

Crafting A “Big Book,” “High Concept,” and “Same But Different” Story (Revised Cheat Sheet)

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BB, HC, SBD defined: A story that deals with something everyone can identify with and has a built-in audience, but turns that something on its head or gives it a creative twist while also providing a sense of complexity and richness that can continue past one book.

This definition deals with IDEA/CONCEPT:

- 1) RELATABLE
- 2) RECOGNIZABLE
- 3) TWISTABLE

and EXECUTION of the story:

- 4) LAYERABLE
- 5) EXPANDABLE

A story that:

1) deals with something everyone can identify with **(RELATABLE)** **The story touches on a universal concept (intangible) from which you will craft the universal theme of your story.**

What is a Universal Concept?

- A. Universal concepts are issues that have the greatest degree of meaning to the greatest number of people
- B. Universal concepts are intangible resources that almost everyone can relate to.
- C. Not all people will agree on the meaning of or share the same perspective towards a universal concept, but all people will relate to the concept in some significant way.
- D. The way you tell your story tells the reader your position on a universal concept.

E. Examples of Universal Concepts: the redemptive quality of love; the transience of human life; the importance of companionship. Examples of Thematic Assertions: Only by facing our greatest fear can one truly experience the joy in life; Each phase of life is as important as the last; Isolation causes a person’s worst qualities to intensify.

2) and has a built-in audience **(RECOGNIZABLE)** **The story incorporates a current issue/trend/icon (tangible).**

Makes your work desirable to an established group of people. Recent trends in romantic fiction: Paranormal, Erotica, Dark Y.A., small town sweet stories

3) but turns that something on its head or gives it a creative twist **(TWISTABLE)** **The story contains an element of the unexpected, either because 1) irony is**

created in that one element of the story exists in opposition to another; or 2) an element of the story is

unique/has never/has rarely been done before

4) while providing a sense of complexity and richness **(LAYERABLE)** **See below**

5) that can continue past one book **(EXPANDABLE)**

The story achieves continuing interest (i.e., series potential)

Character-based: Characters that are colorful, interesting, engaging; Characters that are in opposition to themselves, each other or preferably both; World-based: A world that raises intriguing social issues/conflicts.

These last two components deal with the “BIG BOOK” part. Being “BIG” doesn’t just depend on page count. Look at things like: high stakes, big characters, complex plot and subplots, unique voice/language, complex world building, ebb and flow, subtext, theme, symbolism/motif, quick pace, page turning, multiple points of view, might be controversial, unique/realistic details