bubbled up into an actual problem inciting the protagonist to do something, they are going to have to deal with it.

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Speaker 1

26:11

Yeah, and an eminent antagonist is a very specific thing, in the same way that a protagonist is. So an antagonist is not the villain or the bad guy. The antagonist is simply the one who is providing input. And we'll talk about input and output later on. But it's someone who's transferring energy toward the protagonist to incite them to do something. And so all it means is that it's the person, the avatar, or in some cases, the force, it could be like an arena based random chance or natural occurrence, something like that. That's knocking the protagonist off balance and causing them to do something. And so sometimes, we can feel a little bit of resistance to naming an antagonist when it's not someone who's bad in the novel, but it's someone who is then who is causing that change for the protagonist. So Gandalf is not bad. But he's someone who impacts Phil Bo's life. And he impacts those life in such a way that he, he encourages Bilbo or forces Bilbo, to confront his problem. And that's his obsession with home. And so then what we'll see throughout that novel is that different forces will come into Bill's life, and force him to address different parts of that central issue that he has. And so in some cases, there'll be parts of the problem in some cases, and others, it'll just be circumstances that force a confrontation with that problem in order to address them. So we can see that manifest in all those different ways. So now, let's go to our fourth component. And that is the goal state of the protagonist. So this is something that we've hinted at before, it's the object of desire. And so this is something that the protagonist is pursuing, in response to the Inciting Incident, which creates or crystallizes the object of desire. And the goal state is linked to the global genre, through the Inciting Incident through the context and through the roles that the protagonist plays. So this is something that we've talked about in the components leading up to this, where the protagonist is pursuing something, because of their relationship to the context because of the identity and the role that they take on as either the fish out of native water who is coming into a new context, or the defender of the pond, of which they're an indigenous member. There, they're taking on that identity. And then in relation to the Inciting Incident, they take on a role to pursue an object of desire that is prompted by that Inciting Incident. And that's how they find themselves in the goal state. And when we describe the goal state, we can describe it at all of the Trinity planes of story that we talked about in the first video of this training. So we have On The Surface once Above The Surface needs and Beyond The Surface desires. And so we can get into those in our masterwork pattern example, about how to actually pick those out of a story. But it's we've ordered them in this way, because it's easiest to start with the On The Surface where it's actually what they're pursuing. The actions that they can they take because of something that they see that they want. The need is underlying what they actually need to change to thrive and be successful. And then the Beyond The Surface desire is what they must accomplish to actually actualize themselves. Have and achieve their full potential

# Video 5 – POP – The Aeronaut’s Windlass (TAW)

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Speaker 1

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Next, let's dive in and look at the concepts of the POP in the context of our masterwork pattern seen from Jim Butcher's The Aeronaut’s Windlass. To start out, let's take a look at context. Now context has three different components, we look at the Reality genre, which is Time and Place, we look at the conventions of the Content genre. And we look at the double-factor problem. So we're going to take each of those in turn, and really explore the key elements of the context as we develop the constraints and the boundaries of our story world.

So starting out with the realities on our time in place, this is just where the story takes place. And what are the rules that govern that time in place? Right, so we have that it's inspire Albion. And as we discussed, when we were talking about the five-leaf genre clover, this is one of a number of spires that operate in this environment. We know from the text that it happens 200 years after the New Dawn, but we don't really know what that is, that's part of, we understand what we need to know. But we don't really need to know that for the story. And so it creates that sort of epic feeling where we have this big canvas, and it's a large timescale, but we don't know what the new dawn actually was. And then we can talk about sue that we have these dynamics in the context. And this is about how we determine how we determine the truth of the true nature of an action and how we decide whether that action had merit or not. So what we find is that within the spire, and within the timeframe that we're dealing with, we have clear cause and effect. So if you can get down to if you can peel back all the layers of all the covert action going on, it's pretty clear, who's doing what and why they're doing it. And revelations give you a really clear idea of okay, so and so did this. Because of this, it's like the motivations very clear. But they can be blurred by that timeframe. So looking too much at the short term, versus the long term, or long term versus short term. And so people can kind of get off track by considering things in a timeframe that doesn't suit the event. So that's how you get down to what the true nature of the event is, is by making sure that you're looking at it in its proper scope. And then to evaluate its merit, we get this really lovely moment from Ferris, where he explains, as part of a part of his background, he was a Marine. And their motto, there was Semper Fortitudo, *are always strong*. And he explains what strength really means. So what we've boiled that down to here is that through is that there are elements of SAT self sacrifice, which sacrifices important fraction, but the wise are going to seek to understand. So to get to wisdom, we have to get to a place where you're seeking to understand others. So some of the moments that we've talked about before, like where Bridgette connects with Foley, by seeking to understand her we understand that Bridget, in the context of the story universe is a meritocracy plus or a good actor, because she is acting with the wisdom of that self sacrifice where she's not focused on herself. But instead she's turning that lens outward and focusing on others.

