

Creating a Story Outline Using Threads and AllMyNotes Organizer

David Lovelock

December 17, 2017

Overview

The purpose of this document is to show how to use Threads—chronological sequences of events—and the Windows program AllMyNotes Organizer to create an outline for a novel, here called a **Story Outline**.¹

AllMyNotes Organizer, <https://allmynotes.vladonai.com/>, is a universal outliner for organizing any types of data. After creating a new database, here called “MyData”, the opening screen is divided into two panels. See Figure 1. The left-hand panel shows the start of a tree-like structure—which can contain Folders and Note titles—while the right-hand panel is where associated notes are created and edited.

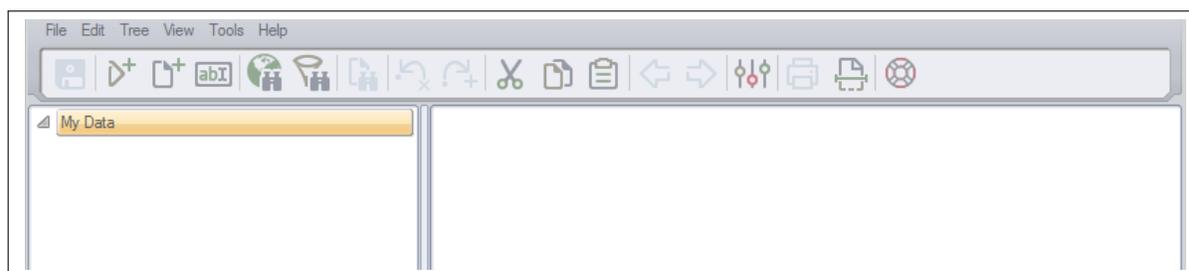


Figure 1: Opening Screen of AllMyNotes Organizer

AllMyNotes Organizer is a multi-purpose tool, so it is a convenient way to organize and visualize the characters, events, ideas, plots, subplots and background information that will make up, or inform, a story. It provides a method for the writer to keep a chronological record of events and then to transform them into an outline.

When writers start an outline for a new story, they usually have some initial ideas. These ideas could range from a vague premise with no specific characters—at best perhaps some names—to a more detailed premise with a few defined characters; from a collection of a few characters searching for a premise to numerous interesting characters with objectives.

The purpose of this document is show how to use AllMyNotes Organizer to start with these initial ideas and help writers produce and organize a detailed outline of a story as a collection of characters and events. AllMyNotes Organizer does **not** create these characters and events—that is for the writer’s imagination. However, AllMyNotes Organizer can not only organize these ideas but also trigger additional ones.

The basic idea is to use the tree in Figure 1—the left-hand panel—to identify the important elements of the story, and use the note editor—the right-hand panel—to amplify these elements if necessary.

We assume that the writer is familiar with AllMyNotes Organizer. In particular, they know the difference between a Folder and a Note; how to add Folders, **F11**, and Notes, **F7**, to the tree; how to rename a Folder or Note, **F2**; how to reposition Folders and Notes in the tree; and how to duplicate Folders and Notes, **Ctrl**⌘**C** followed by **Ctrl**⌘**V**. They also must be able to identify Folders and Notes by their icons. Notes can be added to Folders, but Folders cannot be added to Notes. In this documents **Folders** are identified in a different font, while “Events” are in quotations.

Initially it is a good idea for the writer to create a Template containing Folders similar to the one shown in Figure 2, and save it, say as “Template”, for future use. The writer should also save the template under a name of their choosing before continuing with the rest of this document.

In Figure 2, the Folders under **Characters** are where Note titles are used to enter the names of **Family**, **Friends**, . . . , as they are introduced, while the corresponding Notes can contain any associated details.

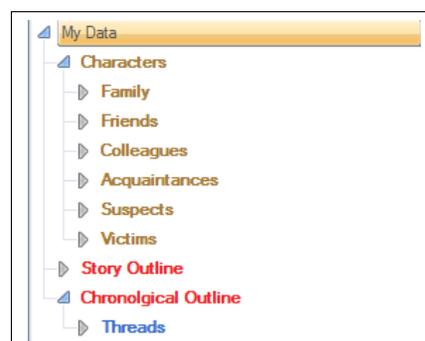


Figure 2: Story Template

¹The ideas in this document are not restricted to using AllMyNotes Organizer—any outliner with similar features could be used.

The **Story Outline** will contain the final detailed outline. The **Chronological Outline** is where the outline of the story is created, but in chronological order. The idea is to first create the **Chronological Outline**, then to copy it to the **Story Outline**, and finally to re-organize its structure to achieve the desired dramatic effect.

As expected, the **Folder Threads** will contain **Threads**. **A Thread is a sub-Folder of the Folder Threads which contains a collection of related events, with a common emphasis, in chronological order.**

Examples of threads include

- A plot or sub-plot following cause and effect.
- A scene in chronological order.
- A sequence of chronological events, followed by a scene/plot/sub-plot in chronological order, followed by another sequence of chronological events.
- A character's biographical time-line.
- The progress of an object, for example a MacGuffin, through time.
- The historical changes to an item, such as a city, a specific location, a building, a geographical feature, the terrain, the vegetation, the sea level,
- The change of an idea over time.
- The change in weather over time.
- The change in someone's interests or goals over time.
- Instructions/recipe for making/using an item.
- A single event, describing something at a particular time, such as the location of the story.

In this document an event is something that occurs at a particular time. An example of an event is someone's birth; however watching a kettle boil is not an event because it does not occur at a particular time—it has a starting time and an ending time.

In the tree, an event is the title of a Note. The Note Editor can be used to amplify details of an event in various ways. For example possible details of an event could include

- A brief summary.
- A longer description.
- Reminder notes, possibly bulleted.
- Some unanswered questions, possibly bulleted, that need to be resolved eventually.
- Paragraphs of text that might be included in the final story, as is.
- A combination of the above.

So the **Story Outline** could range from a skeleton of just event titles to a fully detailed summary of a story—all depending on the preferences of the writer.

The creation of a detailed outline using AllMyNotes Organizer is done in two steps:

1. First the writer creates a **Chronological Outline** of the major events in the story consisting of events usually copied from the **Threads**.
2. Then the **Chronological Outline** is copied to the **Story Outline** which the writer may choose to re-organize to determine the structure of the final story to achieve a desired dramatic effect.

There are a number of words in this document that are used in specific ways, such as Event, Story Outline, Chronological Outline, Thread, as so on. These have been collected together in a Glossary on page 18 for easy reference.

1. Creating a Chronological Outline

The basic components of a **Chronological Outline** are events. The broad idea is that the writer creates a number of threads, each with a different emphasis. Appropriate events from the threads are then copied to the **Chronological Outline**.

The same event may occur in two (or more) different places. When this happens, the event is called a **shared event**.

The purpose of this method is to gradually duplicate some of the events in threads as shared events in the **Chronological Outline**. So, once created, threads change very little, whereas the **Chronological Outline** is constantly added to. Not all events need be shared with the **Chronological Outline**, and some threads may

have no shared events with the **Chronological Outline**, or any other thread—they just stand alone for possible later inclusion.

Figure 3 explains the process used to create a **Story Outline**. Various threads (numbered 1 through 3) share some events with the **Chronological Outline**. That is then used to create the **Story Outline**. Thread 4 shares no events with the **Chronological Outline**, but does share an event with Thread 3. Thread 5 shares no events with the **Chronological Outline**, nor with any of the other four threads. Shared events can go both ways. Threads can share their events with the **Chronological Outline**, and the **Chronological Outline** can share its events with threads.

