



## 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.)



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### 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.