

Title of Session: Westerns Fiction - General

Creator: Janet Beasley

Curriculum: NOVICE

Definition: Western fiction represents fictional settings, happenings, and characters. Settings take place in what most see as America's Old West; the territory most represented in these novels is territory west of the Mississippi River.

Goals: By the end of the session enthusiasts will be able to recognize basic elements to a western fiction.

Tools:

Wipe off board or flip chart and appropriate markers

A digital camera

An array of old west props such as:

Cowboy hats

Cowboy boots

Rope

Gun holsters

Stick horses

Bandanas

Plain sheet (any color) for backdrop

Ice Breaker:

- One by one, or in groups (if they prefer) have enthusiasts choose their props
- Set your digital camera on the Sepia (old time) setting
- Photograph each enthusiast or group and share the digital fun! (Make certain all who are in the photo(s) have signed the media release form)

Activity 1:

Western fiction is a fun genre in which to write. The majority of the western fiction reading audience is well-versed in this genre. Like historical fiction, you will need to do your research before you build your characters, and create your setting(s). And again, like historical fiction, a western fiction can zero in on a historical figure or event.

- **Who makes the best western fiction authors?**

Authors who are highly interested in the era, are often times already familiar with America's western history, are willing to spend a good amount of time researching, and have a passion for the craft of creative writing.

- **What time period is most commonly used when writing western fiction?**
The most well-known time period falls from the mid to late 1800's. This is probably the most popular time period used in western fiction stories and is often times referred to as the wild-west, though modern day westerns have emerged with success.

- **What are some events or happenings that happened in the old west?**
 - The Great Migration
 - The Gold Rush
 - Building of the Railroad
 - The Homestead Act
 - Battle of the Little Bighorn
 - The Pony Express

- **Who are some well-known figures that can be used in western fiction stories?**
Old west "celebrities" are the range of folks. You have everything from political figures, to heroes, to Indians, to outlaws.

Ask enthusiasts to name a few old west "celebrities" whom they may be considering for their stories before mentioning any of the ones listed below.

- Judge Roy Bean
 - Wyatt Earp
 - Calamity Jane
 - Wild Bill Hickok
 - Sitting Bull
 - Kit Carson
 - George Custer
 - Crazy Horse
 - Annie Oakley
 - Jesse James
 - Sam Houston
 - Geronimo
-
- **What are some stereotypes of the old west?**

Ask enthusiasts to name some before sharing the ones listed below.

- Shoot outs
- Gunslingers
- Lawlessness
- Rowdy saloons
- Harsh living conditions

- Romance
 - Wagon trains
 - Cowboys and Indians
 - Gambling
 - Cattle rustling
 - Posses
- **What type of research will you need to do?**
Depending on what you choose to write about you will need to research one, some, or possibly all of the following to hold the authenticity of the “old west.”
 - Figure (male & female)
 - Figure (well known)
 - Popular names of the era
 - Event
 - Territory
 - Clothing
 - Food
 - Transportation
 - Dwellings
 - Language (slang, territorial, popular phrases, etc.)
 - Actions and re-actions of the era
 - Currency
 - **How many characters should there be in a western fiction?**
Western fiction is usually kept to one, two at most, protagonist characters who, favorably, appear in every chapter.
 - **How is western fiction similar to other genres and their features?**
 - Like fantasy, there can be battles – small, or epic
 - Like historical fiction, facts need to be spot on to keep it real, even though it is a fictional story. That means research.
 - Like mystery there is often a trail of clues that must be followed to get the bad guy.

Can western fiction be considered in other sub genres?

Yes. Western fiction can easily fall into sub genres such as historical, adventure, fantasy, romance, paranormal, and even science fiction.

Below is an example of western fiction written in the sub genre of fantasy. It is an excerpt from author Janet Beasley’s YA enchanted epic fantasy series, Hidden Earth Volume 2 Planet Land ~ The Adventures of Cub and Nash (a fantasy western).

Have the enthusiasts take turns reading aloud, then discuss the elements of fantasy and the old west mixed together.

“Hidden Earth Series Volume 2 Planet Land ~ The Adventures of Cub and Nash”

Janet Beasley

Portion of Chapter 5 "I'm a What?"

"All right boys, 'nough-uh the fun for now. It's time to git down to business. Time to tell ya, Cub, why you're here."

"What about me? Am I here for a reason too?"

"Well Nash, not on purpose. But I s'pose seein' as how ya come through to the Lower West with Cub, ya can help keep an eye on 'im for me." Nash slugged Cub in the arm, and Cub did the same to Nash.

