

Title of Session: Exposition
Creator: Janet Beasley
Curriculum: NOVICE

Definition:

Exposition: Parts of an author's story that gradually introduce important/relevant information to readers regarding the characters, places, and things.

Goals:

After this session enthusiasts should be able to write an effective exposition that introduces readers to needed information to pull their story together.

Tools:

- Print outs of the What's Your Background? World map (included at end of Exposition section). Please note this is a two sided worksheet. One for each enthusiast
 - Color pencils: Easier if presented in a plastic container/tub
-
- Flip chart or wipe off board / Markers
-

Ice Breaker:

- Gather together around one table
 - Hand out world map print outs
 - Put color pencil container in center of table
 - Ask enthusiasts to color in the places their character has been, where he/she lives now, where his/her ancestors came from, where he/she likes to travel to, etc. Get creative and have them use a different color for each representation
 - Ask enthusiasts to be sure and fill out the sections listed on the back of the world map worksheet
 - Allow 5 - 10 mins for enthusiasts to complete their maps and answers
-

Activity – Part 1:

- After enthusiasts have completed their World Map sheets, front and back, ask them to keep the sheets handy so they can add to them as the discussion begins to develop throughout part one of the Activity. Ask enthusiasts to share points from their ice breaker handouts.
- **What is the purpose of exposition?**
The purpose of exposition is to introduce the reader to character back stories, a main event that took place before the story began, setting(s), or location(s). Though exposition is a useful tool in fictional stories, it is used more readily in the fantasy and science

fiction genres due to the imaginative worlds, characters, and prior events these genres present.

Exposition can also be a valuable tool when it comes to character development. Where they live, what they wear, and what they may be thinking at one time or another can easily introduce a setting, history, or background.

- **Where and how can exposition be conveyed within the author's work?**

- In Dialogue
- In Narrative
- Through Background Details (past, present, or future)
- Through Character Thoughts

- **What is an information dump?**

At times referred to as an expository lump, an information dump occurs when the author strays from needed details to details that are not relevant to the story.

Example of an information dump: Charlie could not wait to get busy on his next scrollwork project. He was planning on making a jewelry box that boasted a scrolled bull moose, his granddaughter Lizzie's favorite animal, on the delicate lid. He thumbed through the stack of wood and found a sheet of white pine, the perfect selection for what she had requested.

Charlie held the wood to his nose and inhaled. After a contented sigh he sketched the moose on the wood and aligned the piece of wood on the plate of the scroll saw and thought, *The scroll saw was invented early on in 1874 by Helmut Abel. The next generation scroll saw came on the scene in 1921 by the hands of Chicago resident, Carl Moberg. It was not until the 1930's that the modern day electric scroll saw was brought to the public eye. A fascinating fact is that the modern day electric scroll saw was modeled after the original two.*

He flicked the switch and the purr of the saw began. He smiled and eased the wood into the blade.

As you can see, the history of the scroll saw has no relevance to the story. It appears awkward and stops the action dead in its tracks.

- On flipchart write **Question 1** and ask for input before revealing answers.
 - **Question 1** What should effective exposition contain?
 - **ANSWER:** Effective exposition should contain (background) information that is relevant to the story - past, present, or future
- On flipchart write **Question 2** and ask for input before revealing answers
 - **Question 3** What are three main things that can be researched to portray the important expository information?
 - **ANSWER 1: LOCATION**

- Character location(s)
- Story location(s): Country – City – Island – State – Small town – etc
- Specific places: Bakery, sporting event, funeral, school, abandoned building, train station, etc.
- Aromas specific to the location: Floral, fresh warm cookies, forest, garbage dump, farm, etc.
- Sights specific to the location: Old person always sitting on porch, junked car/truck, ghosts, bicycle that is embedded in a tree which grew around it, etc.
- Sounds specific to the location: Mysterious voices, person yelling at someone no one else can see, regional music from sidewalk performers, growling from the bushes, etc.
- Icon(s) that the location is most known for: tombstone, tree, fence, monument, building, haunted house, etc.
- **ANSWER 2: HISTORY**
 - **Character History**
 - *Example A:* Thinking about the character’s family tree, consider if there are any long lost relatives that may have passed on genetic illness, anger, magic, super powers, etc.
 - *Example B:* Where was the character born
 - *Example C:* Where did the character grow up
 - *Example D:* Did a parent, aunt, uncle, cousin, grandparent, or sibling die before or will die after the character appears in the story
 - **Events/Happenings History**
 - *Example A (events):* Important birth, historic battle, signing of important documents, annual fair of years gone by, a camp-out and campers never returned home, etc.
 - *Example B (happenings):* Murder, paranormal activity, secret meeting(s), sacrifices, buried treasure, finding the remains of a mysterious corpse, etc.
 - **Location History**
 - When was it founded
 - Who was it founded by
 - What is the population
 - Climate changes
 - Lost city
 - Sever laws that no longer exist
 - Lawlessness
 - Cult
 - Utopia

