



# Creating a Clear Story Arc from Clever and Careful Construction

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CATEGORY B & BEYOND

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# Story Arc is essential in Prose AND Poetry.

- Story arc is PLOT.
  - Story arc is magnified by NARATION.
  - Story arc is enhanced by DIALOGUE.
  - Story arc is characterized by a change in MOOD.
  - Story arc is shown through a change in TONE.
  - Story arc is underscored through understanding where the CRISIS occurs.
  - Story arc is at its height in building to the CLIMAX.
  - Story arc is completed by how you FINISH the details.
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# Story Arc can be varied in form.

- Linear
    - There is a clear beginning, middle, and end, and it is basically told chronologically in a Linear Arc.
  - Episodic
    - The story is told in a combination of “real time,” “flash-backs,” and “horizontal and vertical jump-cuts” in time
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But how do you do that in a creative way with multiple sources that hasn't been done to death already?

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How do you stay true to the source materials AND show positive change over time, which is the purpose of Category B?

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# Transitions can help to keep the Story Arc clear.

## TEXTUAL

- Excerpts from the source texts
  - Excerpts from related texts not used as source texts
  - Excerpts from pop culture references
  - Excerpts from songs
  - Excerpts from entertainment
  - Repetitions from texts
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## ORIGINAL

- Transitional sentences and phrases you create and use in a limited way
- Characters you create with personas, dialogue, and thoughts in limited ways
- Repetitions from all of the above

Yes, but we've been weaving with and without transitions for a long time.  
What's so new or different about your idea?

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## ORIGINAL TRANSITION EXAMPLE- PROSE

Consider the source pieces  
“characters” or stand-alone entities,  
and create an original mediator or  
moderator with transitional  
statements and questions:

\*A Group Therapist

\*A Teacher/Professor

\*A Drill Sergeant

\*A Parent

\*Yourself

etc

Transitional phrases,  
sentences, and questions are  
original and limited, but  
they are designed BOTH to  
bridge the sources smoothly  
AND to allow them to stand  
as their own at the same  
time, stylistically speaking.

# Two source examples- Prose

- Brothers Grimm Cinderella

*Now, it came to pass in those days that the king ordained a festival to which all the young women were bidden. The king's son would choose the most beautiful among them as his bride. Cinderella's ugly-at-heart step-sisters were chosen to appear, but no invitation appeared for Cinderella. She cried and asked her step-mother if she, too could go to the festival, but her step-,other rebuked her.*

*“What, YOU, Cinderella? In all your dust and dirt? You have no shoes or dress. You cannot dance! HAHAHAH!”*

*But Cinderella persisted in asking until her step-mother strew a dish-full of lentils into the ashes.*

*“If you can find and pick up every, single lentil in two hours, you may go with us.”*

- Politically Correct Bedtime Stories

*Cinderella's legal guardian treated her very cruelly and favored her own two biological children relentlessly, subjecting Cinderella into unpaid, forced labor. However, one day, an invitation arrived at their collective domicile, and the mood changed. The prince was celebrating his coming exploitation of the dispossessed and marginalized peasantry by throwing a party subsidized by tax dollars. Cinderella's non-biological-but-legal siblings began to plan their excessively expensive clothing, used to alter their natural body images to emulate and unrealistic standard of beauty.*

*When the day of the festival came, Cinderella had to help her legal siblings into their ball gowns. It was a formidable task: like forcing ten pounds of processed non-human animal carcasses into a five-pound skin.*

*Next came the immense cosmetic augmentation, which is best not described at all, except to say it was... extensive.*

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In this case, you could create and insert a professor of women's studies, for instance.

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## LEADING QUESTIONS PROVIDE THE TRANSITIONS

The professor of women's studies could start the readings off with a leading question much like a "bell-ringer" or warm-up question.

This question is brief and delivered in the character of the professor, but it is not textual.

- "So class... I would like to start today by asking how you feel our fairytales and bedtime stories have evolved over time, or if you think they have at all. I would like to start with Cinderella."

“We all know Disney has changed things wildly, but let’s start with The Brother’s Grimm version.”

- This sets up the pattern of older vs newer for the rest of the piece.
  - This allows the reader to introduce both pieces independently and yet together within the context of the category.
  - This allows the reader to have at least 3 different styles of voices, not including the characters in the story.
  - The traditional opening lines (Once upon a time...) are read.
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“Next, we’ll hear from James Finn Garner’s version in Politically Correct Bedtime Stories.”