Trixie spoke up. "We'll take care-uh the dishes. You guys move over to where it's more comfterble." She nodded to Buck, and they began to clean up the table. Together they flew one dish at a time to the sink. Buck pumped some water into a couple of pans while Trixie sprinkled powdered soap onto the dish. Then she and Buck donned their special dish washing shoes, held hands, and jumped into one of the pans of water to get their shoes wet. Out they came, landing feet first on the dish. Then they skated through the

soap with their “sponge slippers” to get the dish clean. When all traces of food were gone, they flew it to the rinse water to get rid of the suds, and finally to the drying rack. Obviously, the Pee-Wees were going to be busy for a while.

Cub and Nash sank deep into fluffy cushions on the couch. Bristol’s rocker creaked when he took his seat by the window. It creaked louder when he leaned over and reached down into a tin can.

“Dandelion stem to chew on?”

“Shore. ‘Cause when I grow up, I wanna be just like you,” Cub said.

“Me too,” Nash echoed.

“But I thought ya was already growed up. Ya know, eatin’ with no silverware and all, just like perfesh’nal grownups here in the Lower West.”

“Well, ya know what I mean.” Nash felt his ears heat up.

Bristol twirled the dandelion stem a few times in his mouth and tied it in a knot with his tongue.

Once again, Cub was impressed.

Bristol stared out the window for several minutes.

The awkward silence led Cub to believe the old man was in deep thought. Finally, Bristol spoke up. “Cub, has anybody ever told ya anythang ‘bout the future?”

“Let’s see...my ma once told me that if’n I keep crossin’ my eyes they’re gonna stay that way, and my pa told me if’n I keep shovin’ watermelon seeds up my nose, vines’ll grow out-uh my ears when I get older. But that’s pretty much all I know ‘bout the future.”

“Well now there’s a couple-uh thangs I ain’t never heard tell of, so I guess ya better mind ‘em on that.” Bristol smiled at Nash, who was shaking his head and rolling his eyes. “The best advice my pa ever give me was, ‘Don’t squat with your spurs on’.” Nash giggled. The old man turned his attention back to Cub. “What would ya think if’n I said ya could bust a rock in pieces just by pointin’ at it? Would ya believe me?”

Cub shrugged his shoulders. “I guess so.”

Bristol reached into his pocket, pulled out a rock, and placed it on the small table in front of

the couch. “Go ’head boy, point at that there rock.”

Cub was not sure if he was being taken for a trick or not. Nash coaxed him on. Cub lifted his hand, pointed at the rock, and the rock just sat there.

“Oh, sorry ’bout that. I done forgot one important thang. When ya point at it, ya gotta say the words, ‘Be now dust’.”

Cub looked at Nash, then at Bristol. He curled his lips in, took a deep breath, then pointed and said, in a timid voice, “Be now dust.” A small spark fizzled from his fingertip and lumbered its way to the rock. The small rock broke into misshapen, lumpy clumps. Cub gave Nash a smug look as he blew his fingertip like a smoking gun.

Bristol sat up straight with obvious excitement. Smacking his lips, he said, “Well, it ain’t quite dust, but it’ll do for a first try.”

Nash, who had always loved magic of any kind, said, “No way! Do it again.”

“I can’t,” Cub said. “There was only one rock.”

Bristol winked at Cub. “Not a problem. Point at

the lumps and say, 'Be now whole'." He held tight to the arms of his chair.

Cub re-situated himself on the couch and did just as Bristol had told him to. This time the chunks collected, the rock regathered into its original shape (well, close anyway), and the small spark returned to Cub's fingertip, causing his wrist to snap back. The other two laughed at his shocked expression.

"Don't worry Cub. You'll get the hang of it," Bristol said.

"What was that all about?" Cub asked. He saw the Pee-Wees skating on a soapy dish, not paying any attention, and his stomach did a flip. He changed his tone. "I thought for sure Buck and Trixie was in on this, but I . . .I'm really doin' this?" He rubbed his arm. "That felt plum weird," he said as he stared at the small black powder mark on his fingertip, still not sure if he should allow himself to believe what he had just done. He was glad Bristol let the event sink in a little longer before speaking.

“It’s all your doin’ boy,” Bristol said. “I told ya, you have a reason for bein’ here. Would I lie to ya?”

“Don’t see no reason for ya to.”

