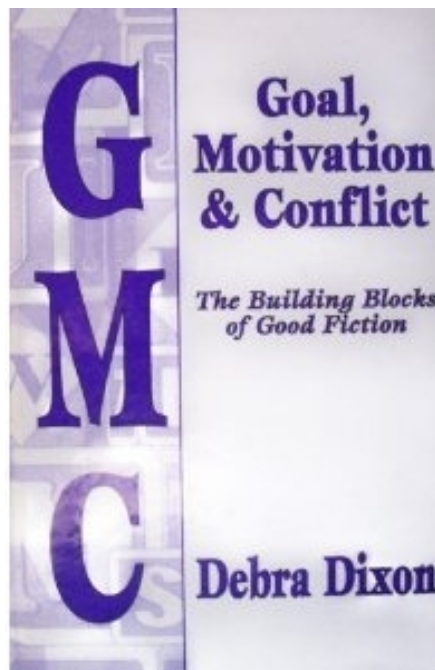




GMC: Goal, Motivation and Conflict: The Building Blocks of Good Fiction

Debra Dixon , Martha Shields (Designed by)

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Goal, motivation, and conflict are the foundation of everything that happens in the story world. Using charts, examples, and movies, the author breaks these key elements down into understandable components and walks the reader through the process of laying this foundation in his or her own work.

Learn what causes sagging middles and how to fix them, which goals are important, which aren't and why, how to get your characters to do what they need for your plot in a believable manner, and how to use conflict to create a good story. GMC can be used not only in plotting, but in character development, sharpening scenes, pitching ideas to an editor, and evaluating whether an idea will work.

Be confident your ideas will work before you write 200 pages.

Plan a road map to keep your story on track.

Discovery why your scenes aren't working and what to do about it.

Create characters that editors and readers will care about.

GMC: Goal, Motivation and Conflict: The Building Blocks of Good Fiction Details

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Chrissy Wissler says

A must-have for any writer. I highly suggest you track this book down and add it to your keeper-shelf.

This book does a fantastic job of breaking down the three core elements to any good story: goal, motivation, conflict.

The GMC chart will force you to work your characters into simple, easy-to-understand concepts that can be used across the board, whether for your protagonist, antagonist or secondary characters. The best part of all is Debra Dixon takes you through this process, step by step. Using well-known movies featuring strong characterization, she helps you transition these exercises into your own work.

I will continue to pull this book out each time I start a new novel, and also as my current work evolves.

There's a reason why so many writers swear by the concepts Dixon presents in this book.

Loren says

Goodreads GMC

Before the 18th century, (& the advent of the novel) stories were much more complicated. They revealed a great diversity of stories within a story, a multitude of characters with back stories in varying depth and precision. They explained various ideas, ideologies and conventional wisdoms. They remarked (often in allegory) on philosophical and metaphysical virtues. They were written poetically; a time intensive endeavor in itself.

To be able to write (as in have the wealth to do so) and write well (as a classical education would afford) was not something everyone was capable of accomplishing. Mere literacy did not dictate the ability of composing a story as our ubiquitous prose narrative of today has argued. The incessant emphasis within commercial fiction to put plot over story has oftentimes deluded the very relevant truth about literature. Life does not neatly end. Alas we are left without many resolutions time and time again. All writing today is innately fantastical in origination to appease the whims of already *zeke market willing to consume the flesh of any story remotely resembling a pulse. Words have in the past and should today be experienced. The mode of style, prose and rhetoric should not be so nauseatingly homogenous. The often cliché and formulaic pieces of which define "plot" should be and often are the bane of any literary artist's attempt at aiding in creating any worthwhile experience.

In the book GMC, the writer equates commercial fiction success with what I consider to be the raping of literature through the act of blasted "plot." Virginia Wolf herself hated this concept as much as I do stating that the novelist is a "slave" to the necessity of selling books and that she longed for a fiction that could be free of "plot, comedy, tragedy, no love interest, or catastrophe." E.M. Forster called the novel in itself a "low atavistic form," for which GMC firmly attests. We are demanding less and even less of our readers by pandering to this accepted ideology propagated by corporate sanctioned "market research." Is it surprising that we suddenly believe that innovation comes from solely corporations and not individuals? We are de-evolving our once well educated minds. We cannot ask more of readers if we ask even less of ourselves. Writers have a responsibility to the public to not simply entertain, but to question, to illustrate and to show. If your answer to the next Great American novel is to compete with the film medium than I have some news for you honey. You've already lost.

Lets talk about film. This book is so incredibly inept that it sees no distinction between the two mediums (it is more a novelist guide to film adaptation if anything). The film industry is dying for the same reason print is dead. People are tired of these idiotic blockbusters that come out weekly. They are DOA. People want stories that have meat, that have substance, not product placements and 3D glasses.

