



Story Editing Lesson 2

Characters and Novel Structure



Why do people read novels?

We think it's to find out what happens next. But what happens next is only interesting if it the "what happens next" involves characters or something that is important to a character.

Characters **ARE** your story. They act and react. They create emotion. They show motivation. Without any of this, you don't have a story. That's a tall order for your characters. So how do you make sure you're getting the most out of them?

You rewrite and revise until your characters are performing at their best.

Characters and Novel Structure

You've finished your first draft, so most likely you know who your characters are, what they look like, where they work and so on. But what about how they fit into your story structure? To understand this and make the most of it, you must evaluate your characters in the context of the structure of your novel.

Fictionary scans your manuscript, lists your characters, and links them to a scene.

All characters active in a scene or mentioned in a scene are listed. If you don't want mentioned characters to show up in your reports, you can move them from

being in a scene to mentioned using the View Character List link on the Evaluate page. This is what I've done here.

The screenshot displays the Fictionary software interface. On the left, a text editor window titled "Scene 19" contains three paragraphs of text. The first paragraph describes a skier's death. The second paragraph describes a character's return to her office. The third paragraph describes a character finding a skier in his office. On the right, a dark grey panel titled "Characters in this Scene" and "Characters Mentioned" lists characters. The "Characters in this Scene" list includes Ben Timlin, Howard Jenkinson, Kalin Thompson, and William DeWell. The "Characters Mentioned" list includes Chica, Gavin Reed, Nora Cummings, and Steve McKenzie. Below each list is a green button labeled "Add More Characters". In the center of the character lists, there are three icons: a right arrow, a left arrow, and a trash can icon.

Point of View

By now, you'll also know if you're writing from first-person point of view (POV) or third person. You've also decided if you are writing from multiple points of view or a single point of view. In essence, you know who is telling your story. Fictionary will help you keep track of POV and how you balance your POV scenes throughout the novel.

Fictionary has taken a first pass at listing your POV characters for each scene. It's up to you to confirm the list is correct.

Pro Tip: If you write from a **single POV**, select that character on the Cast Of Characters page and set him/her as the Single POV character. You won't need the report I'm about to talk about, so skip down to Advanced Mode in this lesson.

You can confirm your POV for each scene by quickly scanning the POV character on the Evaluate Page.

Pro Tip: After checking each scene, use the Save All button to save everything once.

Here you can see my POV character for Scene 1 is Kalin Thompson.

The screenshot displays the Fictionary software interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Guide, Visualize, Evaluate (highlighted in green), Toolbox, Help, and a user profile for Tina. The main workspace is split into two panels. The left panel, titled 'Scene 1', contains a text editor with a 'Word Cloud' icon and a rich text toolbar (B, I, U, list, link, unlink). The text in the editor is as follows:

CHAPTER ONE
Day One: November 28th

Death swept up the mountain and across the frigid snow, giving no warning, no threatening growl, just spreading tendrils, searching for a victim while Stone Mountain Resort buzzed with energy, unaware of the impending doom.

Kalin Thompson gunned the engine of her snowmobile, forced its skis over a mogul, and sped toward the summit of the Alpine Tracks run. The Holden ski team owned the race course for next twenty minutes, and when the local team finished, Kalin planned to ski the gates, just for one run, just for the adrenaline rush.

Her sled hit a patch of ice and slid toward a chairlift tower. She gripped the handlebar and leaned left, edging around the structure, brushing the metal side with her ski pants. Damaging equipment five days into being the director of security at the resort would not impress her boss. She regained control and drove toward the summit. Exhilarated by the ride, she skidded to a stop beside Ben Timlin and let out a whoop.

Giving her a wink that could seduce even the coldest of hearts, Ben said, "Enjoying yourself?"