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Speaker 2

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So I want to dig into these a little bit so we can spend a little more time with them. So the time horizon, what are we talking about there? Right that there is there is cause and effect, as you said, if we pull back the layers enough. And so in a way, what we might talk about is how we're making sense of or what something means, right? So when we think about, we think about this a lot in the context, or people talk about it a lot in the context of if you're on your deathbed, and you look back over your life, what are the things you're going to regret the things that you the things that you did, or the things you didn't do, right? Are you going to regret those that you didn't have more meetings, or you kind of regret that you didn't have more authentic connections or right these sorts of things. So in a time horizon, certain things are more important, right? When we're, when we're thinking about parenting, for example, we need to keep in mind that our children are not going to be young forever. And if we want to have a relationship with them, once they become adults, we have to treat them in a certain way during that time, even if it's more inconvenient. So it's what what's the consequences are most important. And then that's what that event means to me, is, you know, what, what am I finding relevant in it? So that's kind of the that time horizon because we can we can be making a choice that is based on how we're measuring things, how we're looking at the crisis, right? And the factors within the crisis, how we're looking at it now, how we're looking at it for over the course of our lives, and how we're looking at it for all of eternity, because our actions have different meanings depending on the time signature through which we're viewing them. So let's time. And then I love that. I love Semper Fortitudo. And I love that this is delivered by Ferris, who is this kind of eternal being? Right? He's someone who is far seeing, right? So Ferris is this eternal being, he can see things in the context in a very broad context. Whereas Gwendolyn is more. She while she has the lineage of her entire family backing her up, she does tend to think about now, what needs to happen now, and she's always, not always, but she's often firing off her gauntlet, and, and taking decisive, quick action. Because she is seeing things more in that now. She's perhaps thinking a stitch in time saves nine. So let's get this stuff done. But that doesn't enable her to have all the wisdom. So it's really meaningful that this that this phrase, and that this explanation comes through Ferris explaining to Gwendolyn about the whys seek to understand. And it's through this kind of eternal view of the consequences of one's actions.

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Speaker 1

7:03

Yes, and I love how thinking about the timeframes in that way, it brings us right back to self sacrifice, which ties into that idea, right of the, of the merit of an idea or a person or an action. And what I love about Semper Fortitudo, apart from it being said by this, as you said, eternal being like Ferris is that it comes from this lineage of the institution of the Marines, that is part of the epic framework of this particular context. And so we have those epic themes coming to bear in the way that different avatars will evaluate whether an action was wise or not. And that's coming from, as I said, part of the context that has survived a long time, and is in itself seem to be a meritocracy as part of the of the context. So we have that Semper Fortitudo, we have that self-sacrifice. And when we look at that in terms of the time horizon, it means that sometimes people are going to do things that are self-sacrificing, like, I thought you brought up some really good examples with the three avatars that you discussed. And also we have Grimm right our protagonist, and he allows even at the end of this novel, he allows his reputation to be tarnished, and stay tarnished through falsehood, because it's what's best for the ongoing eternality of the context. And so he's thinking beyond his own lifespan, which is such a, you know, a unique gift for someone to be able to do. And I think it's really wonderful that he does that. And he's held up as this paragon of wisdom, because he's able to see beyond himself, and he's able to care about not only others, in terms of people that he knows and cares about, but also others in the more abstract sense, where he's doing what's best for the system as a whole, rather than for any individual or group of individuals. For the next part of our context, we have the conventions of the content genres. So here, what we want to do is we want to look at all of the conventions that apply to our two content genres are external and our internal and pull out the ones that affect all of the avatars in the context. So we're not looking at the ones that define certain roles for avatars within the context, but rather the ones that apply universally. And so here we have three and we will discuss each of these in turn, the first to come from action. There the disturbed, unbalanced physical and social environment that gives rise to conflict, and dueling hierarchies, where a growth hierarchy is at odds with a power dominance hierarchy, or a dueling protagonist and antagonist. And then coming from worldview we have the existence of a big social problem that will be addressed So with that worldview shift, so let's go through those one at a time. And first talk about the disturbed, unbalanced, physical and social environment, we have a lot of things going on there. And one of them is just that they live in the spire city. And we've talked about how this is a combination of the past and the future in the development of steampunk technology and bringing it forward into this alternate future. But it also is some sort of post-apocalyptic going for goings on. Those are happening. So we have a completely well, maybe not completely uninhabitable, but a very dangerous surface, because we know that the Olympians go down there sometimes. So it's not like you can't be down there. But there are things like silk weavers that you don't want to hang out with the puppet master appears to be On The Surface. So we don't want to be spending time with him either. There's a lot of bad stuff happening On The Surface, something happened that we don't like down there. So humanity has moved up to the spires. And we and we have people who are in an environment that doesn't necessarily suit them, right, they live 10,000 feet off the ground. That's a big deal. And so, you know, when we think about all of the attendant changes that have to happen, they have to have some sort of oxygen management, they have to have all have that kind of thing. To live that far Above The Surface, isn't we