Riddle me this.... Why was the novel Cloud Atlas amazing and the film adaptation total crap?

*zeke - n. zombie

v. to be a zombied

Linguistic origins: World War Z

Jacci says

I loved this book. I wish I'd read it ten years ago. But, better late than never. It is extremely practical in looking at a book or movie or your own story and making it better. I will be re-working my current WIP using this guide.

Holly says

Very basic bare bones information on figuring out your character's goals, motivations and what is keeping them from their goals (conflict). As a new writer who reads many how to write books I find that sometimes too much information just overwhelms me, even if the information is excellent.

Debra Dixon presents the information one step at a time with plenty of examples and very handy charts. She then moves on to the next segment where she ties character goals with motivation.

The book is out of print but I was able to order it through Amazon's used books. I know I will go back to it again and again .

Beth Barany says

I found this book incredibly useful when I was a beginning writer. I like the character development tool of GMC, and I have added three more key components to my character building: Strengths, Fears and Secrets. Dixon also has wonderfully succinct outlines for plotting, which for me -- primarily an intuitive writer -- have been quite useful.

Stephanie Bibb says

GMC: Goal, Motivation, and Conflict does an excellent job explaining its title focus: goals, motivations, and conflict, as well as how to use them effectively within a story. It explains how to structure and develop these concepts, and which types of goals and motivations tend to work best, without overburdening the story with unnecessary conflict. Even if you already have a fairly strong understanding of these concepts from other writing craft sources, *GMC: Goal, Motivation, and Conflict* worked as a wonderful refresher, while still offering new information and examples to expand on familiar ideas. I'm finding it useful in the manuscripts I'm currently working on, and I expect the concepts explained will provide further use in the future.

I'd heard several other authors recommend this book, and it didn't disappoint. If you're looking to develop your stories by improving your characters' interactions, *GMC* is definitely one of the books you should read.

Candace says

GMC is a writing tool for commercial fiction. It answers four questions: who, what, why and why not. Who (Character). What (Goal). Why (Motivation). Why Not (Conflict). This tool charts both the external GMC and the internal GMC. The external GMC is the physical components -- what can be seen, touched, smelled, and heard by the character. The internal GMC is the emotional component -- what is felt by the character. The book also shows how the GMC chart helps with the pitch to an editor or agent. It discusses the query letter and provides a sample letter. Two Appendices are provided. Appendix A lists reference books. Appendix B provides GMC charts of selected movies. Overall, this book is a good resource for beginning writers.

Wendy Bunnell says

Ok, this book is impossible to find except in e-book version now, unless you want to pay cash for a used copy. But, very good. It was recommended to me by a writing friend. That you. Very helpful.

I buy a lot of writing 'craft' books. I very seldom read such books cover to cover, instead I keep them around, hoping I can learn through osmosis or something, and occasionally thumbing through them for inspiration.

I read this book cover to cover in less than 24 hours. I didn't stop reading it, even when I walked on the treadmill. And I took notes.

But, format note - the e-book version on my Kindle, the pictures of the charts are so small they are frustratingly unreadable. Maybe there is a way to get pictures larger on a Kindle, but my Kindle is 100 years old (hyperbole), but seriously, it's the original Kindle, and I cannot for the life of me find a way to make the text of pictures bigger, so these charts were useless. The text talks about what's in the charts, but if you have crap eyesight like I do, um, I don't know what you can do as there is no paperback or hardcover version of this book available for sale through usual sources now.

Now I want to rewrite everything I've ever written to make sure I'm nailing the key characters' goals, motivations, and conflicts. These characters have issues, people . . .

Tina Weaver says

This book is a must for every writer or aspiring writer. Debra's building blocks for writers is spot on. If you want to write a story and have just an incident or a basic idea, ask the questions "What is the goal of the main character? What motivates them to continue toward that goal and what conflicts are preventing the Main Character from reaching it? Every character has these 3 things and once you've established them you have a story.

Sometimes it takes longer to find the GMC but they must be there. I review stories and novels. I made a review

template that includes the questions above. If I can't find the answers to those questions the story better go back to the "typewriter" or keyboard.

Xavier says

Muy bueno para evaluar personajes. Su tabla es muy útil para ajustar una premisa, definir objetivos de los personajes y ubicar huecos en la trama.

Joshua Keezer says

This is a book for writers. At the same time, this book isn't for all writers. I think that this book is going to be extremely useful for new writers who haven't had much experience with establishing characters. For writers with experience behind character building and development, the tool isn't going to be as useful. That is not to say that this book isn't useful. It was. The GMC method has some definite benefits that can help check existing characters and make sure minor characters aren't two-dimensional. I definitely used this book to evaluate some of the characters from my writing.

The book is strongest in the subject of characters. Unfortunately, I found that the book fell short in other areas. I furthermore, found myself yelling at the author in the section of the book on scenes. I found this information vague and misleading. Scenes are complex beasts that, frankly, deserve more time and energy than Debra Dixon gave it.

