

# SWOT for Storytellers

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SWOT was originally designed for business strategy, but I've found that its core logic works surprisingly well for redrafting creative work. It enables us to take a step back and acknowledge what we do well and less well, to spot opportunities and be aware of obstacles – in other words, it enables honest self-scrutiny!

The 'weaknesses' become 'opportunities', which is why I like it as a redrafting tool.

Here's one I did for one of my own short stories.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong emotional hook	Slow, wordy pacing in first half (too much 'telling')
Ending ties themes together	Dialogue could be more natural
Metaphor (burning books and fighting fires) links past and present	Character change happens too suddenly at end
Historical detail (Nazi book burnings)	Some overly long sentences
Generational and heritage themes	The grandmather's hints are a bit forced
Hidden letter as a reveal creates intrigue	
Opportunities	Threats
Deepen Lizzy's reaction to the letter, so her empathy grows more naturally	Story could be seen as too message-heavy
Add more sensory detail	Historical accuracy should be checked
Show more of Lizzy's personality earlier, to emphasise the transformation later	Risk of clichéd tropes (disinterested teen learns to appreciate the past' )
	Younger readers might find the style old-fashioned

On the next page, I've provided some prompts for completing a SWOT analysis ...

## SWOT Prompts

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>What are the two or three strongest moments or elements?</p> <p>Is the dialogue natural and purposeful?</p> <p>Does the narrative have a clear theme?</p> <p>Is the setting convincing?</p> <p>Is the voice distinctive and consistent throughout?</p> <p>Are the characters three-dimensional and memorable?</p> <p>Is the world-building convincing without being overwhelming?</p> <p>Does the opening hook the reader quickly?</p> <p>Is the ending satisfying (not necessarily 'neat')?</p>	<p>Where does the narrative feel slow, confusing or boring?</p> <p>Which parts are 'telling' rather than showing?</p> <p>Are there plot holes or unresolved threads?</p> <p>Is any section over-written, under-written, or self-indulgent?</p> <p>Are any characters underdeveloped or interchangeable?</p> <p>Does the story rely too heavily on coincidence or convenience?</p> <p>Is the structure clear, or does the reader risk losing their way?</p> <p>Is the point of view consistent and well chosen?</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Where can I add more sensory detail?</p> <p>What can I cut?</p> <p>Is the story's theme timely or connected to a current cultural conversation?</p> <p>Does it fit a clearly defined genre or market, making it easier to pitch?</p> <p>Could it be developed into a series or longer work?</p> <p>Is there an underserved audience who would connect strongly with this story?</p> <p>Could the story be adapted — into a screenplay, podcast, or stage play?</p> <p>Are there festivals, competitions, or publications this piece is well-suited to?</p> <p>Do I have a personal platform or connection to help promote it?</p>	<p>Is the market for this genre currently saturated?</p> <p>Does the story cover sensitive subjects that require careful handling?</p> <p>Could the story's topicality make it feel dated quickly?</p> <p>Are there similar works already published that it will inevitably be compared to?</p> <p>Does the length or format limit where it can be submitted?</p> <p>Is my intended audience difficult to reach or niche?</p> <p>Could aspects of the story be misread or misinterpreted by certain readers?</p>