

#STORYTELLINGSHIFT

# ASSESS YOUR STORY'S STRENGTHS

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## **PERSONAL STRENGTHS**

*In each section below, take a moment to describe and evaluate your  
**personal** strengths in each storytelling area.*

### **CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

### **PLOT AND STRUCTURE**

### **SETTING AND WORLD**

## **UTILIZING THE MEDIUM I'M WRITING IN**

**WHICH AREA DO YOU HAVE THE STRONGEST STORYTELLING ABILITIES?  
THE WEAKEST?**

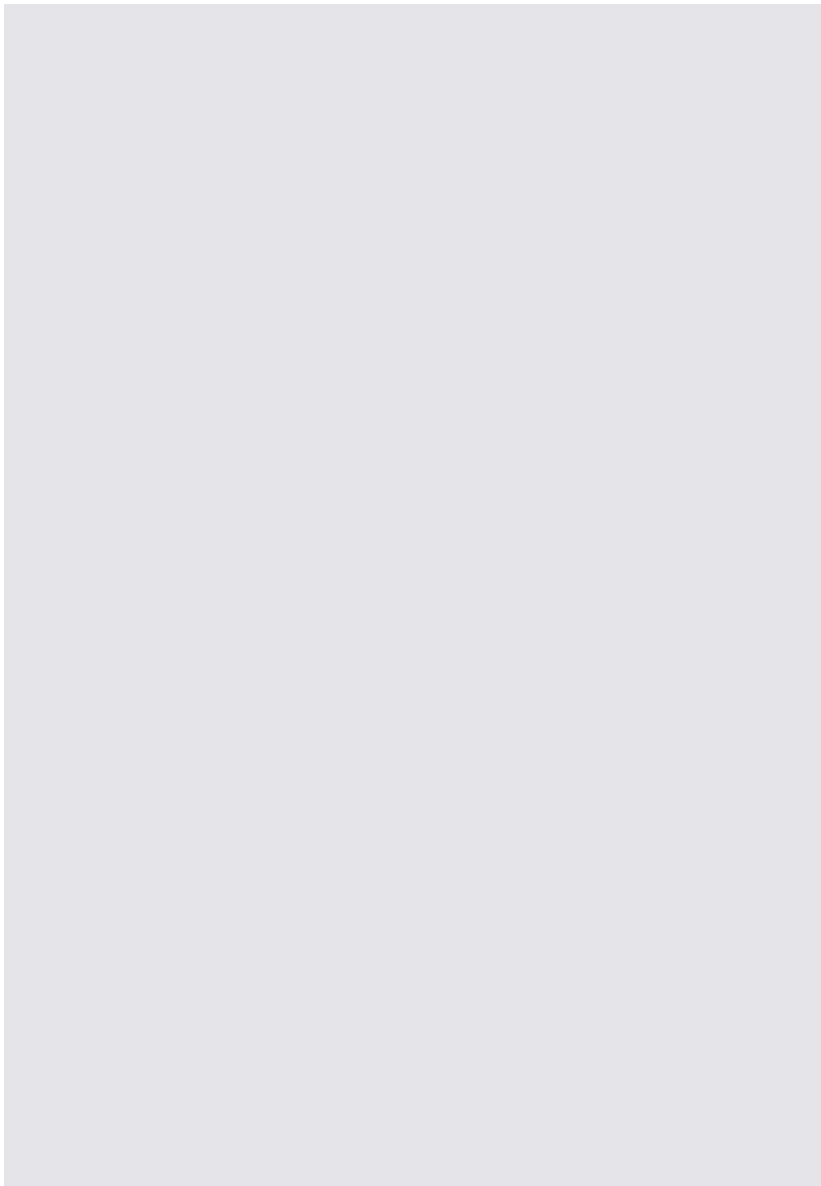
### **STORY STRENGTHS**

*Now that you understand your perceived strengths and self-prescribed weaknesses, you can keep an eye out for your “blind spot” as you assess your **story's** strengths.*

*In this section, you'll be taking notes on your story and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. **Keep in mind that your story's strengths are different than your own personal ones.** Should you start to notice all your story's strengths align with your own personal strengths, you'll want to double check that you are not biased towards or against your own work.*

*Select one story that you have written and evaluate it using the space below as well as the checklist on the side to keep tabs on more specific areas that stand out to you. Do not try to check off everything on the list, but instead use it to further clarify in what area your story is standing out.*

**READ YOUR STORY OUT LOUD.** AS YOU READ IT, WRITE DOWN ANY REACTIONS OR IDEAS YOU HAVE AS YOU READ IT BELOW, AS WELL AS ANY SUB-CATEGORIES NOT LISTED ON THE RIGHT:



