

Concept

Defined	The Big Idea of your story... the basic <i>what if?</i> proposition... the dramatic landscape... the window into plot... the source of conflict... the compelling question... the enticing situation... the promise of the story... the stage upon which character finds something to do.	
Example	<i>The Hunger Games</i> . The concept alone is a home run. Then again, a novel like Jonathan Franzen's <i>Freedom</i> relies more on character than concept (yes, it has one).	
Lesson	The deeper you are within a genre — any given genre – the more critical concept becomes. Concept is the stage upon which character is allowed to unfold.	
	Larry Brooks' Wisdom	My Project
Good	The reader is inherently drawn to the proposition through an attraction to the answer to the dramatic question posed.	
Better	The reader can inherently experience the hero's journey in pursuit of that answer. They can live the hero's journey vicariously.	
Best	The reader not only experiences the hero's journey, but empathetically feels what's at stake. The reader relates to the consequences of the resolution of the story.	

Character

Defined	The protagonist of the story, presented with layers of backstory, inner psychology, outer dimensions and a journey that will allow her or him to become heroic as they evolve as necessary to eventually serve as the primary catalyst of the story's resolution (which is what heroes do).	
Example	Holden Caulfield in <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> . He's us, at our most basic level of humanity.	
	Larry Brooks' Wisdom	My Project
Good	A protagonist we can root for.	
Better	A protagonist we can relate to.	
Best	A protagonist who feels what we feel, fears what we fear and steps into the hero's role as we would hope we would... in other words, a vicarious juxtaposition between hero and reader on an emotional level.	

Theme

Defined	The relevance and transparency of the human experience through the dynamics of the story, both in terms of character and conflict.	
Example	John Irving's <i>The Cider House Rules</i> , which exposes both sides of a polarizing issue on a level that defies politics and religion and doesn't flinch from consequences on either side. And of course, Kathryn Stockett's <i>The Help</i> is a clinic on theme.	
	Larry Brooks' Wisdom	My Project
Good	A story that shows life as it really is. One that allows us to recognize the dynamics of being alive in whatever time the story reveals, while illuminating universal truths in any case.	
Better	A story that shows the virtues of heroism as it plays out on a thematically rich and realistic stage.	
Best	A story that pushes buttons, doesn't flinch, one that demands the reader see both sides and all the options that attach to the hero's choices, and teaches us truth and reality in the process.	

Structure

Defined	The expositional unfolding of the story in a sequence that deepens stakes, presents twists while defining the reading experience.	
Example	Dan Brown's <i>The Da Vinci Code</i> . Love it or hate it, the story blends all six core competencies in a way that, literally, readers could not put down. All 80 million of them.	
	Larry Brooks' Wisdom	My Project
Good	A solid four-part sequential presentation of the story: Set-up... response (to the first plot point)... a proactive attack on the problem... resolution.	
Better	A sequence that allows the reader to get lost in the story in a vicarious way, which is the deepening of the effectiveness and compelling nature of the four parts that comprise it.	
Best	A story that surprises, intrigues, captures, and then rewards the reader on both an emotional and intellectual level.	

Scene Execution

Defined	Blocks of narrative exposition that move the story forward in an optimal way, with equal attention to characterization and dramatic tension.	
Example	Anything by Michael Connelly, Nelson Demille, or Jodi Picoult.	
	Larry Brooks' Wisdom	My Project
Good	Scenes that are logical in order that blend into subsequent scenes.	
Better	Scenes that play like little one-act dramas, each with a set-up, confrontation and resolution. Scenes that deliver one primary, salient point of plot exposition while contributing to characterization.	
Best	Scenes that cut quickly to the point of the scene, that resolve a moment while setting up a subsequent deepening of stakes, urgency, options and character arc.	

Writing Voice

Defined	The flavor of the writing itself (the prose), from the reader's point of view.	
Example	John Updike was the modern master of voice. Read Colin Harrison, too, who sets the bar here higher than anyone still breathing.	
	Larry Brooks' Wisdom	My Project
Good	Exposition that is clear, direct and uses adjectives and description sparsely yet effectively. Prose that is not conscious of itself for the sole purpose of stylistic effort. Prose that readers don't really notice as they get lost in the story.	
Better	Prose that illuminates the sub-text of the moment and of the characters involved.	
Best	Prose that goes down easy, with a hint of humor and spice, with nuance and subtlety where required and the power of a blunt instrument when called for.	