

Universal Grammar of Story™

**GAME BOOK
OF PRACTICAL EXERCISES
FOR WRITERS**

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Universal Grammar of Story™ Game Book of Practical Exercises for Writers
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1. Authorship. 2. Creative Writing Games. 3. Literary Technique.
4. Literary Theory.

This game guides writers in developing stories using the mythopoetic writing method known as *Universal Grammar of Story*™. The game builds from the main book *Universal Grammar of Story: An Author's Guide to Writing for the Soul of the World*, and directly supports the exercises in the companion workbook. Players can use the thought-provoking moves to create entirely new stories out of nothing, bring clarity to fuzzy story ideas, or break through writers' block with work in progress. Players can choose to keep total control of an emerging story by using a strategic approach or leave much to chance with the spin of the wheel. Levels of difficulty range from simple play to exceptional challenge carried out amid intense chaos. Game components include the instruction guidebook, answer sheets/score cards, number spinner, and 46 playing cards.

Keywords: Universal Grammar of Story, writing technique, authorship, instructive games, gamebook, creative writing games, creative writing exercises, practical exercises, educational games, literary theory game, storytelling game.

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2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 I 20

INTRODUCTION

Universal Grammar of Story™ Game of Practical Exercises for Writers is an enjoyable way to create new work, untangle struggles with a story in progress, or enhance an already completed one just by playing a game! This intellectually stimulating game teaches the mythopoetic writing method Universal Grammar of Story™ and can be played with or without having read the main book *Universal Grammar of Story™: An Author's Guide to Writing for the Soul of the World* or having completed the exercises in the companion workbook.

The Theory

Universal Grammar of Story™ is the first of its kind, grand mythopoetic theory of writing set to print for authors. While theories abound on various mythological aspects of storytelling, this is the first to combine the essential ideas in mythology along with other crucial elements that every well-rounded writer needs, including:

- the core narrative theories of storytelling
- basic literary philosophy
- depth psychology
- cultural anthropology
- linguistics
- the perennial philosophy shared among world faiths

The term “mythopoetic” refers to the way we rise above the animal kingdom by directing our collective intelligence into stories to make sense of the world. The ancients could see that the underlying health of a nation depended on stories and so invested heavily in developing their storytellers’ skill and wisdom. They in turn presented exquisite stories to the public that were received with collective reverence, even as a form of prayer.

Unfortunately, in the present day we lack the same strong support for our creative artists. But we are fortunate to still have the ancient stories for our guiding moral compass. Universal Grammar of Story™ brings together the wisdom of the ancients along with the insights of modern masters to generate a grand mythopoetic theory for our time.

Universal Grammar of Story™ is composed of four core areas: 1) the personal, social and mythic forces calling us to create a given story, and how we respond by integrating logic, emotion, and intuition; 2) how subtle changes in a writer's everyday language can profoundly impact the writing; 3) the narrative structure of storytelling, and; 4) tapping into the power of mythological encounter. This Game focuses on the latter two.

The heart of the game addresses the development of conflict between the hero and antihero (or villain) which drives character arcs through the transformation of both.

How the Game is Played

Game pieces:

- game book with explanation of Moves and keys for answer numbers
- 46 Playing cards (25 number cards, 11 Myth Cards, and 10 Wild Cards)
- answer sheets for three different levels of game complexity
- score cards
- number spinner

The game consists of 46 moves culminating in the outline of a well-balanced story. Stories brought to the game can be:

- entirely generated by the game
- vague ideas for a story
- already in progress or stalled by writer's block, or
- completed needing analysis for strengths and weaknesses

The game is typically played in a straightforward linear sequence, beginning with the choice to play either by:

- using pure strategy where the player retains full control of the story's development
- or*
- leaving much to fate with the spin of a wheel to determine 16 out of the 46 moves.

Several other variations of the play are also possible, including playing in random order and/or with multiple players. These alternative modes of play are described in the Lagniappe section for variations on the game.

Levels of Complexity

Players choose from three levels of complexity determined by the number of characters the writer wants to develop through the game:

- **Basic level:** hero's development with limited but necessary elements of the antihero
- **Moderate level:** equal development of hero and antihero
- **Advanced level:** full development of hero, antihero, 3rd character, and three additional supporting characters

The moderate and advanced levels require sound understanding of Universal Grammar of Story™ theory.

