

5. Plot finder

Whether you intend writing fiction or plays, you will almost certainly need a plot. If you find yourself stuck for new ideas, try this fun task. It will get you writing ...and may even provide you with the inspiration for a real story or play.

- Down the left hand side of a sheet of A4 list the numbers 0 to 9.
- Across the top of the page write four column headings – **Character**, **Location**, **Object** and **Motive**.
- Ask a friend to give you a list of ten types of people or ten occupations (for example sailor, beach photographer, housewife). Under the **Character** column, write them down against the numbers 0 to 9 (the order is irrelevant)
- Ask a different friend for ten locations. These can be specific (Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, for example) or very general (a hairdressing salon, a refugee camp). List these under the **Location** column against the numbers 0 to 9.
- Now ask a third friend to name ten different things – such as a teddy bear, a signed photo of Cliff Richard, a football etc. List these under **Object**.
- Complete the fourth column yourself, using the following motives: Love, Money, Power, Survival, Revenge, Glory and Self-integrity (a sort of psychological survival). There are only seven here, and you need ten, so intersperse these seven with three ‘Unknown’s – unless you can think of more than the seven motives listed here.
- Lastly, ask several people to provide you with four-digit numbers, anything from 0000 to 9999

Each four-digit number will now provide you with the bare bones of a plot. The number 4057, for example, will give you Character number 4 in Location number 0 with Object number 5, and the plot will be driven by Motive number 7. Now try to write a short story or a play scenario using these four elements – there are literally thousands to choose from. The plot can be as wild and wacky as you want it to be – the main aim is to get you writing, and to stimulate your imagination – but, who knows, you may turn up something that really gets your creative juices flowing.