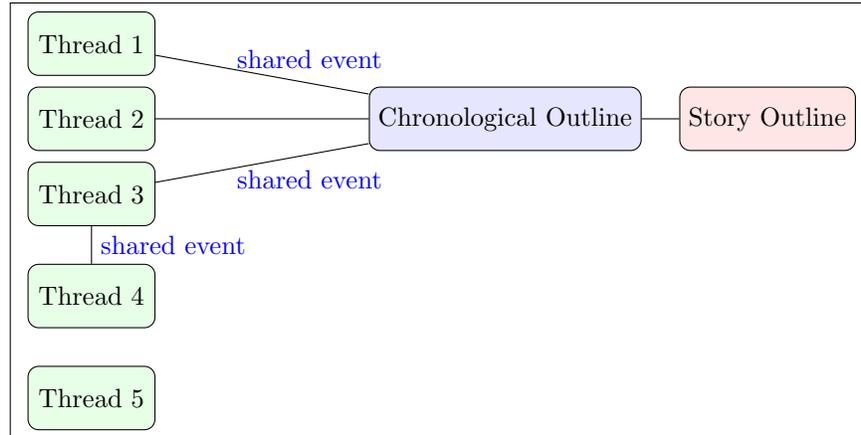


Figure 3: Schematic of the AllMyNotes Organizer process

An event in one thread that is to be shared with a Folder, is not moved to that Folder—it is duplicated. Consequently the original thread’s chronology is preserved for future use and reference.

To better understand the interaction of Threads and AllMyNotes Organizer, the next two sections are devoted to sample uses of them. In the first section the writer starts with an idea for a plot and adds characters, while, in the second section, the writer starts with some characters and adds a plot. Both samples should be read in sequence and in full. Some readers have found it beneficial to imagine writing their own biography while reading these samples.

Sample Use of Threads and AllMyNotes Organizer Starting with a Plot

The outline of this sample use of Threads and AllMyNotes Organizer starting with a plot, is:

1. Create a **Chronological Outline**—a Folder.
2. Add events—Notes—to the **Chronological Outline**, possibly with details.
3. Create threads, possibly based on events in the **Chronological Outline**.
4. Concentrate on each thread, fleshing it out.
5. Share appropriate events from these threads with the **Chronological Outline**.
6. If the **Chronological Outline** still needs more events, return to item 2.

So the first thing a writer does is create a **Chronological Outline** and add chronological events (Notes). There can be as many events as the writer needs or can think of. The number of initial events could range from one or two to a much more detailed preliminary outline, but the events must be in chronological order.

For example, in the **Chronological Outline**, the writer might have added events with titles such as “Ken has accident” and “Ken admitted to hospital”, where Ken is the protagonist. Because a character named Ken has been introduced, a Folder called **Ken** is added under **Family**. See Figure 4. The two events could be the entire initial **Chronological Outline**, or be two of a number of events not shown in this figure.²

When looking at events, such as the ones shown in Figure 4, there are two different ways to proceed, either (a) by adding details to an event, or (b) by adding threads, triggered by an event. Each of these is now treated in turn.

²In a more realistic setting, there will be many events in the **Chronological Outline**. Which event should a writer start with? Not necessarily the first one. A common recommendation is to start with the event that excites the writer the most, or the event that the writer is most comfortable with.

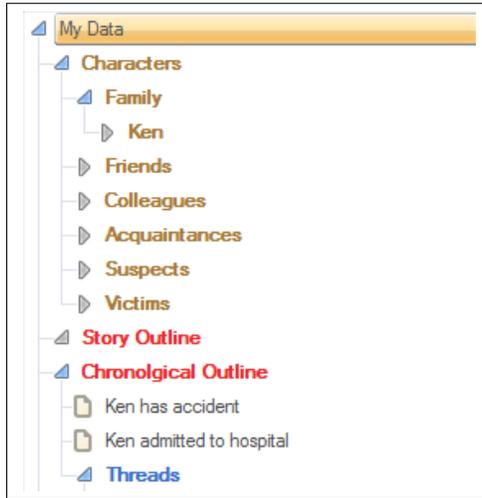


Figure 4: Added a Character and Two Events

(a) Adding Details to an Event

If a writer wishes to add details to an event, they could ask questions starting with “Who?”, “What”, “When?”, “Where?”, “Why?”, or “How?”.³ At this stage the writer may not have complete answers to these questions.

The first event in the **Chronological Outline** is a Note with the title “Ken has accident”. This could raise obvious questions such as “What was the cause of the accident?” and “What type of accident?”. These might lead to details such as “Cause of accident? Type of accident? Car. Motorcycle. Airplane. Ice skating. Skiing. Falling. Workplace. Poison. Burns. Suffocation. Drowning.” The associated Note for this event might look like Figure 5.

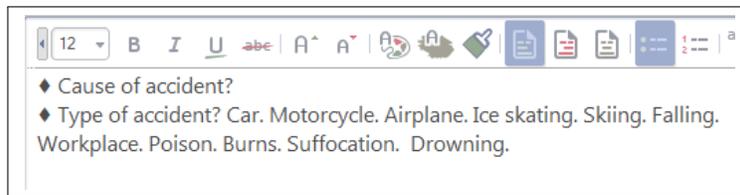


Figure 5: Ken has accident

The next event in the **Chronological Outline** is a Note with the title “Ken admitted to hospital”. This might lead to possible details based on asking questions such as “What is wrong with Ken?”, “How serious is it?”, “What is Ken’s prognosis?”, and “What is Ken’s mental state?”. The associated Note for this event might look like Figure 6.

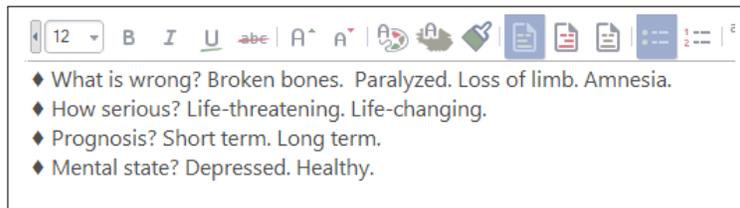


Figure 6: Ken admitted to hospital

Each of these two events have unanswered questions that the writer needs to resolve at some stage—either as part of the **Chronological Outline** or when writing the associated scenes in the story itself.

³Common “What” questions are “What if ...?” and “What happens next?”.

(b) Adding Threads

After the writer has made a start on the **Chronological Outline**, they add threads. It is not uncommon for events in the **Chronological Outline** to lead to the creation of a thread by asking questions similar to those asked when detailing an event, namely those starting with “Who?”, “What”, “When?”, “Where?”, “Why?”, or “How?”.

Looking at the current **Chronological Outline** event “Ken admitted to hospital”, the writer might ask “Who would visit Ken in hospital?” and get the response “His parents”.⁴ So that would lead to creating a **Ken’s Father and Mother** thread (a Folder) with the single entry “Parents visit Ken in hospital” (a Note). See Figure 7, where the parents have also been added as Folders to the **Family** folder.