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Speaker 2

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see, one of the interesting things I think about this context is we see how it affects different avatars differently. For example, Grimm, doesn't like to be on masonry, right? He wants to be on his ship. And nowhere else, right? He starts to feel unsettled. Right, if he if he spends too much time, there, but what we see when we see Bridgette, coming into the shipyard for the first time she is out from under the handles, right? So she's actually out and able to experience the sun for the first time. And it's really, really bright for her. Right, and she's, she has this fear, right? When we think about being 10,000 feet Above The Surface of the Earth, we might think, worry about falling down and hitting that right. But what she's worried is that she'll be pulled up into the abyss pulled, you know, up into all of that. So it's really fascinating. And it just shows how you can create a world with these details that affect everybody. Everybody in the context differently, but in a similar way. So we have that, again, that deadly surface, where and everybody is up in the air. But then we also have the social environment. And we have a very rigid class structure. But we have a representative monarchy. So what that is, is, of course, it's like the United Kingdom is today, right? There is a monarch, the monarch has some powers, but they're mostly ceremonial. And the and there is this this democratic process, but the really fun thing about this story is that we get we get this view of democracy as as a battle, right, as a symbolic representative, a symbolic representation of battle where ideas are dying, and that that one position ends up coming out of a, you know, a discussion or a debate or, and, and is in wins. So we don't actually have bloodshed, of course in this in this experience, but it is there is lost there is this the sense that things are certain things do not continue, and certain things do.

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Speaker 1

14:51

Yes, and part of what you touched on there with the idea of the rigid class structure is we're starting to we're starting To expose that big social problem, so not to spoil anything we're gonna get there. But we can start to see how all of these conventions work together to form a coherent context in which the story operates. And I really, I think the passage that talks about the democracy of violence is very powerful for that, sorry, democracy as violence is very powerful and interesting, as you noted, and part of what's fascinating about it is that that speeches delivered by Esterbrook, who is a warrior born and so the warrior born have a lot of feline characteristics, they share a lot of their DNA with cats, cats think that they're half soul. So you know, they're doing okay. But from both sides, they have some pressure of not fitting in and, and we have this structure where there is prejudice from the humans, and the warrior born in the cats, those are all conflicting factions. But I want to bring up that it's Esterbrook, who says this, because when, when a democracy when a pure democracy or the pure idea of democracy, silences voices, it's because the majority speaks, and that is Esterbrook’s idea of what the what the violence of democracy is that the majority speaks in ritualistically. It's, it's like the end of the ideas of the minority. And it's fascinating coming from this disadvantaged group that, yeah, whatever the humans say. That's what's going to happen. And so it's showing that even though they have, they have a government that appears to have lasted for a long time, with the shifting relationships between humans where pureborns and cats there's, there are cracks that are opening up in how well this government can function. And then we also know that the spire Ark, when we meet him in the dumpling shop, that he is also concerned about the fragility of his position. So we have a seemingly stable government, but it is unbalanced underneath the surface, where it does have, it has some cracks, as I said, that are opening up and threatening to cause really, perhaps catastrophic unrest in misfire. And as we have cracks opening up in the excepted government, we also have things that rush in to fill that power vacuum. So we have things like criminal gills, and those are operating. And so there are lots of non-governmental actors who are contributing to the fabric of the society and splintering it up. So one thing that we didn't talk about yet in the in the physical context is that there are 250 handles. And 236 of them are occupied setup, something's going on in those 14 handles. We don't know what it is yet. But, you know, in a in a place that is two miles wide to have 250 distinct sectors, where people are. The sense that I'm getting of this is that this context is entirely patchworked. Right. And we know that the builders, they they're the technology is lost, the builders are lost, and so they can't make more Firestone. So they, as you said, they put masonry on there, Grimm doesn't like masonry, it's just kind of cobbled on top. And that's another idea of patchwork. And then you have all of these different types of people who are trying to find places together. It's more about it's more patchwork. And so that's the aesthetic that I get from this environment is one of patching together unrelated things. And you know, when you have that Patchwork, they don't always join up very smoothly. And so we're seeing the effects of that as these different patches try to figure out how they work together. And you know, that's within the spire, but then outside the spire, we have all sorts of spires who are out there, we know about the Aurora inspire, of course, they figure prominently in the story. And there's the Olympian Spire, and there are other spires, presumably, and so we don't know how many, but what we know is that there are other spires out there, and that they create that patchwork effect on the global scale, where you have different nations, all vying for importance.

