



Version 1.3 2022-02-23

Author: Dallas Gossett
Project Title: Grateful
Chapter or Scene: Entire Story
Length: 7500 words
Date: 2022-07-04

In three sentences or less, what is happening in this scene?

Why is this scene important? AND/OR What are you trying to say about life?

How do you want the reader to feel when they read the scene?

What's wrong with the protagonist's personal world? What is the disruption?

Who are the characters in the scene?

<i>Character Name</i>	<i>Voice</i> <i>How does a character sound? What words do they use? How is their speech paced? How do they modulate their voice in different situations? How do they sound different than other characters?</i>	<i>Emotional State</i> <i>Is your character sad? Happy? Angry? Anxious? Excited?</i>	<i>Physical Condition</i> <i>Is your character healthy or ill? What is their current state of well-being that is manifested physically?</i>
+Jason	He sounds like an educated American.	Jason is depressed because of the death of his fiancé.	Physically, he is healthy, although because of his depression, he mopes through his day.
Shizuka	She sounds like an educated American. Because she's a water spirit, this may be part of	She is saddened by the death of her "sister," and retains that pain even after	Physically she is healthy, showing no ill effects from the pollution that no doubt fouls the water.

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	her magical powers, if she has any.	150 years, which frankly isn't that long for a river.	
-Katsu	He sounds like an educated American. There is no hint of any Japanese accent in his speech patterns.	At the beginning, he is happy with the project, but when the issue with the shrine turns against him, he becomes angry.	Physically he is healthy.
Takashi	He does not speak.	No clue is given as to his emotional state.	Physically he is healthy and carries a bearing and air of authority..
Kenta	He speaks like an educated American, again without hint of Japanese being his first language.	No clue is given as to his emotional state, until he's presented with a solution to the shrine issue, which makes him happy.	Physically he is healthy.

+ protagonist
- antagonist

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What does the protagonist want (external pursuits)? Do they get it?

Want: Save and replace the shrine

Acquired: Yes

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The want or external pursuit of the protagonist is unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character's want as flat.	The want or external pursuit of the protagonist exists, but it is unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the scene. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it often defies logic.	The want or external pursuit of the protagonist is easily identified. Although it is defined, the protagonist does not always act consistently on the want. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it is often too predictable.	The want or external pursuit of the protagonist is well-defined. Their external pursuit is obvious to the reader and understood by the other characters in the scene.

Notes:

Jason's external want through the story is to get to know Shizuka better and save and replace the shrine. He does achieve this goal. However, there is no real discussion or exposition of this issue with respect to other characters in the scene. Beyond that, Jason's actions seem obvious (see Choice below).

I rate the protagonist's wants as between Fair and Good.

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What does the protagonist need (internal desires)? Do they get it?

Need: To find human connection and love

Acquired: Yes

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The need or internal desire of the protagonist is unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character's need as flat.	The need or internal desire of the protagonist exists, but it is unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the scene. Readers understand the character's internal desire in the scene, but it often defies logic.	The need or internal desire of the protagonist is easily identified. Although it is defined, the protagonist does not always act consistently on the want. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it is often too predictable.	The need or internal desire of the protagonist is well-defined. Their internal desire is obvious to the reader and understood by the other characters in the scene.

Notes:

I rate the protagonist's internal need as between Underdeveloped and Fair.

Jason's internal need seems to be to find human connection and love again, but this story doesn't really explore that need beyond a single scene with the water spirit. His life changes after her touch, going from a robotic and monotonous day-to-day misery to a first blush of love, but beyond that, his internal motivations are never explored.

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What does the antagonist or force of antagonism want (external pursuits)? Do they get it?

Want: Destruction of the shrine

Acquired: No

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The want or external pursuit of the antagonist is unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character's want as flat.	The want or external pursuit of the antagonist exists, but it is unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the scene. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it often defies logic.	The want or external pursuit of the antagonist is easily identified. Although it is defined, the antagonist does not always act consistently on the want. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it is often too predictable.	The want or external pursuit of the antagonist is well-defined. Their external pursuit is obvious to the reader and understood by the other characters in the scene.

Notes:

I rate the antagonist's external want to be Underdeveloped.

