

## ***The influence of Emotion on storytelling: the very first steps to create appealing stories***

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If we think about the last decades, everything has become much more story centric, digital media, visual media, written media, even journalism or advertising uses stories to help themselves sell better.

### **But why are stories so relevant, why do we need them?**

We as human beings are sociable animals, we feel the need to be part of a community, we have an urge to be understood and loved. Stories enable us to share our feelings and thoughts, our passions, fears, joy and sadness, we use stories to connect and understand others and ourselves. Stories enable us to empathize, and mankind strives for emotions.

Since I started watching movies and reading books, as many others, I always thought to be able to see what was working in a story and what was not, but I was never able to resonate and explain what made a story particularly good or bad, so I often found myself wandering about what made a story attractive to the audience.

Still knowing nothing about storytelling and cinematographic techniques, I tried answering myself by understanding human psychology. Later on, I found out my interest in the human mind was of extreme help in the professional world of making stories; also, because, as Robert McKee says in one of his books, the material of story is life itself.

One of the most useful concepts I understood by reading about human psychology that can be related to story making, it is the craving that humans have for appreciation, it is not just a desire or a wish, it's craving!

When I was still in university an episode happened that gave me a valuable lesson. I was enjoying a night out with some friends when a famous singer entered the pub, one of my friends happened to be a big fan of the man, but she was too shy to go to him and ask for a signature and a picture. Still a teenager and trying hard to impress others, I jumped off the chair and stated that I would obtain the

signature for my friend. When I approached the singer, his reaction was not what I expected. At first, he ignored me, then he called me ignorant, and sent me away as if I was some annoying mosquito, all this in front of his smirking posh friend. No justification of any kind held against the rage and humiliation I felt returning to my friends. I still am changing the radio channel if I hear any of his songs. Even though I will probably never have respect for this man, I admit that he gave me an incredibly good lesson. If you want an enemy for life just let yourself indulge in a little stinging criticism.

When dealing with people it is important to remember that humans are creatures driven by emotions and often motivated by pride, the same rule applies to any content created for men.

People are not stupid, they are cleverer than most of the stories created till this day, and they can smell miles away when a story lacks sincerity.

In order to be able to somehow touch the audience, it is fundamental for people to believe in what the story tells. Faith can move mountains, history shows us that power, money, or brute force, sooner or later, have always been overpowered by faith. People want to believe, to have faith, faith in you, in your goals, in your success, in the story you tell. The duty of a storyteller is to create something worthy of people's trust.

So, the first step towards people trusting in your work is to create a story that gives justice to an audience that is incredibly sensitive and open to the story that they are about to watch or listen, an audience that does not defend their emotions, welcoming laughter, compassion, love and tears.

But only saying this probably does not help much; what I understood from digging in various books not only about storytelling, but also about life, is that before creating stories that are able to give justice to their audience, a storyteller needs to understand what is the message that he/she wants to deliver. And it better be something that the person really believes in, because creating stories tests the maturity and the insights of the storyteller, the knowledge he has of the society, of the nature and of the human heart; all stories from any part of the world, of any genres and styles mirror their creators, exposing their humanity, or lack of it.

The goal is never stop learning, never stop being curious, to bring to life a vision full of the storyteller insights, coupled with deep knowledge of the created characters and the world they are living in. And with all of this, a lot of love.

I passed most of my teenage life, I am ashamed of admitting it, hating people. In the early adulthood, at the beginning of my independent life, the nature of my reflective, ruminative personality, brought me to obsessively dig in the life of my absent father, trying to find a reason for his disappearance. I felt extremely abandoned and mad. Back in those days my greatest interest was the wellbeing of the animals, and because I still felt I had a lot of time in front of me to develop my career, I was passing most of my days reading books about the meat industry and intensive farming. The pain I was reading about, caused by certain people's lack of sensibility towards unarmed and speechless creatures, the contrast between human and inhuman, and the abandonment and refusal I felt because of my father, has brought out of me a rage against humanity from which I had to work extremely hard to heal.

The result of all this hate? Most of the people I knew decided to hang out with somebody a bit more positive. And I do not blame them for their choice. If you have nothing else than hate to bring in this world you will never obtain any success, whatever you do. Especially if your career is based on creating content for people. As I said before, the deepest desire of mankind is to be important and appreciated, that is what will catch their attention, a story that makes them wonder if you are reading their mind.

Love is fundamental. First, love for humanity, you audience, an enthusiasm to empathize with them, the willingness to see the world through their eyes. When you sincerely understand how people feel, that is what they will sense through your story.

But the main question is: How to create a good story? And what makes it good?

Drowning in a sea of movies of all genres and kinds, a storyteller may come to believe that anything can become a story. In fact, if we observe carefully, each of the stories told may be unique, but getting to the core of it, in each of these stories the essential form is alike, and it is to this deep universal form that people react positively.

A story is not made only out of moments of conflict, the personality of the characters or their emotions. A story is a strategic sequence of life events of its characters, that are included in the story to arouse certain kinds of emotions in the audience, and to convey a specific point of view on life. The life represented in a story should not be as obvious as some chronological facts, rather it should be truthful to what the storyteller thinks about it.

I find this process of self-inner understanding fundamental before starting to study all the various storytelling techniques and structures. The world of cinematography and storytelling is so vast, that if you don't take time to understand what your message for the people is, you risk drawing in all its possibilities.

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