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DREAMFORGE

Scene Building with Immersive Elements The Five-Fold Passage

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What's a Passage?

A Passage can be defined as a section of text within a scene that has a focus on a specific action or description. We could also call it a sequence or a segment.

The way I'm using it today is in the sense of a continuous sequence of 5-7 paragraphs (appox.) that could be a complete scene or a part of a larger scene.

And because "Five-Fold Passage" sounded better than "Five-Fold Segment," which might be more classically correct.

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Classical Scene Writing Concepts

A Section of Text That:

- Advances the plot, reveals character, or creates conflict.
- Has a 3-part structure
 - Beginning: Establishes setting, characters, and scene's purpose
 - Middle: Delivers a key action or conflict
 - End: Resolves the conflict or creates a hook for the next scene
- Uses dialog to reveal emotional states and personality
- Has a pacing that is appropriate to the scene's intensity
- Maintains a consistent Point of View (POV)
- Aligns with and supports the main theme of the story

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The Five-Fold Passage

Salting the Scene with Immersive Qualities

1. Vision
 - What does the Viewpoint Character in the Scene see?
2. Extra-Ocular Senses
 - Sound
 - Touch
 - Smell
 - Taste
 - Pressure, Vibration, Sickness, Pain, etc.



The Five-Fold Passage

Salting the Scene with Immersive Qualities

3. Emotion

- Excited
- Threatened
- Happy
- Overwhelmed
- Sad
- Bored
- Angry

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The Five-Fold Passage

Salting the Scene with Immersive Qualities

4. Perceptions and Awareness (Cognitive, Physiological, Intuitive, or Social)
 - Introduce a perception made by the viewpoint character.
 - Cognitive: Character thoughts about the scene that is unfolding around them, including memories, judgements, and predictions
 - Physical: racing heart, sweating, shivering, fatigue
 - Reading Others: Sensing the emotions and intentions of others
 - Social: Body language, facial cues, power dynamics, tension, and alliances
 - Environmental: Noticing layout, ambience and atmosphere, as well as changes in the environment like weather, lighting, noise, etc.

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The Five-Fold Passage

Salting the Scene with Immersive Qualities

5. Plot Step (aka Story Beat)

- A plot step is a specific moment or event within a scene that represents a key point in the narrative, contributing to the progression of the story. Plot steps can be within or without of the viewpoint character's perception. It is an occurrence, a character action, a thought, a desire, or some other bit of business that sets a connection to the following passage, often drawing the reader on to the next scene or passage.
- Classic Story Beats include: Inciting Action, Conflict Introduction, Emotional Reaction, Revelation, Decision Point, Climax, Resolution

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Well That All Sounds Complex...

Really, we're just going to do a few simple things to make sure the scene we write is more engaging than it otherwise might be.

Let's give it a try...

Example with All 5 elements:

The sea merged calmly into the coral atolls and white sandy beaches of Kiritimati. A single, dark channel led into the vast docks of Christmas Island, where a battered old cruise ship had just begun the final leg of its journey.

VISION

The air carried the musk of coconut palms and the scent of mangroves, along with smells of roasting breadfruit and grilled bananas

EXTRA OCULAR (scent)

"You'll want to keep these people apart," said the man beside Officer Teanako Teika. He towered over her, casting an uncomfortable shadow. "They've had military training: handling weapons, taking orders. In groups, they'll start organizing."

PERCEPTION

The man, a marshal named Rawlins, was on loan from the Western Territories. His presence made Teanako uneasy.

EMOTION

"These are civilians?" Teanako asked.

"Yes, but they've been underground their entire lives. They're a little... different."

PLOT STEP

Example with Less Elements:

When Walter Clarke arrived at Los Alamos National Laboratory, the atmosphere brimmed with excitement and breakthrough. You could see it in the faces of the “lab rats” as they scurried down corridors and cornered one another with interdisciplinary questions and the fine points of one calculation or another.

Of course, Walt had been flown in to write the story. It wasn't for a newspaper piece or a podcast, nor the first draft of a documentary, nor a speech the President might one day give. No, Walt had been chosen to write History with a capital H.

It didn't happen overnight. Selecting a scientific historian was almost as daunting as the Big Project itself. A selection committee of senior scientists, administrators, and various experts in history and ethics had been working on the assignment for over a year.

The Records Committee had spent months deciding on selection criteria, including expertise in relevant scientific fields, neutrality and objectivity in reporting, a proven track record of documenting scientific history, and, of course, the proper security clearances.

VISION & EMOTION

PERCEPTION

(Exposition)

Example with Less Elements (continued):

In Walt's case, he had an in. The Laboratory Director was an old friend, a colleague. Dr. Dermot Moran had started circulating Walt's name early. More than a decade before, they had labored together, shoulder to shoulder and back-to-back through a long Antarctic winter, uncovering, recording, and the keeping secrets of Operation Cold Reach. That was the big breakthrough into Lake Vostok, Earth's most famous subglacial lake. Buried beneath the East Antarctic Ice Sheet, two and half miles down, Lake Vostok had been sealed off from the biosphere of Earth over 25 million years.