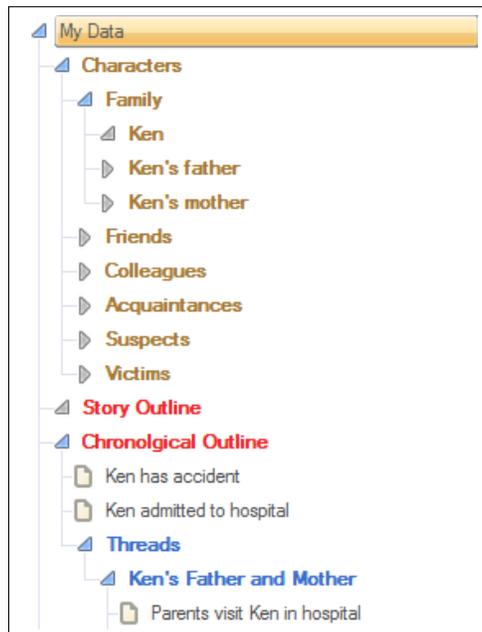


Figure 7: Start of Ken’s Father and Mother thread

But the writer can’t just have the parents show up without introducing them earlier in the story. So the writer sets aside the **Chronological Outline** for the time being and concentrates fully on fleshing out the **Ken’s Father and Mother** thread, maybe by adding that they had lunch some time in the past and thinking about what could happen to them in the future. This might lead to Figure 8.

⁴An alternative question, equally valid, might be “Who is Ken?” This could lead to the thread shown in Figure 12 on page 8.

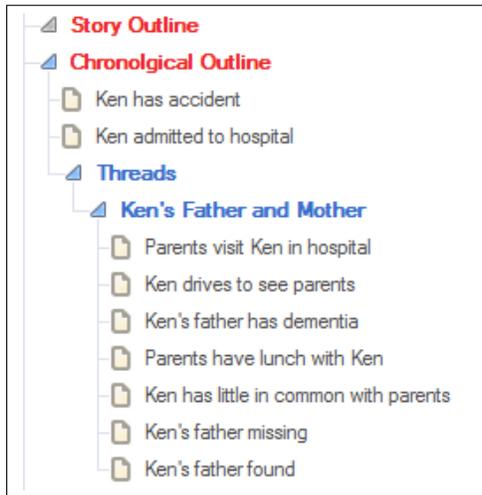


Figure 8: Ken's Father and Mother thread

The writer decides that the four events “Parents have lunch with Ken”, “Parents visit Ken in hospital”, “Ken’s father missing”, and “Ken’s father found” are shared events, and duplicates them in the **Chronological Outline**, which then might look like Figure 9. Notice the chronology—it would make no sense to put the event “Parents visit Ken in hospital” before the event “Ken admitted to hospital”.

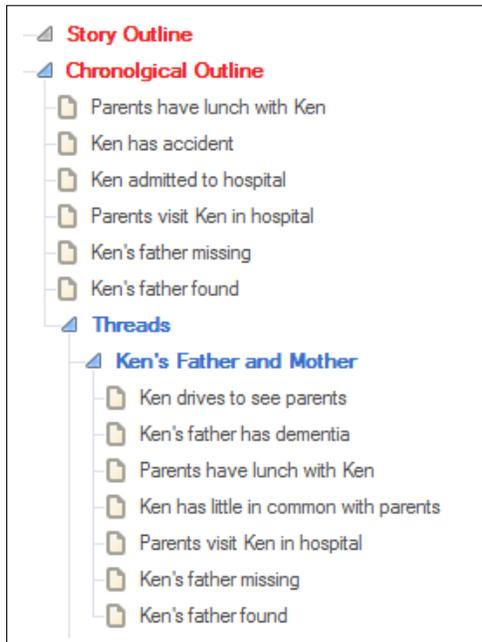


Figure 9: The current Chronological Outline

The **Ken's Father and Mother** thread is left unchanged after the shared events have been duplicated, and could be the source of further shared events or ideas as the process continues. Also, when the **Story Outline** is eventually used as the basis for a story, the scene or scene outline that contains the event “Parents have lunch with Ken” might also include more detailed ideas from the **Ken's Father and Mother** thread, such as the events “Ken drives to see parents”, “Ken's father has dementia”, and “Ken has little in common with parents”.

So not all events from a thread need be added to the **Chronological Outline**. However, an event in the **Chronological Outline**, and therefore in the final **Story Outline**, may be used as a memory-tickler for the contents of a thread. It is up to the writer to decide how much detail to include in a **Chronological Outline**.

Continuing with this process, the writer now decides to add details to the “Ken’s father missing” event in the **Chronological Outline** that might be included in the final story—subject to final editing.⁵ See Figure 10.

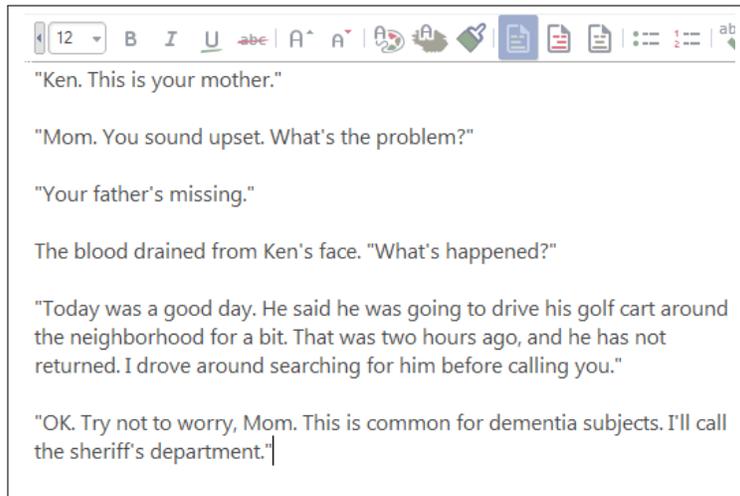


Figure 10: Ken’s father is missing

To avoid confusion, it is important to adhere to the following two **title-naming** rules.

1. Each thread title is unique—two threads should not have the same title.
2. A thread title should be understandable when copied to the **Chronological Outline**.

Returning to the current **Chronological Outline**—Figure 9 on page 6—the writer might ask “Who else would visit Ken in hospital?”. This might raise the question whether Ken is married, and if so, why his wife, Jane, does not visit him. Perhaps he is divorced, so the writer may want to create a **Ken** thread summarizing Ken’s life, starting with a new event “Kan and Jane Divorce”. See Figure 11 on page 8, where Jane has been added as a character. Focusing on this thread might lead to Figure 12 on page 8, where Heather and Tony have been added as characters.

⁵If a writer wants to add details to an event after it has been duplicated in the **Chronological Outline**, it should be done in the **Chronological Outline**.

