

Reading Guide #13: Pixar's 22 Rules of Storytelling

1. You admire a character for trying more than for their _____.
2. You gotta keep in mind what's _____ to you as an audience, not what's _____ to do as a writer. They can be very different.
3. Trying for _____ is important, but you won't see what the story is actually about til you're at the end of it. Now rewrite.
4. Once upon a time there was _____. Every day, _____. One day _____. _____, _____. Because of that, _____. Until finally _____.
5. Simplify. Focus. Combine characters. Hop over detours. You'll feel like you're losing valuable stuff but _____.
6. What is your character good at, comfortable with? Throw the _____ at them. Challenge them. How do they deal?
7. Come up with your ending before you figure out your middle. Seriously. _____, get yours working up front.
8. _____, let go even if it's not perfect. In an ideal world you have both, but move on. Do better next time.
9. When you're stuck, make a list of what _____ happen next. Lots of times the material to get you unstuck will show up.
10. Pull apart the stories you like. What you like in them is _____; you've got to recognize it before you can use it.
11. Putting it on paper lets you start fixing it. If it stays in your head, _____, you'll never share it with anyone.
12. Discount the 1st thing that comes to mind. And the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th – get the _____ out of the way. Surprise yourself.
13. Give your characters opinions. Passive/malleable might seem likable to you as you write, but it's _____ to the audience.
14. Why must you tell THIS story? What's the belief burning within you that your story feeds off of? That's the _____ of it.

15. If you were your character, in this situation, how would you feel? _____ lends credibility to unbelievable situations.
16. What are the stakes? Give us reason to root for the character. What happens if they don't _____ ? Stack the odds against.
17. No work is ever wasted. If it's not working, let go and _____ – it'll come back around to be useful later.
18. You have to know yourself: the difference between doing your best & fussing. Story is _____, not refining.
19. Coincidences to get characters into trouble are great; coincidences to get them out of it are _____.
20. Exercise: take the building blocks of a movie you _____. How d'you rearrange them into what you DO like?
21. You gotta identify with your _____/characters, can't just write 'cool'. What would make YOU act that way?
22. What's the _____ of your story? Most economical telling of it? If you know that, you can build out from there.