

But Therefore Story Template

Use the prompts to outline your own film. Add or remove sections to suit your project. The worked example follows the blank worksheet.

Project _____ Writer _____

Starting situation

What does your character want or attempt?

BUT

What blocks the plan or changes the situation?

THEREFORE

What action follows because of that complication?

BUT

What new obstacle makes that action harder?

THEREFORE

What decisive response moves the story forward?

Worked film example

Back to the Future (1985)

Inspired by Trey Parker and Matt Stone's cause-and-effect advice. Original Cineview worksheet and film interpretation; spoilers follow.

Starting situation Marty wants to get home after arriving in 1955.

BUT His interference threatens his parents' relationship.

THEREFORE He must help them fall in love.

BUT Time is running out to repair history and return home.

THEREFORE He coordinates the dance and Doc's return plan.

How to use the worksheet

Write the beats plainly. Describe each beat as a specific event or decision. Leave out dialogue and decorative detail at this stage.

Choose the connection. Use "but" for a reversal or obstacle and "therefore" for a consequence or response. Explain the actual connection.

Repair weak links. If two events only connect with "and then", look for the missing motivation or cause. Keep deliberate pauses when they serve the film.

References

Back to the Future — Official production notes

<https://www.backtothefuture.com/movies/production-notes-1985>

Trey Parker and Matt Stone teaching excerpt

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGUNqq3jVLg>

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