

Character Development – The End Goal vs. The Desire for the End Goal©

After you have decided on the genre of your story, or concurrent with deciding on the genre, you must decide on who your protagonist/hero will be. Whether it's a male or female protagonist, you need to decide on what your character's goal/outer motivation in the story is. Without the goal, the audience is left "hanging," confused, irritated, and wondering why they paid their \$15 to see this movie in the first place. And remember, the protagonist's goal is not your goal. You need to step back and let your character do the talking and the walking.

You must decide what you want to do with this character you want to create—Someone who is waiting to jump off the page into a reader's consciousness or jump onto the screen so the audience can view his/her

story. It's time to give the protagonist a goal and an outer motivation. And he/she must want this goal VERY BADLY. Maybe you don't want this goal because you'd rather sit home and avoid confrontation, BUT THE PROTAGONIST WANTS THIS GOAL AND JUST MIGHT BE READY TO DIE FOR IT.

Goal and Outer Motivation

When the protagonist (hero) is motivated to reach his/her "end goal," this is the physical or tangible goal: To find the killer; to find a way out of prison; to survive a hurricane at sea; to survive a sinking ship and save as many people as possible; to find one's identity that has been lost due to amnesia; to save as many people as possible from tyranny or genocide; to find the way home; to get the right to see one's children when the wife has custody; to give a speech that will bolster a nation on the brink of war and destruction.

Desire to Reach the Goal

It is the protagonist's desire to reach the goal that will drive the story.

The goal of the protagonist defines the story and carries us all the way to the end. The desire to reach that goal will drive the story. The outer motivation is the "finish line." I.e. The hero wins a medal. This is visible, tangible. It would not be: "To achieve success." In *The Fugitive*, the goal for Dr. Kimble is to find the one-armed man. In *Titanic*, the goal for Jack is Rose's safety, for which he is willing to die. In *The Bourne Identity*, the amnesic hero Jason wants to find his identity. In *Schindler's List*, Oscar Schindler wants to save Jews from the Nazis by keeping his company going under false and dangerous pretenses. In *Gravity*, Sandra Bullock wants to survive a mission gone awry and get back to earth without getting killed. In *Mrs. Doubtfire*, the hero wants to get the right to see his kids. In *The Imitation Game*, the hero wants to break Enigma, the Nazi Code. In

Shawshank Redemption, Tim Robbins wants to escape from prison and avenge the crimes and punishment of the evil warden. In *The Firm*, Tom Cruise wants to save his life and the life of his wife and disentangle himself from the mafia firm where nobody ever quits. In *The King's Speech*, George has to give a speech and overcome his life-long stuttering, and lead his country into WWII, after his brother abdicates the throne.