

Twitter Thread by Conan the Summer Conqueror



Conan the Summer Conqueror

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When I said I hate Worldbuilding I mostly meant the trap of making up facts and never actually writing a story. How do you beat the trap?

Just learn how to tell a story. Don't fear structure. Commit yourself to it.

Here are some resources I like for studying story structure.

Before I go into specifics, let me also say there are two main ways that study can help. First is deconstructing a work and writing your own to that formula. Second is learning theory so you aren't stuck with formulas. DO BOTH.

Formulae:

Probably the most famous true formula is Lester Dent's for a 6K word pulp story. Dent's is a great starting point bc it's plug n play.

Write 3-5 shorts w this and really examine how it works. The pacing, the actions, the revelations, building and releasing tension.

Another I love is Polti's 36 Dramatic Situations. Excellent reference and primer on comparative classic literature structure.

Write 1K word short stories for as many of the 36 as you can get thru. Notice where the actions and reveals end up to 'turn' the scene. <https://t.co/enOEYjZQMo>

Georges Polti made this book which is freely available online\u2014i strong recommend as a reference tool. Not just for writers but for anyone using rhetoric. If you can boil your narrative down to a clear narrative statement like this it will be very persuasive. pic.twitter.com/QY1VBEqsle

— Conan the Summer Conqueror (@conan_esq) [April 9, 2022](#)

For longer work I have looked at this and found it slightly useful but it's really for raw beginners who would be better served by the short fiction exercises above.

Truby's book is a little more technical and theoretical while still attempting to provide a sort of formula. Again, when targeting longer work this simply becomes unwieldy. But his theory and process discourse and writing exercises can be interesting and useful.

By the way, if I'm not including something here I either haven't used it or didn't like it. I read Save The Cat and the Lajos Egri book and found them mostly unhelpful.

But Screenwriting books have pretty good crossover for fiction, so...

More into the theoretical direction:

I liked Screenplay. I group it as theoretical because it's better as a discourse on why things work rather than a 'tutorial' to follow. I find the diagrams helpful aids to thought.

Story is another screenwriting book with carryover. More clearly theoretical but McKee is good at pushing you to bulletproof your stop as your own first-line editor.

Also liked Story Grid. Coyne offers an interesting and rigorous process without really approaching formula. I credit him for showing me the power and importance of structure especially in the planning phase.

Use his method to outline 10 stories with as much detail as possible.

For a very technical analysis of Character I like O S Card's book, but this is a level of depth not really necessary to a good performance.

Also shout out to the inimitable [@DavidVStewart](#) who has a wealth of content in this vein on his YT channel:

<https://t.co/48ppQJkvrE>

Oh and prose skill is important to all this. You don't need elaborate stylized prose fireworks, but you do need to be coherent and confident and smooth. I have enjoyed these:

You'll notice the above are not really about fiction writing. This is important. If you can't write clean orderly prose, don't bother with anything but learning that first honestly.

I also advocate reading broadly. Here are a couple things that excited me *as a writer*

YOU CANT JUST READ THE BOOKS.

You have to practice. I gave you short exercises to do that will jump your skill efficiently, much faster than muddling through 100k word of a novel that doesn't work.

And don't get overly attached to any one guru either. All these books are attempting to explain a mysterious transcendent object, the story itself. They're all just fragmentary perspectives. It's just a way to increase YOUR direct understanding and make PRACTICE more useful.

Anyway if there are any other real bangers I forgot or should know about let me know.