

Scenes as Building Blocks

I feel that three scenes are the beginning of complexity; two scenes give you two ends of a thread, but the third is when you begin to make loops and knots. Scenes are the building blocks of stories, and in this exercise I tried to focus on combinations of three scenes.

We begin a story in one scene (usually one or two pages) that we created in rough draft form for a homework assignment. In class, each scene is given to another student to add a second scene. The original student takes the two scenes (one created by him/her and a second created by another student) and adds a third scene to that. Thus their stories begin to build in complexity in ways they probably wouldn't have envisioned when creating the first scene.

This assignment was surprisingly successful. I had imagined everyone would be proprietary with their stories and resist the directions other students pushed them in, but it resulted in some good work. Most stories felt like strong beginnings when we finished; the stories could go on and be fascinating. It threw some great kinks into an otherwise solid assignment, an occasion that most of the kids rose to in adding their third scenes.

-- Contributed by Tom Hart