Katsu's external goal is the destruction of the shrine, but there is no explanation of Katsu's behavior or motivation. The reader has no idea of what his objective is, since it isn't just to save money.

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What does the antagonist or force of antagonism need (internal desires)? Do they get it?

Need: Unknown

Acquired: Unknown

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The need or internal desire of the antagonist is unclear or undefined. Readers perceive the character's need as flat.	The need or internal desire of the antagonist exists, but it is unclear or inexplicably inconsistent throughout the scene. Readers understand the character's internal desire in the scene, but it often defies logic.	The need or internal desire of the antagonist is easily identified. Although it is defined, the antagonist does not always act consistently on the want. Readers understand the character's motive in the scene, but it is often too predictable.	The need or internal desire of the antagonist is well-defined. Their internal desire is obvious to the reader and understood by the other characters in the scene.

Notes:

Katsu's internal desire is Underdeveloped.

As with the external desire, the reader has no idea what's motivating Katsu at all. No discussion or explanation is even hinted at.

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What is the Conflict? (What single moment or circumstance pushes the protagonist out of the status quo?)

Conflict: How to save the shrine.

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The protagonist does not face an initial Conflict. The event pushing the character out of the status quo is missing.	The initial Conflict is present but lacks the intensity to make a reader care. The protagonist can avoid or defuse the obstacle presented by the Conflict.	The initial Conflict propels the protagonist into a situation that forces a Choice. The character cannot go back to the previous state and cannot do nothing.	The initial Conflict catches the protagonist and reader by surprise. The event creates an unavoidable situation and should logically set the stage for a Choice.

Notes

The Conflict, at least in the beginning of the story, is impossible to discern. Aside from visiting the shrine, Jason doesn't not face any kind of event that throws him out of his reverie for at least the first 25% of the story. It is simply a rendition of his movement through what remains of his life after his fiance's death.

Her death is not represented as any kind of inciting incident; rather, it throws him into (understandable) despair, but no event pushes him out of his humdrum day to day until far too late in the story.

The first event that gives him a kick isn't until page 14 of 54 (in a triple-spaced manuscript) when he realizes that the shrine will be demolished for a mall of some sort. While this does spark creativity on his part, it doesn't represent any kind of personal growth or struggle for him.

The fire is the first event that gives him a swift kick in the pants, but it doesn't occur until three quarters of the way through the story.

I therefore rate the Conflict in this story as Fair.

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What is the Choice? (Best Bad Choice or Irreconcilable Good?)

Choice: <?> Whether or not to approach management with the idea of rebuilding the shrine.

Type: Best Bad Choice/Irreconcilable Good

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The protagonist does not face a Choice. The character is completely passive or reactive, acting without agency.	The Choice is too easy for the protagonist. The stakes for all the consequences are not equally positive or negative.	The Choice posed to the protagonist is difficult. The character struggles to determine the best path forward.	The Choice becomes incredibly difficult for the protagonist. The character cannot see a way out of the predicament, and neither can the reader, which should set up a surprising but inevitable Consequence.

Notes:

I rate the Choice in this story as Fair.

The issue here is that the Choice isn't at all difficult or gut-wrenching for Jason. What does he stand to lose if things go wrong? He is not choosing between the best of two awful choices, and he doesn't have two irreconcilable good choices to make.

He does not struggle with with the decision to go to the owner of the land and does not consider what consequences it might have on him or his career. Thus, the outcome of his decision, while nice and ending on a happy note, is predictable.

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What is the Consequence (What event occurs because of the protagonist's decision?)

Consequence: The shrine will be rebuilt.

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Because the protagonist is passive or reactive, the Consequence is dull and one that the reader anticipated, creating an unsatisfying ending to the scene.	Because the Choice is too easy for the protagonist, the Consequence is obvious and easily predicted by the reader, but there is minor satisfaction when the reader correctly guesses the outcome.	When the protagonist struggles to determine the best path forward, the Consequence is often unexpected, which delights the reader.	With an incredibly difficult Choice for the protagonist, the Consequence strikes the perfect balance of surprising but inevitable. The reader never sees the end of the scene coming, but once it does, they realize they should have seen it all along.

Notes:

I rate the Consequence to be Fair.

Because the Choice is easy, the Consequence becomes obvious. Jason wins this battle, but there is no consideration of the coming battles either.