(Exposition)

There was only so much the public would ever learn, learn of the Chemolithoautotrophs, radiotrophic fungi, and symbiotic biofilm communities. And not a word about the silicon-based things clawing their way across the bedrock beneath 1,300 feet of water so pressurized that its freezing point had been depressed well below 0 degrees Centigrade.

PLOT STEP (maybe)

Example (one more):

For Kai, exploring the ruins at dusk proved exhilarating, the most exciting time. There was little to see and everything to be felt. The winds in the heights both sang and subsided, making the tower beneath him vibrate slightly. To his ears it seemed a kind of music, at once improvisational and yet as regular as a man's breath.

Above, the new moon shone brightly, a crescent embracing a shadow, with city lights just becoming visible through the crystal air, twinkling in the rilles and craters of the lunar dark.

The moon was not the only place he expected to see lights as day turned to night.

"Over here, Dom," Kai said gently, letting the breeze take his voice across the short span of the ancient terrace.

"There you are," a familiar voice whispered from the shaft Kai had ascended earlier, its door held open by a loose stone. "Sure it was me, huh?"

EMOTION

EXTRA-OCULAR (vibration/sound)

VISION

PERCEPTION

PLOT STEP

Example (one more - continued):

Both voices were young, conspiratorial, and invincible at once.

(Exposition)

"You glow in the moonlight, bruv. Face like a white witch moth." Kai tapped his glasses, indicating he had seen Dom in the corner of one lens.

VISION

"We could be sent back to the ship for this," Dom mused. "Under guard."

EMOTION (uncertainty/ confidence)

"Nah. Captain likes initiative. Did you bring it?"

The newcomer to the roof grunted as he hefted a cloth covered object and brought it over to Kai. Together, smooth white hands and tattooed black ones pulled away the coverings to reveal the ship's telescope and tripod.

EXTRA-OCULAR (physical exertion)

Kai smiled. "Now, for taking this, we get sent back to the ship. Under guard."

PLOT STEP

Your Turn – Design a Scene

We don't actually have to write the scene today, but you could do that as an exercise later if you wish.

But let's design the scene by planning what's going to happen and how we're going to make sure a few immersive elements are added.

5-Fold Elements:

VISION

EXTRA-OCULAR SENSES

EMOTION

PERCEPTION

PLOT STEP

Your Turn – Design a Scene

Fantasy: A lone traveler enters an ancient forest known as the Whispering Woods, where the trees are said to hold the memories of past ages. Ahead lies a well-worn path.

Science Fiction: Botanists step onto the surface of an alien planet, Ventara-7, for the first time. The landscape is dominated by towering crystalline structures. Strange flora cover the ground.

Horror: An abandoned mansion stands at the edge of a dying wood. A child has gone missing, and three searchers have been tasked with making sure they have not been trapped in the decaying structure.

VISION

EXTRA-OCULAR SENSES

EMOTION

PERCEPTION

PLOT STEP

Your Turn – Design a Scene

Texture of moss as they step on it, soft and spongy, but don't sink deeply into it.

High pitched whistle of wind through the towers, hard to hear through.

A smudge on the outside of the helmet's visor.

Different hues for the plants other than green.

Long shadows cast by the towers.

The way the crystals refract light

the suit's filters didn't quite filter out the mushroom smell of the environment.

Sonic reverberations/vibrations detected by their suits/equipment, coming from the crystalline structures.

Physical difficulties due to heavier gravity?

The crystals would not just cast shadows, but shadows with refracted spots of light within them (caustics), like the shadow of a glass on a table.

Are the crystalline structures natural formations, like an outgrowth of quarts, or artificially constructed?

VISION

EXTRA-OCULAR SENSES

EMOTION

PERCEPTION

PLOT STEP

Your Turn – Design a Scene

Emotion: sense of wonder on stepping onto the planet. Worry. Anticipation.

Did I land on the wrong planet.

Oh no, not again.

We're being watched.

Perception: are the crystal towers natural or organic.

Whatever reason they are there, they were sent there to analyze for mining, but they realize this is something different.

Plot step.

Perception/plot step: the building blocks of the universe were just a mile away from their grasp in those crystalline structures. It would be a long walk.

Radio communication with their mother ship cuts out.

Darren, you roll a 3. You are quite sure everything is fine here and nothing is going to eat you.

Physical difficulties due to heavier gravity?

When stepping on a plant, you hear something say "ouch" in your earpiece.

Their ship starts to sink into the ground behind them.

A delegation of robed gnome-like creatures appear from out of hole in the ground.

VISION

EXTRA-OCULAR SENSES

EMOTION

PERCEPTION

PLOT STEP

Your Turn – Design a Scene

Imagine a Scene and what immersive elements could bring it to life.

VISION

EXTRA-OCULAR SENSES

EMOTION

PERCEPTION

PLOT STEP

Your Turn – Design a Scene

Imagine a Scene and what immersive elements could bring it to life.

VISION

EXTRA-OCULAR SENSES

EMOTION

PERCEPTION

PLOT STEP

THANK YOU!

AS ALWAYS, YOU'VE HELPED US BUY SOME STORIES, AND WE HOPE YOU'LL VISIT DREAMFORGE TO READ THEM!

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