

The Periodic Table of Storytelling

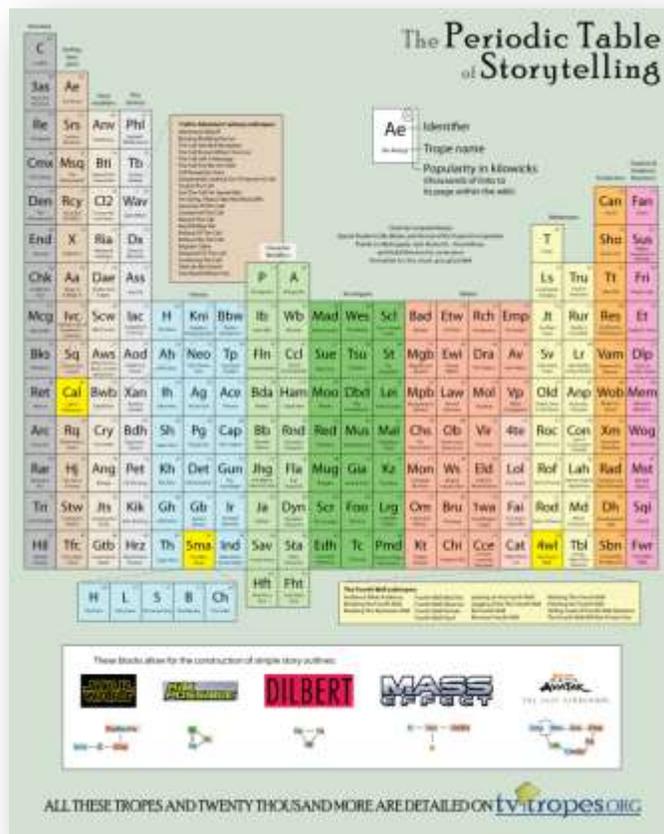
Steven Shepard

Steve@ShepardComm.com

2 June 2013



I love it when I run across something unique, quirky, fun, and absolutely useful in the world of storytelling. Those of you who have read the other posts in this series know that I recently wrote about a book I had just completed called “The Disappearing Spoon,” which was about the history of the Periodic Table of the Elements. The other day I saw a reference to something called “The Periodic Table of Storytelling” and I was immediately drawn to find it. It didn’t take long; you can find it here: <http://dawnpaladin.deviantart.com/art/Periodic-Table-of-Storytelling-203548951>.



Created by graphic artist Dawn Paladin as part of a class project, the table is absolutely amazing – and actually very useful to those of us who are forging stories. I know that you can’t see it – it’s too small – but the columns all have names. But instead of being called alkali metals, alkali earths, lanthanoids and transition metals, the columns are labeled Structure, Setting, Story Modifiers, Plot Devices, Heroes, etc. Structure, for example, includes such things as conflict, the three-act model, the climax, etc. Setting includes serious business, X meets Y, and so on. And Heroes includes knight in shining armor, badass bookworm, and the chosen one.

What I like about this is that it demonstrates a keen understanding of storytelling and provides for all of

us some additional insight into how stories are structured. For example, take a look at the graphic shown below, which is the bottom-most element of Dawn Paladin’s graphic:



This shows the structure of simple story outlines. For example, look at Dilbert. It comprises a triangle made up of the story elements Sta (9th column, Static Character), Sq (2nd column, Status Quo is God), and Hil (1st column, Hilarity Ensues).

Take some time to play around with this and I'm sure that you'll find, as I did, that there is real value here. And do us all a favor: If you like this graphic, consider sending a donation to Ms. Paladin for taking the time to create this. You can buy a poster and other storytelling resources; artists appreciate such generosity.

Thanks for reading.