

Identifying Your Life Movie Script (Part 1)

The best way to identify the story you tell of your life is to imagine it as a movie. Your life story is the narrative you tell yourself and others about what happened in your life, what that means, and who you are as a result. Your Life Movie, on the other hand, is the vision you see of yourself—in your own mind—often as memories. Your life movie follows a similar structure to a movie, including a plot with a background story, climactic scenes, and a main character. Below is part 1 of this activity. It will help you see what story you tell about your life the way you tend to tell it to yourself and others now. Then, you will rewrite your story the way you WANT to tell it.

2 important things to know about Your Movie:

1. You are constantly, actively writing and directing your film.
2. Your Movie becomes Your Life.

*****Use the space below the questions to brainstorm your ideas, rather than trying to write neatly or making it sound “story like”. Then, use the summary boxes to write short summaries telling your story.*

The Beginning: The Background Story

All stories have a beginning. Your story begins just like any other: with a foundation of who you are, where you come from, and what is happening. You can start at birth or later into your childhood.

What are the defining characteristics of the main character’s “beginning,” such as where they were born, the situation their parents lived in, their cultural background etc?

What are the defining characteristics of the main character’s personality and behaviors?

Introducing the Star of the Show: You!

You are the **main character** in this movie, and your character plays many “roles”. A **role** is a set of behaviors you act out during certain situations. For example, you may be a parent, but you are also a child, a friend, an employee or manager. The roles you play may be parts of your identity or lifestyle, such as being a “helper” or a “teacher”. For each of these roles, you have a certain “script” that you follow—or act out—based on your beliefs regarding how you think those roles are supposed to be played.

Make a list of the roles you play in life. Then, for each ask yourself:

- How are you are supposed to act in that role?

- Where did you learn the role? Who did you see playing the role?

MAIN CHARACTER’S BACKGROUND STORY: In one paragraph, summarize the characteristics of the main character and the background story.

Rising Action: Important Scenes

In a short story or movie, there is always series of important scenes called the “rising action”. This is where the character faces conflict, problems and excitement. In this activity, you will determine 2 types of rising action scenes; those that repeat and those that are important.

Important Scenes: There are experiences in life that define your story. These scenes may be pivotal moments or plot twists. *(Note: the next section is “the climax.” Feel free to brainstorm climatic scenes here and then further identify the “climax” in the next section.)*

What are your most influential or important scenes?

Repeated Scenes: Often, there are scenes from your past that you replay in your mind over and over again. These are important to identify.

What scenes from your past do you replay frequently (positive and negative)? These can also be situations that you have experienced multiple times, such as patterns that keep repeating.

Summarize the movie's timeline of rising action.

The Climax

All stories have a climax—a point in the story in which the main character faces their darkest moment, worst challenge, or biggest breakthrough. It's a turning point. In your life movie, you may have MULTIPLE climatic scenes. This goes beyond simply being “important”—they are LIFE CHANGING.

What is the climax of your movie? (Remember, there CAN be more than one. Also, ultimately, these are scenes that have ALREADY happened.)

Summarize the movie's climax in 1 paragraph Summarize the movie's timeline of rising action.

The Current Story

Traditionally, when a story reaches its climax the main character resolves the conflicts, makes a decision, and the crisis ends. It's called "Falling Action" or "Winding Down". However, in your life movie, you may not have yet have resolution. You may not even have a clearly identifiable

Falling action (if applicable):

Identify scenes that are currently happening at this point in the movie (a.k.a. your present life experience). What is happening? Who is in your scenes?

Summarize the current scenes and/or falling action in one paragraph.

The Ending

The last section of any story, of course, is the ending. This is where loose ends are tied up and final resolutions are made. However, in this case, your movie does not have a definitive ending, but rather it ends with a "to-be-continued" preview of what is to come. So your movie's ending will be the story of your *future*. It is not meant to be "this is how the story ends" it's meant to be "this is how the story continues.

How do you see the story unfolding? What's next? What does the main character do?

What scenes to you expect to unfold?

Summarize the ending in 1 paragraph.

What’s the Overall Plot?

The plot of your movie tells the “story” of what happened to the main character, how their experiences unfolded and how it lead him or her to the current scene. It’s a summary of “what this story is about”.

Is your movie a comedy, a tragedy, a suspense, a drama?

How did the life experiences in the important scenes impact or change the main character?

Is your story one of bravery and perseverance, leading you to your current state of success and fulfillment? Is your story one of being the victim of an unfortunate life in which you had bad luck, got the short end of the stick, or were mistreated by others? Or, is your story one of boredom and lack of fulfillment, letting fear of other people’s judgments keep you from living the life of your dreams?

What is the “storyline” of your movie?

Important Things to Consider About Your Movie

You are the one who both writes your screen play and directs every scene. This includes the scenes from your past. “How,” you might ask, “did I write the script for the ways I was mistreated as a child or the unfortunate circumstances that happened to me as an adult? I didn’t have control over them and I certainly would not have chosen them.” What is important for you to know is that THE PAST HAPPENED, yes, but it is over – it no longer exists. The movie scenes you play in your mind or simply memory traces in your brain. And the story you tell about your past are just stories. For this reason, you are 100% responsible for your movie.

Your movie and your story create the life you live, not the other way around. Your life experience may have been what inspired the story you tell, but it cannot impact your future unless you continue to tell the same story. If you tell yourself or others that you are a certain way, you will act accordingly. If you tell yourself or others that certain things are going to happen to you, they will. There may have been things that happened “in the past” that you have included in your story, but what you tell GOING FORWARD is what is going to determine how your story will continue to unfold.

Reflection questions:

Who else do you let write scenes in your script?

Is your story the one you want to be telling? If not, what would you change?

Can you see any ways that telling your story limits you?