“And it ain’t just rocks ya can take apart and put back together.” Bristol grabbed an arm of his rocker with one hand and his beard with the other. His elated response put a smile on Cub’s face. “If’n it’s a substance, ya can purdy much make it happen by usin’ them words I just taught ya. And ya don’t have to start by turnin’ it to dust neither; ya can work the magic in reverse. But somethin’ important to remember-ya cain’t go changin’ everthang whenever ya feel like it. It’s gotta be purdy important for ya to go usin’ that kind-uh magic. Don’t just be usin’ it to be usin’ it. Ya hear me?”

“Yessir.” Cub nodded several quick times.

Again, he stared hard at his tingling fingertip.

“Here’s ‘nother thang,” Bristol continued.

“Don’t go wastin’ it on tryin’ to turn anythang bad into bits and pieces; it don’t work real good for that purpose. The way I understand it, there’s

**some purdy mean thangs that have a way-uh
bringin' themselves back from that magic, and
they'll always be meaner'n before. And *most* important,
ya cain't use it to bring the dead back to life.
We need to leave that up to SUL. But ya can shore
try and fix 'em up if'n they're in a bad way. Oh,
and you've only got a few times it'll work for ya.
But don't get your trousers all bunched up over it,
'cause you'll know exactly when to use it. Got me?"
Cub gulped and nodded several times again, but
with a little less enthusiasm.**

Activity 2:

Write the following prompts on your wipe off board or flip chart

Ask enthusiasts to choose one and write a quick "old west" style paragraph from one of the prompts and turn it into a sub genre of western fiction.

- Clayton pulled the pistol from his holster only seconds before the outlaw.
 - Sarah snapped her lacy, black and pink fan open then looked at the rugged cowboy and said...
 - An ace of hearts shot from Ty's sleeve. "He's a cheat!" shouted Martin.
 - The day had been rough. Alone, Bart sat by the dwindling campfire. The hair on his neck stood when he heard a twig snap behind him. *Grizzly*, he thought and picked up his shot gun.
 - It was obvious from Mary's fancy hat and parasol she was not from this town.
 - Elizabeth had waited long enough. She looked at the gorgeous blue-eyed stranger, her heart pounding. She said, "I've been wanting to tell you this ever since you rode into town."
-

Discussion:

- What and/or who is going to be your main focus in your western fiction?
- What is your favorite western name for a male character? A female character?
- If you could travel back in time to the old west, what event would you want to take part in?

Session: Western Fiction - General

Creator: Janet Beasley

Handout: NOVICE

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- Poses

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We need to leave that up to SUL. But ya can shore try and fix ‘em up if’n they’re in a bad way. Oh, and you’ve only got a few times it’ll work for ya.

But don’t get your trousers all bunched up over it, ‘cause you’ll know exactly when to use it. Got me?”

Cub gulped and nodded several times again, but with a little less enthusiasm.

Title of Session: Western Fiction – Key Elements in Writing a Western Fiction
Creator: Janet Beasley
Curriculum: ADVANCED

Definition: Western fiction represents fictional settings, happenings, and characters. Settings take place in what most see as America’s Old West; the territory most represented in these novels is territory west of the Mississippi River.

Goals: By the end of the session enthusiasts will be able to construct a beginning paragraph to their western fiction that will grab the reader, set the tone, reveal an era or event, and introduce the protagonist.

Tools:

Wipe off board or flip chart and appropriate markers

Online capability for all to see

Map of United States (included in curriculum)

Color pencils or markers

Ice Breaker:

- Handout maps of the United States (one per enthusiast)
- As a group research online the layout of the land during the mid to late 1800’s
- Have enthusiasts section their maps and color them in to represent what is most widely accepted as the “old west” time period
- When done drawing, have enthusiasts share their maps with the group and tell what territory they find most interesting and why

Activity 1:

As with any genre, you have to open your story with a hook. The hook in a western fiction needs to hold key elements that set the tone, the era, the event, and/or the figure of whom the story will be focusing.

- **Cool western (genre) facts**
 - Classic westerns came on the scene in the early 1900’s when they became a theme in Hollywood film. These classics presented entertainment that built the standard for westerns to consist of ruthlessness, the chase, and the resolution of law breaking citizens. In other words the good guys always win. Most known as the “first” classic western to set the precedent on screen was Edwin S. Porter’s, “The Great Train Robbery.”