Example Stories

The study stories *Rainman* and *The Miracle Worker* used in the main text and workbook for *Universal Grammar of Story*, are used again in the game for continuity.

GAME INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose the Style of play: Strategy or Fate.

In games of Strategy players retain complete control over all character development and situation. The spinner is not used. This style is best for writers who have a strong sense of a story and clear characters in mind.

In games of Fate: the spinner is used for moves 1-16 to determine the plot situation, story setting, and characteristics of the characters. This style of play is best for writers with little or no story in mind, or who have only a relatively vague idea for one.

2. Choose the level of Complexity

Level of Complexity	Focus for Character Development	Story for Game	Player's knowledge of Universal Grammar of Story	Wild Cards Played
Basic	Hero.	Little or no story idea in mind.	Little or none.	1-3
Moderate	Hero and Anti-hero.	Sense of story but lacking clear characters.	Basic understanding.	1-5
Advanced	Hero, Antihero, 3 rd Character, and three additional supporting characters.	Strong sense of story and characters.	Moderate to advanced understanding.	1-10

3. Prepare the Cards:

- Arrange the number cards in order from 1-25, face down in a single stack with #1 (Comedy or Drama) on top. Place the stack to the left of the playing area.
- Arrange the ten Wild Cards in order (1-3 for basic play, 1-5 for moderate, 1-10 for advanced), face down with #1 (Title of the Story) on top. Place this stack immediately below the stack of number cards.
- Arrange the eleven Myth Cards in order from A-K, face down with A (The Call to Transformation/Mythic Journey) on top. Place the stack immediately below the Wild Cards.

4. Find Answer Sheet:

Select and copy the answer sheet for the chosen Level of Complexity at the back of the instruction book.

Games of Fate are played by using the number spinner to randomly choose numbers for the Moves cards. Number meanings are found in the Moves chapter.

- Spin once for a single digit number, twice for two digits, or three times for three-digit numbers.
- Spin again if the number falls outside of the range.

BEGINNING THE PLAY

1. **Draw Card 1 from the numbered cards.**
 - Turn to section Move 1 (Comedy or Drama) for direction in answering.
 - Record the answer on the Answer Sheet and note the score.
 - Place the card face-up to the upper left of the playing area.

2. **Draw Card 2 from the numbered cards.**
 - Answer the card.
 - In a game of strategy**, choose the genre from the list in the Move 2 section.
 - In a game of chance**, use the spinner to determine a number from the range on the card and find the corresponding genre in the Move 2 section.
 - Record the answer and note the score.
 - Place the genre card face-up to the right of the comedy/drama card.

3. **Continue playing the cards left to right, creating rows as needed to accommodate 30 cards.** Each of the 25 number cards and five of the Myth Cards (G-K), require their own space. The other 16 cards, including All of the Wild Cards and Myth Cards A-E, are played atop these 30 placeholder cards.

MOVE 17

At Move 17 the game becomes considerably more difficult. Here, the spinner is set aside, and the game of fate now becomes one of strategy. Preset answers are no longer available, and the hard job of authoring is at hand. For both types of players, the threat of writer's block begins in earnest with Move 17 where answers are demanded that might not be so easily forthcoming. When this happens, the player has three choices:

Choice 1: Play a Wild Card atop an appropriate numbered card or in the empty space where a fitting numbered card will go. More than one Wild Card may be played with the same number card.

Choice 2: Between Moves 14-22 only (including on 14 & 22) play one of the Myth Cards A-E atop an appropriate numbered card or in the empty space where a fitting numbered card will go. Myth Cards can join with more than one Myth and/or Wild Card.

Choice 3: A “pass” may be taken on a card by placing it face up, to the right of the playing area, in a “holding area.” The card may then be played later in the game when an answer comes to mind. While a pass may be taken at any time in the game, it is not generally necessary for the first 16 moves.

- Once a card enters the holding pile, it forfeits one point. All cards must be played at some point to complete the game.
- **A pass cannot be taken for Card 21: The Doldrums—the sudden death card that must be played when drawn or the game is over.**

Some players may never encounter writer’s block and are able to play all the number cards as drawn. If so, the choice of when to draw Wild and Myth Cards is left to the discretion of the player. Myth Cards A-E are still subject to the restrictions noted above.