Magda says

Simply a must read to better understand the writing craft

Goals, motivation and conflict for each character are more complicated and at the same time simpler that you think.

This book is filled with concrete, to-the-point writing rules readily explained by well known story examples. It mostly uses the story of the Wizards of Oz, and in particular talks about the main character Dorothy. To give you a glimpse: Dorothy's external goal is to go back home to Kansas. Her motivation/ urgency to get there is because her aunt is sick. The conflict is that she has to do a number of things in order to return, including stealing the evil witch's broom. All these external elements tie to her internal ones: her internal goal is to find her heart's desire (initially thought it was a serene place with no trouble), her motivation is that she is unhappy now, the conflict is that she doesn't know what she wants. By the end of the book: she realize's there is no place like home...

So there you go! Now these are crystal clear to me. Before reading the book, I could barely see any of this.

Nikki Boisture says

It has really helped me create an outline for my fiction writing. There's nothing in here that I didn't already know, but for some reason, seeing it written down, seeing the process of outlining and creating characters from scratch really helped me. It's August, and I've already begun working on my outline for November's nanowrimo.

LR Braden says

This book was recommended on several separate occasions during a writer's conference I attended last year. I bought a kindle version of it because that's the only format I could find, then promptly forgot about it because I'm way more likely to read a physical book than an ebook. I recently found it again thanks to a happy set of circumstances I won't go into here, and have since read it cover to cover... if ebooks had covers. That in itself gives this book high marks. A lot of craft books are great for reference, but not something you actually sit down and *read*.

Most of the information in GMC was stuff I'd heard at one time or another from seminars, articles, or other books, but it was put together in a clear, concise, easily approachable way that really made it resonate. It's a pretty quick read, offering examples of successful use of GMC in movies as well as some exercises to help you get the hang of it.

The basic concept is that every character should have a chart showing their internal and external goals, what motivates them toward those goals, and what prevents them from reaching those goals. They should also have a sentence or two that explains what they need to learn in order to succeed and their most distinguishing character traits. Dixon writes, and mostly discusses, romance books, but the GMC framework can, and should, be applied to any genre. It's basically a tool to make characters deep, realistic, and memorable, and I think most writers would benefit from having it in their toolbox.

TKay says

As a writer, I consider this the #1 most important 'must read' book for anyone who wishes to write.

As a reader, whenever I read a book that just doesn't quite cut the mustard, I wish the author had read this book and followed its principles. Too many writers fail to understand that conflict is the backbone of an exciting plot; many don't even understand what true conflict entails. This book breaks the character motivation down into its basic components, and provides a no-fail road map to plotting a book that the reader will enjoy.

I recommend this to every writer who wants to improve their writing.

Renee says

I'm inhaling writing craft books left right and centre. This is my favourite so far.

When my critique partner gave me some feedback about clarifying my character's goals, motivation and conflict, she mentioned "there's a book called GMC." Too impatient for an email response for the author's name, I searched GMC on Amazon and found it straight away.

Once I started reading, it made so much sense. I wanted to devour the whole book in one go, but I forced myself to ration it out. I wanted to make sure I absorbed as much as I could. I think, like my critique partner, that I'll reread this book every year as a refresher.

This book gave me an understanding of how to apply goal, motivation and conflict to characters, scenes and the book as a whole. I recommend it to everyone who is interested in writing craft.

Mystique says

A must have for any writer. Deb Dixon explains the essentials to characters, plots, and goals in easy to understand language and with fantastic examples from some of the most popular movies in history.

Rebecca says

I learned about this book from Angela Knight in her "How to Write Erotic Romance" book. It was more than I thought I needed but decided to go ahead and see what it had to offer. I was currently working on a project but after having read this book, I realized that I was floundering in a raft without a compass or oars so I chunked the whole thing and am now working on a new story from the beginning using her worksheets. I see how it makes the story easier to plan and hopefully I'll avoid the "sagging middle" when I realize I've written myself into a corner.

The book was a fast read, tight and coherent and I must say her presentation of the material was solid and easy to follow. Her use of older films as examples will be difficult for younger writers but otherwise it was excellent.

Alex says

Short but extremely relevant. Dixon uses movies to demonstrate her points. Might be more for the beginning writer.

Deborah Leitch says

This book is well worth the read for any author. It highlighted for me the importance of having a goal, a motivation and a conflict not just for the book overall, but for every chapter and every character. The author provides a template to use that is simple and helpful. I have begun to re-work several chapters of a book I am currently working on as a result of the ideas presented in this one. The author uses examples from common stories like the Wizard of Oz to illustrate her message and that tactic works well. The only negative is that the overall message could be given in a single chapter instead of an entire book. Overall however a very

worthwhile read.
