

StoryTellers Press

# BEGINNERS STORYTELLING LESSONS

## ADULT WORKBOOK SERIES

**STRANGE TRUTH!**

STUDY OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES TO BECOME  
A BETTER STORYTELLER OF *YOUR OWN STORY!*

MY BODY HAS THE  
**STRANGEST  
FEELING!**  
WHY DO I WANT TO -  
**TO TELL A STORY!**  
(WHAT AM I...  
**BECOMING ?!!)**



TRAYCE

THE MAGICIAN

APPEARING TONIGHT!

@ Catering2Us.com

WITH A  
SECTION OF  
THE LESSON  
INSPIRED BY  
SONGS FROM  
BEYONCE'S  
'LEMONADE'  
ALBUM

**VOLUME #1:**  
**'PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN'**

## MESSAGE FROM THE LESSONS CREATOR

You Want To Know,  
'What Are You Going To Get From These Lessons ?'

**THESE STORYTELLING LESSONS ARE NOT TO HELP YOU WITH 'CONSTRUCTION'** — The writing of a specific story idea you have. In fact, if you try to think about a specific story idea while doing the Lessons, it'll distraction from your learning ! And hey, it's OK if you're not at all interested in telling a story.

**THESE STORYTELLING LESSONS ARE ABOUT 'DE-CONSTRUCTION' !** Even if you don't want to tell stories, everyone should be able to analyze the stories told to them, right ? Stories told to you from all sizes of screens, books, and by real live people you're trying to figure out. Funny thing, as you start to observe and think about the stories you consume --- you'll become more knowledgeable and confident when you turn to your own storytelling. Whether trying to write a story, or simply talking about yourself to others.

### HOW TO DO THE LESSONS

- **DON'T** think of the Lessons as 'reading' material ! **DON'T** zip down a page and say, 'I understand all the words ! Simple, I got it !'.
- These Lessons are '**DOING**' material, full of **QUESTIONS** to ask yourself and little **EXERCISES** to do.
- These Lessons are also '**ORAL**' --- meaning they are best done **READ ALOUD**. When you listen to the **RHYTHM** and **PACING** of the words, it'll warm up your desire to learn. (There's a reason they tell you to talk to babies, dogs, plants, and people in comas. And yes, it helps talking aloud to yourself, especially if you let the actor / poet out !)
- The absolute **BEST WAY** to do the Lessons ? **WITH SOMEONE ELSE !** After I ask you questions, I give you my answers or '**interpretations**'. What's even better for stirring dialogue and opening the mind ? Hearing two or three **OTHER PERSPECTIVES !**
- These Lessons are great discussion starters, especially among different ages, backgrounds, and skill levels.

Ready ? Let's Go ! - Trayce



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SPECIAL THANKS FOR THEIR FEEDBACK THRU MULTIPLE DRAFTS  
Ronnie Villa / Tom Hughes / Liz Corcoran / Tom Sherrred / Bryan Burns

## Confessions of a Determined Human !

**WITH THESE LESSONS  
I GO INTO BATTLE - AGAINST THE ODDS!**

Can an older working-class Black woman,  
with no following but lots of experience doing,  
freely share (meaning initially give away)  
her own multi-layered blend  
of storytelling, teaching, and artwork,  
and find an audience and support  
for her life's work ?

**THAT'S MY QUESTION !  
And I'm going to find out !!!**



Hey, hello... I was  
wondering ---

What... Do  
I know you?  
I'm busy...

So ?

I heard you say  
you're pretty  
good at figuring  
out what the  
character might  
do next and quick  
doing the puzzles  
and challenges...

So I was wondering,  
why can't you ---

**WHAT ?!**

**BE THE CREATOR  
OF THE STORY...**







# ONE BLACK WOMAN STORYTELLING SERVICES

*Presents*

The StoryTellers Beginner Lessons Workbook Series

## Volume #1: 'PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN'

UPCOMING: Volume #2: 'Swept Away'

Volume #3: 'Loss Of The Returned Son'    Volume #4: 'Why The World Is Rotting'

Volume #5: 'Those Who Step Out'    Volume #6: 'The Call To Adventure'

*Compelling Stories In Any Format (from books to films to songs to video games)  
Are Shaped By An Understanding Of Human Behavior, Needs, Impulses & Pleasures !*

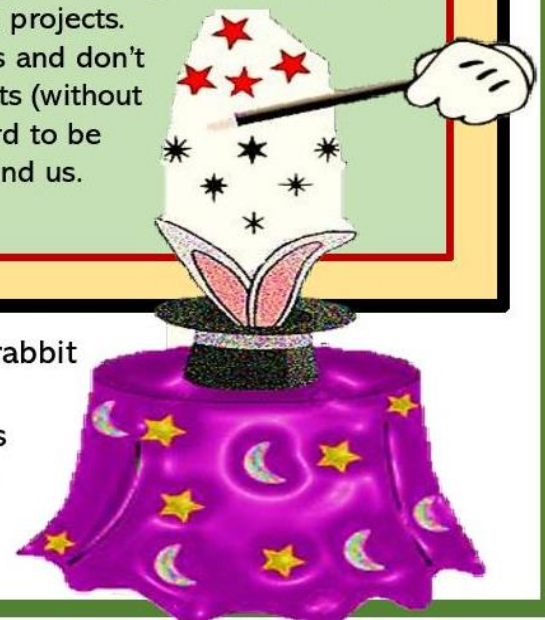
WELCOME TO MY WORLD ! I'm creating a StoryTellers Course – six planned Volumes that will cover the basics of storytelling: 1) How to structure a story that engages your audience; 2) How to portray vivid characters and believable relationships; 3) How to create a vivid visual world to fill out your story in your audience's mind; 4) How to weave a message in while entertaining or explaining. I'll help you realize how we are all StoryTellers --- as we try to get support for our side; aim to impress in a job interview; persuade a supervisor / institution that we should get a benefit; seek to get a date interested in us; or convince a kid to eat !

I invite you to get better at your own storytelling by plunging into mine ! I include analysis of passages from my feature film script '**BILLIE'S SONG, An Urban Fairy Tale**' to provide a sample story to be the thru line in the six Volumes of StoryTelling Lessons. The Lessons are universal, not just for writing a script, and can apply to any format as well as to help you communicate in everyday life. I also aim though to demystify scriptwriting for everyday you and me, and help take away the *fear factor* by encouraging you initially to approach scriptwriting as Team StoryTelling !

These Lessons are to be done at your convenience and pace ! Skip around if you want.  
Do an exercise, and think about it. Use them to start discussions with others !



**We spend our extra time consuming stories** produced to entertain us (that includes WWE wrestling !). As we cheer, laugh, sob, or get bored, we use up that extra energy that could fire our own projects. We come to doubt our own creative abilities and don't believe we have the grit to finish our projects (without someone reassuring us each step !). It's hard to be alone, especially if there's lots of noise around us.  
**Let These Lessons Be Company !**



**SPOILER ALERT !** These Lessons won't turn you into a rabbit --- but they could turn you into an Annoying Person ! Instead of just being a consumer of other People's stories --- you're going to have the tools and know how to start analyzing stories as they unfold. Don't be surprised if the person next to you growls and says, 'Shut Up' !





## LESSON #1: PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN



### OPENING QUESTIONS

#### SOME BASICS ABOUT STORYTELLING & SCRIPTWRITING

(Before Studying Excerpts From The Feature Script 'BILLIE'S SONG, An Urban Fairy Tale')

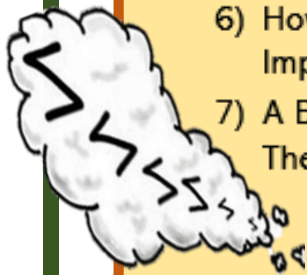
**BELOW YOU ARE ASKED TO EXPLAIN SOME BASIC STORYTELLING TERMS.** Try to give a one sentence response to each question. Don't think too hard about it! On the following pages I'll use lines from Beyonce songs to give you examples of what the terms mean. (You'll appreciate Beyonce as a StoryTeller in a whole new light!)

