

A Character-Driven Approach to Screenwriting

[Scott Myers](#)

Beginning in January, I will be teaching a series of one-week online classes which will immerse you in a unique storytelling methodology. Plus, an opportunity to receive a free autographed copy of my book *The Protagonist's Journey: An Introduction to Character-Driven Screenwriting and Storytelling*.



Photo by [Yannick Pulver](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Begin with character. End with character. Find the story in between.

That's a writing mantra I originated over a decade ago. Ever since I was hired as an assistant professor at DePaul University in 2016, I have started and ended every class I teach, both undergraduate and graduate students, invoking that aphorism. It lies at the very core of everything I do as a writer and teacher. Indeed, it's how I start and finish *The Protagonist's Journey!*

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state of the Protagonist and the unfolding plot. The journey the Protagonist takes is the journey they *need* to take. Part II examines the Family of Characters, five archetypes seen with great frequency in movies and television series—Protagonist, Nemesis, Attractor, Mentor, Trickster—and how this assembly of a story's characters exists to support the Protagonist's physical and psychological journey. Part III presents a proven professional approach to Breaking Story through a series of character development and plotting exercises resulting in a scene-by-scene outline.

Theories explored here are influenced by Aristotle, Joseph Campbell, and Carl Jung, but are also grounded in my many years of experience as a working writer and teacher. The content in these pages has been road-tested in workshops in the United States and Europe, as well as what I have learned as a mentor at multiple feature writer labs under the auspices of the Black List in Los Angeles. In addition, the theories and practices detailed here served as the inspiration for story development classes in the B.F.A. and M.F.A. programs in screenwriting at DePaul University.

As I often remind students and writers, there is no right way to write. Every writer is different. Every story is different. It is incumbent for each individual to find their own way into who they are as a writer and how to best navigate the story-crafting process. That said, a character-driven approach engages the writer with the very individuals whose story it is: the Protagonist and the characters with whom they intersect.

Thus, we start our journey in these pages with a mantra I coined many years ago: Begin with character. End with character. Find the story in between.

Chicago, Illinois
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Finally, if ever you are confused about your story—and you will be—reach out to your characters. After all, it is their story. No one knows it better than your characters. And always...

Begin with character. End with character. Find the story in between.

Every year since 2010 when I launched [Screenwriting Master Class](#), a unique educational resource for writers, I have taught the *Core curriculum*. Eight online courses, each one-week long. In aggregate, they offer a comprehensive education in character-driven storytelling and screenwriting theory. I will begin the next cycle of Core classes in January 2023. Here is that schedule:

[CORE I: PLOT](#) — A one-week class which begins with the principle *Plot = Structure* and explores the inner workings of the Screenplay Universe: Plotline and Themeline. Start date: **January 16**.

[CORE II: CONCEPT](#) — A one-week class which begins with the principle *Concept = Hook* and examines multiple strategies to generate, develop and assess story ideas. Start date: **January 30**.

[CORE III: CHARACTER](#) — A one-week class which begins with the principle *Character = Function* and delves into archetypes: Protagonist, Nemesis, Attractor, Mentor, and Trickster. Start date: **February 13**.

[CORE IV: STYLE](#) — A one-week class which begins with the principle *Style = Voice* and surfaces keys to developing a distinctive writer's personality on the page. Start date: **February 27**.

[CORE V: DIALOGUE](#) — A one-week class which begins with the principle *Dialogue = Purpose* and probes a variety of ways to write effective, entertaining dialogue. Start date:

March 13.

CORE VI: SCENE — A one-week class which begins with the principle *Scene = Point* and provides six essential questions to ask when crafting and writing any scene. Start date: **March 27.**

CORE VII: THEME — A one-week class which begins with the principle *Theme = Meaning* and gives writers a concrete take on theme which can elevate the depth of any story. Start date: **April 24.**

CORE VIII: TIME — A one-week class which begins with the principle *Time = Present* and studies Present, Present-Past, Present-Future and time management in writing. Start date: **May 8.**

"I can't think of anyone more qualified in this field than Scott." — Charlie Wachtel, Academy Award, BlackKkKlansman

Each Core course consists of four components:

- Lectures: There are six lectures written by me, each posting daily Monday through Saturday.
- Workshops: Optional writing exercise offering you the opportunity to develop aspects of your original stories.
- Teleconference: I will host a live 90-minute Zoom video conference call to discuss course material.
- Forums: The online course site has 24/7 message boards where you may engage in conversation about

the craft.