- The reader can choose a different vocal quality here or just read the Garner version as the newer version.
  - This upholds the pattern of older vs newer.
  - The opening lines (Once upon a more enlightened time...) are read.
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Now, the professor asks another leading question or makes a leading statement:

- “I hope we can agree the arrival of feminism and the social understanding of the citizenry have developed since The Brothers Grimm have shaped how we see Cinderella and her circumstances.”
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# As the arc of the story, itself builds, the professor points out important facts to transition

*The king's son came to meet and bow to the beautiful and mysterious young maiden he suddenly and intensely desired. He took her by the hand and danced with her, refusing to stand up with anyone else. And when anyone else came to ask her to dance, the prince only stood still and held her hand tighter.*

*"She is my partner, and my partner, alone."*

**At this point, the professor could ask something like this:**

“Would most modern women put up with this kind of misogynistic behavior today? Do we feel that women have empowered themselves more today as opposed to when The Brothers Grimm originally wrote Cinderella?”

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# “Well, let’s see what Garner has to say:”

*The prince began to stalk his intended prey across the ballroom floor, as his cronies noticed her and started to circle as well. Cinderella was proud of the commotion she was causing, until it became clear it was socially dysfunctional.*

*“Guys, PLEASE! I intend to possess this girl. Move along.”*

*But his friends, taken with the magnetism of this not only physically beautiful but also clearly intelligent woman, found the resoluteness of the prince off-putting too say the least. They began to fight physically and argue, collapsing into a writhing pile of human force.*

*Needless to say, Cinderella was appalled by the whole display, and as she was standing there in disgust, the clock tower chimed midnight, retuning her to her original dirty and tattered rags.*

*Fortunately for all the women there, she was a source of inspiration, and they took off their corsets and every other confining garmets and danced together.*

*Unfortunately for the prince and all the other men, their gross display of testosterone merely ended in their own eventual destruction.*

*Later, it was noted that the women of the realm took over and started repairing everything quickly and efficiently.*

*Cinderella was elected leader, and her first official act was to open a clothing co-op for garments of all sizes and styles. They were made of organic and sustainable materials, and they were comfortable and practical:*

*CinderWear*

*And through self-determination and clever marketing, they all- even the legal family members of Cinderella and the men who refused to fight- lived TRULY happily ever after and free.*

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Don't forget that the transition is to point out positive change over time!

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“Like the characters in Greta Gerwig’s BARBIE MOVIE, I hope we all feel good about taking a step back from patriarchy and toward feminism today.”

- This type of statement both needs to be made in the intro in some way, but it can also be reiterated in the piece by the created mediator character.
  - Make sure positivity comes through naturally and in an unstilted way, rather than as a cliched tag line or a trite slogan.
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# Use your imagination to help make it work!

- This technique helps people who struggle in prose, especially, to jump back-and-forth among pieces, rather than sticking to just one piece.
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# Two source examples- Poetry

SONNET 43- ELIZABETH BARRETT  
BROWNING- "SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE"

*How do I love thee?*

*Let me count the ways.*

*I love thee to the very depth and breadth and  
height*

*My soul can reach,*

LOVE- BEAU SIA

*I think love is the most beautiful thing in the  
world,*

*And I don't care,*

*Because I have no original ideas.*

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Create and insert Cupid asking  
about love poetry, for instance.

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## ORIGINAL TRANSITION EXAMPLE - POETRY

Cupid can open the discussion by welcoming the two characters (in this case, the two poets) and asking each to say what they think or how they feel about love poetry.

The question is delivered in the persona of Cupid trying to figure out what love poetry is and how it works.

- “Hi, friends. It is great that you’ve taken the courageous step to meet me. Welcome. First, I just want to know what you two feel about the concept of LOVE poetry. Do you have any examples?”

“Let’s hear from you first, Beau. You represent modern love poetry.”

I’m a pathetic man

whose goal it is to read poetry

in order to get women to fall in love with him,

and you’d think I was reprimanding myself

and revealing my horrible dark side, but really?

What I was saying is,

“Women who hear this, fall in love with me, or else!”

Because that’s what it comes down to.

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“Okay, wow! So what about you, Elizabeth?”

...when feeling out of sight

For the ends of being and ideal grace.