**THERE ARE MILLIONS OF SCRIPTS BEING WRITTEN!** From film scripts to TV and streaming series scripts to scripts for video games (this includes animation) to scripts for job training videos to scripts for commercials. Since you consume so many of the products, aren't you just a bit curious about what a script might look like?!

#### QUESTIONS

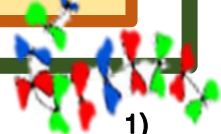
Sometimes there are multiple ways you can answer a question. Even if you don't know --- guess! Try to give an answer to all the questions before turning the page to review my take on answers.

- 1) What Is Plot?
- 2) What Is a Theme?
- 3) What Is Story Structure? What Is Three Act Structure?
- 4) What Is Backstory? Why Is It Important?
- 5) Why Are Story Openings Important?
- 6) How Are Film Scripts Specially Formatted? Why Is The Formatting Important? (There's a sample script page in the answers.)
- 7) A Book Is Composed Of Chapters; A Script Is Composed Of Scenes. What Is The Rule For When A Scene Needs To End -- And A New Scene To Begin?

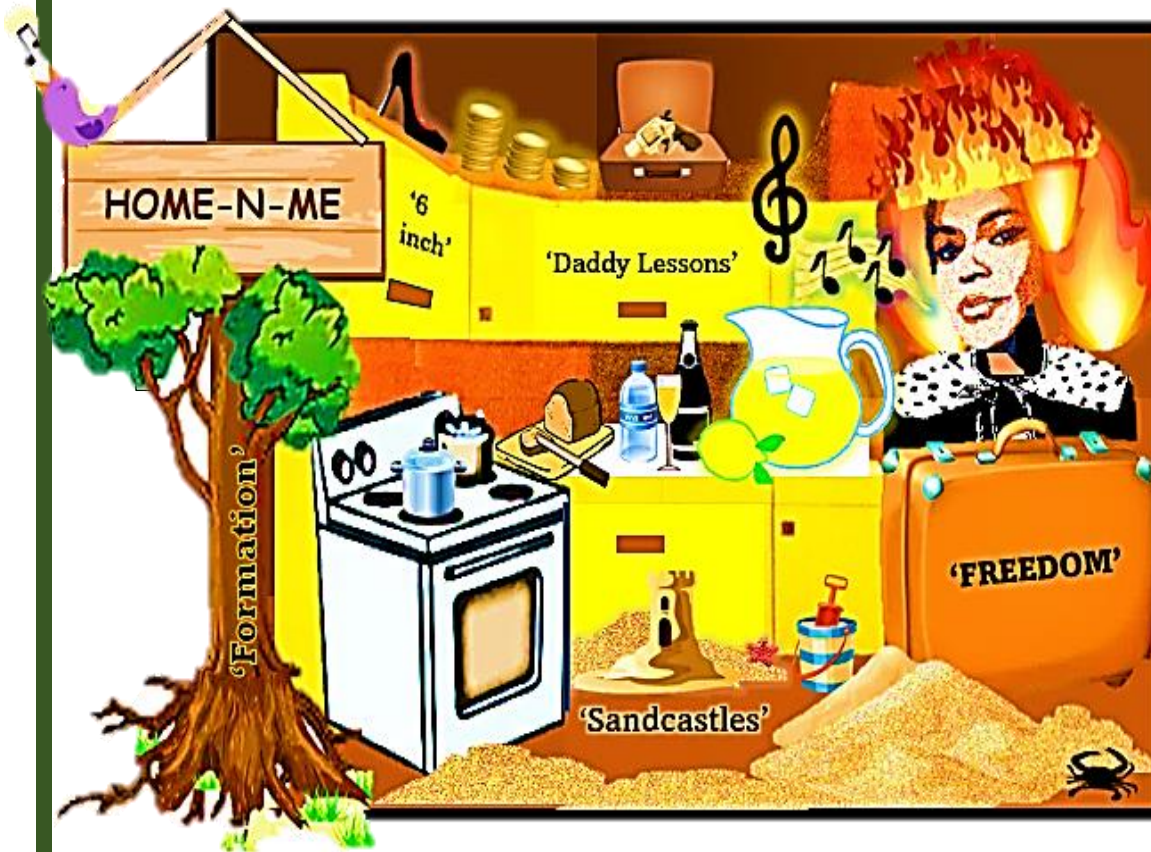


**BORING!** (And maybe too complicated for you?..)

Do you remember -- ever -- finding pleasure in something you first looked down on? Pretty cool too, right, when you can handle something you thought you couldn't. Turn to the answers now and see if your thoughts start to fly! You'll be able to take what you learn about the different elements of storytelling to help you turn ordinary information, opinions, and descriptions into engaging stories. A well-told story will be remembered and can win over the support of your audience!



**STORYTELLING LESSONS INSPIRED BY  
SONGS FROM BEYONCE'S 'LEMONADE' ALBUM**



Stories can be told in many ways, including script format, collage or song. LESSON #1 celebrates the storytelling of BEYONCE by quoting lyrics from (5) songs on her album LEMONADE that illustrate particular storytelling lessons.

Sample lyrics from these (5) songs on Beyoncé's album 'LEMONADE' (2016) are being used under the Educational Fair Use to illustrate StoryTelling Lessons:

1. **"FORMATION"**  
Produced by Mike Will Made It  
Written by Swae Lee and Beyoncé
2. **"FREEDOM"** f. Kendrick Lamar  
Produced by Jonny Coffey, Beyoncé and Just Blaze  
Written by Jonathan Coffey, Beyoncé, Carla Williams, Dean McIntosh, Kendrick Lamar, Frank Tirado, Alan Lomax, and John Lomax Sr.
3. **"DADDY LESSON"**  
Produced by Beyoncé  
Written by Wynter Gordon, Beyoncé, Kevin Cossom, Alex Delicata
4. **"SANDCASTLES"**  
Produced by Beyoncé and Vincent L. Berry II  
Written by Vincent L. Berry II, Beyoncé, Malik Yusef, Midian Mathers
5. **"6 Inch"** f. The Weeknd  
Produced by boots, Beyoncé, Ben Billions, and Danny Boy Styles  
Written By Hal David, Burt Bacharach, Brian Weitz, Noah Lennox, Dave Portner, boots, Belly, The-Dream, Ben Diehl





## ANSWERS

### WHAT IS PLOT ?

#### Understanding It Can Improve Your Life



Plot Is The Series Of Events That Unfolds From The Start To The Finish Of A Story.  
 To 'Tell' The Plot Is To Detail The Specific Things That Happen In The Story  
 And Their 'Causality' – How One Event Leads To Another.

**A Story Works When Its Series Of Events Make Sense Like A Puzzle**

**BEYONCE**  
**As StoryTeller**  
 from the song  
 'Formation'  
 LEMONADE Album



( 'yellow bone' : light skin black female )

#### **BECOME A MASTERFUL STORYTELLER BY KNOWING HOW EVERY EVENT YOU DESCRIBE IN YOUR STORY FITS TOGETHER AS A WHOLE**

Make sure to connect your showy events --- the snappy dialogue, jumping-at-you-visuals, or life'n'deathness-at-stake --- with the push-n-pull of your character's breathing in the quiet moments, as your story builds up to the showy. In other words: **Figure Out How Your Character (as a Human) Gets To The Extreme — Starting From The Ordinary.**

**EXAMPLE:** Let's examine how BEYONCE lays out her 'plot' in the song 'Formation' by creating an imaginary story whose series of events follow the conditions described in her lyrics (as I interpret them – not knowing their creator's mind). I'm calling my made-up story 'INTO THE OVEN', naming its hero YoYo (after my cat – but the character in the story is human I), and setting it in the year (1990). **BEYONCE's lyrics are in brown:**

#### **'INTO THE OVEN' PLOT**

- 1) **I see it** YOYO, a scrawny Black teen who is often bullied, sees a cooking show and loves it for-he-knows-not-why. The show becomes his favorite thing in the world.
- 2) **I want it** A Black chef comes on the show. Suddenly YoYo realizes he can be a chef too. But how ? Fast food is everywhere he turns. It's too weird to tell anyone he knows what he wants to be. Then he finds an old book someone discards, not by a chef but by a long dead Black pilot. He learns from it how to look for things outside his knowing. Little things are big, Like asking a white stranger for directions. YoYo ventures uneasily into a world he didn't know existed. But he wants it.
- 3) **I stunt, yellow-bone it** YoYo gets a janitor's job at a cooking school. He overhears one of the white teachers express her concern that the school has only one Black student. He schemes to meet the teacher and develop a relationship.