SCORING

All cards must be played to complete the game. **If Card 21: The Doldrums is not played when drawn, all points are lost, and the game is over.**

- Number Cards: 3 points each.
- Wild Cards: 2 points each.
- Myth Cards: 5 points each.
- Cards placed in the holding stack forfeit one point each—even when a solution to the failed move is later found and the card is successfully played.

A Note About Heroes and Villains

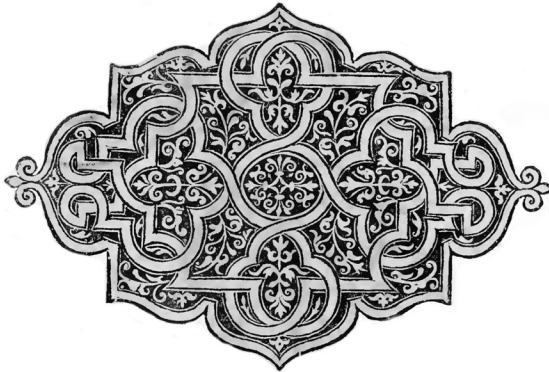
In Universal Grammar of Story,[™] the hero is no angel nor the antihero a devil. They symbolize two sides of the same person whose encounter with one another triggers the catalyst for the transformation of both. Because the antihero's journey takes place in the shadows, rarely is it recognized that this character also has a journey of transformation. The shadow of the antihero is that part of humanity we despise when what is needed is instead to embrace it, in careful balance. The antihero is symbolic of the "blackened mirror" of the alchemist—letting the hero see the totality of the self—the shadow side needing recognized—that part of the self, lost in a delusion that the material world is all that matters.

The hero and antihero open the story trapped in the prison of their egos. But they both resist freedom because the prison for all its misery is the known world whereas the journey threatens a foreboding unknown.

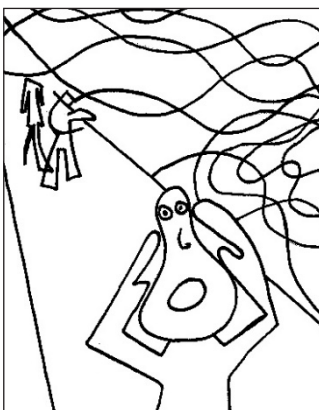
The walls fall only through the death of the hero's ego; and to some degree, that of the antihero—at least momentarily.

All stories come into being to dissolve the prison walls of ego and set the true self free.

THE MOVES



THE NUMBER CARDS



Move 1: Comedy or Drama

For games of Fate:

Use the number spinner.

- Odd numbers determine comedy
- Even numbers and 0 determine drama.

For games of Strategy:

Choose between a comedy or drama.

A Note About Comedy and Drama

In the ancient world, stories were divided into comedies or tragedies. The main difference being one of *dignity*.

Tragedy is the dignified telling of a fatal flaw in the hero's life leading to ruin. Comedy is the irreverent telling of the same story ending with the hero's triumph over the adversity. Tragedy leaves us with a serious ending, whereas comedy grants us a lighthearted one. Structurally, they are the same, but comedy uses satire or humor to navigate the unpleasant circumstances.

In the contemporary era, we often blend the two into what we call a "comedy-drama" or more playfully, a "dramedy". However,

despite the label, we still ultimately consider such as a comedy because the comedy dominates. The same is true of drama with comic elements—it is remembered as more dramatic than funny.

Move 2: Genres

The genre tells us what kind of story we are dealing with. The following table provides 42 genres and their meanings.

Players of Strategy: Choose a single genre or combine two or more. For example, one might choose a science fiction-farce, autobiographical satirical-thriller, or romantic comedy-adventure.

Players of Fate: Choose a number between 1-42 and use the designated genre from the table.

42 Genres		
1	Adventure	Energetic, physical adventure into the unknown.
2	Allegorical Fable	A moral fable using allegory for hard truth.
3	Animal Story	Projecting human characteristics and norms to the animal world.
4	Bildungsroman	A coming of age story centered on moral and emotional transformation of the hero.
5	Black Comedy	Humor derived from the bad luck or bad behavior of characters.
6	Children's Story	Stories about children for children.
7	Comedy of Manners	Mocking ruling/upper/aristocratic class.
8	Comedy-Drama/ Dramedy	A balance of comedy and drama.
9	Crime	From the criminal point of view.
10	Detective Story	From a detective's perspective.