

# Subplots

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## ***Supporting Characters are People Too (10 minutes)***

A sure-fire way to guarantee that there is enough action in your novel to fill the pages, meet your word count, and keep your readers reading is to add subplots starring your supporting characters. Just like your protagonist and antagonist, your supporting characters have dreams, fears, and weaknesses of their own.

If your protagonist wants to travel to Chicago for the freestyle hip-hop competitions to fulfill his dream of becoming a performer, perhaps his best friend wants to become a chef and is coming along for Chicago's world-famous, five-star restaurants.

1. Who is your most important supporting character?
  
2. What does your most important supporting character *want more than anything in the world*?
  
3. What is your most important supporting character *most afraid of*?
  
4. What is your most important supporting character's *greatest weakness*?

## ***What is a sub-plot? (10 minutes)***

A subplot follows a supporting character on his or her own journey to get what he or she wants.

Subplots may interweave with the main plot, but they do not need to have much to do with the main character's journey.

1. List some supporting characters and their subplots from your favorite books:

Refer to the questions that you answered about your supporting character as you continue writing your novel. You can add subplots to your novels for as many supporting characters as you like by answering those questions for each additional character. Remember that whenever you feel like your main plot is slowing down, you can explore a subplot.

*Subplots involve the supporting characters going after something they want. They may include the protagonist, but sometimes the protagonist has little to no connection to the subplot.*

## *The More Plots, the Merrier (15 minutes)*



Watching TV is a great way to learn about subplots. Shows like *The Simpsons* are filled with them. Episodes aren't always about Homer or Bart. Lisa, Marge, and even Maggie have adventures of their own that weave in and out of the main plot line. For this reason, we would like you to take a break from noveling and watch some TV. Don't get too excited though. You're not totally off the hook ...

**You have to choose a fictional show—meaning no reality-TV shows—and it can't be a show you really like. Otherwise, you will get too lost in the episode to pay attention to the assignment. Which is to sit down in front of the tube, put your thinking cap on, and write down answers to the following questions:**

1. Who is the protagonist?
2. How many supporting characters are there?
3. Who are the supporting characters?
4. How are the supporting characters related to the protagonist?
5. What are the subplots?
6. Do the supporting characters have their own antagonists or are they also battling the protagonist's antagonist?
7. In what ways do these subplots make the show more exciting to watch?

As you probably noticed, within the main plot of the show, the writers have inserted several minor plots involving the supporting characters. Now that you know about your supporting characters' hopes and fears, you can add subplots to your own story.

Anytime you feel stuck or bored with your protagonist, go see what your supporting characters are up to. You can totally switch gears and follow their journeys whenever you'd like. Maybe they'll run into your protagonist, maybe they won't. No matter what happens, we promise that all kinds of unexpected things will unfold each time you explore a subplot.