(cont.)





## ANSWERS



### WHAT IS PLOT ? (cont.)

#### 'INTO THE OVEN' PLOT

- 4) **I dream it** YoYo convinces others he'll do great in the cooking program because he believes it. He gets a scholarship.
- 5) **I work hard** YoYo has to learn so many other things beyond cooking to keep up with the other students. He gets discouraged. The villain among the other students, MAX, schemes to trip him up. Then YoYo is evicted from his rented room and has to sleep wherever he can. Yet YoYo always shows up on time for class.
- 6) **I grind 'till I own it** YoYo decides to give up --- but doesn't because there's nowhere else for him to go. There's no going back to who he was. A big student cooking competition is announced – the prize a year abroad as apprentice to a famous Spanish chef. YoYo is Max's biggest competition. Max trips YoYo up every way he can, including physically.
- 7) **I twirl on them haters** YoYo's finger has been broken and it's the big competition ! Will YoYo be able to stir ?! Biting back on the pain, he does – AND WINS !

**EXERCISE:** BEYONCE's lyrics are uniquely hers, but their 'plot' is universal. Now you too write down the lyrics for the (7) states Beyonce describes, then follow them to come up with your own story plot – funny or serious. Give it a title and name your main character. Then listen to BEYONCE's full song 'Formation' to see if her StoryTelling can inspire even more events to fill out your story.

### CAN YOU UNCOVER YOUR OWN PERSONAL PLOT ?

Something big happens in your life – it could be good or bad or confusing – are you able to describe the series of events that helped lead you to this moment ? It's easy to talk on and on about a happy event or a crappy event or an upsetting event. But can you 'see' the more subtle events that helped to set up the big event ? Some events that play a key part might be very random, for instance:

- 1) **You are rushing to get to an appointment**
- 2) **because you stayed out late the night before drinking and got up late**
- 3) **after being disappointed to hear you did not get the job**
- 4) **which you applied to after learning the job was recruiting for someone 5'5" like you**
- 5) **now in your morning rush you go to the wrong floor and enter the wrong office**
- 6) **and you meet who turns out to be your future employer ! (or the creditor you're avoiding !)**

Writing down the 'plot' of your life is often what you will be asked to do if you go into therapy ! The therapist knows if you can recognize the many different kinds of factors that played into the situation that shook you, you'll feel less helpless in the present and more alert to what happens around you in the future. **YOU'LL BEGIN TO 'SEE' THE HOLES BEFORE YOU STEP INTO THEM !**

#### SIMPLE 'PLOTING' EXERCISE

- 1) **In One Line Describe An Important Event That Happened To You (You Define 'Important' !)**
- 2) **Describe (4) Events That You Think Helped To Lead Up To The Important Event**

Don't judge yourself on whether or not everything you remember is accurate. This is an exercise to help you begin paying more attention to everyday events and their potential influence on you. It will also give you more ideas for 'plotting' when you make up stories.

## ANSWERS

### WHAT IS A THEME ?

It's the important moral belief or life experience woven throughout a story.  
It's the meaning or emotional foundation of the character's life.

(Do you believe there is any significance or emotional cornerstone to your life ?)

**BEYONCE**  
As Storyteller

from the song  
'Freedom'  
LEMONADE Album



"FREEDOM !  
Where are you ?  
Cause I need freedom too !  
I break chains all by myself  
Won't let my freedom rot in hell  
Hey, I'ma keep running  
Cause a winner  
Don't quit on themselves !"



We might not think about it, but often we seek out stories because of their themes and how they touch on things that we have dealt with ourselves. Think about the last film you saw or book you read – or argument you had – what was the theme ?

Why is it helpful to think about themes ? Because it can help you identify patterns --- not only in the stories that entertain you, but also in the situations and people you are drawn to (or tripped up by) in life.

Once you realize there is a theme that carries a lot of force in your life you can focus more on understanding the theme itself, rather than how it plays out in your life. Only then will you realize that it is in your power to reshape the message you want this theme to communicate in your life (or in the stories that you shape).

#### COMMON THEMES

love  
war  
revenge  
growing up  
bullying  
friendship  
marriage  
motherhood  
money  
loss  
loneliness  
community  
abuse  
justice  
rich vs poor  
man vs nature  
faith vs doubt  
self-discovery  
**FREEDOM**

#### 'FREEDOM'

Often we are attracted to films, books, or songs where the main character has or gets what we don't have --- from money to a loving relationship to freedom. Rather than consuming for escape with a beer, sit up and look closely for lessons you might learn.

BEYONCE takes on 'FREEDOM' in her song of the same name. Freedom means one thing to the wealthy white man running a Fortune 500 company. Something quite different to the Black man walking his own neighborhood concerned about police playing cowboys. As a Black woman artist, what do you think Beyonce communicates about freedom in her song ? Go line by line. There are multiple messages.

**CHECK OUT MY INTERPRETATIONS OF HER MESSAGES ON THE NEXT PAGE**



## ANSWERS

### WHAT IS A THEME ? (cont.)

### INTERPRETATIONS OF FREEDOM

**“Cause I need freedom too !”**

If you are in a relationship or part of a community you can't let your support for your partner or community minimize your own need for freedom.

**“Won't let my freedom rot in hell !”**

What kind of hell does she mean ? Her album was dedicated to her journey after discovering her husband had been unfaithful. Could hell be feeling like a mouse stuck spinning on a wheel ?

#### FREEDOM

“Freedom  
Where are you ?  
Cause I need freedom too !  
I break chains all by myself  
Won't let my freedom rot in hell  
Hey, I'ma keep running  
Cause a winner  
Don't quit on themselves !”

BEYONCE  
From LEMONADE Album

**“I break chains by myself”**

Do you imagine giant muscle pumping as Beyonce tugs on lengths of chain ? NO.

I 'see' her pds --- passion, determination, and smarts !  
She finds her own hidden powers.

**“Hey, I'ma keep running”**

You break one set of chains but there's no stopping. Life is process. There will always be new situations to challenge, upset and entrap us. Be aware.



**“Cause a winner don't quit on themselves !”**

Turn the concept of winning into the act of honoring and believing in yourself.

### EXERCISE: PICK A THEME CLOSE TO HEART

LIST (5) DIFFERENT MESSAGES THAT YOU CAN COMMUNICATE ABOUT THE THEME

#### EXAMPLE: 'LOVE'

- Love makes you stronger.
- Love gives a sense of purpose
- Love continues after the Loved one is gone.
- Love can connect people from different worlds
- Love makes you willing to risk things you value
- You won't find Love looking in the wrong places.
- Love makes it possible to get through life's hardships
- Love can transform those who are jaded and hopeless
- You have to Love yourself to Love others



**What Other Messages Can You Add To The Theme 'Love' ?**

#### COMMON THEMES

- love
- war
- revenge
- growing up
- bullying
- friendship
- marriage
- motherhood
- money
- loss
- loneliness
- community
- abuse
- justice
- rich vs poor
- man vs nature
- faith vs doubt
- self-discovery
- freedom

**FOR SALE**  
STORY BEAMS

DADDY / DAUGHTER / MAN ?
COMING-OF-AGE INTO-WOMANHOOD
MOTORCYCLES / WHISKEY IN TEA GUNS
LESSON: STOP TROUBLE BEFORE IT STOPS YOU
TIMELINE / LOCATION

**ANSWERS**

**WHAT IS STORY STRUCTURE ?**

A House Needs A Wooden Frame  
To Guide Its Construction And Give It  
The Stability To Build Out From.