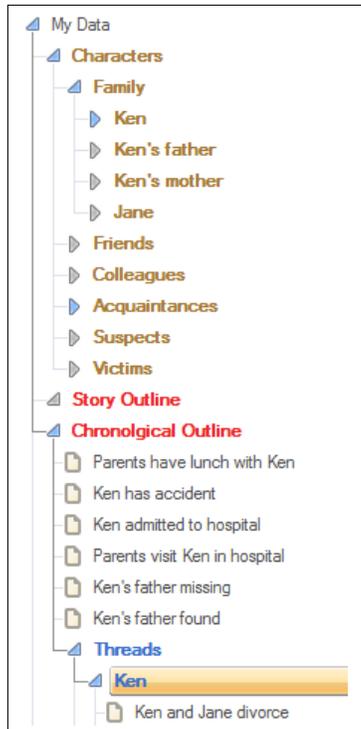


Figure 11: Start of Ken's thread

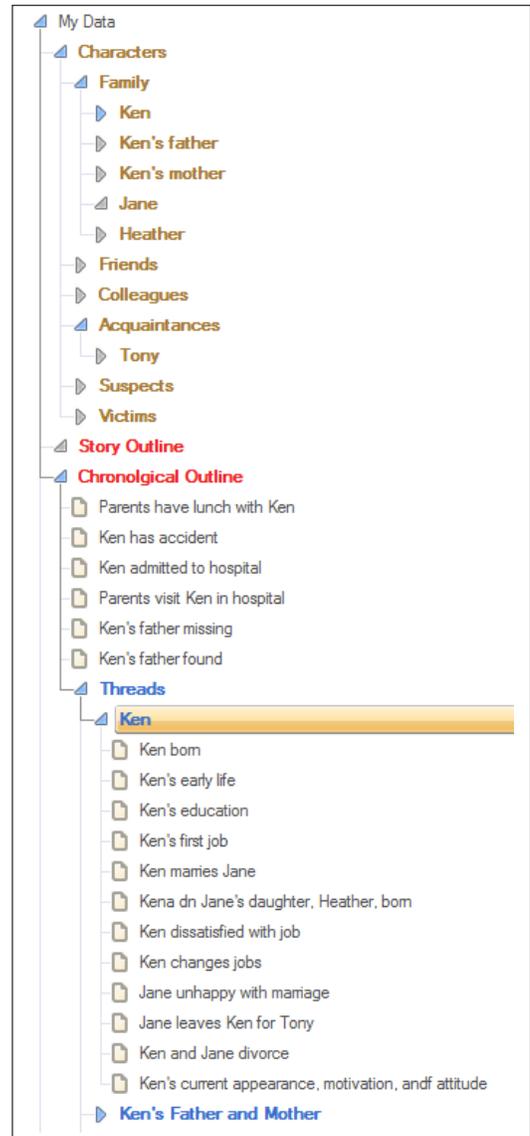


Figure 12: Ken's thread

Each of these events can have a Note which might include more details, such as full name, birth place and date on the “Ken Born” Note, when and what his first job was on the “Ken’s First job” Note, how he met Jane on the “Ken Marries Jane” Note, why Jane is unhappy on the “Jane unhappy with marriage” Note, and so on.⁶ For example, the “Ken’s current appearance, motivation, and attitude” event Note might look like Figure 13 on page 9.

⁶The entry “Ken’s early life” is not an event but is shorthand notation for the two events “Start of Ken’s early life” and “End of Ken’s early life”. If nothing significant is going to happen in the story in Ken’s early life, then it is acceptable to leave the item “Ken’s early life” in its thread, treating it as a shorthand notation for the two events, “Start of Ken’s early life” and “End of Ken’s early life”. If something significant is likely to happen in the story in Ken’s early life “Ken’s early life” should be replaced by the two events “Start of Ken’s early life” and “End of Ken’s early life”.

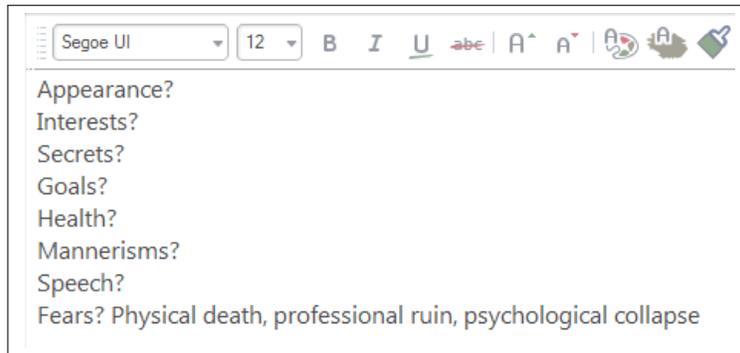


Figure 13: Ken’s current appearance, motivation, and attitude

The **Character** Folder for **Ken** should include Notes on anything that is not covered in the **Ken** thread. This might include a note containing questions based on any of the multiple character cheat sheets available on the web. A sample of this is shown in Figure 14.

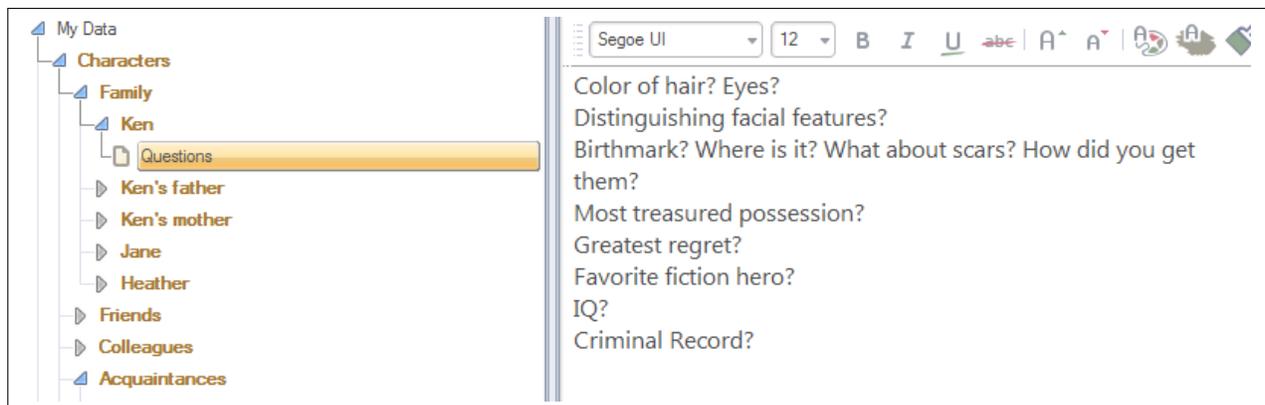


Figure 14: Ken’s character questions

Answering these questions might lead to adding events in **Ken**’s thread, or the creation of new threads. They also might lead to additional Notes in the **Ken** **Character** tree. In the rest of this document, whenever a person is added to the **Character** Folder, it is understood that appropriate Notes have been included, although this is not stated.

So, when creating a character, events associated with that character are placed in a Thread, while all other details are placed in a Character Note.

Based on Figure 12 on page 8, the chronological details of Heather or of Tony could lead to more threads and events. These might be called the **Heather** thread or the **Tony** thread, and follow the pattern of the **Ken** thread in Figures 12 and 13.

At this stage the **Ken** thread may be for background character information only, or an event, say “Ken and Jane divorce”, might be shared with the **Chronological Outline** at an appropriate chronological place determined by the writer—in this case before Ken has lunch with his parents. See Figure 15 on page 10.

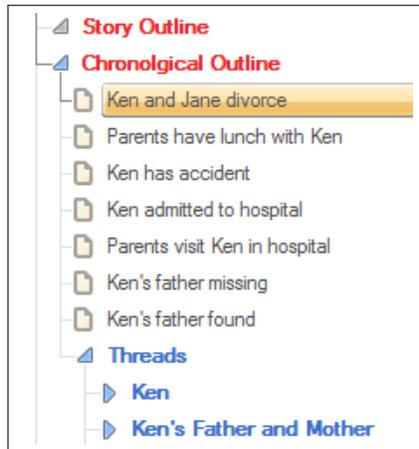


Figure 15: The current Chronological Outline

Thinking of divorce the writer might create a new thread **Jane, Ken's Ex-Wife** by first copying the “Ken and Jane divorce” event from the **Ken** thread—a shared event—and then adding more events. See Figure 16.

This might change the **Chronological Outline** to Figure 17 by duplicating the “Jane phones Ken - Tony left her” event. Obviously this shared event should occur chronologically after the “Ken and Jane divorce” event. It is up to the writer to decide where this event occurs in the **Chronological Outline**. Its position could dramatically change the nature of the story, as could whether Ken does or does not take her back.

