Learning Objectives

This module aims to provide an understanding of the concepts behind the practical and theoretical applications of stage management. By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand that nearly all stories have common elements (theme, structure/sequence, plot, character/characterization, and narrative style) that are consciously balanced and managed in different ways by the creator, depending upon his/her overarching intention;
- Realize that all of the creative choices in developing a story should be conscious and intentional, not accidental, and that, in an effective story, these creative choices serve to reinforce and enhance the underlying theme of the work;
- Realize that different media have different strengths when it comes to expressing certain story ideas, and that a good story teller will be aware of these differences and use them to make his/her own story more powerful and effective;
- Realize that the entire process of developing a story is a creative endeavor, with relevant choices made at every step of the way, and that a good story teller works in his/her own way to make such choices with awareness and intention;
- Realize that there is no ‘standard method’ for story creation, and that powerful story ideas come from anywhere and everywhere, grow organically, and sometimes take on a life of their own.

Module Coverage

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<tr>
<th>Module Coverage</th>
<th>Allocated time per day (One day-One problem PBL pedagogy)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussions in Study Cluster</td>
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<tr>
<td>(a) Problem 1 explores how stories can be deconstructed into theme, characters/characterization, plot, and structure.</td>
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<td>Learning Issues:</td>
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<td>• What constitutes “a story”?</td>
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<td>• What terminology/jargon have students come across with regards to the principles of story-telling?</td>
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<td>• How can students justify the creative choices in their stories?</td>
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<td>(b) Problem 2 focuses on the importance of characters/characterization in stories, without</td>
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neglecting the other story elements.

Learning Issues:

- What do students understand of “character”, “characterisation” and “character transformation”?
- How would “character”, “characterisation” and “character transformation” relate to stories?

(c) Problem 3 introduces students to the elements of narrative style and points of view, and how narrative style impacts the creating and understanding characters/characterization.

Learning Issues:

- What is narrative style?
- How many types of narrative styles are there?
- What is each type of narrative style used for?
- Which narrative styles should students choose to use in their stories? How does that impact the telling of the story?

(d) Problem 4 focuses on the concept of plot, that it not only consists of a string of incidents/events linked by cause and effect, that it is also connected to the theme of the story.

Learning Issues:

- What is plot?
- What is a subplot?
- What is the relationship between main plot and subplots?
- What are the different plot development techniques?
- How is plot related to the story elements we’ve encountered in previous lessons e.g. character, narrative voice?
- What is the relationship between plot and theme?

(e) Problem 5 introduces students to the idea that story development is generally centered on real-life experience, complete fabrication, or some combination of the two, an essential concept in helping them develop a process for creating original and effective stories of their own.

Learning Issues:
- How can students see and apply daily experiences of life as fodder for effective and meaningful stories?
- How would the students extract from their personal experiences to create a powerful, moving story that is unique and original?
- How would students develop the ability to see the story potential in any life experience, even the simplest?

(f) Problem 6 allows students to discover the importance of the concept of sequence/sequencing in storytelling; to explore visual storytelling, while applying the fundamentals of storytelling that they have learnt in previous lessons; to understand that telling stories through the use of pictures is about being succinct; what is not shown is just as important as what is shown; and to learn that stories can be told with no or minimal words, and that the key to communicating the story lies in connecting with the audience whether through pictures or other mediums.

Learning Issues:
- What is sequence/sequencing?
- What constitutes visual storytelling?
- What is “showing” vs “telling”?
- How could stories, told mainly through pictures, give the intended audience an emotional experience?

(g) Problem 7 introduces students to the process of structuring the events that make up a story as well as manipulation of timeline in story, a fundamental basic in understanding and crafting stories.

Learning Issues:
- What is story structure?
- What are the various ways used to create/analyse story structure? E.g. Aristotle’s unified plot of beginning, middle, end; Freytag’s pyramid structure.
- What are linear (chronological) vs non-linear stories?

(h) Problem 8 looks at the concept of dialogue in stories, in particular the various functions that dialogue serve, regardless of the different story mediums – i.e. dialogue expresses a theme; carries the plot; reveals information

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about character(s), implies a transformation, and helps clarify a character’s transformation.