A Story Structure's Framework  
Organizes The Different Story Elements

So That Events / Plot Unfolds In A Coherent And Compelling Manner.



"Came into this world  
Daddy's little girl...  
Tough girl is what I had to be....  
He told me when he's gone....  
and men like me come around  
Oh, my daddy said shoot  
Oh, my daddy said shoot"



\*BEYONCE as StoryTeller  
from the song 'Daddy Lessons'  
LEMONADE Album

BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH THE LESSON: Look up online 'Daddy Lessons lyrics by Beyonce', and after studying them look up and listen to the song. The first 48 seconds is instrumental. Loose New Orleans style jazz with background chanting establishes a sense of time and mood for Daddy's world that you won't get by just reading the lyrics.

**STORY STRUCTURE CAN BE OUTLINED WITH DIFFERENT METHODS. MOST COMMON AND BASIC:  
THREE ACT STORY STRUCTURE: 1) BEGINNING 2) MIDDLE 3) END**

**I'M OUTLINING STORY STRUCTURE FOR A FILM OR BOOK** The song 'Daddy Lessons' is 4:48 minutes, whereas a film might be 90 minutes. A song can be like a film and have Three Act Structure -- or it can be structured like a painting or poem and be a vivid stroke of life communicating a mood, time, or relationship. If I were to fit 'Daddy Lessons' into Three Act Structure, it would go into ACT I (Beginning). It vividly communicates the story of how the Daughter was loved, dominated and indoctrinated by her Daddy. In essence her Backstory (a term explained on pg. 10). But the song doesn't present a current conflict that the Daughter needs to overcome. We don't know what the Daughter *herself* now believes. On the next pages I suggest multiple ways you could expand the story of 'Daddy Lessons' to fit Three Act Story Structure. **HAVE FUN CHOOSING HOW YOU WOULD DEVELOP THE STORY**



**ACT I (BEGINNING):** You're introduced to the main character or the '**PROTAGONIST**' and their '**ORDINARY WORLD**' – be it rich or poor, happy or depressed. Something happens to disrupt that world, often referred to as '**THE INCITING INCIDENT**' or '**THE CALL TO ADVENTURE**'. The disruption is caused by the '**ANTAGONIST**' or villain / rival / challenger – which could be a person, a snowstorm or a dinosaur ! At first the protagonist doesn't want to deal with it. They don't think it's a big problem and hope it will go away. Or they don't think it's their problem, or that they're capable of dealing with it. But the problem gets worse, taking over their life. **THEY HAVE TO DO SOMETHING !**



**CAUTION**  
POTENTIAL HAZARD  
FALLING OBJECT



#### **ACT I, Part I: INTRO TO ORDINARY WORLD**

The **DAUGHTER's** growing up started and ended with her **DADDY**. His world was her world. What is interesting are the missing pieces of Daddy's story. Though Daddy tells the Daughter to look after her mother and sister, we don't know how Daddy himself treated them. He tells his Daughter "when men like me come around" to shoot – but we never learn what Daddy has done that makes him such a bad man. Plus he doesn't tell her how to look for good in a man --- does he not want her to be in a relationship ? Was he trying to turn her into the son he never had ? Was he treating her more like 'Daddy's little woman', turning her into an adult before she got to be a child ?

#### **ACT I, Part II: THE INCITING INCIDENT**

Let's create an Inciting Incident in the form of a **MAN** who rocks the Daughter's world. Initially she:

- Doesn't find him attractive
- Finds him attractive -- so she hides from him
- Dislikes him but is unsettled by how he makes her feel more feminine
- Other (fill in your choice)

Then she ends up having to spend time with the Man because:

- They have to work together
- They are stranded somewhere together
- He continues to pursue her as she pushes him away
- Other (fill in your choice)

This leads the story into ACT II.

**ACT II (MIDDLE):** Now the protagonist is totally consumed with dealing with the problem, and goes through confusions and setbacks and efforts to get free or to get help. As well as times of giving up or giving in or denying reality. Eventually they either come up with a plan -- or something beyond awful happens and it pushes them to act --- leading to the climactic showdown and all hell / life breaks through !

## ANSWERS

### WHAT IS STORY STRUCTURE ? (cont.)

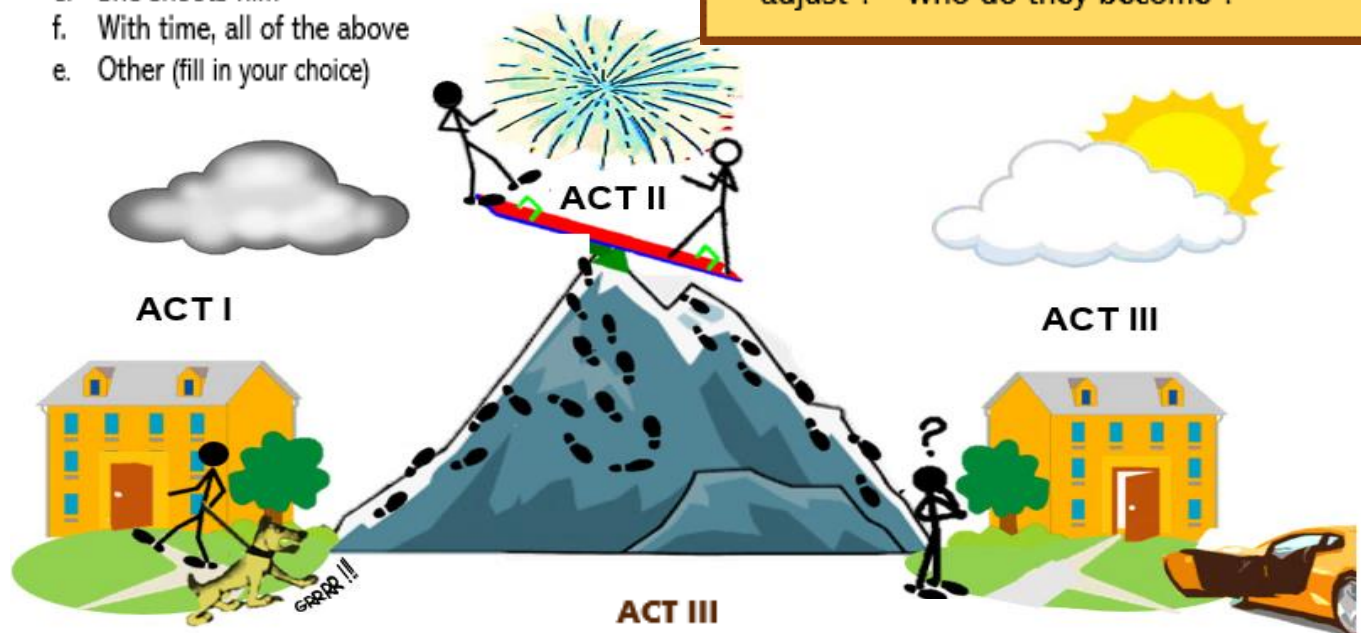
**ACT II:** The Daughter ends up in a relationship with the Man, but it's bumpy because of his behavior (and hers). Then it becomes unbearable !

#### HOW DOES THE DAUGHTER RESOLVE THE PROBLEM / CRISIS ?

- She gives a warning and reminds the Man continually of his sins; nags and demands
- She has an affair to make him jealous (or pretends to)
- Finds out she's pregnant and decides to keep trying to tame (or live with) who he is
- She leaves him
- She shoots him
- With time, all of the above
- Other (fill in your choice)



**ACT III (END):** Now the protagonist is beyond the climactic battle, for better or poorer. They and their ordinary world is no longer the same. How do they adjust ? Who do they become ?