- Spaghetti westerns didn't hit the scene until the 1960's. Spaghetti westerns differ slightly, usually leaning toward a protagonist who represents a tough-guy out for vengeance brought on by motives that are purely selfish. You'll usually find more violence and action in a spaghetti western. An example of a well known spaghetti western would be "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly."
- Westerns don't always take place in America's old west.
 - Meat pie (slang term) westerns, similar to spaghetti westerns, hold the American old west feel, but are mostly filmed in Australia's Outback.
 - Northern westerns take place in the extreme northwest, meaning Alaska, or western Canada.
 - Florida, though on the east coast of the US, hold a few of their own westerns known as Florida westerns.
- **Times have changed, and old westerns, though still widely accepted by the masses, are being joined by other type westerns. Therefore, western subgenres can be created by mixing the old with the new to create sub genres:**
 - Fantasy
 - Science Fiction
 - Romance
 - Historical
 - Paranormal
 - Adventure

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Have the enthusiasts take turns reading aloud, then discuss the elements of fantasy and the old west mixed together.

Hidden Earth Series Volume 2 Planet Land ~ The Adventures of Cub and Nash

Janet Beasley

Portion of Chapter 8 "Weighed and Measured"

Cub took in a deep breath. Buck and Trixie moved behind Nash's left ear; Trixie peeked around while Buck watched over the top, and they all waited.

Cub watched as the pages began to ripple like

sand in shallow, fast-moving water. Thread by thread they detached themselves from the book's spine. They examined Nash, moving at a snail's pace from head to toe, front to back, and side to side. Each page then made a rapid circle around Nash's head and shoulders. Without warning, the pages stopped abruptly in front of Nash's face. Buck and Trixie burrowed into Nash's hair. The pages darted opposite to each other, back and forth, their papery existence snapping at the end of each movement, as if they were playing a game of hide and seek with Buck and Trixie. The pages made several rapid spirals around Nash from head to toe, then a few slower spirals back up until they were again directly in front of his face. They crinkled and crackled, folding themselves into a shape. "What are we?" page 1402 asked Nash. Cub could see the look of terror on Nash's face. Nash squeaked, "You're a palameetah," "Correct." The pages unfolded, then they crumpled to make another formation. "Now what are we?"

Buck answered, "That's easy. You're a stagecoach."

The pages acted harassed at Buck's cocky answer coming from Nash's hair, but they continued nevertheless. "What are we, Nash?"

"A stagecoach?"

"Correct."

The pages wrinkled and creased themselves into another formation resembling a head. Two very dark indentations made eyes, and smoke magically seeped from the slit that made a mouth. "What are we?"

Cub felt the blood run from his face. Buck and Trixie slunk deeper into Nash's hair at the sight. Shaking, Nash answered, "Uh. . .I don't think you're a what I think you're a who. And that who is Blackjack."

"Most excellent boy," page 1403 said in a professorial sort of tone. The pages unfolded, snapped, and the wrinkles vanished.

"Now, you Pee-Wee Flyers. If you are true and faithful Pee-Wees, tell us how blunderpokes came

to be.”

Buck and Trixie flew into plain sight. Buck answered first. “Three animals collided when SUL made the Lower West: a hippo. . .”

Trixie chimed in, “. . .a horse. . .”

Together they ended with, “. . .and a pachyderm.”

Pleased with their answer, the Pee-Wees backed up until they were sitting on Nash’s shoulders.

The pages hung motionless in the air for several seconds, then they floated down to the ground and reattached themselves to Marshall’s spine. Cub and the others could do nothing but wait for the pages’ answer. It was quiet enough to hear a Pee-Wee Flyer blink.

Marshall held his breath. At last he let out a rush of air, and the map pages rustled with force.

“The pages have decided to reveal the map to all of you!”

Cub’s tension grew as the map began to appear.

First came Bristol’s cabin in the far northeast corner of Tuck-Away Woods. Locations continued to appear on the map, working their way from east

to west. Everyone watched as deserts, mountains, rivers, and hollows developed. Small towns popped up here and there. The train track etched itself around the border, one railroad tie at a time. More towns appeared, the last being the biggest, Boulder Dache, located in the northwest corner of the Lower West. Cub studied the map. “So where’s the elemental shrine? Where’s the magic stalactite?”

- **Research is a must!** If using historical events or figures you’ll need to have your facts straight. If you’re using fictitious characters you will need to research the era and its elements to make your story come across authentic – past, present, or future.
- **What type of research will you need to do?**
Depending on what you choose to write about you will need to research one, some, or possibly all of the following to hold the authenticity of the “old west.”
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 - Currency
- **Sub plots are not normally a feature in a western fiction.** This does not mean they cannot be used, but they need to be subtle and need to have a substantial meaning to

the story. To write the most widely accepted western fiction, you definitely want to focus on your protagonist and their “quest” to the finish.