Kalin glanced around and checked no one was looking in their

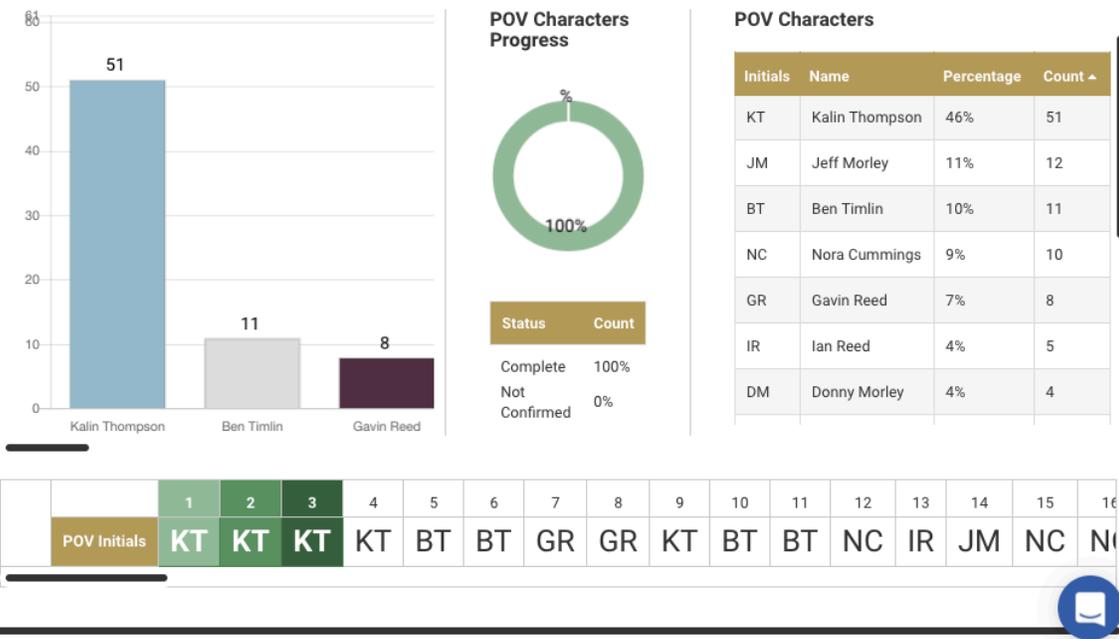
The right panel has tabs for CHARACTER, PLOT, and SETTING. The CHARACTER tab is active, showing a 'View Character List' section with a question mark icon. Below it, the 'Point of View (POV)' is set to 'Kalin Thompson'. There is also a 'POV Goal' section with a question mark icon. A 'Save' button is visible in the top right corner of the right panel.

Once you've confirmed your POV characters, the POV Characters report will show you who your POV characters are, how many scenes each POV character has, and the order they appear throughout the novel.

Below you can see Kalin Thompson is the POV character for 46% of the scenes. This is great as she's the protagonist, so she should have the most scenes.

POV Characters ?

Scene Count ? Balance ?

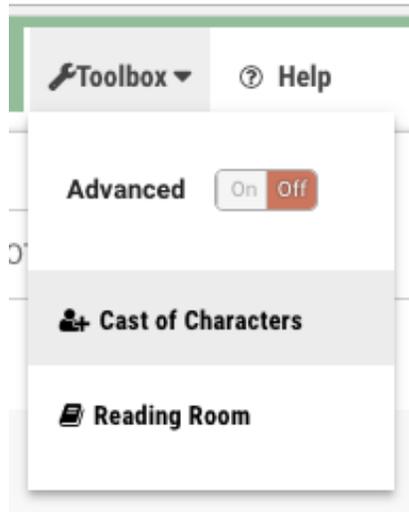


In a later lesson, we'll go into more detail about how to read this report.

As you go through each scene, you can focus on the basic elements of fiction and give the POV character a goal for the scene.

Advanced Mode

If you want to delve deeper, switch to the advanced mode in Fictionary. You can do this in the drop-down menu from the Toolbox.



When thinking about the POV character for each scene, ask yourself:

- What is the POV's internal goal for the scene?
- How does the goal relate to the plot?
- What happens if your POV doesn't achieve the goal?
- How does the scene affect your POV character?
- How does the scene affect the protagonist (if that's not the POV for the scene)?
- What knowledge does the POV character gain?
- Are the characters in motion?

Once you've answered the questions, check each scene to ensure the reader will understand the answers. You can show, tell, or imply the answers. It's up to you to find the right balance. The more important the event, the more you should show the reader what's happening. The less important could be told quickly, so the reader can move on to the good stuff.

I cover each of the questions in more detail in future lessons.

What's Next

We would love it if you subscribed to Fictionary. As part of your subscription, you'll receive a new lesson each week. If you continue to use Fictionary, the next lesson is **How to Improve Your Plot**.

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