

SYNOPSIS

CLASS NOTE: When you have completed this class, write a review and send an email to: olaf@defleurinc.com to receive a FULL 34 page complete brochure on how to write a film treatment.



In this lesson, we are going to learn how to write the synopsis for the film proposal.

A synopsis is a short description of your project. Directly, the word synopsis means: "a brief summary or general survey of something."

PASSPORT INTO YOUR STORY WORLD

The purpose of a synopsis is to get your idea quickly across to a reader. Not as quick as a logline, but close. It's the next step after you've done the logline in the previous chapter. When writing short descriptions of your project I always suggest spending as much time on it as possible. A well-written synopsis can

pave the way for not only investors to understand your idea, but also collaborators and of course yourself. When you share your synopsis, it's like handing out a passport into the story world you've created.

How many words or paragraphs is a synopsis?

There are two types of synopsis you can write. And it is common that when you're introducing your project to investors, film funds, and so on - that they ask for either a **short synopsis** or a **long** synopsis - and sometimes **both**.

- A SHORT SYNOPSIS is one paragraph (3-5 sentences)
- A LONG SYNOPSIS is can be 1-2 pages.

BENEFITS

The benefit of writing a synopsis comes in many forms.

1. You'll get to know your story better by writing it.
2. It will help coworkers and collaborators to know quickly what your story is about
3. And it is an essential part of introducing the project to investors, film funds, and so on.

The more work you put into writing the synopsis, obviously, the better it will be. I would suggest that writing the one-paragraph synopsis is the most important step in making a film proposal. The upside of having a strong one-paragraph synopsis is that it is short and can be sent in messages and expressed verbally at any time as a pitch.

EXAMPLES

SHORT SYNOPSIS When I write a synopsis, I take my time. My process is like a mini-version of writing a film script. The best advice, or rather the method that works best for me is to learn to accept that you need do several drafts of the synopsis. And a key part of that is being able to accept bad versions until you get the one you like.

Here is a **ONE PARAGRAPH** synopsis example that I have made out of the long synopsis of the Ugly Duckling:

"After a mother duck's eggs hatch, one of the ducklings is perceived by the other animals as an **ugly little creature**. The duckling wanders into the world alone and suffers abuse wherever it goes. Time passes and hardships plague the duckling's soul to the point of destruction. When the duckling decides to end its life it realizes that it's not an ugly little creature, but a beautiful swan."

LONG SYNOPSIS Let's look at two examples of a **LONG SYNOPSIS**. And we will begin with a synopsis of the example project of making a short film proposal for the **Ugly Duckling** and then we have a synopsis example for the classic film **Lord Of The Flies**.

THE UGLY DUCKLING
By H.C. Andersen
(long synopsis example)

After a mother duck's eggs hatch, one of the ducklings is perceived by the other animals as an ugly little creature and suffers much verbal and physical abuse. He wanders from the barnyard and lives with wild ducks and geese until hunters slaughter the flocks. He finds a home with an old woman, but her cat and hen tease and taunt him mercilessly, and once again he sets off alone.

The duckling sees a flock of migrating wild swans. He is delighted and excited but cannot join them, for he is too young, ugly, and unable to fly. When winter arrives, a farmer finds and carries the freezing duckling home, but he is frightened by the farmer's noisy children and flees the house. The duckling spends a miserable winter alone outdoors, mostly hiding in a cave on the lake that partly freezes over.

The duckling, now having fully grown and matured, cannot endure a life of solitude and hardship anymore. He decides to throw himself at a flock of swans, feeling that it is better to be killed by such beautiful birds than to live a life of ugliness. He is shocked when the swans welcome and accept him, only to realize by looking at his reflection in the water that he had been not a duckling but a swan all this time. The flock takes to the air, and he spreads his wings to take flight with the rest of his new family.

LORD OF THE FLIES
Book/Movie
(long synopsis example)

A group of British schoolboys, living in the midst of a war, are evacuated from England. Their airliner is shot down by briefly-glimpsed fighter planes and ditches near a remote island.

The main character, Ralph, is seen walking through a tropical forest. He meets an intelligent and chubby boy, who reveals his school nickname was Piggy, but asks that Ralph not repeat that. The two go to the beach where they find a conch shell, which Ralph blows to rally the other survivors. As they emerge from the jungle, it becomes clear that no adults have escaped the crash. Singing is then heard and a small column of school choir boys, wearing dark cloaks and hats and led by a boy named Jack Merridew, walk toward their direction.

The boys decide to appoint a chief. The vote goes to Ralph, not Jack. Initially, Ralph is able to steer the children (all of whom are aged between about six and fourteen) towards a reasonably civilized and co-operative society. Only the boy holding the conch is allowed to speak in turns during meetings or "assemblies". The choir boys make wooden spears, creating the appearance that they are warriors within the group. Crucially, Jack has a knife, capable of killing an animal.

The boys build shelters and start a signal fire using Piggy's glasses. With no rescue in sight, the increasingly authoritarian and violence-prone Jack starts hunting and eventually finds a pig. Meanwhile, the fire, for which he and his "hunters" are responsible, goes out, keeping them hidden from a passing airplane. Piggy chastises Jack, and Jack strikes him in retaliation, knocking his glasses off, and breaking one lens. Ralph is furious with Jack. Soon some of the children begin to talk of a beast that comes from the water. Jack, obsessed with this imagined threat, leaves the group to start a new tribe, one without rules, where the boys play and hunt all day. Soon, more follow until only a few, including Piggy, are left with Ralph.

Events reach a crisis when a boy named Simon finds a sow's head impaled on a stick, left by Jack as an offering to the Beast. He becomes hypnotized by the head, which has flies swarming all around it. Simon goes to what he believes to be the nest of the Beast and finds a dead pilot under a hanging parachute. Simon runs to Jack's camp to tell them the truth, only to be killed in the

darkness by the frenzied children who mistake him for the Beast. Piggy defends the group's actions with a series of rationalizations and denials. The hunters raid the old group's camp and steal Piggy's glasses. Ralph goes to talk to the new group using the still-present power of the conch to get their attention. However, when Piggy takes the conch, they are not silent (as their rules require) but instead jeer. Roger, the cruel torturer and executioner of the tribe, pushes a boulder off a cliff and kills Piggy.

Ralph hides in the jungle. Jack and his hunters set fires to smoke him out, and Ralph staggers across the smoke-covered island. Stumbling onto the beach, Ralph falls at the feet of a naval officer who stares in shock at the painted and spear-carrying savages that the children have become, before turning to his accompanying landing party. One of the stunned boys tries to tell the officer his name, but cannot remember it. The last scene shows Ralph sobbing as flames spread across the island.