

## Assignment 1: The Two Plots

*There are only two plots in the entirety of literature:*

- 1) *A person goes on a journey*
- 2) *A stranger comes to town*

*—attributed to Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, John Gardner, and others.*

### Description:

A lot of people have said this about stories, that an entire plot can be reduced down to whether someone embarks on a journey, or someone unfamiliar arrives in town. You can probably think of a few that have both things happen at different parts of the story. Moments that are a catalyst of change makes for great visual storytelling, and can jumpstart our imagination. Here are a few examples: Belle arriving at the Beast's castle (stranger arrives), Aang sets out with his friends to end the war with the Fire Nation (journey), Jack Skellington discovers Christmas Town (stranger arrives), Gandalf and the Dwarves hire Bilbo Baggins as a burglar (strangers arrive, *then* journey). For this assignment you will be using one of these two plot moments from an existing fiction novel as the composition for a paperback book cover. As you are beginning this course at the first stage of the Writer's Journey: *The Ordinary World*, this assignment will explore moments that precipitate change.

- ✦ **Format:** Fiction Novel Cover (paperback, front cover only)
- ✦ **Dimensions:** 6 x 9 inches, with 0.125 inch bleed, vertical orientation
- ✦ **Final Delivery Specs:** 400 dpi, CMYK colour profile, PDF file with bleed settings on
- ✦ **Client:** a "Big Five" publishing company (Harper Collins, Penguin/Random House, Hachette, Simon and Schuster, Macmillan)
- ✦ **Timeline:** 2 weeks
- ✦ **Professional Fee:** \$3000

### Process:

In the early stages of an illustrator's career, it is important to aim high in the publishing world. If your skill is at a level that would suit one of the "Big Five" publishing companies, then it is in the interest of your skill and finances to start looking for work from them first, and then working down if they don't see your skill as adequate. For this assignment, you will be working through the normal steps an illustrator will take in creating a book cover, while skipping some of the approval stages one goes through with a big publisher, since there are no editors, agents, and sales departments to chime in. Consider your instructor filling those roles for this assignment. Further, most illustrators will not have the time to read the whole book or unpublished manuscript, because of deadlines and other ongoing projects. To save time on this assignment, you will pick an existing fiction novel that you are familiar

with to create a cover for. After choosing and researching your novel, you will prepare a trio of refined sketches for approval, and then use the provided dimensions and specs to illustrate a cover for the book to deliver in 2 weeks.

### **Part 1: Research and Sketch Development**

Begin with finding an existing novel you are familiar with. It must be a fiction novel that has national or international distribution, and preferably one that has received critical acclaim. The country and culture of origin is your choice, but it should be a popular book, at least to some. Familiarize yourself with the story if you need.

Write down a one-paragraph description of the pivotal moment where the plot changes. Does someone go on a journey, or does a stranger come to town? Describe the scene for the rest of your classmates.

Through the thumbnail process, develop three strong sketches of possible cover designs, which use the pivotal plot moment as the “scene” pictured in your written description. Using drawn details and annotation in each sketch, outline the details, contextual clues, characters, and environment that fill each composition. Make sure that there is a space considered in each sketch where the title and author text will be placed by the publisher’s design team.

Bring the following to class in Week 2 to discuss with your classmates and instructor:

- 1) One paragraph written description of your novel’s pivotal plot moment
- 2) Three detailed and annotated sketches of possible compositions

### **Part 2: Final Artwork**

After determining the best sketch direction and any adjustments that should be made to it, prepare a substrate that fits the format listed above, whether analog or digital. Analog finals must be scanned in and formatted to match the “Final Delivery Specs” listed above. Digital final artworks must be executed on a canvas matching the specs listed above.

Execute the final artwork and prepare a digital image to show for presentation in class on Week 3. A short review and discussion of the work will take place, followed by directions on how to upload a PDF of process documents and final work to the Assignment 1 interface for grading.