- Did it used to be a fun place but is now scary
- Did it used to be surrounded by a wall
- Was it once part of a mainland but now an island
- **ANSWER 3: BACKGROUND (Characters and Location)**
 - Legends, tales, rumors
 - Character quirks
 - Family secrets
 - Famous person is a relative
 - Fought in a historic war
 - Signed a famous document
 - Never loved their parents
 - Always wanted a brother instead of a sister, or vice versa
 - Been arrested 6 times
 - Escaped from prison
 - Was nearly buried alive
 - Lost an arm or leg an it mysteriously grew back

Activity – Part 2

Proper Use of Exposition - Example: The exposition used in the example is found in a narrative which is actually being read aloud by the protagonist.

The example is taken from YA enchanted epic fantasy author Janet Beasley’s Hidden Earth Series: Volume 1, Maycly the Trilogy, Book 1: Two Altered Worlds (Chapter 4).

Have enthusiasts take turns reading each paragraph aloud.

Iona and Wiskee had had a decent second day arranging things in their new place. Bedtime came and she called to Wiskee to join her. He jumped onto the chair then onto the bed and curled lovingly by her side. Though she was tired, something kept her from feeling sleepy. She recognized a familiar tug on her heartstrings from her past that would not let up. She did not want to believe it, but it was SUL calling to her from Maycly. Without enough strength to fight off the feeling, Iona did something she had not done in a very, very long time. She reached for her tattered purse and pulled from it her ragged miniature copy of *The Book of Good and Evil* and read aloud the entire documented account of creation.

The Book of Good and Evil

• The Beginning of Time •

Part I

In the beginning there was darkness. A thick darkness. There was silence. A deafening silence. However, one living being dwelt buried within the abyss of space and time, waiting patiently for the right moment. The wait was over.

A bone-jolting rumble came from the depths of quietude as the hidden living being spoke, "I am SUL– Sorcerer of Unequivocal Leadership, Grand Wizard of all that is Good, Creator of all things." SUL was pleased at the first sound of His voice.

He inhaled the dark, then an illuminated euphony rose from within Him and escaped His mighty lips, "Stars, suns, and moons, show yourselves." The luminous musical notes danced in rhythm as they played upon a lighted score that spanned infinitely across the black canvas. "Now take your places. Those who wish to be stars fill the black canvas from end to end. Those who wish to be suns and moons take to the canvas in pairs." All of the notes scattered to dot the emptiness at SUL's command. When the notes arrived at their final destinations, each one materialized into its chosen shape of a star, a sun, or a moon and played its last tone. "Behold My first creation: the lights of the universe."

SUL burst forth in song again. "Land and water mass come forth and separate yourself into many." This time the orchestral piece escaped His lips and blasted its way to a focal point where it exploded into many shapes. "I shall call you planets." There was brief silence as SUL admired His work.

"Planets, scatter and choose a sun and a moon to be your light." Each planet sailed to a sun and a moon and stopped in just the right place. "Now make up your surface with as much water and land as you wish." The numerous planets came to life at SUL's order. Colors burst through the outer crusts and the swirling of land, water, and gases took place on each. SUL waited for every planet to complete its evolution.

SUL called for His two most prized planets. "Priority mass of land and water come forth and be two." An extremely large mass appeared and meticulously divided itself. SUL watched as one portion became a blue-green sphere with continents of many climates separated by seas. "You, I shall call Earth." He then blew from His fingertip an additional single sun to light the day and an additional single moon to shine in the night. He set the sun and moon opposite each other and positioned each of them just the right distance from Earth amongst the other stars, suns, and moons. He delicately placed one hand on Earth and pulled the sphere gently into a never-ending, slow, spinning motion that caused sunrises and sunsets.

