



# 4 Major Story Structures

There are four major ways that stories can be structured; and which structure the author chooses has a lot to do with the author’s motivation for writing the story—what he or she wants the story to *mean*. It is possible, and often happens, that a book contains all four elements, but structurally, one of them almost always dominates.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the description of each story structure below. Think of a book or a story that you have read that falls into this category. Write the title and author of the book in the box. Then on a separate page, choose one of the books and briefly describe how the structure of the book contributes to the author’s style and meaning.

**STRUCTURE 1: THE MILIEU STORY**

The milieu is the world in which the story takes place. The milieu can be a planet or a universe, a society, a family, a country, etc. Every story has a milieu, but a writer structures a story around the milieu when it is the thing the storyteller cares about most.

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_  
 AUTHOR \_\_\_\_\_

**STRUCTURE 2: THE IDEA STORY**

In an idea story, a character is the vehicle through which an idea is discovered or revealed. The idea story begins with a question and ends when the question is answered.

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_  
 AUTHOR \_\_\_\_\_

**STRUCTURE 3: THE CHARACTER STORY**

A character story is focused on a character’s growth, transformation, or, sometimes, downfall. It usually begins at a time when the character is unhappy, impatient or angry enough to be spurred into some action, which is also the beginning of the process of change. It ends when the character has changed, or has given up and returned to where he or she began.

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_  
 AUTHOR \_\_\_\_\_

**STRUCTURE 4: THE EVENT STORY**

The event story seeks to fix some external problem; something is wrong, and the characters need to set it right. The story begins with the main character’s awareness of this problem, and ends when a new order is established. Sometimes, but rarely, the story ends when the old order is restored when all forces of order are destroyed.

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_  
 AUTHOR \_\_\_\_\_