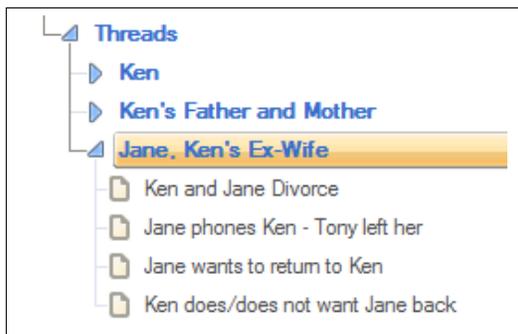


Figure 16: Jane, Ken's Ex-Wife thread

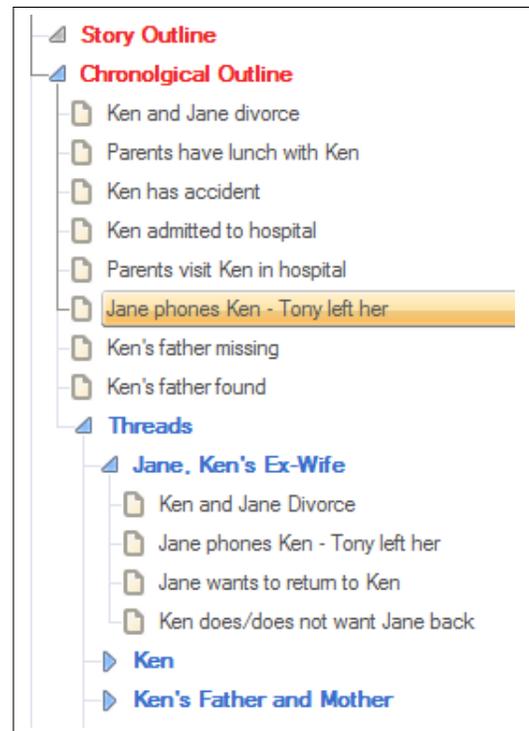


Figure 17: The current Chronological Outline

Notice that the shared event “Ken and Jane divorce” occurs in three separate places: the **Chronological Outline**, the **Ken** thread, and the **Jane, Ken's Ex-Wife** thread.

Looking at the **Chronological Outline** might make the writer wonder about the hospital. This could start a **Hospital** thread with the shared events “Ken admitted to hospital” and “Parents visit Ken in hospital” coming from the **Chronological Outline**.⁷ See Figure 18 on page 11.

⁷Notice that the event “Parents visit Ken in hospital” was first created in the **Ken's Father and Mother** thread—see Figure 8 on page 6—then became a shared event in the **Chronological Outline**—see Figure 9 on page 6—and from the **Chronological Outline** became a shared event in the **Hospital** thread.

The writer might decide that the “Patient dies in hospital” and “Ken discharged from hospital” events look promising, so they are shared events and the updated **Chronological Outline** is shown in Figure 19.

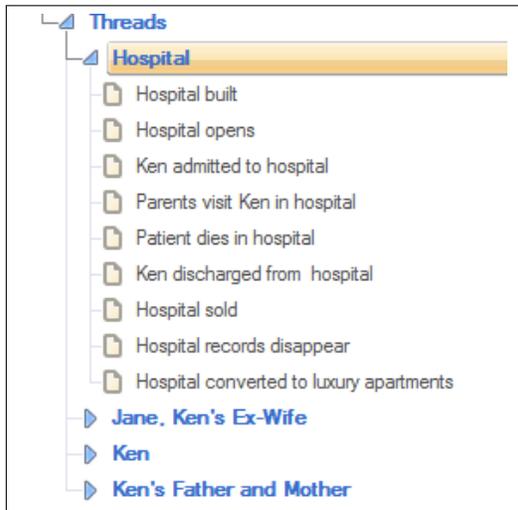


Figure 18: The Hospital thread

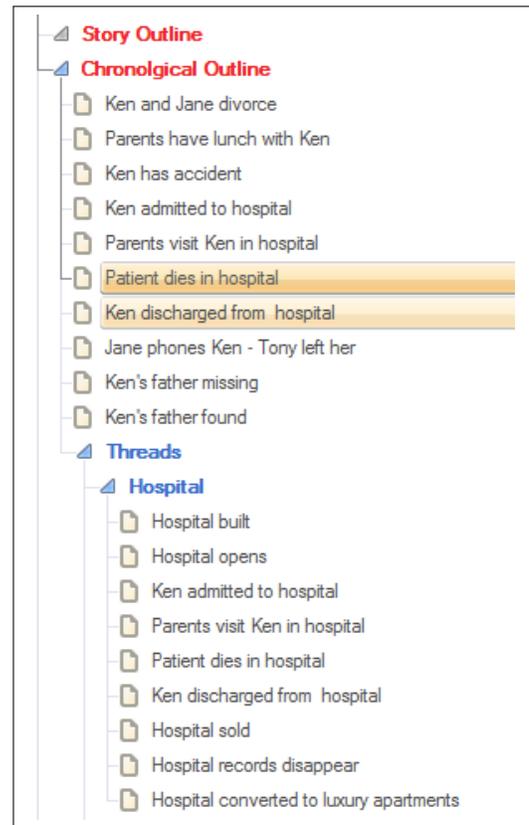


Figure 19: Updated Chronological Outline

While thinking about the characters in the story, a writer might suddenly have an idea for a sub-plot, unrelated to any of the current threads, which they do not want to forget. Rather than discard the idea, the writer makes it into a thread, called the **Heather** thread, for possible future use. See Figure 20. John is added as an **Acquaintance Character**.



Figure 20: Heather's thread

At this stage the writer is uncertain where, or even whether, this thread fits in the overall story, so does not link any of its events to the **Chronological Outline** at this stage. However, the **Heather** thread is there if needed.

In a similar vein, the writer might decide that someone called Henry is missing, but, at this stage, they are undecided whether Henry has been killed or has staged his own disappearance. Rather than settling on either one of these, the writer could develop both, creating two threads, perhaps called **Henry Killed** and **Henry Stages Disappearance**. These threads could be developed independently and then allowed to simmer in the writer’s imagination until one bubbles to the top. Of course, these threads could taper off to nothing—perhaps Henry was not actually missing but was with his mistress and returned of his own accord. This could be the germ of a completely different thread.

If part of the story takes place at a particular time of the year, say, Summer, a thread named **Time of Year** could be created with the events “Start of summer” and “End of summer”. Weather events such as torrential rain, flooding, drought, blizzard, earthquakes, record high/low temperatures, hurricanes, tornadoes, . . . , could be included in this thread. Some of those events might be shared with the **Chronological Outline**, as appropriate.

Some writers like to include actual events in their stories, which might lead to an **Historical Events** thread. This could contain such events as “1974 Richard Nixon resigns”, “1975 Microsoft founded”, “1975 Arthur Ashe first black man to win Wimbledon”, “1977 Elvis found dead”, and “1977 Star Wars movie released”. Such information can be found on the web. Timelines are also built into the novel-writing program “WriteItNow 5”, available from <http://www.ravensheadservices.com/>.

The writer would continue with this process until they are ready to create the **Story Outline**. At this stage the writer should look at the **Chronological Outline** with a critical eye, making sure it creates a chronological, coherent, consistent, and a logical skeleton for a story that is not tired or clichéd or has anything that detracts from its plausibility or integrity, such as plot holes. It may be necessary to remove some events from the **Chronological Outline** if they no longer achieve this goal, and add others.