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Speaker 2

19:38

Now let's talk about the dueling hierarchies. And what we have here are we have the power dominance hierarchy, and we have a growth hierarchy. And these two hierarchies are the differences are really about their approach to solving problems. Right. Do we Are we trying to dominate and seize agency? Or are we trying to grow and enable agency for others? So it's when the approaches of different people is in conflict, then you're going to have, you're going to have some good conflict, right? And because they cannot exist together in harmony, okay, so when we talk about power dominance hierarchy, we have in this in this story, we have a lot of examples of that we have spire Aurora, we have actually the spire Albion fleet, which is really interesting. We also have the house system. So you have the Lancaster's who are kind of at the top of the heap. And then you have families like the tag wins Bridget's family, they are very, they're more. They are aristocrats, in a sense only because their family name is left, you know, there's a lineage there, but they are definitely working class folks in the Inspire now. So then, we have the puppet master, a puppet master is remember the one pulling the strings, the one who is seeking to destroy spire Albion and he is he or she? We don't know exactly. But the that force is very much interested in seizing agency, right, we see that it's a very clear example of seizing agency in a literal way. He is directing or he or she, the puppet master is directing the actions of Cavendish and through Cavendish, others including the silk weavers, and the Aurora ones. And so we have this whole hierarchy within the dominant power dominance hierarchy. So when it comes to the growth hierarchies, which is you know, that the opposing forces, right, if we have, we're more interested in a meritocracy, the, the best example of that is really the predator crew. And we have a very clear example of this between Creedy and kettle. Right. So Creedy is the Executive Officer, he's the second in command. And in within the fleet, there is very tight, a very tight rigid hierarchy, so that that someone who is subordinate does not talk back to someone who is superior. Right. So in the situation when kettle and Creedy are offering competing strategies for going after Itasca Grimm is listening to them both. And, and despite the fact that kettle is disrespectful, he listens to him, he does not punish him, except later, we see that that how that works out. But it's in a way he wants good ideas and good information to come from the bottom up, he understands that he cannot see and know everything and that his crew possesses knowledge and wisdom that he needs and so, he is not willing to discipline kettle even though he's a little rude to Creedy. So, we have a really good example of that. Then also within the within the cat tribes, we have a similar kind of thing. Now, it is more based on physical prowess the ability to you know, to to dominate physically, but it is it is based on causing the effects right like what is going to be most efficient, what is going to help us survive.

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Speaker 2

24:26

And so we see an example of that when none of the nine clause listens to Rowl when Rowl has a fair fight with mean right so we have another example of that. And then some other examples. The spire art guard is another growth hierarchy. We see that the spire arc is very much encouraging people who are learning growing offering info nation he wants to hear from them he wants to listen. And then we also have, of course, the relationship between the materialist, and they and their apprentice. So in the situation with Master Ferris and Folly, he is very up, he is a little rude to her. But he is also he also welcomes her ideas and welcomes that, that give and take, and, and allowing wisdom to bubble up from the bottom.