SUL hummed as He swirled His fingers majestically near Earth's waters. With an upward movement of His hands, clouds grew from the waters and rose above Earth's surface. He cried a solitary blue tear of joy. The massive reverent drop of liquid halted in space above Earth's topside. He sang, "Give Me sky around My Earth." At that command, the blue tear began to spread itself like warm icing making its way down a hot cinnamon roll. It sweetly encompassed Earth without touching its surface, and remained higher than the clouds. The transparent sky was created. SUL lingered.

After His rest He turned to the second half of the priority land mass and sang to it, "Remaining half of floating matter, it is your turn. Shape yourself into a massive world, but be not round like the other planets." Giant sounds of boulders cracking, roots pushing through soil, and lakes bubbling joyfully to the surface filled SUL's ears. When the sounds stopped, the planet's rectangular flat surface was attached to an extremely large rocky and rooty base. He continued and brought forth The Vinewalls which outlined the floating planet's surface. "I shall call you Maycly, meaning eternal land of enchantment. You shall be My ever-after world. You shall represent the center of all of My creation."

SUL blew from His fingertips three very special suns to light Maycly by day. They took their place in the west as He so commanded. SUL then sang, "Now My three suns, juggle yourselves in slow motion low in the sky and take turns kissing the horizon." He watched the event with pleasure then sang to the three suns again, "Cease your motion." The three suns obeyed willingly. In the silence SUL could hear the slow throbbing of their pulsating light. "Because I

am the Creator and know the beginning to the end, I sing this next song to you and only you. One being shall fall from Goodness in the far distant future. At that time I shall whisper to you and you shall align yourselves and become stationary until you are released to frolic once again. Your stationary line shall be the sign that puts into motion the finality of setting apart Good and Evil.” The three suns nodded in acceptance. SUL returned to singing, “Now continue your love fest with the horizon until I whisper to you.” And so they did.

SUL breathed into His palm then blew from it two deep purple moons, one much larger than the other. “Take your places in the eastern sky and face the three suns of Maycly.” The larger moon led the smaller moon to their places and they settled in.

The three suns and two moons could be seen from any location on Maycly. The three suns held brilliant light and the two moons possessed a dim silvery light. SUL commanded the suns and the moons to trade their light with each other at the beginning and the end of each day to give daylight and twilight so there was never total darkness on Maycly. SUL ordered that when the suns and moons traded their lights, the sky would become a mixture of amber, gold, pink, lavender, and royal blue until the trading was complete.

“Only one world shall see all of creation. That world will be Maycly. Earth shall only have visibility of its own sky, its own sun, and its own moon, but I shall grant to Earth a view of all of the stars.”

Activity - Part 3

- Ask enthusiasts to create an informative exposition using dialogue, narrative, or both to present a background regarding the character from their What’s Your Background worksheet.
 - Keep it short: 250 words max.
- Allow enough time for some or all of the enthusiasts to share their expositions with their fellow enthusiasts. As the leader, be sure to interject both positive feedback as well as enhancements if needed.

Discussion:

- Where did you like getting the information from best? (dialogue, narrative, character thoughts)
- Why did one location appeal to you over another?
- Do you prefer exposition that presents the past, present, or future, and why?

Exposition

Janet Beasley

Handout: NOVICE

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What are three main things that can be researched to portray the important expository information?

Location

History

Background

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Without exposition a story would be confusing to a reader. Think of exposition as your “writer’s paintbrush.” Every word you stroke (write) adds color and detail to the story. In a sense exposition paints a picture with words. And like in a painting you do not need to include useless items, i.e. you’ve probably never seen a painting of a beautiful, serene landscape that includes a toothbrush and cement truck.

Title of Session: Exposition
Creator: Janet Beasley
Curriculum: ADVANCED

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am the Creator and know the beginning to the end, I sing this next song to you and only you. One being shall fall from Goodness in the far distant future. At that time I shall whisper to you and you shall align yourselves and become stationary until you are released to frolic once again. Your stationary line shall be the sign that puts into motion the finality of setting apart Good and Evil.” The three suns nodded in acceptance. SUL returned to singing, “Now continue your love fest with the horizon until I whisper to you.” And so they did.