#### WHAT IS THE DAUGHTER'S NEW ORDINARY WORLD LIKE ?

- She and the Man have weathered the storm and are working to know each other anew
- In prison after shooting the Man, trapped in a world more suited for Daddy, she thinks about her destroyed future
- She is raising her daughter alone, consciously teaching values different from what Daddy taught her
- She finds her voice and releases her feelings in a wildly successful breakthrough album
- Other (fill in your choice)

Once you as a StoryTeller have made all your decisions about how the Plot develops, you can decide to tell your audience the story in any order you want. You can open in the middle or end of the story — because you understand how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together !



## ANSWERS

### WHAT IS A BACKSTORY ? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT ?

Backstory is what happens before the story you are being told begins



“Dishes smashed on my counter  
from our last encounter.  
Pictures snatched out the frame  
Bitch, I scratched out  
your name and face.”

BEYONCE As StoryTeller  
from the song 'Sandcastles', LEMONADE Album

**BACKSTORY** is the history or background of how the character became the person we first meet. Or Backstory can describe how the circumstances or relationships in the story came about. A committed StoryTeller builds a detailed backstory in their own head so that they can explain to themselves / justify -- why the characters they create do what they do. Actors do the same when preparing for a role. They will create their own Backstory that goes beyond (but doesn't conflict with) what is said in the script. As a writer if you don't build a believable Backstory your characters will not seem real. In life you have never met another human being who doesn't have a lifetime / generations of Backstory you know nothing about -- which might be affecting how they behave and the choices they make. The writer feeds the audience Backstory bit by bit. The audience gets hooked when they are surprised by the Backstory that inspired the character's extreme or hurtful actions.

### WHY ARE STORY OPENINGS IMPORTANT ?

“Six inch heels,  
she walked in the club  
like nobody's business  
Goddamn,  
she murdered everybody  
and I was her witness”

BEYONCE As StoryTeller  
Opening lines from '6 Inch', LEMONADE Album



**THE OPENING** You try to quickly hook your audience ! The Opening sets the mood for the kind of story it's going to be. It can give clues to what's going to happen later. It can be surprising / inspiring / mysterious / funny / scary ! In film Openings it's often music and images that pull the audience in. If there's dialogue it's usually surrounded by strong images. If a script's Opening pages contain written descriptions of lots of visuals --- don't skim past it! To imagine it's power on the screen, stop and visualize what is being explained -- just like the craftspeople who are going to turn the script into a film will have to do.



# ANSWERS

## HOW ARE FILM SCRIPTS FORMATTED? AND WHY?

Did You Know A Film Script Is Not Considered 'Literature'?  
It's Considered 'Performing Arts'. What Does That Mean?

INT. CATERING BUSSING STATION - DAY

Billie is piling dirty dishes on a huge bussing tray on a stand. She is dressed in a white service jacket, white shirt, black tie and pants.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

Hurry, entrée is almost up. You need to be in line in five!

Billie struggles to lift the tray. She balances it on one shoulder, and tilted to one side, she hustles the huge tray away.



**You Can Be An Avid Reader, Part Of Book Clubs, And Still Struggle To Get Through A Film Script !** A film script is not aimed at you, the audience. It's aimed at the people who can finance a film and the artists and craftspeople who can make a film – turning words on a page into performing art for an audience. Don't approach reading a script like you would read a book. **Instead Approach A Script Like It's A Cake Mix !**

### A CAKE MIX IS NOT A CAKE !

Think about a cake mix. A cake mix is not the cake. A cake mix doesn't taste or look like a cake. Someone has to open the box, shake out the mix, add the listed ingredients needed (and you can even change some of those), and then mix, pour, and bake before you have a cake.



**A Script Looks Nothing Like The Film It Will Become**

The script provides the dialogue the characters will say, but has no sound. It describes objects and images to create a world around the characters, but has no dimensions, textures or colors. To fill out the story outlined in the script for performance new kinds of StoryTellers need to join in --- Actors / Director / Cinematographer / Lightning Wiz / Wardrobe and Props Masters / Set Designer --- and someone (Producer) who holds it -- the people, resources, locations, and schedules – all together. When you read a script it might feel clunky, slow, and missing something --- until you too become a StoryTeller and have fun proposing how you would turn the words into a visual performance !



## HOW ARE FILM SCRIPTS FORMATTED ? AND WHY ? (cont.)

## SCRIPT SAMPLE

Below is an excerpt from the feature script 'BILLIE'S SONG, An Urban Fairy Tale'. The different script components that are tagged are explained on the next page.

**FYI: BILLIE'S SONG is set in the year 1995. Billie, the main character has been introduced earlier in the script. She is a Black woman in her 30s with a short natural haircut and an edge to her unique, dramatic costume-like-style. In the setup before this scene Billie has been revealed as the only Black actress in a line of white actresses waiting to audition.**

INT. REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

SCENE HEADING

A small, raised platform lit with a harsh stripper's spotlight dominates a shadowy, film-noirish\* room. The white DIRECTOR's silhouette looms behind a table set back from the stage.

CHARACTER INTRO

ACTION

Billie steps up on the platform into the spotlight. She shields her eyes from the harsh light, trying to see the Director.

DIRECTOR

(harsh bark)

I take it you are not familiar with this play!

BILLIE

I love this play.

DIALOGUE

DIRECTOR

Honey, I am not the new Joe Papp.\*\* This is legit theater, not an urban fairy tale.

BILLIE

I'm here to read!

DIRECTOR

Well, read!

From the shadows the Assistant's hand passes Billie's headshot to the Director, who tosses it aside.

DIRECTOR

(hissing)

She doesn't even have hair!

PARENTHETICAL

(cont.)

## ANSWERS

### HOW ARE FILM SCRIPTS FORMATTED? AND WHY? (cont.)



#### A SCRIPT IS A BLUEPRINT

With Info That Helps A Producer Figure Out The Budget And Resources Needed To Make The Film

- All film scripts are written with Courier 12 pt. font and the same exact margins. When properly formatted 1 script page = (approx.) 1 minute of film time.
- Scripts are loosely bound with 3 brass fasteners because as the production team figures out how to tell the story in a world they will create, there will be many changes and new pages with the changes will be added to the script.
- Everything is always written in the present tense – even flashbacks. You can't include a character's interior thoughts because they can't be seen or heard !

**A SCRIPT IS MADE UP OF SCENES. WHAT DEFINES A SCENE ?  
A SCENE HAPPENS IN ONE PLACE IN CONTINUOUS TIME**

#### TAGGED SCRIPT COMPONENTS (from pg. 12)

**SCENE HEADING:** The start of a scene is designated by a Scene Heading (also called Slug Line), that is in all caps. It tells the reader the location and the time of day. INT. for Interior (scene happening indoors) or EXT. for Exterior (scene happening outdoors).

EXAMPLE:

**INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

If the characters go in continuous time from living room to hallway it's a new scene:

**INT. HALLWAY - DAY**

Why ? For shooting purposes it is considered a new location because it might need a new camera and lighting setup. Also sometimes when you watch characters move from a room into a hallway, even though it seems the locations are adjoining, it's possible that the hallway is actually in a totally different location (or even country !), and the scenes were shot at different times then edited together to look continuous !

**ACTION (also called NARRATIVE)** is text that tells the reader what to see in their mind's eye as if it were up on the screen – the setting, characters, wardrobe, props, and movement.



## ANSWERS

### TAGGED SCRIPT COMPONENTS (cont.)

**DIALOGUE:** The spoken words the characters say. It is indented with shorter margins than the ACTION text so that it stands out for the actor. The character's name is written in all caps, and below that the dialogue.



I TAKE IT  
YOU  
ARE  
NOT --!

**PARENTHETICAL:** It appears within the dialogue on its own line. It is a direction for how a particular line of dialogue is to be delivered emotionally, or if the actor is to do an action while speaking the dialogue.

**DO THIS !**  
(while talking)

**CHARACTER INTRO:** To call attention to when a character's name is first introduced in the Action it is put in all capitals – 'DIRECTOR'. After that if the character is mentioned again only the first letter is capitalized – 'Director'.



