Phil Parker in *The Art and Science of Screenwriting* (1999) suggests that there are ten basic story types:

1 The Romance
A character is seen to be emotionally lacking or missing something or someone. Something/someone – the object of desire – is seen as a potential solution. The character struggles to overcome barriers between himself and the object of desire and succeeds in overcoming some, if not all, of them. The resolution comes when the character unites with the object of desire (eg *When Harry Met Sally,* Rob Reiner, 1989, US).

2 The Unrecognised Virtue
The character with a virtue becomes part of someone else's world and falls in love with a powerful character in this world. The character seeks to prove that she is desirable to the powerful character but the power relationship undermines this. The character attempts to solve a problem for the powerful character and, in doing so, her virtue is finally recognised (eg *Pretty Woman*, Garry Marshall, US, 1990).

3 The Fatal Flaw
The character has a quality that brings success and enables him to gain opportunities denied to other characters. He uses opportunities for his own gain at the expense of others, but when he recognises the damage he has done he sets himmself a new challenge. However, the quality which brought him success leads to failure in the new challenge (eg William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*).

4 The Debt That Must Be Repaid
The character wants something or someone and becomes aware that something or someone is available which will possibly give her what she wants – at a price. The character agrees to pay the price later and pursues her original desire. The character attempts to avoid settling the debt but is finally confronted by the debtor and the debt is repaid (eg *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson).

5 The Spider and the Fly
The character wants to make another character do his bidding but, having no power to force her, devises a plan to trap her into doing it. The character successfully executes the plan, achieves his initial goal and then faces a new future (eg *Double Indemnity*, Billy Wilder, US, 1944).

6 The Gift Taken Away
The character has a gift which she loses and seeks to regain. The pursuit of the gift leads her into a new situation to which she becomes reconciled (eg *Rain Man*, Barry Levinson, US, 1988).

7 The Quest
The character is set a task to find someone or something. He accepts the challenge, searches for and finds the someone or something. He is then rewarded, or not, for his success in the quest (eg *Star Wars*, George Lucas, US, 1977).

8 The Rites of Passage
The character recognises that she has reached the next 'age' in her life and attempts to learn what she needs to know to adapt to this new age. She tries to act as if she has already acquired the necessary knowledge and fails. She then encounters a challenge which requires her to reach beyond what she has already achieved. Her success reflects her maturation into the new phase of her life (eg *Stand by Me*, Rob Reiner, US, 1986).

9 The Wanderer

The character arrives in a new place and discovers a problem associated with it. In facing the problem she reveals why she left the last place, then attempts to move on again (eg *Shane*, George Stevens, US, 1953).

10 The Character Who Cannot Be Put Down

The character demonstrates his prowess in a certain situation but then faces a bigger challenge, which he accepts. He succeeds by triumphing over a range of antagonistic forces (eg *Die Hard,* John McTiernan, 1988, US).

Other story types

Robert McKee, in *Story* (1998), also offers us a list of story types, a 'genre and sub-genre system used by screenwriters' which includes entries based on setting as well as story structure – the most useful of which are:

- Maturation Plot (the coming of age story);

- Redemption Plot (moral change in protagonist from bad to good);

- Punitive Plot (protagonist changes from good to bad and is punished);

- Testing Plot (willpower versus the temptation to surrender);

- Education Plot (protagonist's view of life/self/people changes from negative to positive);

- Disillusionment Plot (protagonist's worldview changes from positive to negative).

Story types

Consider *The Slave and the Lion*, *Joyride* and other film narratives you have examined, and put each of them into one or more of the following categories:

- The Romance
- The Unrecognised Virtue
- The Fatal Flaw
- The Debt That Must Be Repaid
- The Spider and the Fly
- The Gift Taken Away
- The Quest
- The Rites of Passage
- The Wanderer
- The Character Who Cannot Be Put Down.

Now try to place them in these categories:

- Maturation Plot
- Redemption Plot
- Punitive Plot
- Testing Plot
- Education Plot
- Disillusionment Plot.

What does this tell you about:
- The story?
- The protagonist?