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Speaker 1

25:35

Yes. And as we explore the conventions of the content genres here, I think it's really important to look at how they're functioning with the rest of the context. So when we looked at, for example, the disturbed and unbalanced physical and social environments, we started to see how they're coming from the framework, where we have those epic groups and those epic institutions going on in the hierarchies are also functioning within those epic groups or across them. Right. So this is interesting. So we have those groups that go backward and forward in time. And then some of these things cut across and combine elements of those different groups into places where they're that where transformation can happen. They, they provide that sort of transformative environment. So something like the predator crew, as you pointed out, it has people who are not from places of advantage in those power dominance hierarchies. And then you have creepy coming in. And he's able to understand more over the course of the novel about where ideas can come from, because he's forced into that environment that he's not used to. And the spire arcs guard in taking representatives from all the different houses. They allow for communication and transformation in connection between people like Gwendolyn, and people like Bridget, who are from those opposite ends. Also want to note a fun little image there is they both of their houses have batteries. Right. But the Lancaster's have crystals of the taglines have meat, and that's very different. So, so you know, having those elements of cross cutting allows for that transformation. And I also want to connect this to the dynamics of figuring out merit, because as a meritocracy, growth hierarchies respect the dynamics of figuring out merit. So as you said, V. Someone like Grimm, who is doing very well, in a merit based hierarchy, allows ideas to bubble up from below, he seeks to understand rate, Semper Fortitudo, he is looking for his self-sacrificing, he's sacrificing his own primacy, for the merit of those ideas, as they are determined by that dynamic. And so we have these conventions that are directly connected back to the ideas coming from the reality genre. And so, then, on the other side, the power dominance hierarchy, a power dominance hierarchy in this context is going to be one that rejects the idea of self-sacrifice, and rejects the idea of seeking to understand so we can see how those are directly opposed to each other. Because the dueling hierarchy doesn't care about, about the way of determining merit, right? It's not a meritocracy. And so that's how Grimm got disgraced in the first place, is that he, he did self-sacrifice, and his self-sacrifice wasn't rewarded, because he wasn't the right kind of person. They wanted to protect other people. And that leads us to our big social problem, which we've been exploring a little bit so far. But this also comes directly out of those, that epic framework where we have those different hierarchies in different lineages. We have that strict class system that we've been talking about, and so Grimm, right, he has this undeserved hit to his reputation, because he's not the kind of person the fleet wants to protect. And there are power dominance hierarchy. There, there's prejudice against cats in the warrior born so we see all over the place that we have the big social problem of unfair advantage, and unfair privilege and unfair bias based on the institutions and hierarchies that exist in the context due to what I'm calling that epic framework of those groups that go backward and forward in time. And so as we can see, all of those, all of those components are working together in this really intricately woven way. And they all come together in the double factor problem. Now, this is a problem that, as we talked about in the concept videos, doesn't have an easy solution. It requires weighing and prioritizing to Different factors to feel to figure out what is the best context specific way to act. And

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Speaker 1

30:07

the double factor problem affects every single avatar in the context. So that's why we put it here, when we're talking about the context is that everyone is dealing with the same two factors. And here we have this double factor, when is the right time to intervene or to fight. And so this goes right back to that time horizon, some avatars are going to lean more toward waiting, some are going to lean more toward acting quickly. But they're, they're making those decisions based on how they weighed the factors of survival and the potential for the real the revelation of the truth of the context, which in in this world, that equates to wisdom. So they are figuring out, what are the relative risks to them in the specific context in which they find themselves based on those two countervailing forces? And they're deciding, okay, do I act right now? Do I get involved? Do I fight? Or do I put it off and try to get more information before I get involved? And we can look at what the different how the different factors weigh out when they act, or when they wait. But they're all going to be in terms of the survival and the potential for wisdom? And none of it's easy, right? So every time there is a, there's a negative, there's a positive, and they have to figure out which one is more applicable in that specific context. And that's what makes it that double factor problem. There are no hard and fast rules, okay? It's always better to wait, no. Instead, they have to really evaluate their context and see what's right for them at that space and time. So as we go through the different stakes that are associated with our factors, what we can see is that this has to do with the nature of the force of antagonism. So when we're looking at when is the right time to intervene or fight, if you act quickly, you, you might not understand what you're up against, and you can fall into a fatal trap. Whereas waiting can allow antagonists to make a nest. So we're trying to use imagery here that connects to the unique nature of our antagonists. And from the bottom to the top, we have a lot of imagery related to strings, and to spiders. And so and a lot of covert action along the way, right, we have layers of covert manipulation of others. So we don't really know who the true antagonist is until really near the end. And so we're expressing that by talking about these, talking about things like making a nest, right using that imagery to evoke what kind of animal antagonists This is. And we're trying to honor the nature of the antagonism by showing that this is not a this is not an A hunter that goes out and tries to catch its prey. Instead, they set traps. And so this is the kind of antagonists that we have, we have antagonists that create traps and lore, lore other actors into them. So traps are really dangerous, right, they can affect your survival, they can injure or kill you. And if you act, then you have less time to detect those traps, right. So you might rush in headlong you might get hurt. But you might save lives, sometimes acting quickly is the right thing to do. And then on the other side, if you wait, the antagonist has more time to create that trap. But at the same time, you can act more carefully and potentially avoid the pitfalls that are involved in that trap. So that's how interacting with traps of what affects survival. And that's one of our factors. So you can see already we have a complicated situation. But if we only have that one factor, we can make calculations about All right, and is it better? Or how do we how does this affect our chances of survival? And we can do the math on that. But to get into prioritization, we also have to think about Revelation. So this is about discovering the motivations of antagonists, which contribute to the truth of the context, right, you need to know what game you're playing and to know that you need to know who you're up against. So quick action doesn't allow time to discover those motivations, which is critical for wise action. But it makes those the antagonist before they settle in. So again, we have that trade off within that factor. On the other side, if you wait, the antagonists have time to obscure their actions that goes hand in hand with making a nest making that trap that can hide what they're up to.