For those of you who have not taken an online class, the interface is extremely easy. **Plus, online classes can be an amazing experience.** Most of the activities you can **do on your own time** — download and read lectures, review and respond to forum discussions, upload optional writing exercises and track comments. In addition, I've been teaching online for two decades and it never ceases to amaze me **how much of a community emerges** in such an environment. In fact over the years, **dozens of writers groups** have emerged from my online classes.



Here is one such Screenwriting Master Class writers group I met with who had an in-person reunion at this year's Austin Film Festival!

If you're new to screenwriting, have intermediate

experience, or you've read it all, but want to explore *character-driven screenwriting*, here is your chance to learn the foundation of screenplay structure that goes beyond formula.

“Scott Myers is an uncommonly sensitive and erudite thinker and writer about the craft of modern screenwriting.” — Phil Hay, Crazy/Beautiful, The Invitation, Destroyer

These eight Core classes represent decades of my work on the front lines of the entertainment business as a writer and teacher, over time pulling together a coherent, comprehensive, and cohesive approach to screenwriting theory.

This is **not** about secret systems or magic formulas, rather the Core content presents a story-crafting process that **starts with characters, ends with characters, and discovers** the story in-between. That process of engaging you with your story universe through your characters and getting you in touch with these living, breathing individuals informs every step of your creative process, leading you to story structure, themes, conflict, subplots, and all the rest. As I say, **Character-Driven Screenwriting**.

This cycle, I am offering a special sale price. Normally, the Core classes are \$95 each. In 2023, each is on sale for \$79!

A popular option is the [Core Package](#) which gives you

exclusive access to the content in all eight Craft classes which you can **go through on your own time** and at your own pace, plus **automatic enrollment** in each 1-week online course — all for **nearly 50% off the normal price** of each individual class. If you sign up now, you can have immediate access to all of the Core content.

"I'm a huge fan of Scott's classes, and I signed up for his Core Package, which I cannot speak highly enough about. If anyone wants to take a serious look at improving their writing, there is more than enough material to keep you busy for a few... dare I say, lifetimes? He's the best. No bones about it."

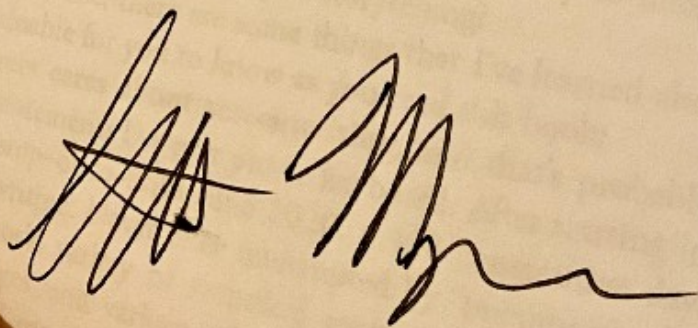
~ Heather Farlinger

This year, I'm making available a special offer: If you enroll in the Core Package, I will send you an autographed copy of my book: *The Protagonist's Journey ...* for free!

This book is dedicated to storytellers

Jeffrey,

Best of luck in your creative journey!
Begin with character. End with character.
Find the story in between.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Scott", written in a cursive style.

"Scott is a brilliant guide for anyone looking to get into screenwriting." — Lisa Joy, Westworld, Reminiscence

My book is an introduction to character-driven

screenwriting and storytelling. The Core curriculum **takes you much deeper** into the subject matter and touches on **all the key principles you need to know** to elevate your screenwriting chops.

To learn about any of the Core classes, click [here](#).

I look forward to the opportunity to work with you in 2023!