Learning Issues:

- What is dialogue?
- What are the various functions of dialogue in stories?
- What is good dialogue?
- How is stories told through dialogue?

(i) Problem 9 focuses on the elements of setting and genre in stories, and how these two elements related to each other as well as to the other story elements covered in the module so far.

Learning Issues:

- What is setting?
- What is genre?
- Why are setting and genre important to the crafting of stories?
- How is setting and genre related to the other story elements, i.e. characters, characterization, theme, plot, structure, sequence?

(j) Problem 10 enables students to utilize the principles of myth to create good, effective stories that are dramatic, entertaining and psychologically true. The problem looks at what are myths, how are mythic structures used to create powerful stories, how can students tap into their cultural and genetic inheritance to create effective stories, and what constitute Universal Stories/Themes.

Learning Issues:

- What constitutes a myth? What are the functions of myths?
- What are mythic structures?
- How are myths related to stories?
- How are mythic structures used to create powerful stories
- What are universal stories, universal themes?
- What’s the relationship between universal stories and myths?

(k) Problem 11 looks into the concept of interactivity in storytelling, and how it challenges story elements like plot, structure, sequence and theme. Students will understand that stories have multiple possibilities, and
how they develop is dependent on the choices that their authors make; that the multiple possibilities in stories are not random, but are dependent on story elements such as character/characterization, theme.

Learning Issues:

- What is interactivity?
- How is interactivity related to storytelling?
- What are the characteristics of interactive stories?

(l) Problem 12 examines cinematic storytelling, and focuses on the specific challenges and difficulties in translating stories from a written to a visual medium. This problem also introduces students to proper screenplay formats.

Learning Issues:

- How are screen stories told?
- What are the characteristics of cinematic storytelling?
- What are the various techniques/tools we can use in cinematic/visual storytelling? E.g. mise en scene, visual design, use of sound, images and action etc.
- How is a screenplay structured and formatted? Why?

(m) Problem 13 allows students the opportunity to choose their preferred mediums of storytelling, and to utilize this medium for artistic and creative expression. Students are encouraged to look beyond the conventions and principles of The Art of Story, and if possible to manipulate and mould these conventions according to various artistic forms, i.e. to take artistic and creative risks in their storytelling.

Learning Issues:

- What forms of story are there besides the written form?
- How do the principles of Story vary across these forms/ mediums?
- Are the various story elements equally important in these mediums? Or do some story elements take precedence?

(n) Problem 14 covers the challenge of conceptualizing and starting a story from scratch and empowers
students to create their own stories using insights they have gained so far in this module.

Learning Issues:

- Students learn to conceptualise, plan and start their story from scratch;
- Students learn to explore and experiment beyond the fundamental principles of story construction;
- Students learn to take charge and assume individual ownership of their own stories;
- Students learn to make important creative choices concurrently, establishing narrative style, setting, character, genre, themes, plot, structure, etc.

(o) Problem 15 enables students to learn that crafting the bulk of their story requires consistency, commitment and steadiness; to remain open to improvements as they continue to work on the bulk of their story, leading to the story’s climax; and to analyse their story critically.

Learning Issues:

- Students learn that crafting the bulk of their story requires consistency, commitment and steadiness;
- Students learn to remain open to improvements as they continue to work on the bulk of their story, leading to the story’s climax;
- Students learn to analyse their story critically by addressing the following questions:
  - Can it sustain the audiences’ interest?
  - Does the audience care about the characters?
  - Are there enough stakes for the audiences to be emotionally involved and engaged with the story?

(p) Problem 16 is a continuation of Problems 15. Whereas Problem 14 challenges student’s ability to start on a personal masterpiece, and Problem 15 explores their ability to commit and maintain a level of energy and consistency, Problem 16 is the last step where students complete their stories and put in finishing touches. This is only possible when they have gone through the process of creating and crafting.

Learning Issues:
- Students learn to verbalise the effect of stories on people and the message they are trying to articulate in their story;
- Students learn to establish the importance of ending a story.

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Total = 16 Problems  
= 96 hrs

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