Sample Use of Threads and AllMyNotes Organizer Starting with Characters

This section is devoted to a sample use of Threads and AllMyNotes Organizer where the writer starts with characters and creates a plot. The outline of this section is:

1. Create threads for one or more characters, adding their names to the **Characters** folder.
2. Focus on each character separately. Flesh each out. Add events to their thread and all other details to their **Character** folder.
3. Use the ideas that these characters generate to begin a vague plot—a starter outline.
4. Use the starter outline as the basis for a **Chronological Outline**.
5. Use the suggestions in the sample use starting with a plot, described on page 3.

After loading the Template database the first thing a writer does is to save the database under a different name, and then creates a thread for each important character.

In this example the writer is interested in following an English aristocratic family—the Crawleys—before, during, and after the First World War. The writer might start with detailed threads for the Earl of Grantham, Robert Crawley; his wife Lady Grantham, Cora Crawley; and their oldest daughter, Lady Mary.⁸ Figure 21 shows the beginnings of such a thread for **Robert**, where the family members named are included in the **Characters** Folder.

⁸With acknowledgment and apologies to the creators of Downton Abbey.

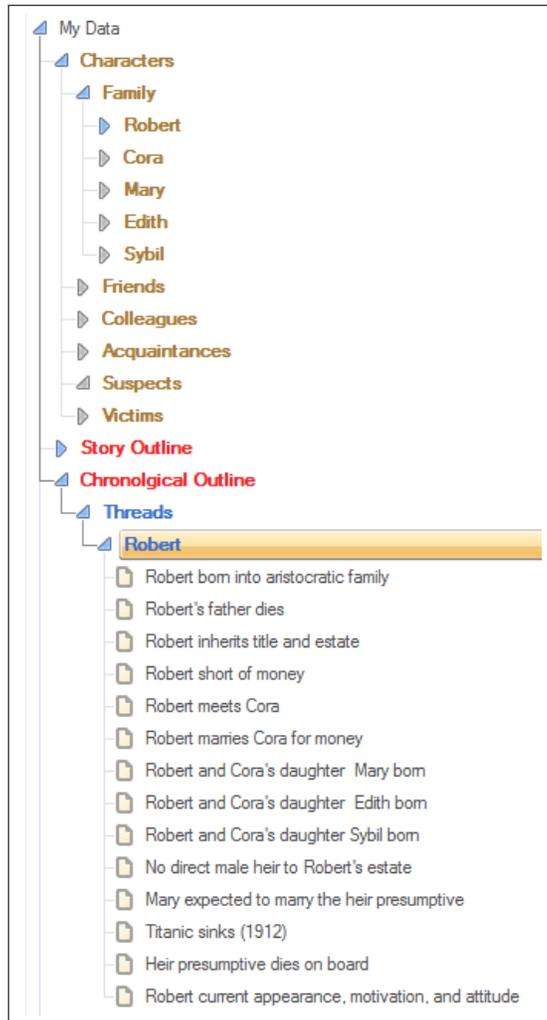


Figure 21: Robert's thread

Each event has its own Note that might spell things out in more detail. Items that are not events and need further explanation are added as Notes under the **Characters** folder. The “Robert short of money” **Character** Note might describe why money is in short supply. The “No direct male heir to Robert's estate” event needs to explain the English tradition of heirs having to be male. See Figure 22.

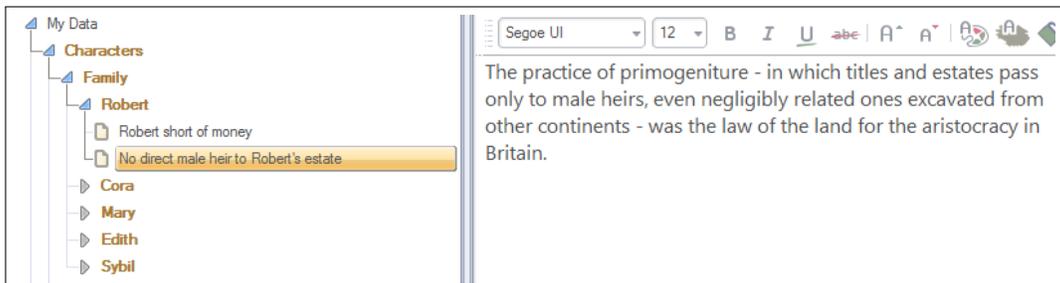


Figure 22: Male heir explanation

Cora's thread could be started with events shared with Robert's thread. See Figure 23. This could lead to Figure 24. Any non-thread information about Cora should be added to the **Cora Character Folder**.

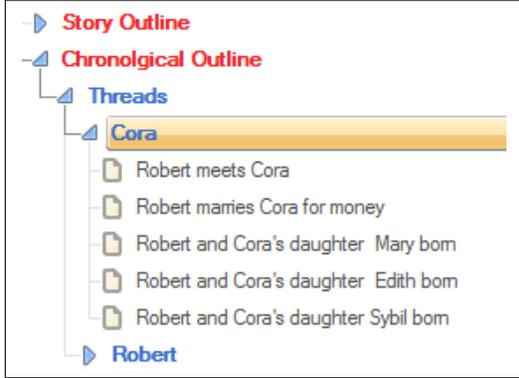


Figure 23: Start of Cora's thread

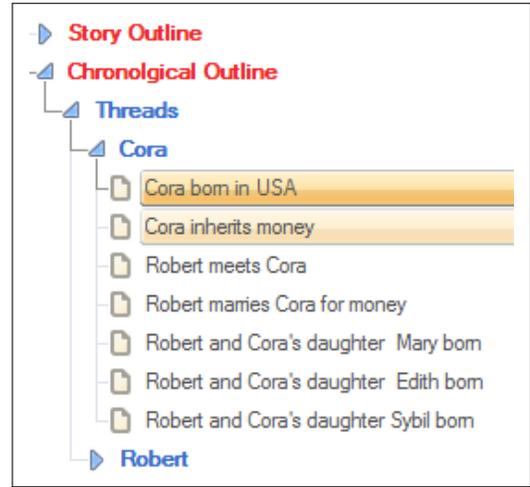


Figure 24: Cora's thread

Mary's thread could be started with events shared with Robert's thread. See Figure 25. This could lead to Figure 26. Any non-thread information about Mary should be added to the Mary Character Folder.

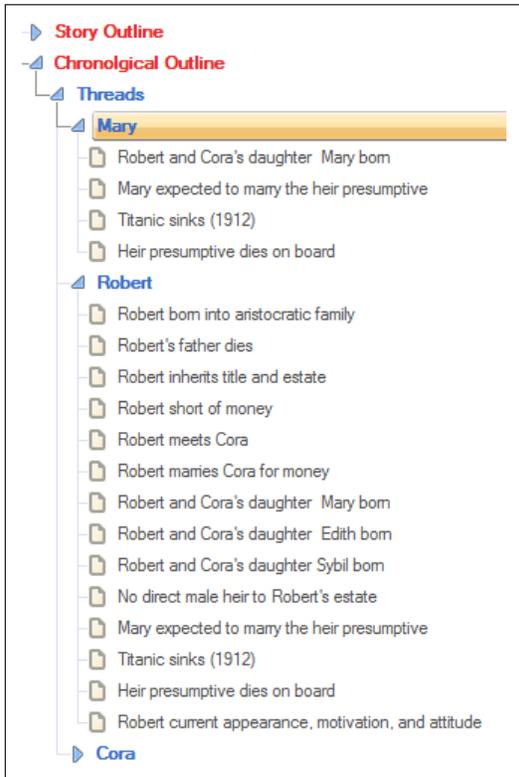


Figure 25: Start of Mary's thread

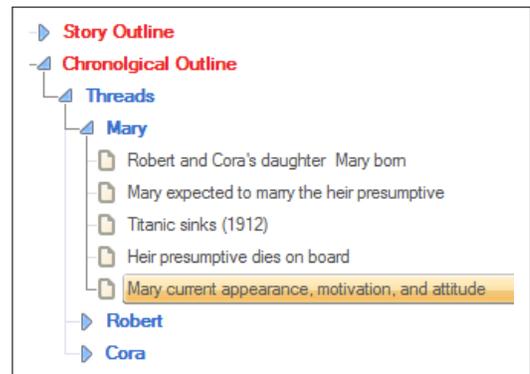


Figure 26: Mary's thread

Character threads for Edith and Sybil could be added now or later, as needed.