I love thee to the level of every day's

Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.

I love thee freely, as men strive for right;

I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.

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Here, Cupid could ask a question or point out a pattern in their thoughts and words.

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Here, Cupid could ask a question or make a leading statement:

- “Well, it sounds like Beau and his modern idea of love is pretty different from Elizabeth and her Victorian ideas, so let’s keep unpacking this and see where it takes us.”
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“Where do we go from here? Is love in love poetry still a thing?”

They say Cupid loved the show “My So-called Life,”  
and when the show was cancelled,

Cupid cried and cried, and cried and decided that he was going to MESS UP  
ALLLLLLLL of humanity,

and this is why China has trouble with its birthrate  
and Iraq is Iraq,

and the fat lipo-suctioned out of California  
could be its own island.

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“Hey, I never even WATCHED  
TV, Beau.” - Cupid

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“I feel like Elizabeth and I are closer on definition, maybe? What do you say, Liz?”

I love thee with the passion put to use

In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose

With my lost saints.

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“I’m hoping maybe Beau has a romantic thought in there somewhere. Right, Beau?”

Yeah.

This isn’t a poem about geography!

This is a poem about LOVE!

I’m sorry.

I’m just that way.

I just want to be in a perfect world with our two perfect children:

Helga and Lamar.

But maybe I shouldn’t have said this.

I think I’ve begun lying in this poem.

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“Do you feel your thoughts are more real,  
Elizabeth?”

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose

With my lost saints.

I love thee with the breath,

Smiles, tears, of all my life: and, if God choose,

I shall but love thee better after death.

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“Not so much, huh?”

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# “So, Beau. Do you think you have a good answer to Elizabeth’s poem on love?”

I was hoping to talk about love for a few minutes, and then come to a conclusion,

Somehow defining love within the poem,

But really?

I don’t have any answers, and I’m looking for help from anyone,

Because I feel stupid without anyone to hold me,

And maybe that’s sentimental,

But also?

What’s wrong with sentimental?

I just need LOVE!

You see.

All I’m saying is

“Someone LOVE me.”

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Then, Cupid can come to a logical, positive conclusion:

“It sounds like at the end of the day, Beau’s idea of love poetry in the modern world of slam poetry has more reality and grit than Elizabeth’s Victorian ideals. Neither is right or wrong, but Beau’s style feels more honest, and that’s important in the world today. Thanks, friends.”

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**WARNING:** Just be careful you don't say or do too much as the persona or that the character you create and insert takes over too much. Keep true to transitions and tie-ins.

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# Pros and Cons of this style of Arc construction:

- Pros:

- The transition between the various pieces of literature is clear and defined.
- The arc can follow the natural arc of the source material, if there is one.
- A comparison/contrast system feels logical to develop.
- The format doesn't have to be a strict compare/contrast, though.
- The voice/physicality of the "mediator" you create adds layers to the performance.

- Cons:

- Possibly cumbersome in the mechanical usage.
  - Lack of a "natural arc" to sources, can tempt the speaker to make the created mediator say/do too much to make it work.
  - You may want to do more than just compare/contrast (which is possible but more difficult.)
  - Adding another character can muddy the waters too much.
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# Just remember:

- Be creative.
  - Let the poems “talk” to each other.
  - Let the new character “talk” to the poems.
  - Stay true to the source material.
  - Stay true to the author or poet’s intent and themes.
  - Don’t let the new character take over and become a whole new source.
  - Pull it all back around to the positive change created over time.
  - You can use up to 4 sources in prose and up to 6 in poetry.
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# In this style of Story arc delivery, the intro is incredibly important in communicating the device to the audience.

- Your intro should explain a bit about the device you have created to make the point in the program.
  - You don't have to give the point away in the intro, but you do need to say what the focus is.
  - The character, whether fictional or nonfictional, should be introduced by name of function.
  - Don't forget all the other things your intro must shall and should have, too.
  - Ex: "We take a seat in a lively group therapy session of fairytale characters..."
  - Ex: "Love poetry has evolved over time..."
  - Ex: "Cupid leads a discussion about modern love poetry featuring the Victorian poem "Sonnet 43" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the slam poem "Love" by Beau Sia, including original transitions posed by Cupid to keep the conversation moving..."
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Questions, concerns, ideas?

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Best of luck to you all this year!  
Let me know if you need me!

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