



# The Fundamentals of Story

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## INTRODUCTION

How do writers conceive of completely original worlds in order to convey a certain meaning that applies to our own life in reality? The purpose of this project was to answer these questions by investigating the fundamentals of plot structure and deep characters that are prominent in good stories so as to write an original play from scratch with the purpose of having it be produced.

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

➤Research quandary is as follows: What constitutes a good story and what are the fundamental elements that are present in a good story?

➤This project was done with the intention of understanding the craft of a storyteller and as an excuse to write and produce a play as a class for credits.

➤Some of the books lined up for reference include “The Fundamentals of Storytelling”, a book by fantasy author Doug Lipman which talks about what is necessary in every good story<sup>1</sup>, and “Understanding Comics” by Scott McCloud<sup>3</sup>, which talks about how to best communicate your message through visual storytelling. Some of other literature includes play written by the famed Shakespeare and *Candide*, by Voltaire<sup>4</sup>. Shakespeare as a playwright understood the fundamentals of a good story<sup>2</sup>. He understood structure. He was at the same time a frequent risk taker with his characters and dialogue. Voltaire’s *Candide* is every overly-complex story reduced to its fundamental factors. All these sources will provide ample research and reference when writing the play.

➤The intended approach of this project was to hopefully take a more innovative approach to storytelling when writing. It needed to be risky with characters and dialogue. It was made with the hope that it would be able to differentiate itself from other student plays.

➤The story of the heist conducted by DB Cooper is so vague and unknown that it begged for a compelling explanation.

## CREATING A STORY

### 1. Getting Started, World and Meaning

- To start, I had to establish a premise based on a kind of message I wanted to get across to the audience. I decided to start with the classical meaning of self-discovery and apply it to the story of infamous thief and extortionist D.B. Cooper.



### 2. Structure, Story Arc

- Constructing the story’s structure and completing its arc was one of the more difficult aspects of the project. It is here that a writer must keep in mind pacing, character presence, story flow, the story arc, and so on. Throughout the project, we went through multiple drafts of potential outlines, trying to extract the right one for the project.
- The final outline included two separate plot lines that were intertwined. Both characters from both stories were vying for the same end goal.
- Both worlds had to complement each other in narrative meaning in order to stimulate a cohesive story.

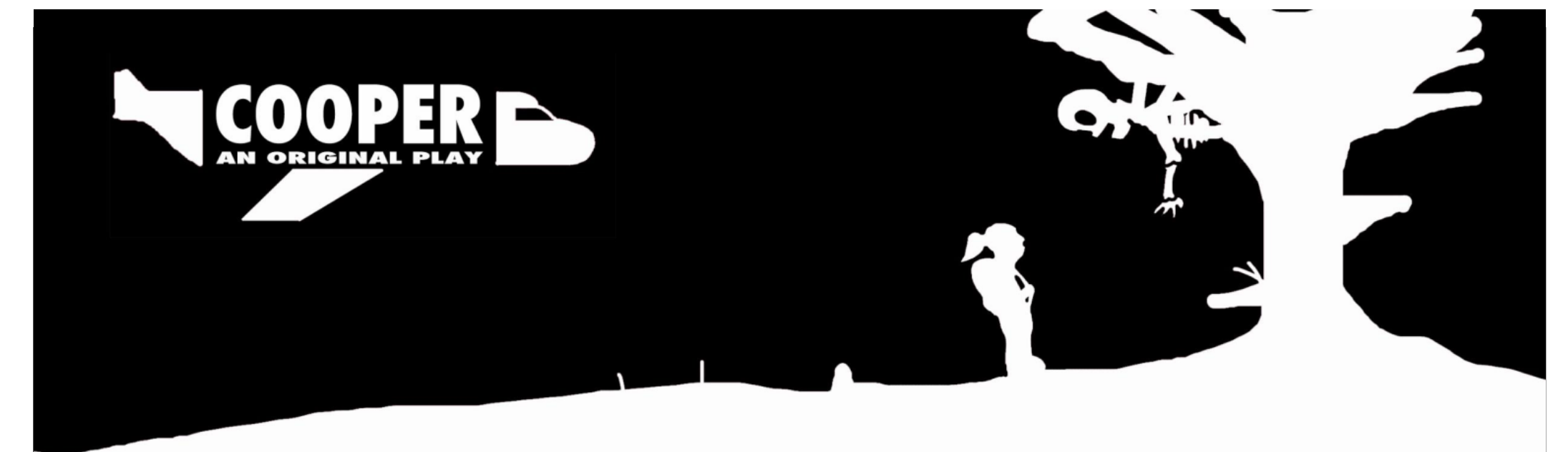
## QUALITATIVE DATA AND OBSERVATIONS

- One could learn through various revisions and edits that the ideal play had a balance between interesting characters and story structure.
- In addition, one must learn to trust their impulsive instincts in writing an hour-long student play. Minimalism in production design and character design must always be kept in mind. One achieves this by retaining a minimal set composition and have most scenes consist of two to four individuals.
- The scene transitions are also important in order to ensure a smooth transition from the beginning to end and to secure that the cohesiveness of the play’s theme.
- The play’s production is much harder than initially anticipated, and it’s necessary to plan for production months in advance.

## WRITING DIALOGUE

Dialogue was definitely a key component of the project, as dialogue was what informed character and structure. There were a few aspects one had to keep in mind throughout the project:

- Character had to be formally realistic while being pronounced enough for the stage.
- Characters that were apparent enough solely through dialogue were vital.
- Design of the story had to be appealing to as vast a demographic as possible, so it must be a easily relatable premise.
- Comedy must be used lightly, like seasoning, in order to preserve the dignity of the story.



## FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future research includes a full-fledged production of the play ‘Cooper’. This includes paid actors, a performance stage, set design and an ideal venue.
  - Additionally, future research includes the production of more plays with more complex stories and manipulations of the story-arc.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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### Works Cited:

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