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The three suns and two moons could be seen from any location on Maycly. The three suns held brilliant light and the two moons possessed a dim silvery light. SUL commanded the suns and the moons to trade their light with each other at the beginning and the end of each day to give daylight and twilight so there was never total darkness on Maycly. SUL ordered that when the suns and moons traded their lights, the sky would become a mixture of amber, gold, pink, lavender, and royal blue until the trading was complete.

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Activity - Part 3

What are 7 types of exposition?

- Description
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- Comparison
 - Using comparison allows an author to describe items side by side, perhaps showing the pros and cons of each, or the different sizes – colors - shapes
- Analogy
 - An analogy differs from comparison as it gives the author the chance to compare in a parable sense: You can physically wash your dog and make it clean, but to wash your dog’s mind from his bad habits requires other tools than soap and water.
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 - An analysis allows the author to describe an item in detail, and present a brief summary or opinion of the person, place, or thing after the exposition.
- Cause and Effect
 - This is widely used when it comes to conflict, and we all know your story will be nothing without conflict. The cause is the driving force that leads to the effect which causes the conflict. This can also be used in “happy endings.” A prince has been turned into a frog because he ticked off a wicked witch (cause), and the princess’s kiss (effect) brings him back.
- Problem / Solution
 - This combination is also effective exposition when it comes to the ever needed conflict. Jim and Mary are stuck in traffic in a tunnel (problem). Mary reveals she

has magical powers, but has never tried it in traffic (another problem). Jim coaxes Mary to try it and they fly out of the tunnel (solution).

- Sequence
 - Does the sequence have to fit the mold of 1,2,3? Not at all. If the exposition is being used to tell the back story the characters can find out in a mixed up order. This leads back to intertwining Sequence with Problem / Solution, or Cause / Effect, and a puzzle must be solved using the “out of order” clues dropped in the exposition.

Is research important to writing effective exposition?

Yes.

- Depending on your genre, the research for your exposition can become extensive.
 - Examples:
 - Writing about dragons can lead to much research if you have never studied them. Dragons come in all kinds of colors, shapes, and sizes. They are also regional creatures.
 - Another example could be writing about the “old west.” In the 1800’s the west was a much different place than it is now. A lot of the language used was filled with slang and the grammar lacking, towns did not have streetlights or wifi, transportation consisted of horses – wagons – and on foot.
 - And yet another example of exposition would be if you are writing science fiction or fantasy; Chances are you will be creating another world. This is tricky as your “laws of the land” must be believable. In science fiction you have the actual laws of space with which to deal, and research can be a time consuming project – but well worth the effort nonetheless. In fantasy the sky’s the limit, but your make-believe “laws of the land” must be believable and maintain continuity.
- All of this leads to researching your genre, or details within your genre, to keep your story believable even though it is fiction.
- Make certain you are researching credible sources.

Activity - Part 4

- Ask enthusiasts to create an informative exposition using dialogue, narrative, or both to present a background regarding the character from their What’s Your Background worksheet.
 - Keep it short: 250 words max.
- Allow enough time for some or all of the enthusiasts to share their expositions with their fellow enthusiasts. As the leader, be sure to interject both positive feedback as well as enhancements if needed.

Discussion:

- What are you looking forward to researching for your back story?
- How do you see your characters adding to your exposition? What actions might they take, who do they hang out with, or who holds what secrets in their distant family?
- Exposition can take us to the past. What are some interesting facts you would consider using from the past to build your story using exposition?

Exposition

Janet Beasley

Handout: ADVANCED

What is the purpose of exposition?

The purpose of exposition is to introduce the reader to character back stories, a main event that took place before the story began, setting(s), or location(s). Though exposition is a useful tool in fictional stories, it is used more readily in the fantasy and science fiction genres due to the imaginative worlds, characters, and prior events these genres present.

Exposition can also be a valuable tool when it comes to character development. Where they live, what they wear, and what they may be thinking at one time or another can easily introduce a setting, history, or background.

Where and how can exposition be conveyed within the author's work?