**STORY STRENGTHS**

CHARACTER

- INNER CONFLICT
- COMPLEXITY
- CONTRADICTION
- THEME
- IDEAS
- BEHAVIOR
- DIALOGUE

PLOT

- WELL-PACED
- UNPREDICTABLE
- INTRIGUING
- SIMPLE
- COMPLEX
- EXPOSITION

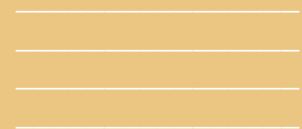
SETTING

- CULTURE
- LORE
- LANDSCAPE
- SOCIETY
- MYSTERY
- WORLD

MEDIUM

- PROSE
- SCREENWRITING
- PLAYWRITING
- VIDEO GAME
- WRITING

EXTRA STRENGTHS



## **WHAT'S WORKING?**

*Looking at your notes from the previous page and your checklist, work through the following questions to further highlight your current perceived strengths in the story.*

**LIST SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MOMENTS FROM THE STORY:**

**WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT THESE MOMENTS?**

**DO ANY OF THESE SCENES EMBODY YOUR PERSONAL STRENGTHS?**

*For every scene or passage, you loved, print it out onto a new sheet of paper or literally cut it out from your manuscript. Now, this doesn't mean omit it from your story, but instead take some time to sit down and analyze why you marked this scene or passage.*

*Work through each scene, one-by-one, jotting down what you think makes the passage strong. Once you're done, compare all your favorite parts and see if there is a common strength you can tap in to. That doesn't mean omitting strong dialogue simply because you have a great plot, but just looking to see what is the majority strength you are moved by in your work.*

*Then, line your story up in order and copy down the story below to see how it feels with all of these parts you love side-by-side.*

## **WHAT'S NOT WORKING?**

*Now, take the parts of the story you didn't cut out, and look over this part of your story. Look to see if there are any parts you've missed that embody the new strength in your story you've found, but also look to see how the story stands up without these strengths.*

*Read the story again without including the parts you cut out in the previous section. If the story seems to be missing that special something, you'll know you've found your strength. If the story still seems to hold up without those special parts you loved, you either are being too hard on yourself when finding the parts you love, or your story is too evenly distributed, meaning you'll need to further develop one or two areas. More than likely one of those areas is the medium you're telling your story in.*

### **WHAT DOES THIS STORY FEEL LIKE WITHOUT THE "STRENGTHS?"**

### **IS THERE ANY PLACE YOU'RE BEING TOO HARD ON YOURSELF?**

**HOW CAN YOU ENHANCE THIS PART OF YOUR STORY MORE TO MATCH THE STRENGTHS YOU DISCOVERED ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE?**

## **BRAINSTORMING**

*While you may think you've determined your medium's strength, you'll want to spend a bit more time imagining the different ways your story can look and how it can feed your medium.*

*After you've found some strengths in your story, I want you to take the time to reimagine your work with and without the different strengths we talked about earlier. This should be pretty easy as you've separated your story now into the strong parts, and the parts that are missing the strengths (though not necessarily weak).*

*For the strong pieces of your story, brainstorm how you can enhance what makes your story better and how you can use the strengths even further. For the weaker areas, try to imagine what different strengths – not the one you uncovered in steps two and three – would look like in your story. For instance, if your strength's are in character, imagine the weak version of your story enhanced by the plot.*



**HOW CAN YOU ENHANCE THE STRENGTHS YOU'RE ALREADY USING?**

**WHAT DOES MY WEAKER STORY SECTION LOOK LIKE WITH DIFFERENT STRENGTHS SURROUNDING IT? (CHARACTER, SETTING, PLOT, & MEDIUM)**

**DO ANY OF THESE STRENGTHS WORK BETTER THAN THE CURRENT ONE?  
(COMPARE THE DIFFERENT STRENGTHS WITH YOUR ORIGINAL ONE)**

**WHAT ARE SOME STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO FURTHER ENHANCE WHAT MAKES YOUR STORY UNIQUE, USING ONE OR TWO MAIN STRENGTHS? DESCRIBE HOW BELOW:**

*Whatever strength your story seems to have – run with it. Do NOT try to have strengths in every area! Sure, you may have a strong story, but in terms of a stand out story, you want one or two areas as the centerpiece. It may seem counterintuitive, but this extreme focus on one or two strengths in your story is what will make it stand out amongst other stories. It's when people spread themselves thin that their work becomes forgettable and loses that special touch that made the story unique.*

*So, focus on what makes your story authentic and powerful. Do not stress about originality, as a creating a truly original story is nearly impossible these days and far less impressive than a story that stands strong using the foundational tools of any great story.*