

OUTLINE & RESEARCH MATERIALS

Developing a detailed outline will help you to imagine your story as it will actually be — not just happy intentions anymore, but actual *stuff*. **Your outline is not just for you. It is for your project group and your faculty.**

Th i n k of it as a storyboard where you envision your story as **distinct, purposeful, and meaningful** scenes.

Below is the required format for your outline. To begin, we **recommend** using notecards:

- Write down every idea you have for scenes, interactions, events, conversations, etc.
- Use the card-making process as brainstorming.
- Take creative research notes on cards when you've hit on a phrase, setting, character trait, or fact that might be in your story...

For instance, a card might read:

Luther nails his theses on the door of the church in the middle of the night. He is worried about someone seeing him and worried that no one will see him. He wants to feel guilty and terrible and also be a revolutionary. Sneaky and bold at once.

OR

Luther is short and thick. The muscles in his skinny arms are twisted desperate maple branches, grotesque beneath his pale skin. His back is scarred and calloused with lashes.

OR

Luther wore a hair shirt most of his life and slept on the rough stone floor under his window. He was afraid of the dark.

You would arrange each card with many others to begin to see how your story builds and moves, what scenes are needed, which can be blended together, how you get from one thing to another, and so on.

Then, you would translate each piece into **outline sections**, as below.

[see the website under week "6" or "final project" for a downloadable sheet of outline forms--print as many as you need or make copies.]

REQUIRED OUTLINE FORMAT:

Section or Scene Title:	Approx. Length:
Setting:	Important details of setting:
Principal Character/s:	
Purpose (what it shows and does):	
Description of action:	
Research:	
Notes	

R e s e a r c h M a t e r i a l s

1. Revised Annotated Bibliography, at least five items. No more than 2 of the 5 may be web-based.
2. Identified work of fiction about the same time, place, sort of characters. Ideally with the same kind of narrator/perspective and form.
3. Identified significant pieces of writing directly from the period by personages identical or similar to your principal characters.
4. 10 Research questions & 5 Rich Questions relevant to your project as it is at this stage.

e x p l a n a t i o n s

Section or Scene Title—Circle “Section” or “Scene.” Provide a meaningful title for the section or scene. A “scene” should be thought of as an actual event that happens over time. This can be a character sitting alone in the dark thinking about his plight or two characters duking it out on the moon. A “section” is somewhat ambiguous; it is anything that is not clearly a scene. Perhaps a long stint of narration that jumps around, summarizes, or does just about anything except describe a “real time” sequence of character activities. Your title should be meaningful to you AND to your group AND to your faculty reviewing your outline.

Approx. Length—The length of the scene or section. This is to give you and your reviewer an idea of the duration of the section/scene described and give you a chance to imagine the work you have ahead of you.

Setting—the specific place in which each *scene* will take place and, whenever possible, the place that the *section* is concerned with.

Important details of setting—any aspect or object or quality or part of the setting that is important to the scene/section, the kind of thing that would be described by the narrator or noticed by characters, or perhaps held, used in battle or to commit suicide, or the location of the sun, for instance.

Principal Character/s—who? ...exactly.

Purpose (what it shows and does)—This is important. What a scene shows is usually going to be something about the characters or the setting. What it does is usually something plot or theme related. So, a scene might *show* a character’s mental state as she feels the overwhelming urge to pick up an axe and hack into her father’s spinal column. What it *does* is establish the animosity between her and her father and indicates perhaps a little instability on her part. It makes the reader suspect that something violent is going to happen, puts them on edge a bit, and gives pretext for the carnage to come.

Description of action—notes about whatever is happening in the scene. Even if the character is a smooth egg-shaped identity-less being in a completely black pit, you still must consider the action that happens in the process of description and narration.

Research—What research sources, notes, info, or needs does this scene suggest? Don’t be redundant here. Think only of what is unique to the scene.

Notes—anything else that would help you or your reader to understand your work.