- In Dialogue
- In Narrative
- Through Background Details (past, present, or future)
- Through Character Thoughts

What is an information dump?

At times referred to as an expository lump, an information dump occurs when the author strays from needed details to details that are not relevant to the story.

Example of an information dump: Charlie could not wait to get busy on his next scrollwork project. He was planning on making a jewelry box that boasted a scrolled bull moose, his granddaughter Lizzie's favorite animal, on the delicate lid. He thumbed through the stack of wood and found a sheet of white pine, the perfect selection for what she had requested.

Charlie held the wood to his nose and inhaled. After a contented sigh he sketched the moose on the wood and aligned the piece of wood on the plate of the scroll saw and thought, *The scroll saw was invented early on in 1874 by Helmut Abel. The next generation scroll saw came on the scene in 1921 by the hands of Chicago resident, Carl Moberg. It was not until the 1930's that the modern day electric scroll saw was brought to the public eye. A fascinating fact is that the modern day electric scroll saw was modeled after the original two.*

He flicked the switch and the purr of the saw began. He smiled and eased the wood into the blade.

As you can see, the history of the scroll saw has no relevance to the story. It appears awkward and stops the action dead in its tracks.

What should effective exposition contain?

Effective exposition should contain (background) information that is relevant to the story - past, present, or future

What are three main things that can be researched to portray the important expository information?

Location

History

Background

Proper Use of Exposition - Example: The exposition used in this example is found in a narrative which is actually being read aloud by the protagonist.

Example taken from YA enchanted epic fantasy author Janet Beasley's Hidden Earth Series: Volume 1, Maycly the Trilogy, Book 1: Two Altered Worlds (Chapter 4).

Iona and Wiskee had had a decent second day arranging things in their new place. Bedtime came and she called to Wiskee to join her. He jumped onto the chair then onto the bed and curled lovingly by her side. Though she was tired, something kept her from feeling sleepy. She recognized a familiar tug on her heartstrings from her past that would not let up. She did not want to believe it, but it was SUL calling to her from Maycly. Without enough strength to fight off the feeling, Iona did something she had not done in a very, very long time. She reached for her tattered purse and pulled from it her ragged miniature copy of *The Book of Good and Evil* and read aloud the entire documented account of creation.

The Book of Good and Evil

• The Beginning of Time •

Part I

In the beginning there was darkness. A thick darkness. There was silence. A deafening silence. However, one living being dwelt buried within the abyss of space and time, waiting patiently for the right moment. The wait was over.

A bone-jolting rumble came from the depths of quietude as the hidden living being spoke, "I am SUL— Sorcerer of Unequivocal Leadership, Grand Wizard of all that is Good, Creator of all things." SUL was pleased at the first sound of His voice.

He inhaled the dark, then an illuminated euphony rose from within Him and escaped His mighty lips, "Stars, suns, and moons, show yourselves." The luminous musical notes danced in rhythm as they played upon a lighted score that spanned infinitely across the black canvas. "Now take your places. Those who wish to be stars fill the black canvas from end to end. Those who wish to be suns and moons take to the canvas in pairs." All of the notes scattered to dot the emptiness at SUL's command. When the notes arrived at their final destinations, each one materialized into its chosen shape of a star, a sun, or a moon and played its last tone. "Behold My first creation: the lights of the universe."

SUL burst forth in song again. "Land and water mass come forth and separate yourself into many." This time the orchestral piece escaped His lips and blasted its way to a focal point where

it exploded into many shapes. "I shall call you planets." There was brief silence as SUL admired His work.

"Planets, scatter and choose a sun and a moon to be your light." Each planet sailed to a sun and a moon and stopped in just the right place. "Now make up your surface with as much water and land as you wish." The numerous planets came to life at SUL's order. Colors burst through the outer crusts and the swirling of land, water, and gases took place on each. SUL waited for every planet to complete its evolution.

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Without exposition a story would be confusing to a reader. Think of exposition as your “writer’s paintbrush.” Every word you stroke (write) adds color and detail to the story. In a sense exposition paints a picture with words. And like in a painting you do not need to include useless items, i.e. you’ve probably never seen a painting of a beautiful, serene landscape that includes a toothbrush and cement truck.

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