**\*FILM-NOIRISH:** Scriptwriters sometimes use a shorthand to indicate the type of visuals they imagine by referencing a well-known style of décor or film. FILM NOIR (French: dark film) was a genre of American crime dramas popular in the 1950s, post-World War II. It featured dark and cynical heroes and stark black and white lighting effects with lots of shadows. Check out the classic Film Noir style: : [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFkUbDQW1u4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFkUbDQW1u4)

**\*\*JOE PAPP:** What does it mean when the white Director, seeing Black Billie, says, "I am not the new Joe Papp." ? **HERE'S THE BACKSTORY:** The script is set in New York City 1995, when most theatre parts were for white actors. Joseph Papp was a cultural pioneer who did non-traditional casting of people of color, women, and gays in roles not originally written for them, and produced new plays showcasing their lives. He took theater productions out to NYC parks to reach audiences who'd never been to Broadway theaters. For more about Joseph Papp: [www.nytimes.com/1991/11/01/theater/joseph-papp-theater-s-champion-dies.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/01/theater/joseph-papp-theater-s-champion-dies.html)

You've been given the basic info you need to know to review excerpts from the BILLIE'S SONG script. There's of course more to know about script format. For more technical information on scriptwriting: [www.studiobinder.com/blog/brilliant-script-screenplay-format/](http://www.studiobinder.com/blog/brilliant-script-screenplay-format/)

Yes, But...

The information given are industry standards. But if you make your own film with your own resources --- you can write the script anyway you want ! But know it won't look professional or be easy to understand by people who might help you.

Let's Take a Look at the Opening Page of  
**BILLIE'S SONG, An Urban Fairy Tale.....**



# BILLIE'S SONG

## An Urban Fairy Tale

By  
Trayce Gardner

### Information You Never Put On A Script Cover !!!

#### **BILLIE'S SONG, An Urban Fairy Tale:**

**SETTING:** Brooklyn, New York (1995)

**TAGLINE:** Her Toto Is *Not* A Friendly Little Dog !

**LOGLINE:** A cynical outcast who thrives on antagonizing others ends up leading the charge to save the childhood home she turned her back on.

**SYNOPSIS:** BILLIE, an angry 38 year old Black actress who is scraping by to survive, has an unexpected encounter with the self-doubting BENJAMIN, a wealthy 41 year old white man. When Billie challenges Ben to a witty verbal sparring match it surprises him --- and takes his mind off his confusions about being drafted as the new leader of a powerful organization by a controlling businessman. When Billie and Ben, two black sheep with secrets, later accidentally run into each other again they resume their high-spirited verbal sparring, and fall into an unexpectedly comfortable relationship. But as Billie starts to open up and depend on Ben, he withdraws as he realizes he's being used as a front for corruption that threatens the childhood home Billie fled. When Billie finds out Ben is involved she turns avenger on Thanksgiving Day and she leads a motley crew of enraged locals in a dangerous confrontation between their worlds.

**INFLUENCES:** BILLIE'S SONG is infused with homages to the mythologies of two classic films – THE WIZARD OF OZ (1939) and THE GRADUATE (1967). It's as though their lead characters, DOROTHY and BENJAMIN, wake up in Brooklyn in 1995, twenty years older (and one of them now Black), still battling their youthful fears and confusions. The inclusion of animated sequences humorously showing characters' alternative realities adds a unique fable-like aesthetic to the story.



FADE IN:

ANIMATED IN THE BRIGHT TECHNICOLOR STYLE OF 1950s CARTOONS

A big fat baby-blue FAIRY TALES book lies flat. The cover flips open to:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE POOR LITTLE MATCH GIRL...page 1

SLEEPING BEAUTY...page 35

RAPUNZEL...page 90

CINDERELLA...page 140

THE PAGES START TO FLIP UNTIL THEY STOP ON:

BILLIE'S SONG...page 210

Once upon a time....

FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

Once upon a time there was a fiery woman, not young and not old, named Billie. Billie had run a long way from home without knowing where to go, as she was cursed not to know until she could find her own voice.

WHIRRRLLLLLLLL!!! THE SOUND OF THE WIND.....