The beginnings of a Chronological Outline might look like Figure 27. These events are shared from the Robert thread.

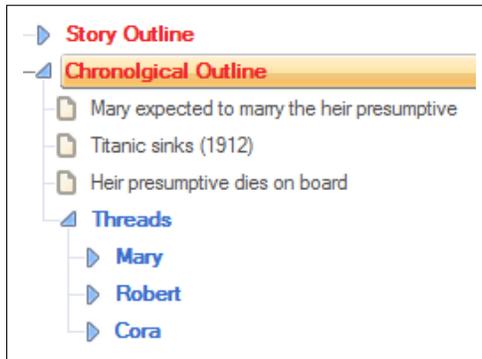


Figure 27: Start of Chronological Outline

This **Chronological Outline** could raise the question “Who is the new heir presumptive?”, leading to a thread on this very distant relative, Mathew Crawley—a complete stranger to Robert and his family. See Figure 28. An updated **Chronological Outline** is shown in Figure 29.

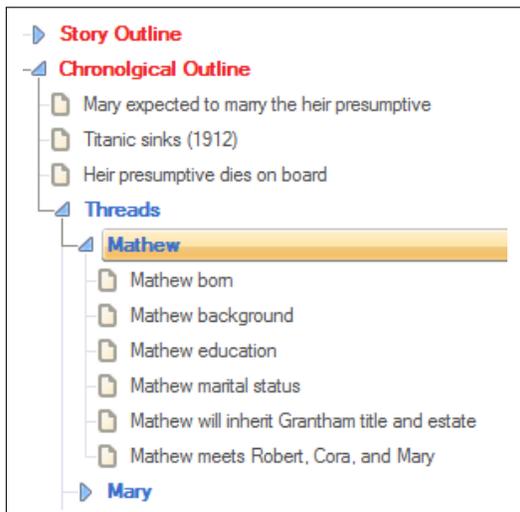


Figure 28: Mathew’s thread

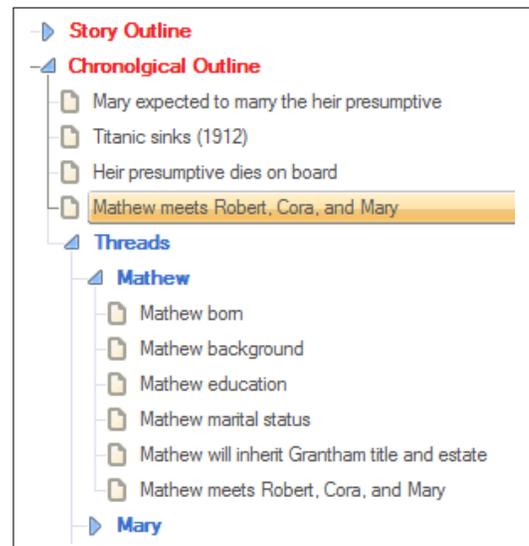


Figure 29: Current Chronological Outline

The **Robert**, **Cora**, and **Mary** threads should also be updated with this shared event.

From here it is up to the writer to decide where to go. Perhaps by answering the question “How is Mathew treated by various family members?” Or by creating a new thread called **How England changed socially before and after the First World War**. This could lead to the Earl’s servants playing a major role in the story. Or by creating a thread called the **Location**, with a single event “Village of Downton”, describing what is in the village at the time of the story—pubs, post office, railway station, and so on. This event is unlikely to be shared with the **Chronological Outline**, but could be used as background material when writing the story.

Notice that the **Robert** thread—see Figure 21 on page 13—might suggest that he is the protagonist, whereas the latest **Chronological Outline** shows a leaning towards Mary being the protagonist.

The following was written at the end of the previous sample when starting with a plot, and bears repeating here. “The writer would continue with this process until they are ready to create the **Story Outline**. At this stage the writer should look at the **Chronological Outline** with a critical eye, making sure it creates a chronological, coherent, consistent, and a logical skeleton for a story that is not tired or clichéd. It may be necessary to remove some events from the **Chronological Outline** if they no longer achieve this goal, and add others.”

Summary: Creating a Chronological Outline

There are various ways that a writer could use Threads and AllMyNotes Organizer to create a **Chronological Outline**. Here are two possibilities.

Possibility 1: Start with a vague or detailed sequence of events

Some writers start with a few vague events from which they gradually build an outline. Others start with more detailed events that represent the major points of the story—for example the primary events in a Three Act Structure, or the primary events in a different story structure—and then interlace minor events between them. All of these approaches to outlining can be handled using the following procedure.

1. Start the **Chronological Outline**.
2. Add events to the **Chronological Outline**—few or many, detailed or by title only. Make sure event titles are unique. All characters introduced, and their non-event details, should be added to the **Characters** folder.
3. An event in the **Chronological Outline** may lead to the creation of a thread with this shared event as the sole entry. Make sure all thread titles are unique.
4. Concentrate on the thread, fleshing it out as much as possible. Add any characters introduced to the **Characters** folder, including any non-event details.
5. An event from this thread may need to be shared with the **Chronological Outline**.
6. An event from a thread may lead to the creation of another thread.
7. If the **Chronological Outline** still needs more events, return to item 2.

Possibility 2: Start with characters

1. Create threads for characters, along the lines of Figure 21 on page 13. Add their non-event details to the **Characters** folder.
2. Focus on each character separately. Flesh each out and understand the character’s motivation.
3. Use the ideas that these characters generate to begin a vague plot—a starter outline.
4. Use the starter outline as the basis for a **Chronological Outline**.
5. Use the suggestions in Possibility 1.

Whatever method the writer uses, eventually they have to identify a **Chronological Outline**. This is the thread on which the **Story Outline** is based.

2. Structuring the Story Outline

What is a **Story Outline**? It is a sequence of events—usually copied from the **Chronological Outline**—which may be reordered by the writer to achieve a desired dramatic effect.

When the writer is ready to create a **Story Outline**, the first thing to do is to copy all the events from the **Chronological Outline** to the **Story Outline**. See Figure 30. This provides a method for a writer to keep a chronological record of events (the **Chronological Outline**) and then to transform them into an outline (the **Story Outline**) that may not be chronological.⁹

If the writer decides that the story is to be presented chronologically, then the **Chronological Outline** becomes the **Story Outline**.

On the other hand, a writer may wish to present the material out of chronological order, such as *in medias res*. In this case, the **Story Outline** is reordered to suit the writer’s preferences. The events that occurred chronologically earlier than the event at the start of the story, might be gradually inter-woven through back story, frame, dialog, flashbacks, descriptions, or some other device of recollection.