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Speaker 1

34:58

So that promotes ignorance because they are putting up veils to hide the truth. But on the other hand, you have more time to discover the truth. So while they have more time to hide, you have more time to discover, it turns out to be kind of a race to see who can do that first. So you can see that there's a lot of, there are a lot of pieces, but each actor in the context, not just the protagonist, but everyone has to weigh when determining how they choose to act or not act to act or wait in dealing with their own antagonists. So, you know, that's, that's everyone that we encounter. It's also the antagonist. Right? They have to decide how long to wait how long to plan before they put their own plans into motion, because to them, the other side is the antagonist. So everyone who's making decisions is dealing with how to balance finding out the truth of the situation with trying to ensure their own survival.

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Speaker 2

35:59

So one of the things that I think is, is really interesting and useful and is, and I want to call attention to is about the way that everything that we've talked about before, is flowing down into the this the double factor problem of the context. And it's really, it's tricky, right? We don't often think about this, because sometimes, if you if you stopped to think about the double factor problems, right, if you slow everything down and pull all the pieces apart, just looking at that box, could make you go crazy, right? And perhaps that's the point, right? Is that the avatars in this world, sometimes have time to think about it to consider to, to, to, to really allow insights to come from the situation, you know, from within them selves about the situation, and sometimes they don't and even though we're dealing with this in this story in the context of an action story, we know, we deal with this kind of thing all the time, every day. And I think that's part of what makes this story. So wonderful. Is it in the context of this very exciting, very intriguing, and indeed cathartic experience where we're following Grimm and his and the crew and the people on the mission? Right, we really do get to see the ways that we, as individuals can solve our problems, right? We're cataloging all of those situations, all that we can use, the next time we're in that situation. And of course, the when we're talking about the Proposition of Possibility, the pub and the context, right, where, within the context comes the protagonist, right. And the protagonist, is, of course, the person that we're really focused on. And we talked about in when we were talking about the five genre leaves. We talked about how Captain Grimm is our linchpin. And he is, and we're watching his transformation. And so we want to figure out who this person is, and their relationship to the context. So that's really important. So when we start looking at the protagonist, which is the second aspect, the second big category within the POP, we want to, we want to really think about that relationship. And what we've identified is Captain Grimm is what we call an indigenous member of the pond. And he is incited to get a an intruder to conform to his world, right? Preferably get out, right. We don't want those bad guys there. But we want them we want to manage that because he right when what do protagonist want? They want to return to the balance that existed before the Inciting Incident, and perhaps make things a little bit better.

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Speaker 2

39:59

Right and so, so that thinking about it protagonist at this level, and their relationship to the, to the context, and their relationship to the Inciting Incident is really important. So that's kind of, we might, that's at a very high level in thinking about the protagonist. So at the bottom in a in a very specific way, we know this is Captain Grimm, we understand him as a simulated person who is operating within the context. And we understand his relationship to the people who are important to him. And so we've, we've really got a very clear picture. But we need to think about, right who he is, in a big picture way, the indigenous member who he is in a very specific way. And then in the middle, we want to think about the role he's playing, the role he's playing in solving the problem that is presented, but also the role he's playing in, you know, within the context. And here we have Captain Grimm is a is currently when as the story opens, he's the captain of the predator. He's which is a, he's a privateer, right. He's got license to go after ships from other spires. But he's not working for the government. But he used to write he was a lieutenant within the fleet, we assume that he had really good prospects, he was doing well. And then something happened. Because he was he had his two, you know, his two peers were rook and Bay yard. And they went on a mission together with the ship the perilous right. And that did not go well. As the, as the name of the ship tells us, right? So. So after that experience, and we hear about this a lot during the story several times people bring it up. After that experience, Bay, yard and rook move up. And Grimm is drummed out of the fleet. He's disgraced. But what we know, and what we're being shown in the story, is that he's actually quite an asset, right? He is the linchpin. And so we have these two roles that are in opposition. He's this disgraced leader, and he's the linchpin for want of Grimm, we would, you know, we, the spider would be lost. And so it's really important. And when we understand Grimm in this very complex way, that he has these different aspects to him, then it enables us to really, in our scenes, right to think about how those qualities and, and aspects will play out, right, it's really fun to see how he is across the entire story. But then, when we want to use Grimm as a model for our own scenes, we want to give him the same qualities, right, we want to he should be an indigenous member of the pond who's trying to get an intruder to conform. And, and he should be someone who doesn't necessarily have to be a disgraced leader, but your protagonist, you want them to be someone who has lost something that they gained that they had before some. I don't want to say status. It's not a status story. But but he is. Your protagonist should be someone who has been discredited on some level, and that creates fiction or nonfiction friction, rather, that creates friction, that makes it harder to to do what they need to do. And we see that playing out in this story. We see the way that that that Grimm is treated by rook who wants to take the core crystal from the predator and is willing to do to resort to bad tricks to get that done. We see how Gwen treats him like you, you were kicked out of the fleet for being a coward. How can I trust you? Right, she tests him. And so and there are other times when this comes up, and so we want to make sure that we're capturing that aspect and including it in our iterations of The pattern scene because it's a vital part of what makes this story what makes the story so wonderful.

