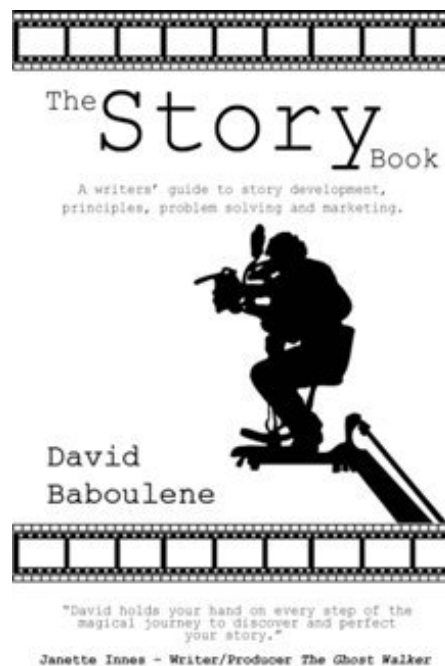




The Story Book: A Writer's Guide to Story Development, Principles, Problem-solving and Marketing

David Baboulene

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Author, scriptwriter, story consultant and Ph.D scholar of story theory, David Baboulene, helps you to understand what makes stories that grip.

With invaluable new thinking on subtext plus insights on story success from:

Bob Gale: Legendary Hollywood scriptwriter and producer of the Back to the Future trilogy.

Lee Child: 16 million Jack Reacher novels sold in 43 countries and 29 languages.

Willy Russell: celebrated playwright and film maker of classics such as Shirley Valentine, Educating Rita, Blood Brothers...

John Sullivan: television comedy writing legend - Only Fools and Horses, Citizen Smith, Just Good Friends...

Simply a must-read for anyone wanting to understand how to turn ideas into stories that sell.

"David holds your hand on every step of the magical journey to discover and perfect your story." Janette Innes - Writer/Producer - The Ghost Walker; Rain...

The Story Book: A Writer's Guide to Story Development, Principles, Problem-solving and Marketing Details

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Rachel says

A fabulous book for those who want to write but want some advice on structure. Baboulene uses clear, interesting examples to make his explanations easier to understand, including a lot of dissection of the Back to the Future films.

If I ever feel I need help with my writing, I know I can turn back to this book and refocus on the main frame of the story.

Andy Luke says

Baboulene's work made me question every aspect of my writing, which wasn't a particularly pleasant set of feelings have, but he did it gently. Using Back to the Future as a meta example, Baboulene pulls everything apart, hold it to the dullest light and keeps the reader entertained while showing how things work. This is a brilliant book. There's also a section of conversations with creatives at the back, with least one proclaiming you spells ignore everything in the book. You know, this was a fun helpful pleasure to read, as to if it was any good, that depends whether I use it on my own books.

Donna Barker says

Best book I've read to support me in editing my m/s. I wish I'd read this book two years ago, before I started my novel. Bought it for my Kindle and will buy a hard copy as well. It's a re-reader and a high lighter of a book.

George Shubin says

Aside from the evolutionist/Freudian claptrap at the very beginning of the book, I enjoyed this book very much. The author clearly has a masterful grasp on the art of the story, and how best to tell one, especially in the form of a motion picture. Using the well known "Back to the Future" as his primary example, he shows how a premise is developed from a simple concept into a detailed outline of the plot with rich characterization.

The main idea the author continually stresses is that the best stories are moved along and conveyed in the subtext, and that the subtext is presented by the use of "knowledge gaps": the character knows something the audience doesn't, or the audience knows something the character doesn't, or one character knows something another character doesn't, and so on. This, he maintains, provides for a more satisfying experience for the audience.

One point the author veers away from that other screenwriting how-to authors seem to stress is "structure". The author says that in beginning to write don't worry about the three-act structure or plot points or other

"mechanical" issues of writing, but to get on with writing the story and being as creative as you can be. Once those juices have been squeezed, you can edit and streamline your story into the structure if need be.

If one is new to writing or struggling with a story, this book is a fine reference for figuring out the problems and how to fix them. I would recommend it as required reading for any aspiring writer.

J.C. Martin says

I've not read many books on writing. To be honest, I have tried, but never managed to complete some of them. Some are too prescriptive, resulting in creative limitations, and many just state the bleeding obvious, much of which is common sense anyway! I find trawling the Internet for tips on writing much more useful.

Having said that, I've really enjoyed David's book. As he is completing a PhD in story theory, he includes in his book some research into the history of storytelling, and the psychology of the reader, which I found totally fascinating! Tips of the trade are gleaned from interviews with the big names of the publishing and film industries, including Lee Child, author of the Jack Reacher novels; Bob Gales, scriptwriter for the Back to the Future trilogy; Willy Russell, the theatre legend who brought us Blood Brothers and Shirley Valentine, to name a few; and Stewart Ferris, MD of Summersdale, one of the leading UK independent publishers.

David's advice on writing is insightful without being too prescriptive, and he constantly gives useful examples from the movies, particularly from Back to the Future. His observations are grounded, realistic, and though the statistics quoted on success rates is a bit depressing, his final message is one we no doubt all subscribe to: write what you love; the structure, subtext, and everything else will come in time.