- **Antagonists** In westerns antagonists are often times stereotyped.
 - Ask enthusiasts, “When you think antagonist in a western, what are the type characters you immediately think of?” *List their answers on your wipe off board or flip chart.*
 - Once you have a few listed ask the enthusiasts to state what they think makes these type antagonists stereotype.
 - After listening to their answers, ask enthusiasts to come up with new ideas for protagonists in westerns.

Right or wrong certain races, and living styles are often times seemingly thought of as “bad guys.” Granted you can’t get around Jesse James being an outlaw, but ask yourself these few questions, “Are all old-west-outlaws bad guys by choice, or were some forced into lawlessness by being threatened with their lives? Are all western marshals good guys? Are American Indians always savages?”

- ***Write the following hook lines on your wipe off board or flip chart.***
 - Dust rolled from under the thundering hooves of the Pinkertons’ horses as the posse raced yet again, hot on the trail of the James gang.
 - In the midst of the controlled chaos, Garrett could feel Ella’s sweaty hand in his as they awaited the signal to begin the race across the land to stake their claim of 160 acres.
 - When the wind finally stirred and water ran from the pump, Ethan could not wait to share the sight of the new, working windmill with his family, but fate had a different idea.
 - When Butch heard the steam-whistle in the distance adrenaline rushed, he donned his robber’s face, nodded at Sundance and together they made their move.
 - Sitting Bull felt the sadness try to overtake him as he rode away from his last performance with Buffalo Bill.
 - From outside the misshapen log walls Sam heard the cries before, during, and after his wife Nora gave birth to another stillborn son.
 - Zeke lay in his cell listening to the haunting sounds of the gallows being built until the crash of his cell wall superseded the noise and he heard his outlaw friend shout, “Come on! Let’s get you out of here!”
 - Have enthusiasts take turns reading aloud one at a time, and discuss after each hook line the keys they feel helped them establish the “novel” as a western fiction.
 - Who or what will be the main focus of each story?

Activity 2:

- Have enthusiasts use the key elements of figure, era, setting, tone, and/or event and write an opening paragraph to their story.
- Read select paragraphs aloud and discuss the key elements found in the enthusiast's piece.

Discussion:

- Would you rather be a good guy or a villain in a western, and why?
- What brings you to write western fiction?
- If you could play a famous western figure on the big screen, who would it be and why?

Session: Western Fiction – Key Elements in Writing Western Fiction
Creator: Janet Beasley
Handout: ADVANCED

Definition: Western fiction represents fictional settings, happenings, and characters. Settings take place in what most see as America's Old West; the territory most represented in these novels is territory west of the Mississippi River.

As with any genre, you have to open your story with a hook. The hook in a western fiction needs to hold key elements that set the tone, the era, the event, and/or the figure of whom the story will be focusing.

- **Cool western (genre) facts**
 - Classic westerns came on the scene in the early 1900's when they became a theme in Hollywood film. These classics presented entertainment that built the standard for westerns to consist of ruthlessness, the chase, and the resolution of law breaking citizens. In other words the good guys always win. Most known as the "first" classic western to set the precedent on screen was Edwin S. Porter's, "The Great Train Robbery."
 - Spaghetti westerns didn't hit the scene until the 1960's. Spaghetti westerns differ slightly, usually leaning toward a protagonist who represents a tough-guy out for vengeance brought on by motives that are purely selfish. You'll usually find more violence and action in a spaghetti western. An example of a well known spaghetti western would be The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly."
 - Westerns don't always take place in America's old west.
 - Meat pie (slang term) westerns, similar to spaghetti westerns, hold the American old west feel, but are mostly filmed in Australia's Outback.
 - Northern westerns take place in the extreme northwest, meaning Alaska, or western Canada.
 - Florida, though on the east coast of the US, hold a few of their own westerns known as Florida westerns.
- **Times have changed, and old westerns, though still widely accepted by the masses, are being joined by other type westerns. Therefore, western subgenres can be created by mixing the old with the new to create sub genres:**
 - Fantasy
 - Science Fiction
 - Romance
 - Historical
 - Paranormal
 - Adventure

Below is an example of western fiction written in the sub genre of fantasy. It is an excerpt from author Janet Beasley's YA enchanted epic fantasy series, Hidden Earth Volume 2 Planet Land ~ The Adventures of Cub and Nash (a fantasy western).