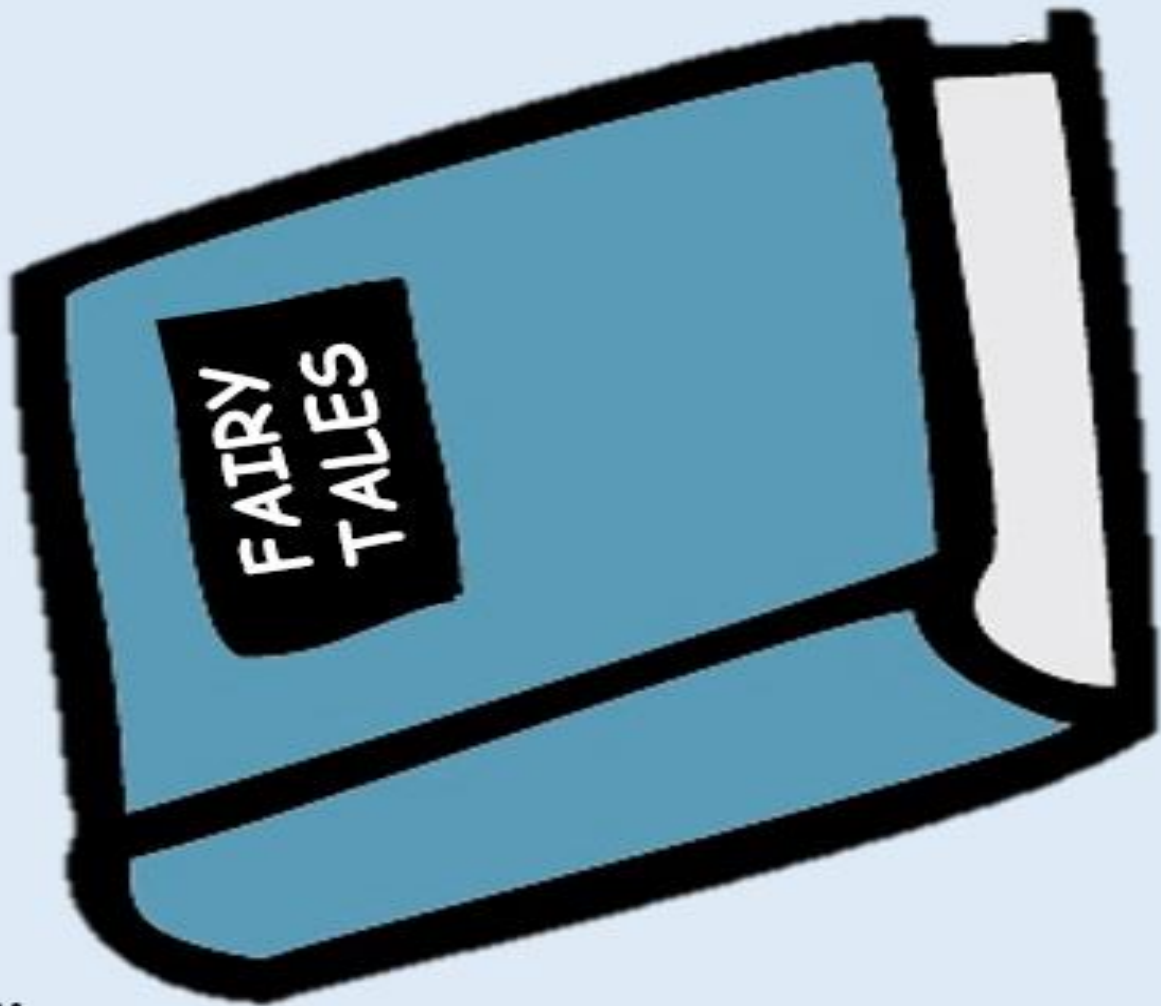
**TO BE CONTINUED !**

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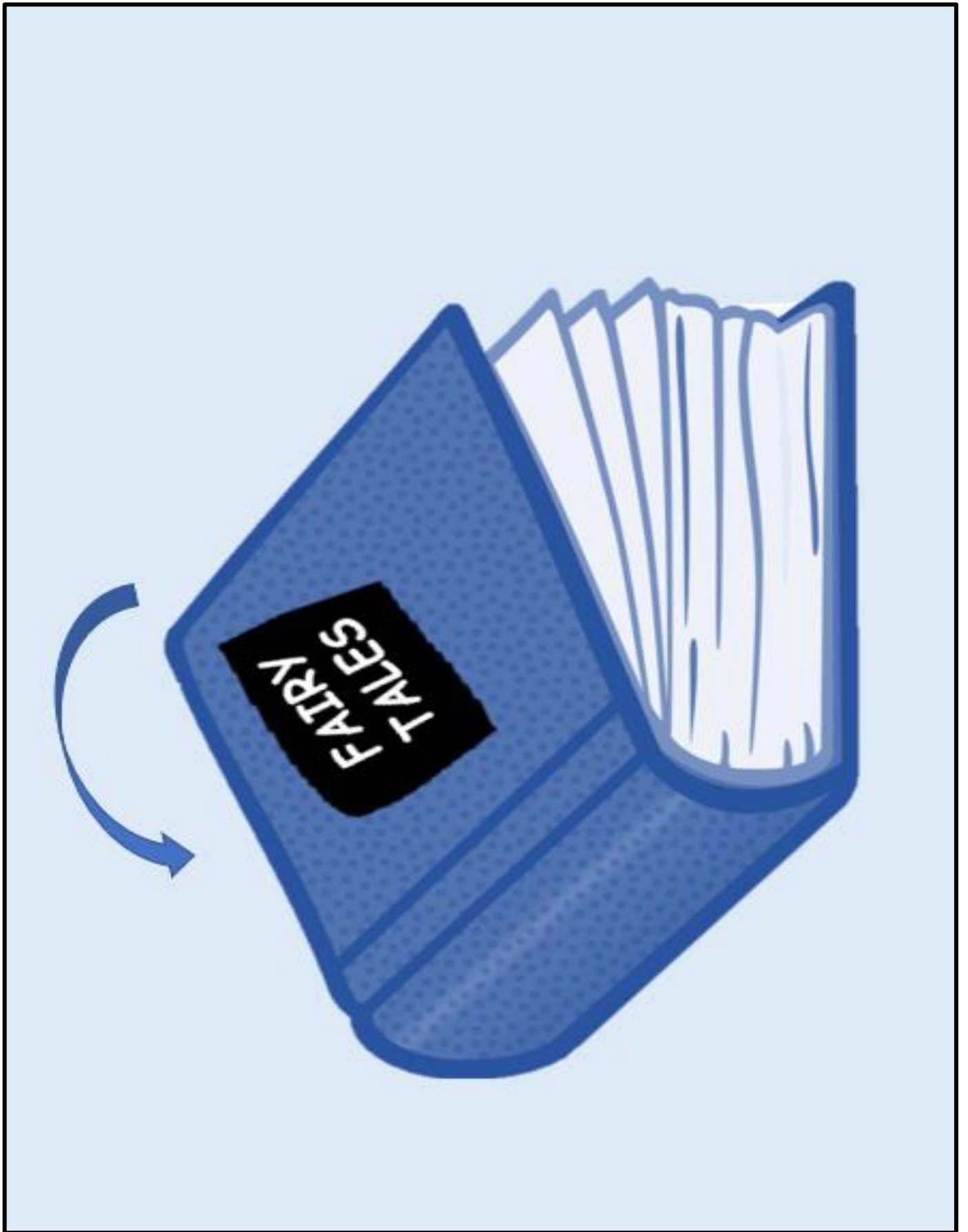
### **FROM SCRIPT TO STORYBOARDS**

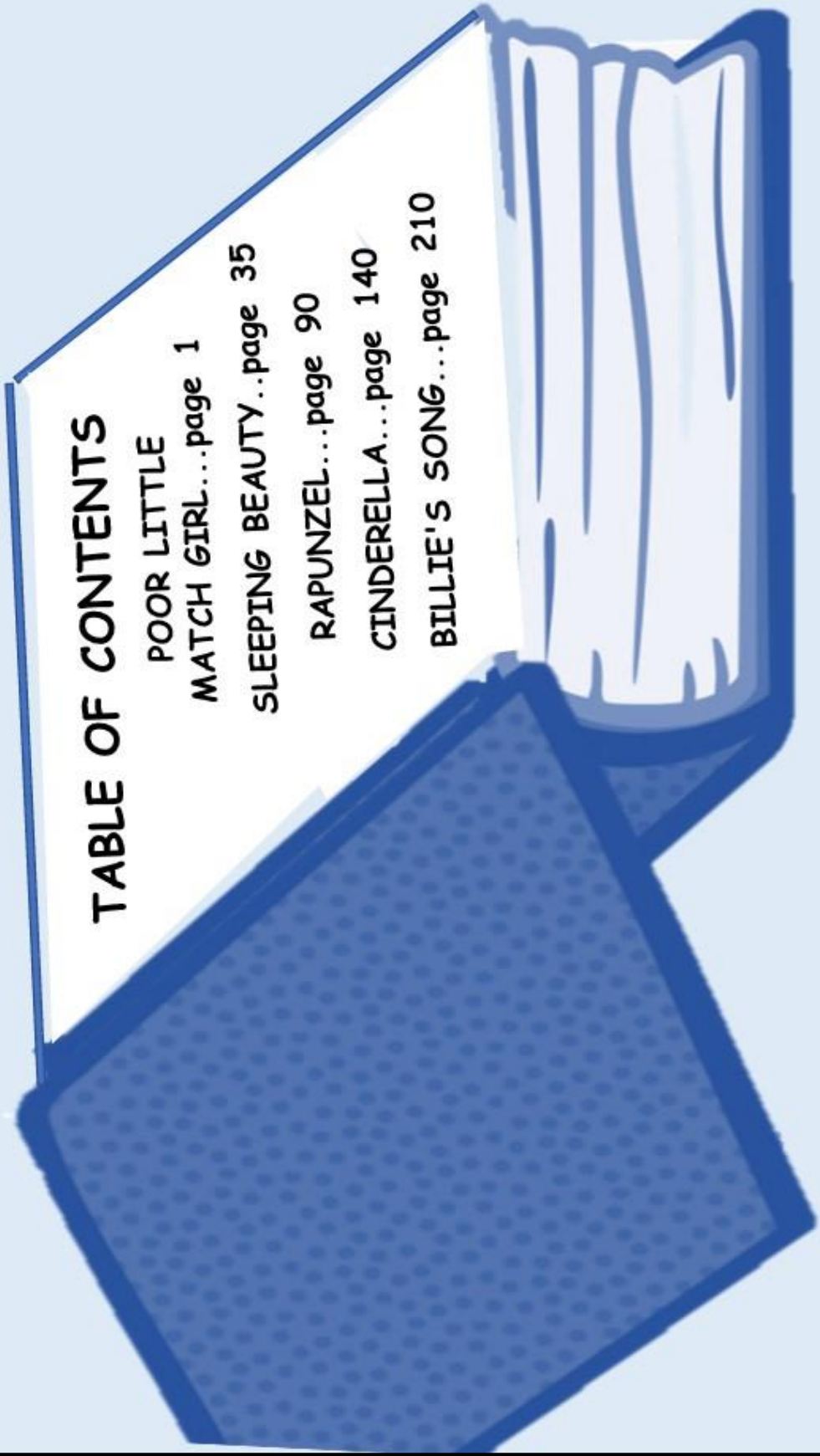
To communicate to others the mood and movement I imagine from my written words I create storyboards. Being limited in my drawing abilities, I create picture collages (cut and pasting images together to create a picture). Turn the page to see how I turn the script excerpt above into visual images !

