

How to Merge Past Events with the Current

Last month, Ken gave an outline of the makeup of a character or characters. One of his comments and I cannot remember which, prompted me to look into dual timelines in a story. By dual time lines, I mean one happening in the past and the other happening currently or both happening at the same time but as separate activities.

I don't suppose this issue applies to everybody in CWL but it is an interesting subject and challenge.

In W. Somerset Maugham's book of short stories "*The Trembling of a Leaf*" the third story "*The Fall of Edward Barnard*" Maugham manages the timeline very well, in my opinion. The time line is over a two year period but there is no distinct separation of the period. It starts in the current and then drifts back two years and then forward to the current.

On a website <https://www.writersandartists.co.uk> Natasha Bell gives five points on how to successfully achieve different time lines. Point #1 is "**Plan**".

Any comments on "plan"? Everybody says to "plan"- do we?

In a work I have written "Five Elements Brotherhood" I have attempted to include different time lines. It became a bit complicated, so I actually laid it out on an Excel spreadsheet

K. K. Weiland in her "Six Points to Pull off Dual Timelines"

<https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/> writes that it is necessary to make both timelines equally interesting.

In Paula Hawkins' novel "Girl on the Train" I found myself struggling with one timeline to a point where I actually skipped a chapter here and there as it became tedious. The book is highly acclaimed and even a movie made of it, but I guess you can please some of the people all of the time.

Any comments?

Balance the timelines. Point 2 that K. M Weiland makes is: The balance you decide upon for your story doesn't have to be perfectly equal. You may want to place more emphasis on one timeline over the other, which will keep you from achieving a 50/50 balance. But you *will* want to organize the book so the timelines appear in a logical pattern.

Natasha Bell suggests to look for thematic links. The temptation with multiple timelines is to get too focused on how each one works separately, but at some point you'll need to consider them as a whole. If you're using alternating chapters, then you need to constantly be asking yourself why this chapter comes after that one and what it's setting up for the next. She also suggests using a spreadsheet