Have the enthusiasts take turns reading aloud, then discuss the elements of fantasy and the old west mixed together.

Hidden Earth Series Volume 2 Planet Land ~ The Adventures of Cub and Nash

Janet Beasley

Portion of Chapter 8 "Weighed and Measured"

Cub took in a deep breath. Buck and Trixie moved behind Nash's left ear; Trixie peeked around while Buck watched over the top, and they all waited.

Cub watched as the pages began to ripple like sand in shallow, fast-moving water. Thread by thread they detached themselves from the book's spine. They examined Nash, moving at a snail's pace from head to toe, front to back, and side to side. Each page then made a rapid circle around Nash's head and shoulders. Without warning, the pages stopped abruptly in front of Nash's face. Buck and Trixie burrowed into Nash's hair. The pages darted opposite to each other, back and forth, their papery existence snapping at the end of each movement, as if they were playing a game

of hide and seek with Buck and Trixie. The pages made several rapid spirals around Nash from head to toe, then a few slower spirals back up until they were again directly in front of his face. They crinkled and crackled, folding themselves into a shape. “What are we?” page 1402 asked Nash.

Cub could see the look of terror on Nash’s face.

Nash squeaked, “You’re a palameetah,”

“Correct.” The pages unfolded, then they crumpled to make another formation. “Now what are we?”

Buck answered, “That’s easy. You’re a stagecoach.”

The pages acted harassed at Buck’s cocky answer coming from Nash’s hair, but they continued nevertheless. “What are we, Nash?”

“A stagecoach?”

“Correct.”

The pages wrinkled and creased themselves into another formation resembling a head. Two very dark indentations made eyes, and smoke magically seeped from the slit that made a

mouth. “What are we?”

Cub felt the blood run from his face. Buck and Trixie slunk deeper into Nash’s hair at the sight. Shaking, Nash answered, “Uh. . .I don’t think you’re a *what*, I think you’re a *who*. And that *who* is Blackjack.”

“Most excellent boy,” page 1403 said in a professorial sort of tone. The pages unfolded, snapped, and the wrinkles vanished.

“Now, you Pee-Wee Flyers. If you are true and faithful Pee-Wees, tell us how blunderpokes came to be.”

Buck and Trixie flew into plain sight. Buck answered first. “Three animals collided when SUL made the Lower West: a hippo. . .”

Trixie chimed in, “. . .a horse. . .”

Together they ended with, “. . .and a pachyderm.”

Pleased with their answer, the Pee-Wees backed up until they were sitting on Nash’s shoulders. The pages hung motionless in the air for several seconds, then they floated down to the ground and reattached themselves to Marshall’s spine. Cub

and the others could do nothing but wait for the pages' answer. It was quiet enough to hear a Pee-Wee Flyer blink.

Marshall held his breath. At last he let out a rush of air, and the map pages rustled with force.

“The pages have decided to reveal the map to all of you!”

Cub's tension grew as the map began to appear.

First came Bristol's cabin in the far northeast corner of Tuck-Away Woods. Locations continued to appear on the map, working their way from east to west. Everyone watched as deserts, mountains, rivers, and hollows developed. Small towns popped up here and there. The train track etched itself around the border, one railroad tie at a time. More towns appeared, the last being the biggest,

Boulder Dache, located in the northwest corner of the Lower West. Cub studied the map. “So where's the elemental shrine? Where's the magic stalactite?”

- **Research is a must!** If using historical events or figures you'll need to have your facts straight. If you're using fictitious characters you will need to research the era and its elements to make your story come across authentic – past, present, or future.
- **What type of research will you need to do?**
Depending on what you choose to write about you will need to research one, some, or possibly all of the following to hold the authenticity of the “old west.”
 - Figure (male & female)
 - Figure (well known)
 - Popular names of the era
 - Event
 - Territory
 - Clothing
 - Food
 - Transportation
 - Dwellings
 - Language (slang, territorial, popular phrases, etc.)
 - Actions and re-actions of the era
 - Currency
- **Sub plots are not normally a feature in a western fiction.** This does not mean they cannot be used, but they need to be subtle and need to have a substantial meaning to the story. To write the most widely accepted western fiction, you definitely want to focus on your protagonist and their “quest” to the finish.
- **Antagonists** In westerns antagonists are often times stereotyped.

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