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Speaker 1

45:10

Yeah, and the way that I like to think about the dynamics that we need in our iteration for creating our protagonist, is just what you're saying that he needs to fulfill that same role. And I like to think about it in terms of the dueling hierarchies. So he has been disadvantaged in a power dominance hierarchy. Despite his or her you have lots of freedom with the actual way that your person is. But despite the protagonist’s capability in the meritocracy in the growth hierarchy, so what's really interesting there is we could think about it inspire Albion the warrior born have more opportunity. But we learn that inspire Aurora series, Jaco is highly disadvantaged and has an upper limit on his parent his progression through the ranks because he is where you're born. So we could imagine that if the Inspire Albion it's more about the houses and less about the prejudices against where you're born and cats, although those are absolutely still there. They're just not as emphasized. But if that were reversed, we might have Grimm as a warrior born, where he is disadvantaged by the power dominance hierarchy, even though he has a lot of cat capabilities. So these are things that you can think about, you know, as you build your, your iteration of your protagonist is, you know, what, which of your power dominance hierarchies do they are they excluded from and which of the growth hierarchies are they quite capable in. And that can give you a way into that iteration. Next, let's take a look at our Inciting Incident. So as we've mentioned a few times, this is the Inciting Incident, not only of the scene, but it's also the global Inciting Incident. And this is encountering the Tosca. And this is a ship of the Iranian fleet. So as is a Convention of, or an obligatory moment, rather, of the action genre, we have an inciting attack from the antagonist. And we find that this seems to be by chance, but Grimm realizes that the Tosco was hunting them passively by laying a trap. So here, the thing to, to realize is that it does have to be an attack, or writing and attack scene, you know, we've baked this into the curriculum, but also that the attack has to have the characteristics of the force of antagonism that you're setting up. And it has to integrate with the antagonists plan and the antagonist hierarchy, all of the aspects of the antagonist. So this is why an attack scene is somewhat complicated to create, because you have to understand everything you can about the antagonist, and ensure that this Inciting Incident works with what you know, and what you're setting up about the antagonist. So it does not work, if the predator is out, doing its thing, and the Tosca proactively hunts the predator down does not work. So, instead, you have to ensure that the characteristics of the way that this piece of antagonism shows up is consistent with the characteristics of the antagonism overall, even though right the Tosca is not the upper echelon of that antagonism, right, it is just a piece, but what we see as we talked about with the hologram, each piece reflects the whole and that means that everyone who is involved with the force of antagonism shares the core characteristics of it. In this case, that means acting covertly means laying traps, it means luring people in and this bit plays out that way in the scene, as well as in every other facet of antagonism that we find in the rest of the novel.

