How to write a novel using open source software

Introduction to bibisco
Andrea Feccomandi
The story of bibisco started in 1997.
ever since I was a child I’ve loved reading, but…

...the video impressed me so much that an urgency to write came over me
In that period, I spent so many nights in front of my text editor, writing one word after another, following the idea of the story I had in my mind. But every time I read what I had written, I felt a deep disappointment. I didn’t understand why, but it didn’t work.
“You shouldn’t write if you can’t write.”
— Ernest Hemingway
many years later I happened to watch the video again...

...and that urgency to write came back over me
Lesson #1

the idea of
the novelist
who writes
guided only by
the sacred
fire of
inspiration is
quite naive.
Lesson #2
(the most important)

The conflict of each character is the driving force of every novel.
But... what is a conflict?

reaction to an external situation!

desire to be realized!

inner need!
Conflict leads a character to action and to change the condition of things.
a novel is the story of a change in the condition of things... ...and of the evolution of characters during this process
There is no novel without conflict.
It’s all about characters, baby...

... novels only work if their characters are believable!
Characters that are completely good or completely evil are stereotypes and therefore are not believable.
Characters are believable when you can understand the complexity of their human nature.
- How can we create believable characters, Elsa?

- We have to know everything about them, Anna.
Psychology

Ambitious?

Curious of indifferent?

Funny or boring?

Open minded?

Patient?
They were telling me their stories and I just had to listen and write down what they said.
I was ready to write the first scenes of my novel... but soon I found myself lost in a mountain of text documents files.
What I really needed was a novel development environment.

I looked for a software like this, but I couldn’t find it.
I am a developer and I have the super power to create things!
I felt a deep sense of well-being and fulfillment in seeing my literary soul and my computer soul, which I have always considered as opposed, merging in the construction of something new.
What have you done today for bibisco?
2 years later... bibisco 1.0
The magic of open source

bugs
new features
translations
posts and articles
beautiful messages
This is your novel

here are some tips
3. Define a premise

The premise contains the entire novel in just one sentence: conflict and its resolution.

Let’s suppose your novel to be about a young man that leaves his small town to go to New York, to make his fortune as an actor. After several failures and humiliations, he finally achieves success. In this case, the premise could be: desire to perform (conflict) and determination lead to success (resolution).

Premise is the guide to the novel: the conclusion must start from conflict.

If the premise is clear, everything comes easier. For example, for our aspiring actor, determination and artistic sense could be revealed in the first chapters, by narrating that during his childhood he passed an entire summer helping his grandmother decorate one of her kitchen walls, creating a huge mosaic of every kind of fruit and vegetable.
Architecture of the novel

- **Premise**: Describe the entire novel in one sentence. Conflict and resolution.
- **Fabula**: Narration of the events sorted by their logical and chronological sequence.
- **Setting**: Description of the place, time, and social context where the story is developed.

**Narrative strands**

- Harriet Smith and Mr Elton
- Frank Churchill
- Jane Fairfax
Although convinced that she herself will never marry, Emma Woodhouse, a precocious twenty-year-old resident of the village of Highbury, imagines herself to be naturally gifted in conjuring love matches.

After self-declared success at matchmaking between her governess and Mr. Weston, a village widower, Emma takes it upon herself to find an eligible match for her new friend, Harriet Smith.

Though Harriet’s parentage is unknown, Emma is convinced that Harriet deserves to be a gentleman’s wife and sets her friend’s sights on Mr. Elton, the village vicar.

Meanwhile, Emma persuades Harriet to reject the proposal of Robert Martin, a well-to-do farmer for whom Harriet clearly has feelings.

Harriet becomes infatuated with Mr. Elton under Emma’s encouragement, but Emma’s plans go awry when Elton makes it clear that his affection is for Emma, not Harriet.

Emma realizes that her obsession with making a match for Harriet has blinded her to the true nature of the situation. Mr. Knightley, Emma’s brother-in-law and treasured friend, watches Emma’s matchmaking efforts with a critical eye.

He believes that Mr. Martin is a worthy young man whom Harriet would be lucky to marry. He and Emma quarrel over Emma’s meddling, and, as usual, Mr. Knightley proves to be the wiser of the pair.

Elton, spurned by Emma and offended by her insinuation that Harriet is his equal, leaves for the town of Bath and marries a girl there almost immediately.

Emma is left to comfort Harriet and to wonder about the
**Main characters**

- Emma Woodhouse
- George Knightley

**Secondary characters**

- Mr. Frank Churchill
- Harriet Smith
- Jane Fairfax
- Philip Elton
- Augusta Elton
- Mrs Anne Welston
- Mr Weston
- Miss Bates
- Mr Henry Woodhouse
- Isabella Knightley
- John Knightley
### Emma Woodhouse

1. **Who is he/she?**
   - **Personal data**
     - First name, surname, nickname, gender, age, birthplace, residence, education, financial situation.
   - **Psychology**
     - Each and every aspect of the character's psychology.

2. **How does he/she look?**
   - **Physical features**
     - Eyes, hair, mouth, nose, ears, hands, build, height, weight, race.
   - **Ideas and passions**
     - Religious ideas, political views, passions, hobbies, obsessions, vices.

3. **What does he/she think?**
   - **Behaviours, attitudes**
     - How the character looks, talks, laughs, cries, walks, drinks, eats.
   - **Sociology**
     - Family, loves, friendship.

4. **Where does he/she come from?**
   - **Images**
     - Character images collection.
   - **Life before the story’s beginning**
     - Childhood, adolescence, school life, professional life, before the beginning of the story.

5. **Where does he/she go?**
   - **Conflict**
     - What generates conflict? Internal needs or external circumstances? Which is the real issue at stake?
   - **Evolution**
     - How the character evolves during the story.
1. Who is he/she?

2. Personal data
   First name, surname, nickname, age, birthplace, residence, economic status, financial situation.

3. What does he/she think?

4. Psychology
   Each and every aspect of the psychological state.

5. Where does he/she go?

6. Conflict
   What generates conflict? Internal or external circumstances? Is there a real issue at stake?
FOSDEM '17

#1

Reason
What role does this chapter play? How does it contribute to the development of the novel?

Notes
Ideas, notes, cues....

Scenes

#1
Introduction

#2
Highbury

+ create a scene
Introduction

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father, and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period.

Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses, and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection.

Sixteen years had Miss Taylor been in Mr. Woodhouse's family, less as a governess than a friend, very fond of both daughters, but particularly of Emma. Between them it was more the intimacy of sisters.

Even before Miss Taylor had ceased to hold the nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now long passed away, they had been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own.
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## Characters' Distribution

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<th>Character</th>
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Export project

- export in PDF
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40000+ downloads
8 languages

one of the 7 cool little open source projects that stood out in 2016 in the yearbook of opensource.com
Let’s get technical, technical!

bibisco 1.x: Java desktop application available for Linux, Mac, Windows written with Eclipse RCP framework; the UI is written in HTML5 and Javascript.

bibisco 2.0: fully HTML5 and Javascript application, written with Electron framework by Github.
About me.

Andrea Feccomandi. 41 years old. From Bologna, northern Italy. I’m a family man and I love my beautiful wife and my two kids. I’m a passionate software engineer and I’m a CTO of a software house. I love books, music, movies, tv series, basketball, lego.
I have not yet written my novel...

but if it's true that a person is happy when is able to fully develop its potential

bibisco made me a happier person.
That's all.
Thank you!