# [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." Ie. 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.

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# [What is Genre?]

What is Genre:

*A category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.*

# GENRE: HISTORICAL EPIC©

*Is Exodus a historical epic?  Is Exodus a drama/war film? Is it a historical tragedy?*

Why is it so important for a story writer/screenwriter to get the genre correct from the get-go?  First of all, to stay within the parameters of genre is to deliver to audiences what they have come to pay for their admission ticket.  Also, characters are believable and credible.  A story line that contains a spine and ultimately, a theme causes the audience/reader to sit at the edge of their seat/turn the page until the climax or epiphany is reached by the main character/hero.

It is easy for a screenwriter to grapple with genre throughout the writing process.  Because there are certain elements that can or cannot be included in a specific genre, it is easy to get confused along the way.  A particular story line lends itself to a certain genre.  Yes, there are "cross-over" genres, but only experienced writers should attempt them.  It is hard enough to write the great story with one genre in mind.

The historical epic is a genre that can include a biographical epic, such as Schindler's List or Gandhi, or a dramatic epic, such as Gone With the Wind or Gladiator.  In the biographical epic, the hero is a real character, as opposed to a fictional character. In the dramatic epic, such as

Gone with the Wind, the hero is fictional.  The story is based on real events, but the characters are fictional.

In some movie reviews, Exodus is listed as a drama/war genre.  Drama is a genre, but not necessarily based on real historical events, such as the history of the State of Israel and all the events both before and after the creation of the State of Israel. War is not a genre.  Within a drama, there can be war, certainly.  And within a historical or dramatic epic there can be war.

To see Exodus as coming under the genre of drama is not accurate.  Put simply, drama is where the hero/protagonist confronts complex human emotions, which are tested throughout the story.  Drama can be a love story, such as Love Story or Wuthering Heights.  Drama can be called a thematic drama, such as The Shawshank Redemption or Seabiscuit.  Drama can be a psychological drama, such as Good Will Hunting.  A drama with tragic overtones could be The Godfather.

To call Exodus an historical tragedy is not the correct genre either.  A tragedy in the Greek sense is a cathartic characterization of characters who have flaws that overwhelm them.  One associates tragedy with Shakespearean classics such as Macbeth.  If tragic events occur to the main characters, then certainly the story that is being portrayed is a tragedy, such as Schindler's List.  But the genre is not tragedy.

Let's examine the two films that are basically on the same topic, the Israel War for Independence: Exodus, produced in 1960 and Kedma, produced in 2002.

Now, a look at just a few Exodus film critics' reviews.

Genre: Historical epic

"Exodus" 1960, Otto Preminger

Based on Leon Uris' novel, this historical epic provides a dramatic backstory to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, in the aftermath of World War II. Ari Ben Canaan (Paul Newman), a passionate member of the Jewish paramilitary group Haganah, attempts to transport 600 Jewish refugees on a dangerous voyage from Cyprus to Palestine on a ship named the Exodus. He faces obstruction from British forces, who will not grant the ship passage to its destination.

Another synopsis:

Fictional but fact-based account of the struggle for the emergence of modern Israel as an independent country and home for world Jewry.

MOVIE REVIEW (partial)

Exodus (1960)

3 1/2-Hour Film Based on Uris' Novel Opens

By BOSLEY CROWTHER

Published: December 16, 1960

THE gingerly awaited film version of Leon Uris' novel, "Exodus," which its producer-director, Otto Preminger, unveiled at the Warner Theatre last night, turns out to be a massive, overlong, episodic, involved and generally inconclusive "cinemarama" of historical and fictional events connected with the liberation of the State of Israel in 1947-1948.

Another film on the same topic as Exodus is listed as Drama/War:

Genre: Drama/War, 2002 Israeli film

"Kedma" Amos Gitai, Director/Writer

<u>One synopsis:</u>

In May 1948, shortly before the creation of the State of Israel, hundreds of immigrants from across Europe arrive in Palestine—only to risk arrest by British troops.

<u>Another synopsis of Kedma from Wikipedia:</u>

The film is a historical tragedy set during the opening stages of Israel's 1948 War of Independence. The film follows the fate of a group of refugees from the [Holocaust] who are illegally brought to Israel by the [Palmach]. When they arrive, they are chased by British soldiers. Once

they escape, they are immediately drafted into the war, and take part in a grueling battle against Arab irregulars. The film centers on two long monologues, one by an Arab peasant who pledges to oppose the Jews forever; and one by an emotionally demolished refugee who laments the seemingly endless suffering of his people. Gitai intended the film to be a more realistic answer to the romanticized depiction of the war in Otto Preminger's *[Exodus](#)*. The final shot of *Kedma* is identical to the final shot of Preminger's film.

In summary, the genre for Exodus and for Kedma is historical epic.  One of the problems with Kedma is that the director's ego got in the way of producing a story with believable and credible characters, where the audience forms an opinion based on the story line.  The film or story should stand on its own and not be an "answer" to someone else's film or vision.  If the story is a tragedy, then the audience will form that conclusion when the elements of the story follow the parameters. An audience feels manipulated or confused when the spine of a story meanders in order to follow the writer's preconceived notions of what "truth" should be.  The characters in the story are compelling to an audience as they go on their journey, as opposed to a writer's pre-formulated goal for them.

TEST TIME: WHAT IS THE GENRE FOR TITANIC??? DON'T LOOK IT UP.  WHAT DO YOU THINK AND WHY???

**GENRE FOR TITANIC:**

Titanic was indeed a ship that sank in 1912, but the characters of Jack and Rose were fictional and their love story was the catalyst that moved the action of the story forward and caused the audience to feel an enduring epiphany along with the characters.  The genre for Titanic is OVERALL, historical epic, but SPECIFICALLY, a romantic/dramatic epic.  JAMES CAMERON COULD — USE CROSS-GENRES LIKE A CHAMP.  THE FILM IS AN ALL-TIME GREAT!!