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Mechanics

Showing vs. Telling

Telling the reader what happens to a character is often unsatisfying and leads to poor engagement, while showing credits the reader with the intelligence to pick up what's happening from the setting, emotion description, dialogue, facial expressions, and other cues in the text. For example, the author can tell the reader that the protagonist is angry, or the author could show it by describing clenched teeth or fists, a snarl, sharp words, having the protagonist lash out physically, or any other way that shows the anger through context clues and nonverbal signals.

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
The story contains too much info-dumping, back story, or general telling.	The story contains large sections of telling. Some narrative contains dialogue, although readers are still being told, not shown, how a character feels.	The story contains minimal telling with substantial use of "exposition as ammunition," where readers receive important information through dynamic and good dialogue.	The story contains almost no telling, and then only when appropriate. Readers can experience the story by being shown the emotional journey of the characters.

Notes:

I rate the showing versus telling aspect of this manuscript as fair.

A great deal of this manuscript describes how things feel to the characters, but we see almost no indirect or dialogue-based indications of their emotions. For example, in one instance I changed Jason's blush from a statement that he turned red to a feeling of heat in his face and chest, which is indicative of a blush.

Further, there are several instances where the exposition of the character's feelings could be better expressed in thought or internal dialogue. Any time we have the opportunity for the character to tell us how they feel, or to wrestle with a problem, it's better done in external or internal dialogue, as opposed to through narration.

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Passive Voice

Passive voice kills sentences and reader interest, while active sentence structure engages readers in action and character development. Reducing the use of the words “was,” “were,” and “had” are fantastic ways to work on eliminating passive voice.

Active voice means that the sentence has a subject (for example, a character) who acts upon the object, while in passive voice, the verb acts upon the object. For example:

- **Passive:** The ball was thrown by the pitcher.
- **Active:** The pitcher threw the ball.

In the passive example, the ball receives the action of the verb (thrown) and “was thrown” is in the passive voice. In the active example, the subject of the sentence, the pitcher, acts directly on the object, the ball.

As an exercise in eliminating passive voice from a narrative, take any two or three chapters from the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling, and rewrite them without the words “was” and “had,” and see how it changes the voice.

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Mostly passive voice.	Many instances of passive voice.	Minimal passive voice.	Almost no passive voice.

Notes:

I rate the use of passive voice in this manuscript to be fair.

I found and fixed a number of instances of passive voice. A lot of these can be eliminated by fixing the showing versus telling issue in the previous section. Most of them can simply be removed by recasting the sentence such that the noun appears before the verb.

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Sentence Structure

Proper sentence structure, word order, and punctuation are critical to successful writing. While the story may be fantastic, the world amazing, and the characters well-rounded and engaging, if the manuscript is filled with punctuation errors and unclear sentences, the reader is ripped out of the suspension of disbelief as they try to interpret poorly written prose. Examples of issues include comma splices, missing, overused, or misused punctuation marks, run-on sentences, unbroken paragraphs, incorrect homophones that fly past a simple spell check, and other mechanical issues not related to the story.

<i>Underdeveloped</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
Structure and punctuation errors are common throughout the manuscript, and significantly detract from the reader's experience of the work.	Structure and punctuation errors are less common, but still far too numerous, such that a native English-speaking reader will consistently notice them.	Structure and punctuation errors are uncommon, such that when they occur, they might be recognized by a native English-speaking reader, but the fact of their presence would also be a surprise.	Almost no structural or punctuation errors.

Notes

I am a tough critic on this section because I'm such a grammatical pedant. I've marked many very minor issues, none of which seem to detract noticeably from the legibility of the prose. What I see demonstrates a good command of English and its rules of punctuation, grammar, and the stupid spelling of homophones.

I feel that the sentence structure elements of this story are between Good and Excellent, with the tie going to Good. If I read this story in a commercial work, I wouldn't be overly fussed about the issues I see, although I would notice them.

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Changelog

2022-02-23 1.3 Fold in a new section on grammar and mechanics based on the V.E. Griffith Story Rubric.

2022-02-08 1.2 More formatting changes.

2022-02-01 1.1 Initial release, including formatting changes.

1.0 J. Thorn's initial version of the Scene Rubric. His version is always available at <http://www.scenerubric.com>

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