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Speaker 2

49:27

And our final and fourth aspect of the of the Proposition of Possibility is the goal state. And this is, this follows naturally from the Inciting Incident when because when that happens, some then then Grimm starts to want something, right? It's a natural thing. Some something comes in upsets your world, then you have a desire that comes from that. And that does Higher becomes a goal state. And we have three different ways of thinking about the goal state. So the first way that we think about it, is this On The Surface want. And so what is the what does Graham want immediately, he wants to preserve predator and the crew. And how do we know this, of course, is the way he engages what he chooses to do when it happens. And so he carries on in a way that lets us know that this is what he's actively pursuing. And that's what the one is really about. It's their conscious object of desire, what they are actively pursuing. Now, the Above The Surface level of the goal state is all about what they need, right? This is the this is what's happening, subconsciously, right, they don't know it. But they need this and, and this is, this is typically coming to us through the internal genre within the story. And of course, here, what Grimm needs is to attune to the world, he needs an accurate as accurate as possible view of what's actually happening, and particularly what the forces of antagonism are doing, and what their motivations are, and how he can defeat them. So that's really important. So he wants to preserve predator and his crew, he needs to attune to the world. Now, this Beyond The Surface desire is really about opportunities. And it's when an Inciting Incident happens, the protagonist has an opportunity to become a symbolic representation of a virtue or a value, right, they can become someone we think of when we're in a similar situation. So if we think about that, how that is in the world, we might think about, well, Winston Churchill is a is a symbolic representation of a leader who takes charge in a very difficult situation, and speaks to the people and inspires them in a way that helps them galvanize and become galvanized in the fight, even when it's desperate. So if we think about that speech, will fight them on the beaches, and all of that it's a wonderful speech. And it really helps people come together, see what's important. And so we do when we, you know, we, obviously, Winston Churchill, the individual, the human being was a very complex person. But when we think about him and his actions during World War Two, we do think about him in this symbolic representation of what a leader ought to do, when the nation is under threat. We might think also of Martin Luther King, right as someone who is a symbolic representation of nonviolent protest, and pursuing goals in that way. So when we think about, again, this is becoming a symbolic representation of a kind of value, or a kind of virtue, or kind of a way of being in the world. And it's an opportunity that's presented by the Inciting Incident, if the protagonist can transform. Okay, so what's going on with, with Grimm here is that when this event happens, when he's he and Predator are moving in on a task, right? The goal in the very beginning is to disable the ship, so that then the fleet can come and take it and that's his whole.

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Speaker 2

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That's, that's what's on his mind there. When he figures out that this was actually this was a trap. Then he wants to preserve the predator crew, the predator and the crew. He needs to attune to the world and he has the opportunity to embody wise leadership. And that is the Swan who is wise understands when to intervene and when to wait. So this, this is really incorporating the double factor problem or the solution to the double factor problem, which is to embody wisdom, and know when to intervene and when to wait. And that's the opportunity presented by the That Inciting Incident?

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Speaker 1

55:03

Yes, absolutely. And so as we know, the struggle factor problem is going to lead to balancing out the one and the needs. So are we going to favor quick action that's going to preserve the predator in the short term or take time to step back and attuned to the world and understand how to mute potentially take a more careful course of action. And so while he's seeking to find that middle path, it is he does have those forces pulling him in both directions. So that's, that's fantastic. And I think, as we think about how the iterations of the masterwork scene need to be to allow for a faithful interpretation of the pattern. The Above The Surface one and the Beyond The Surface desire are pretty locked in, because that's really about the revelation itself. And it's about the interaction between the action genre and the worldview genre. Now, preserving life and preserving meaningful life is at the core of the action genre. So the On The Surface, one is not going to be very different. However, it will be a little different depending on the specificity of what your protagonist looks like, and what their crew looks like, whatever that is, you know, we talked about how the revelation protagonist is advanced enough that they can take on the personhood of multiple people and act on behalf of a group. And so that's going to be an important component of this protagonist is that they have people behind them, they're not acting in isolation. But think about what that looks like for your protagonist, and then incorporate that into the On The Surface one. So you know, as we've gone through all of the components of the POP in the five genre leaves, we've talked about a lot of constraints. And I just want to take some time here as we go into the end of this, and people are going to go out and start planning their iterations. And I want to encourage you that this might seem like it's a very strict set of constraints. But really, there's a lot of freedom within it. Because you have so much freedom of interpretation at how you actually enact these things. This is a very complicated story with a lot of On The Surface stuff going on. And there's plenty of room to play with the ideas that you want to work with, even within all of the constraints that we have set out. So you know, the primary things to do are to think about what the framework of your epic world is. Now this is going to touch on the reality genre, it's going to touch on the action genre to because it's going to touch on those dueling hierarchies and the unbalanced physical and social environment. And so that's going to be key to ensure that you understand what that epic framework looks like, what your different groups are, whether they're lineages, whether they're institutions, you know, all of those things. And then from there, build out your convention. So that's going to be one set of work is to figure out your epic framework. The other one is to really figure out your antagonist. Right? So what are the characteristics that all of the facets of antagonism share? How does that hierarchy work? What's their plan, all of that. And so those, those two broad concepts are going to help you to figure out all of the specificity of all of the concepts that we've gone over in this lesson. So I want to encourage you all to have fun with it. Because it should be fun, you know, we're writing we're playing in this imaginal space, whatever sounds fun to you, do that. And, and come up with a world where you want to spend time, and you want to have your avatars explore that world. And that's, that's really going to be the key. But, you know, keep in mind that it does have to be faithful to that pattern in order for you to get as much out of the coming lessons as possible. And so when we put a constraint, we put it in place for a reason. And when there's freedom, that's where you get to play and explore. So I hope you have a ton of fun with that, as you start getting into creating your own iteration of the masterwork pattern seen here.