For a taster of what the book offers, check out David's guest post on my blog: "The Top Ten Tips to Make Stories that Grip!".

originally reviewed on J.C. Martin, Fighter Writer

Michelle Ann King says

A fantastically useful piece of kit. Like 'Save the Cat,' it's primarily geared towards screenwriting but applies equally to fiction generally. It's about storytelling rather than language use, and is mainly concerned with analysis of structure. This material is presented in a very clear and accessible way, complete with examples from Back to the Future, which make it very easy to relate. Also like STC, it's geared towards 'family' films, uplifting ones (like BTTF, and Toy Story) where the hero beats the bad guys, learns a valuable life lesson and ends in a better place than he starts. Which isn't necessarily my cup of tea as a writer (although I take his point, because I do enjoy that kind of film), but the principles can easily be flipped or subverted to make a darker story--which, of course, you can get away with as a short story writer way more than anyone else.

Although Baboulene is at pains to point out that structure shouldn't be the driver or creative force behind a story (rather a means to check and fix problems), I have found that absorbing the principles of structure has made the creative ideas easier to focus and handle. I have found it tremendously useful to build a framework at the same time as I build the story.

I liked the point that character is plot and vice versa (a character's nature makes them do things, which creates plot, and events make them react, which shows character) and the listing of the four main types of conflict (and the idea of triangulating it, by making each choice have both benefits and costs) was also very valuable.

Some writing books I have read seem to have lots of great thoughts but it's not always easy to see how to apply them--this was the reverse: everything here became instantly, practically, usable.

Jeanne says

His theory is that subtext is created through knowledge gaps, things we don't know. He explains the 10 ways it can be created: action, dialogue, promise, questions, subplot, implication, misinterpretation, subterfuge, subconscious aims, metaphor. His take on subtext is quirky but very useful. Recommended for intermediate to advanced writers.

Darren English says

I've read a lot of 'How to Write' books and this is definitely the best. Some new thinking on what makes a story kick ass and a style and approach I really appreciated. Not patronising or 'teaching' really. More all about what makes a story work rather than telling me what to do.

Lots of great interviews with writers and there are examples to make everything really clear.

If you want to write you need to know story. This is the book to tell you and to give you the confidence to do it yourself from there.

Derren

Kerrie McKinnel says

An incredibly useful book for all writers. David Baboulene concentrates on films for examples to illustrate his points, but the advice he gives is equally useful for novel and short-story writers. He takes his time to go through a range of important points, and goes through it all in a good level of detail.

I have taken away some really useful information from this book, and have already found myself going back to it on several occasions to use specific techniques for planning/plotting. This is a book which I will keep returning to in the future. An excellent read.

Tony Riches says

Anyone who wants to develop their story writing skills will want to read this book. That's not the what

author David Baboulene calls the 'log line' that hooks you in - it is my own view after reading The Story Book.

An interesting exploration of the roots of story making is developed through clever and detailed analysis of some unexpected works, such as character development in Toy Story and plot structure in Back to the Future.

David enjoys challenging the reader (yes I fell for most of the set ups), making you want to return to earlier sections and re-read them. If you want to be provoked into really thinking about your approach to writing stories, this is definitely the book for you.

Justin says

To borrow a phrase from our cousins across the pond, "exactly what it says on the tin." Very strong in the story development area, maybe a little light on the marketing aspect. Includes relevant advice for both screenwriters and novelists. I especially appreciated the deep dive on subtext and knowledge gaps as a tool to maintain tension and audience interest. While we're all familiar with the results of subtext and knowledge gaps, Baboulene offers the most intentional analysis of it I've read.

Recommended for all my fellow wannabes.

J.C. Martin says

I've not read many books on writing. To be honest, I have tried, but never managed to complete some of them. Some are too prescriptive, resulting in creative limitations, and many just state the bleeding obvious, much of which is common sense anyway! I find trawling the Internet for tips on writing much more useful.

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originally reviewed on J.C. Martin, Fighter Writer

Rose Marcie says

This is one awesome book. Dave does a great job of explaining the obvious, which surprisingly many stories

lack. While authors may not have put down terms for what they already do, for example, subtext/knowledge gaps, Dave's discussion of the issue forces an analysis of this important element.

Dave's book also helped me realize the degree of conflict one can and should generate should be based off of dilemma (what would the protagonist do when challenged to the core, rather than a hard challenge that does not make the protagonist challenge his/her beliefs)

Awesome Book. Read it.

Niniane Wang says

Talks about characters developing toward self-actualization, subtext through knowledge gaps, and setting up questions to make the reader curious. Need setup (act 1), ending on inciting incident. Then struggle (act 2), where it gets better and then much worse. Finally act 3 is climax and resolution. Empowering philosophy about what makes a writer stand out amongst the thousands.

Ian says

Most how to books for writers cover a whole range of topics. This one is different because, as the title suggests, it concentrates on one thing, the story.

It does this by deconstructing well known stories - mostly Back to the Future - to see what makes them work at both the overall level and at the nuts and bolts scene level. All of this is backed up by interviews with leading film writers, novelists and playwrights.

It's an interesting approach and one which is easy to apply to your own work. Well worth a read of you're serious about improving your writing craft.