**FADE IN:**









## TABLE OF CONTENTS

POOR LITTLE

MATCH GIRL...page 1

SLEEPING BEAUTY...page 35

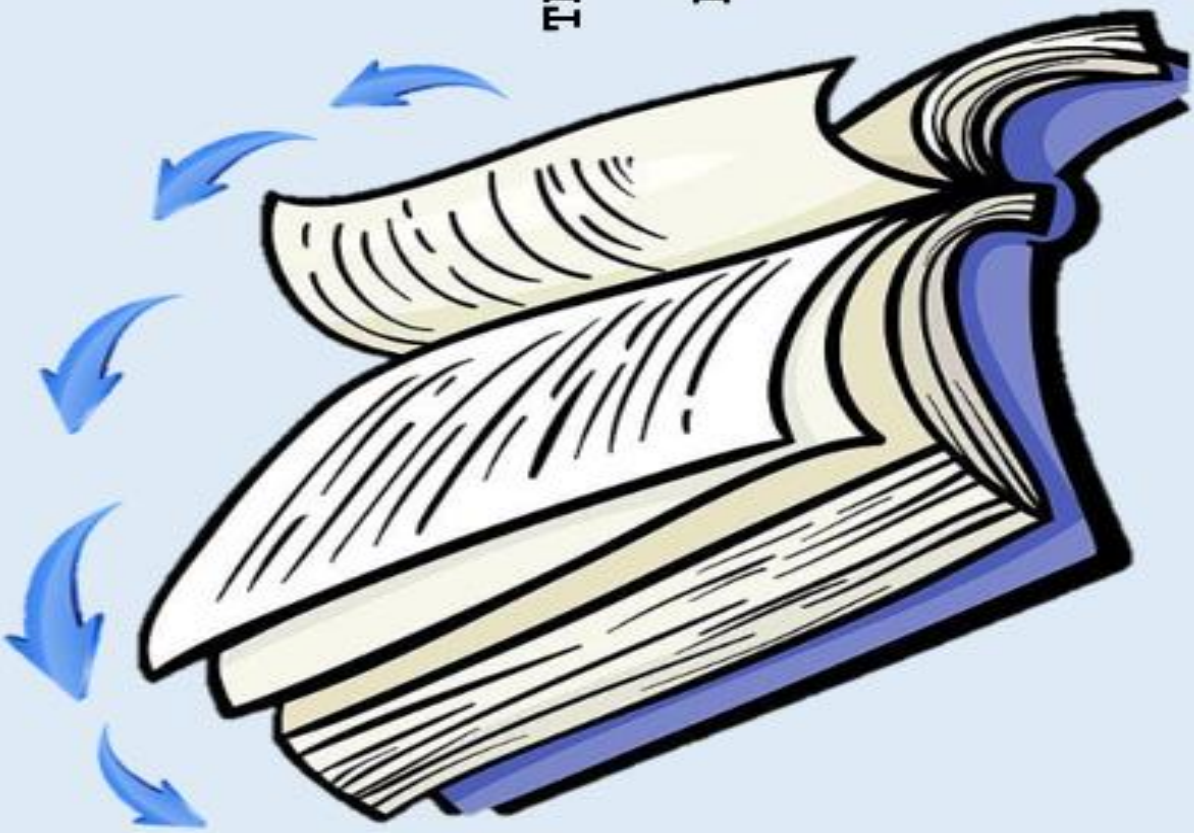
RAPUNZEL...page 90

CINDERELLA...page 140

BILLIE'S SONG...page 210



**THE PAGES  
FLIP  
RAPIDLY**



UNTIL THEY STOP ON...



SOUND: whirrrlll...





## WHAT DID YOU SEE ?

### **You've read the 1st Half Page Of The Feature Script BILLIE'S SONG. WHAT DID YOU 'SEE' ?!**

(\*You can 'SEE' with all your senses, including your intuition !)

#### **You might say, 'Hey, I Haven't Been Given Enough Story To Make Any Guesses !'**

Well imagine you are part of the CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) team from your (or your mom's) favorite TV crime show. When your team arrives at the scene you'll immediately start trying to profile 'who-done-it' by studying every detail at the scene, and sharing your own deductions as to the potential motive, method, as well as the character of the doer.

The purpose of these StoryTelling Lessons is not to rush you into writing your own stories. (You may already be doing so, or you might never do so.) Rather the purpose of these Lessons is to slow you down and encourage you to study the little details and patterns in stories, so that you'll come up with your own ideas of what they might mean or where they are heading. Ultimately when you learn the whole of a story you might discover your interpretations were wrong. The fact is stories can be written different ways – and maybe your interpretations could work, but would make it a different story. Or you might learn your interpretations overlooked a lot of important details from the story, giving you a lot to think about.

In the Beyonce-inspired Lessons (pgs. 2-10) I drew a lot of interpretations about what was going on in her stories from just a few lines of lyrics. Now you can do the same with the half page of BILLIE'S SONG script (pg. 16). **THREE QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:**

- 1) BILLIE'S SONG is listed as a story among a group of well-known fairy tales.  
Are there any similarities among the well-known stories ?
- 2) What information does the FEMALE NARRATOR (V.O.)\* give you about Billie ?
- 3) What do you imagine the 'Theme(s)' of BILLIE'S SONG is (are) ?

#### **STAY TUNED FOR LESSON #2 AND MY ANSWERS (INTERPRETATIONS) !**

\*(V.O.) Voice Over: The speech of a character who's voice is heard but they are not physically part of a scene.

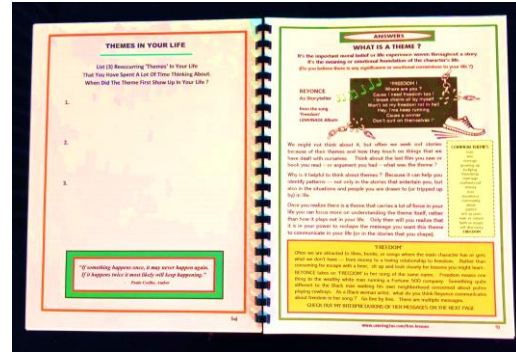
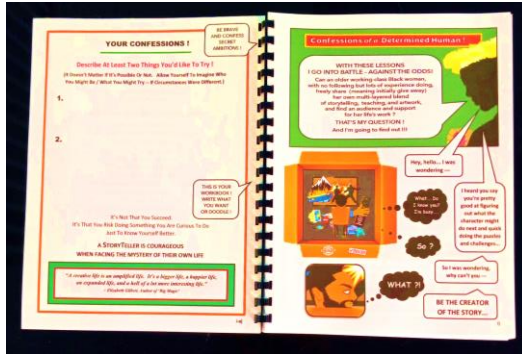
#### **RE-SEEING THE STORIES YOU KNOW**

**EXERCISE:** The scripts for many classic films (and TV shows) are available online for free download. See if you can find the script for a film you love. Then watch the film again. Don't feel up to reading a whole feature script ? That's OK. Just pick one of your favorite scenes and find it in the script, then compare the film scene to its script pages (don't be surprised if there are significant differences). Why do you think that scene is important to the story?

**FREE DOWNLOAD OF WELL-KNOWN SCRIPTS :** [www.simplyscripts.com/movie-scripts.html](http://www.simplyscripts.com/movie-scripts.html)  
<https://gointothestory.blcklst.com/script-download-links-9313356d361c>  
[www.sites.google.com/site/tvwriting/us-comedy/show-collections?authuser=0](http://www.sites.google.com/site/tvwriting/us-comedy/show-collections?authuser=0) (TV scripts)

# STORYTELLERS LESSONS WORKBOOK, VOLUME #1 FOR SALE – (\$20)

The PDF of the Lessons portion of the Workbook (the right side pages), are being posted for free online. The hard copy version of the StoryTellers Workbook also includes an actual workbook and journal portion (the left side pages). The hard copy of the Workbook is available for purchase at [www.catering2us.com/store](http://www.catering2us.com/store) (Note: Shipping and Taxes additional).



## NEXT: LESSON #2 - 'SWEEP AWAY'



For More On The StoryTellers Lessons & Additional Commentary

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