

## **Storytellers: Questions to Ask Yourself**

Based on the ideas expressed by Robert McKee in his book, *Story*.

**Are you trying to create three dimensional stories in which conflict is coming from several different levels?**

A narrative moves forward only through conflict. Conflict can come in many different forms: inner conflict, personal conflict, social conflict, and environmental conflict.

**When a story reaches the climax (the point of greatest intensity or force in an ascending series of progressions) can its root idea be expressed as an action?**

Dialogue in a climatic scene should only "grease the wheels" not explain what is going on.

**Is the opposition equal or greater than your protagonist?**

The protagonist can not be up against forces that he/she can easily handle and overwhelm. These forces should become so powerful and cumulative in their strength that they severely test the deepest human qualities in the protagonist. Character is revealed in your protagonist by the decisions he/she makes under duress. The more that's at stake, the greater insight we have into the protagonist's character.

**How does each scene in your story bring out an aspect of one idea, positively or negatively?**

Every story should be about one major idea. Can you express your story in a single sentence?

**What event starts my story so the crisis/climax must occur?**

**How can you make the reader identify with and/or like the protagonist?**

**What is the worst possible thing that could happen to your character?**

**How could that turn out to be the best possible thing?**

## **Important Points to Keep in Mind:**

**Never take the crisis/climax out of the protagonist's hands.**

Never give exposition for exposition's sake.

Dramatize it. Convert exposition to ammunition. Use it to turn the ending of a scene, to further the conflict.

Don't use false mystery or cheap surprises.

# NACAE

National Association of Comics Art Educators

Don't conceal anything important that the protagonist knows. Keep us in step with the hero. We know what he/she knows.

Know your world as God knows this one.  
Research, research, research.

Rewrite, rewrite, and then rewrite some more.  
Rarely does a story pour from your imagination directly onto the page (almost never in fact).

There are no absolutes in good storytelling.  
Every point made on this handout, in various circumstances, can be disregarded.