In either case, for the writer to create a standard outline it is “merely” a case of deciding where the Chapters and Scenes in the **Story Outline** start and end.¹⁰ AllMyNotes Organizer allows the writer to insert user-defined Folders in the **Story Outline** to identify these important breaks. For example, the writer might create **Scene** Folders containing some events (Notes), and then create **Chapter** Folders containing **Scene** Folders. See Figure 31.

Folders could be used in additional ways, depending on the writer’s preferences. For example, if the writer plans to use the classic Three Act Structure—or one of its many variations—then Folders can be used to identify such things as the beginning of each Act, the **Inciting Event** or Incident, the **Key Event**, the **Plot Points**, the **Pinch Points**, the **Midpoint**, the **Climax**, and so on. See Figure 31, where the Event Notes were in the original **Story Outline**, and the folders play the role of markers.

⁹It is possible to copy specific events from any thread to the **Story Outline**.

¹⁰Remember that, typically, an event is not a scene, but part of a scene.

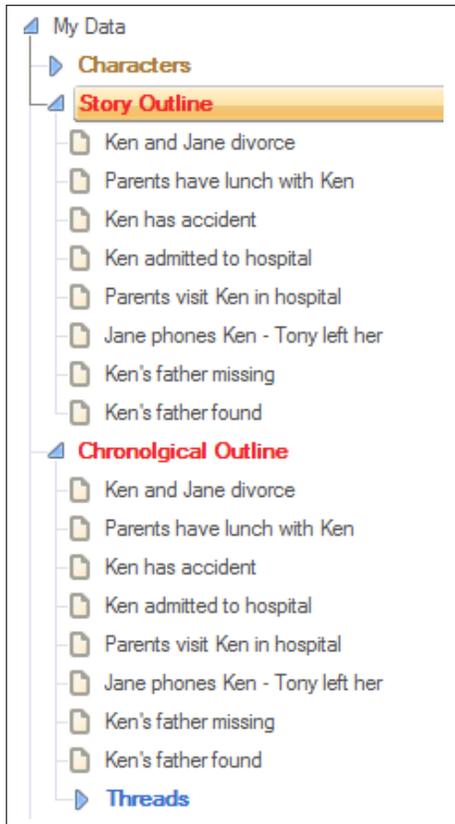


Figure 30: Chronological Outline copied to Story Outline

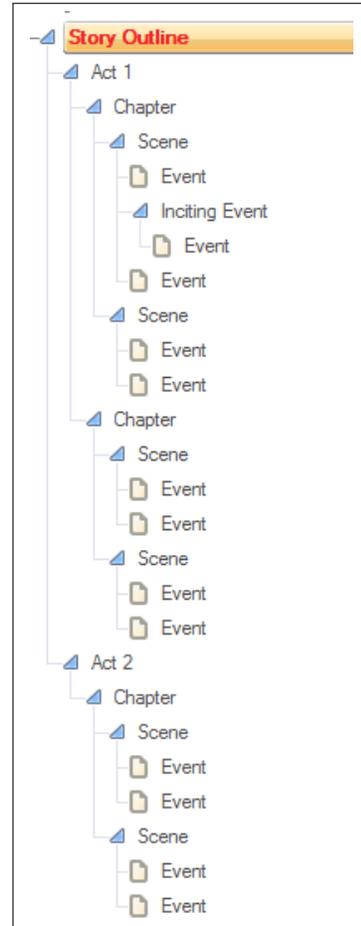


Figure 31: Story Structure

Of course, as with any outline, it can be ignored or amended at any time by the writer. An outline is not cast in stone.

Life After Creating a Story Outline

Now comes the real challenge—writing the story. Every writer has their own process. One way is to have both AllMyNotes Organizer and the writer’s favorite novel-writing software, open side by side. (Ideally the writer’s desktop computer could have two monitors—one viewing AllMyNotes Organizer and the other using the writing software.) In AllMyNotes Organizer, just the **Story Outline** needs to be visible initially. This will allow the writer to concentrate on the events in the **Story Outline**, while writing the story. See Figure 32, for example, which shows AllMyNotes Organizer and the novel-writing program “WriteItNow 5”, available from <http://www.ravensheadservices.com/>, side-by-side.

As the writer follows the **Story Outline**, they can copy and paste any of the **Character** or **Event Notes** from AllMyNotes Organizer, as needed.

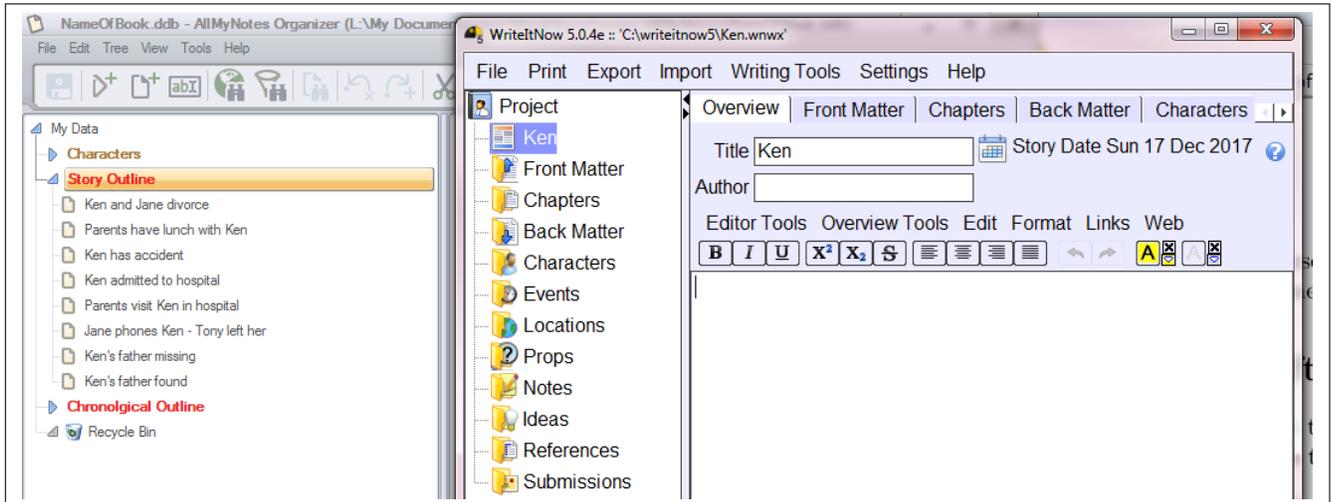


Figure 32: AllMyNotes Organizer and WriteItNow 5

Glossary

Chronological Outline	This is a collection of the major events in chronological order. It is an ever-changing thread, consisting of events and shared events. Not all events need be shared with the Chronological Outline , and some threads may have no shared events with the Chronological Outline , or any other thread—they just stand alone. Before using the Chronological Outline to create the Story Outline , the writer should look at it with a critical eye, making sure it creates a chronological, coherent, consistent, and a logical skeleton for a story that is not tired or clichéd. It may be necessary to remove some events from the Chronological Outline thread if they no longer achieve this goal, and add others.
Event	Something that occurs at a particular time.
Story Outline	The Chronological Outline is copied to the Story Outline , where the events may be re-ordered. The final product of this process.
Scene or Scene Outline	A collection of events. Created by assembling one or more events.
Shared Event	An event that is duplicated in one or more other threads, and/or in the Chronological Outline .
Thread	A collection of related events, with a common emphasis, in chronological order.