

EXCERPT FROM:

**ALL WRITE - FICTION ADVICE
ADVICE ON CREATIVE WRITING**

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What is a Plot driven story?

A plot driven story concentrates almost entirely on the events or situations within the story and it focuses on how the characters influence those events or situations, usually through action. The story is not solely centered on its characters, but often relies on the unfolding events within its context to drive the story forward and bring it to its conclusion.

In plot driven stories (more suited to crime novels or various thriller/adventure genres), the focus remains on the events within the story, usually a single main event such as a death, a battle, an accident, a kidnap etc. The story, the characters and subplots revolve around this single event to bring the story to life.

The characters in plot-driven novels don't tend to be as deeply drawn as those in character driven novels (for obvious reasons), since the fast pace of most plot driven novels means there isn't much time to delve too deeply on an emotional level with your protagonist, antagonist, and other characters. But that's not to say that characters in these types of novels are not three dimensional and believable and make us empathize with them, because they are and they do. However, most plot driven stories don't really have time for deep character reflection. The emphasis is on pace and action.

Novels such as *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Bourne Identity*, *Jurassic Park*, *The Hunt for Red October* and *Golden Compass* are examples of plot driven novels.

What is a character driven story?

These stories are all about the characters. The emphasis is on character reflection, emotions, desires, motives, and subsequent actions. The story tends to be a secondary element, the plot tends to be somewhere in the background and is not strictly enforced like a plot driven novel. This type of novel also tends to be more reflective and slower in pace. This means that the writer can concentrate solely on characterization.

You'll find that most - not all - literary novels tend to be character driven. This is because they focus on the character's emotions, their desires and their reflections and that means that the development and growth of the characters outweighs the development and growth and the movement of the plot. These stories tend to focus on why characters do what they do, and how they react in certain ways through their actions.

Novels such as *Heart of Darkness*, *Hunger* and *The Plague* are just some examples of character driven stories.

Can you have both?

The simple answer to that is yes. There are no hard and fast rules that state you must have one or the other. A good writer can incorporate both elements into their work, so in theory you can have a fast-paced thriller that does have emotional, reflective character driven scenes, and literary-style character driven stories that can have moments of action that propel the plot forward.

The ideal would be to have a balance of both, and this is quite possible as long as you maintain that balance. If you do have a plot driven story, don't forget good characterization, because this is still extremely important in any story. A great plot is nothing without great characters, and great characters still need a plot to work from.

Most stories do follow a pattern that we all know, and the genre generally dictates the type of novel: thrillers, crime, sci-fi and adventure books tend to be plot driven, while some romantic genres, coming of age novels or semi-autobiographical novels tend to be character driven. As you write your novel, it will become apparent where your story fits when it comes to plot driven, character driven or a mix of both.

One thing will be apparent as you begin your writing journey – you need to be clear on the type of novel you want to write. You need to find your 'voice', your writing fingerprint that makes you stand out from other writers. Once you have those, then you'll know the kind of fiction you'll want to write.